

## A Happy and Glorious Christmas

How do we capture the spirit of Christmas with Bhagavan Baba, using our usual vocabulary? Words are inadequate when we describe Divine Love that is flowing in every direction through every action. I know it is redundant to say that this was the "Best Christmas Ever!" And yet, year after year it becomes true. We find ourselves thinking, next year will not surpass this Christmas... and each year Our Beloved Sai does. Could it be His ever present Expansion of Love?

After the Christmas program finished concluding with Bhagavan Baba's 'amazing grace' discourse, as a humble viewer, I would acclaim this year's Christmas message as awesome, spectacular, talented, artistic, powerful and deeply moving. Words cannot convey the feeling of Love that Our Beloved Sai beamed into our hearts. Everyone seemed to glow like fairy lights, flashing smiles of joy, offering greetings of happiness and love. The exchange of "The Holy Spirit of Christmas" is the REAL PRESENT, not the material gifts we purchase. The Presence, not presents, of God in Action, as serving others, can never be substituted for material possessions.

Swami approved our Christmas programme on December 12, 1996. The programme included: Daily Satsang in Hall 22 for Caroling Practice and entertainment from different choirs the world over; the main Christmas Choir was to entertain Baba on Christmas Eve, followed by the Christmas Drama performed by overseas children, and Nagarsankirtan on Christmas morning.

The Christmas Committee was selected, they reviewed the Christmas dramas that were entered, and by December 14, finalised the Christmas Programme.

The participants were inspired by Baba's teaching: *"When you are given a job to do for me, do it whole-heartedly, not artificially."* The challenge that presents itself is keeping the Ego under control. This is the spiritual exercise that Swami is giving us, an opportunity to practise His teaching while living under His *Divine Aura*.

Somewhere between this humble beginning and productive end, the ego likes to raise its serpent-hood and claim ownership..." I did this, It's mine". The pride of ownership wants to appear even though we all know Bhagavan is the Doer. Soon after the game of Ownership, comes the game of Recognition. How difficult it is to work so intensely without getting this EGO involved seemed to be an impossible task. And yet the occasional difficulties and obstacles melted away as human effort met with Divine Grace.

The Christmas Drama held all the magic associated with this festive season. Teams were formed from Global Sai Family members offering multiple talents for the collective endeavour. Hidden in the hustle of designing, choreography, singing, artwork, sewing and drama direction, Swami's gift of Omnipresence was manifest over and over. In the wardrobe room, love spread from heart to heart as sparkling costumes emerged to delight 138 young overseas players. The artistry of costume design and the sets for the stage were brilliant. All under the skillful direction of the drama director.

The children devoted their time and energy to Swami, practising endless hours to please Our Lord on Christmas Day. His almost daily darshan at the drama rehearsal helped to sweeten their effort.

The two days of Christmas Celebration began on Christmas Eve (December 24) at 4 p.m. The Mandir Grounds were decorated like a Winter Wonderland, with Christmas Trees, Wreaths, Poinsettia, Snow Flakes, Stars, Ribbons, Beads and Pearls. Bhagavan gave us a powerful spiritual Christmas.

The Christmas Choir, consisting of 400 members from nearly all the countries in the world, dressed in white, looking like angels, began their programme with "This Christmas Day We Greet You, Sai Baba". They sang a lullaby called "Sleep in My Arms Little Baby," while the base choir sang "BABA, BABA, BABA" throughout the whole song. They sang a medley of songs, some Negro spirituals, a song to Krishna, a few Christmas Carols, and finished with a prayer by Handel called "Thank You Dear Lord, Oh Bless Our Lives and Lead Our Ways". Swami gave us Glorious Darshan and blessed us with Prasad. The announcement came from the loudspeakers that Christmas Drama will follow in the Poornachandra Hall.

"THE HARLEQUINS AT CHRISTMAS" was presented to Bhagavan and all His devotees. The story was about a young boy who knew Bhagavan Baba and had attended Sai spiritual education classes that had transformed his life.

The opening scene showed Danny and his friends building a snowman. After they had finished, a group of lads, including Danny's best friend, destroyed the snowman. They wanted Danny to come with them. But after imbibing Baba's teaching, "Help Ever; Hurt Never" he could not join them. Instead he prayed to Baba to help the other children understand His values. He asked Our Lord Sai to please send the mystical characters, the HARLEQUINS, who bring fun, joy, and spiritual values at Christmas to his town. The Harlequins had not appeared in many years.

Danny sprang joyfully on stage announcing, "The Harlequins Are Coming!" Baba had answered Danny's plea and sent two Harlequins who came teaching love, right conduct, peace, truth and non-violence. They captivated the audience with their gymnastics and juggling, and brought to this sad little town the joyful spirit of Christmas. The children were wanting a Christmas tree, a manger with Jesus, Mary and Joseph, the Star of Bethlehem, and falling snow. The Harlequins asked, "Who would bring a tree, the manger, and play the parts of Mary, Joseph and baby Jesus?" The children volunteered. The Harlequins were teaching the children that they all had to give of themselves and work together in peace and harmony. They underlined Bhagavan's teaching that when there is unified effort, His grace follows.

Like magic the town came alive, with a magnificent twenty foot tall pine tree, strung with Christmas lights and covered in snow. The Lord sent falling snow and the shining Star of Bethlehem and a large stable with a manger of straw for the baby Jesus to lie. Mary and Joseph came. The three Wise Men, the donkey, the cats, the dogs, sheep, birds and dancers filled the stage. One black sheep, on hearing the word of God....turned WHITE before our very eyes!

But best of all the Harlequins taught Danny that his example of love would change his best friend. The drama concluded with the scene on Christmas Day, proclaiming that the only true miracle of God is TRANSFORMATION OF THE HEART. Danny's friend became interested in Sai Baba, God on earth in human form. After the performance, Baba said "Best Ever!"

On Christmas morning, the Nagarsankirtan Choir sang from their hearts the sacred melodies of "Silent Night" and other carols that are familiar to us regardless of which language we speak. The silver doors of the Mandir balcony opened and Our Lord appeared, dressed in snow white, with a radiant smile on His blissful face. Raising our voices, we sang "Joy to the World, the Lord has Come". His divine eyes shone brighter than the thousands of candles glowing in the darkness. He raised His arms, blessing all who came to greet Him on this glorious dawn of Christmas Day.

—Rita Bruce

### **A Nonagenarian's Prayer**

*It was a cool morning in  
August a decade ago  
When out of your infinite compassion  
You called me inside  
The Brindavan Ashram  
You made me sit at your Lotus Feet  
And allowed me to press them.  
Then with the caressing voice of a Mother  
You said "Bangaroo!  
It is time you start the life of a Vanaprastha."*

*And like a Rishi of olden days  
You started explaining the glory of that life  
My eyes got dimmed with tears  
At your unbounded love for me*

*I went immediately to Madras  
And rolled up my little tent I had pitched there*

*I gave away the books of my trade (Law)  
Distributed my clothes to the poor  
And bade adieu to my relatives and friends  
I reached the Valley of Peace-Prasanthi-Nilayam  
You gave the keys of the small hermitage  
You sheltered me from many dangers  
As a mother cow will do to her calf  
You made me known to friends I knew not  
You gave me a seat in homes not my own*

*You brought a distant stranger near me  
And made a brother at him*

*I am now nine decades and three - a ripe age.  
Oh Mother Sai! My task is over  
Now please grant me the boon  
that I may merge in Thee soon*

—*Damodar*

## **A Sweet New Year**

Adieu to 1996 welcome to 1997!

What a farewell and what a welcome. What memories! What expectations! By all accounts 1996 was verily a memorable year in the Sathya Sai Saga. Among other things there was the great Abhishekam for one thousand and eight pairs of padukas brought by devotees from so many countries. And then came the Mahaabbishekam for the sacred kalasas! And then the memorable Birthday festival with a spate of dramas and ballets that thrilled one and all...And now, what a welcome to the New Year! As Bhagavan entered the Sai Kulwant Mandap to the melodious strains of nadaswaram music, all eyes turned towards the blissful figure of Bhagavan graciously gliding towards the Mandir.

Swami ushered in the New Year with the lighting of candles and the cutting of the New Year Cake. And then followed by a stream of New Year gifts to the devotees: The Sai Diary for 1997, pictorial calendar for 1997, handy pocket size calendars with Bhagavan's picture and Swami's motto for all devotees: "Love all; Serve all". And above all, the sweet prasadam blessed by Bhagavan.

In his "Ode to the West Wind", Shelley declared: "Oh wind! If winter comes, can spring be far behind!" The promise in Prasanthi Nilayam is not seasonal but sacred. Here it is: If Christmas comes in all its glory, can the New Year be far behind with its hopes? May the New Year be sweet and happy for one and all by the grace of Bhagavan!

—N.

**MESSENGERS OF MOTHER SAI:**

## **Annual Day in Prasanthi Nilayam**

It was yet another great day for the alumnae of the Sathya Sai College for Women, Anantapur, (the Anantapur campus of the Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning) when Bhagavan Baba lit the lamps to mark the inauguration of the anniversary celebrations of "The Messengers of Mother Sai" in Sai Kulwant Mantap on the afternoon of December 25th.

A very large number of alumnae of the Anantapur Campus from different parts of the world had come for the celebrations which synchronise with Christmas in Prasanthi Nilayam in the gracious presence of Bhagavan.

The function began with a song in adoration of Bhagavan by a group from the old students.

The President of the alumnae association, The Messengers of Mother Sai, extended a hearty welcome to all those present and expressed the association's gratitude to Bhagavan for providing an opportunity for the alumnae to pay their homage to Bhagavan on an auspicious occasion. Reviewing the service activities of the Messengers during 1996, she said that the most notable service was the relief work undertaken by them in the cyclone affected areas of the Andhra Coast. The members carried out rescue and relief operations in a big way, working round the clock and often wading through waist deep waters in several places. They supplied food, clothing and other essential goods for the stricken people who were rendered homeless and destitute.

Over Rs. 25,000 worth of clothing was distributed. They were sustained by the grace of Bhagavan in all their service activities.

A former student, who came from U.K., spoke on her experiences as a student in Bhagavan's college. The secretary of the Messengers of Mother Sai presented a report on the various service activities of the members in the different centres in which they lived.

She said she was a student twenty years ago and recalled how Gen. Cariappa had visited the college along with Swami and exhorted the students to render service to humanity after they left the college. They had been doing service wherever they settled after their marriage and the organisation of the members had been carrying on such service wherever they were living for the past 15 years. They had organised medical camps, served the people on occasions of natural calamities like cyclone, earthquake etc. They had also arranged for free eye operations. The members had also been giving free tuition for children from backward areas, conducted free tailoring classes to help women earn some money in their leisure. They were also teaching Veda chanting to children in New Zealand. A member quoted Baba's inspiring advice to devotees to first transform themselves in order to transform the world.

Swami then gave His Divine Discourse (published separately). After arati to Bhagavan the function came to a close.

### **Bhagavan Commends "Messengers" Seva**

Paying warm tribute to the services rendered by the former alumnae (girl students) of the Anantapur campus of the Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning, Bhagavan declared that seva (service) is the boat which will take them near to God.

Bhagavan made this reference to the work of the Messengers of Mother Sai (the association of alumnae of the Anantapur Campus) after delivering His Christmas message on the afternoon of December 25th, in the Sai Kulwant Mandap. Bhagavan said:

The Alumnae Association of former girl students of the Anantapur Campus have been rendering good social service inspired by the concept that "Service to man is service to God". Even after their marriage, though they may have settled abroad, they came to Prasanthi Nilayam during Christmas, bringing their husbands with them. In this manner, not only do they adhere to the spiritual path themselves, but are also transforming their husbands.

Today most students acquire information but do not undergo any transformation. Transformation is vital. How is it achieved? Through service and service alone. The best way to love God is to love all and serve all.

These women are engaged in such activities. Over the past fifteen years, as the numbers of old students have grown, their service activities have also expanded. In whatever country they may be staying, they participate in the work of the Sai Organisation and render service. There are no boundaries for love. Love has no birth or death.

**Love is my form  
Truth is my breath  
Peace is my food**

(Swami sang the song in His own melodious voice and the entire gathering joined in chorus.)

**My Life is my message  
Expansion is my love  
No reason for love  
No season for love**

**No birth, no death  
No birth, no death  
Love is my form  
Truth is my breath  
Peace is my food**

(The devotees followed Bhagavan with fervour in reciting the song after Him.)

When you sing, you say "My form". This means that it is the form of everyone who sings. When you say, "Love is my form", you should apply it to yourself—each of you. "Truth is my breath". You should regard it as your own conviction. Only then you become one with Swami's message.

When you sing, "Love is my form", you should not think love is Bhagavan's form.

"My life is my message". When you sing this, you become "messengers". When you declare yourselves as "messengers" you must make your life the message. "No birth, no death". When

you say this you must identify yourself with the statement. Then you will realise the truth of Swami's message: "I and you are one". That is the significance of the Mahavakyas: "Tat Twam Asi" ("That thou art"), "Aham Brahmasmi" ("I am the Brahman"). This basic truth is taught by the Bible, the Quran, the Gita and the scriptures of all religions.

Don't hate any religion: Don't deride any religion. Don't make derogatory comparisons between them. "All are one. Be alike to everyone". That was the message of Jesus. Its truth should be propagated throughout the world.

God is in everyone. Not only should you propagate this truth, but also affirm that everyone is Divine. When you spread this message, that becomes true seva (service). This seva will serve as the boat (naava) that takes you near to the Lord. In this ocean of mundane existence, this is the boat that will take you to the Lord.

(The meeting concluded with the offering of arati to Bhagavan by the "Messengers")

#### *CHRISTMAS IN PRASANTHI NILAYAM*

### **How the Lord's Grace Works**

For several years now when good things seem to happen without my having to make an effort, or when my problems get solved almost before they occur, I look up and spend a moment of thanks for the unexpected Grace. I call these blissful leelas winks from the Lord. It is as if Swami is letting His merciful Hand show. He is letting me see that He alone is the doer. There are, of course, some who might say that these things are nothing more than chance happenings or random synchronicity. I say that His winks occur when He wants to intervene for His sport in bringing some extra joy and ease into our lives. Winks by their very nature are unexpected happenings. They remind me of what Baba says with a twinkle in his eyes:

#### **"Love My Uncertainty"**

During Christmas in PRASANTHI NILAYAM Swami seems to overwhelm me with an abundance of His glorious winks. It is almost as if they were His own special Christmas gifts. It is true that he throws in lots of tests and lessons, but when the winks come, the joy you feel make them all worthwhile. This year I was blessed with the privilege of working on the Christmas Program. It is when you are most actively engaged in doing His work that the winks come so fast as to be almost blinding.

This morning the choir director asked for some chairs for several ladies who have trouble sitting on the floor. Just as we were leaving to search for chairs, four new choir people showed up and asked us about getting the necessary entry choir badges. We told the new people to wait and we would try to arrange to get them badges from the head seva person. On our way to locate the chairs, which by the way we had been told were impossible to obtain, we walked past the place where the Play Choir Mistress was rehearsing. She had previously asked if it was possible to get the chorus an electronic piano. Finding a working electric keyboard in the ashram would in itself call for a small miracle. We stopped to tell her that we had been most fortunate in locating a

miniature keyboard. Before we could finish telling her the good news, the choir's pianist interrupted us to let us know that the miniature would definitely not do; she needed a full large keyboard. I was surprised having thought it was a small miracle that we had been able to find any keyboard at all. But Swami must have heard our thoughts because, suddenly, the trumpet player called out from the back of the bandstand, "I have a full electric keyboard and would be glad to make it available." We had our first wink.

### **Finding chairs**

Now we were off to find the chairs. I had been warned that there just were not any extra chairs available this year. Someone said that if these women could sit on the ground during the concert, then they could sit there during the rehearsal. The main choir director found that idea totally unacceptable. She said, "These women all have serious injuries; it is very painful for them to sit for long stretches during rehearsal. We are rehearsing sometimes 6 or 7 hours a day. These ladies need help and consideration. They will sit on the floor during the concert." So off we went to see the man in charge. It was unbelievably easy. No sooner had we asked for the chairs than the man in charge simply smiled and said, "You will have your chairs in an hour." Wink number two. What had seemed impossible a few moments earlier became miraculously simple.

On our way back to spread the good news that the chairs were coming, we ran directly into the head seva lady. As soon as we told her that four new choir people had arrived and were in need of badges, she laughed in a warm friendly fashion saying "I just now gave the choir director a whole handful of badges for just this purpose." The winks were coming so fast now.

One of my assignments was to help select the person who would be in charge of the Wardrobe Department; I asked all those who were interested in making and designing costumes for the play to meet in the satsang hall. Many very competent and enthusiastic women arrived. I asked who would want to be the head of the Wardrobe Department. There were two very experienced women who indicated that they would like the job. I was concerned about having to disappoint one of them, and I also wanted to avoid any possible friction. While I was standing there trying to make the best selection, one of these two ladies suddenly looked at me and smiling graciously said, "Look, why don't you let her do it? I will do my best to assist her." Another delightful wink from the Lord.

As I have said, winks are Swami's wonderfully playful way of teaching me that He and He alone is the Doer. By lifting the normal veil that confuses us sometimes into letting us think that we are making things happen, He is removing the great burden of having to achieve or accomplish things ourselves. Baba's Magical Hand resolves all problems when we surrender them to Him.

The following morning Swami decided to give me a taste of His choreographic magic. He led us in a merry dance of musical chairs. As He came in our direction, He stopped and blessed a group of students who were kneeling before him offering a tray of rice and cloves. Smiling He gently sprinkled their heads with a few bits of the tray's contents. Then He continued walking in our direction. When He was only about six feet away, a large man sitting beside me jumped forward totally blocking Swami from my view. For some reason Baba did not pay the large man any attention, but rather seemed to walk around the man for what seemed to be the purpose of talking to a small group of men sitting directly behind me. In order to reach the group Baba was circling



the large man who had jumped up. Swami came and stood directly beside me in exactly the place where the jumping man had been sitting. Standing there, Baba chatted with the small group. I looked to my right and saw His beautiful feet. I felt my heart leap into my mouth as I cautiously and gently reached out and touched His cool smooth foot. Then as he started to leave I held up the new book we had just published. Baba stopped and smiling, gently touched the book's cover. I saw a small black object drop from His hand on the book's cover. After He passed, I looked down thinking that perhaps there was a small mound of vibhuti. But, no, there was a large black clove. What grace! It must have stuck to His Hand when He had blessed the students with the tray. I thought, "What a magnificent wink." Slowly and blissfully I sat chewing the blessed clove.

During Christmas Swami spreads enormous joy as He personally distributes prasad. He walks from person to person gaily throwing colorful foil packages of candy. Sometimes He throws a pack 5 or 6 feet directly into the outstretched hands of delighted devotees. This morning He carefully hand-fed what seemed to be every man in the section where I was sitting. Strangely, two of the men were left out. He threw a pack to me twice, because I missed His first throw. At the end Baba was standing about 15 feet away. He was looking away from us. He seemed to have finished His gift giving. The two men next to me had given up all hope when suddenly I saw Swami turn and look over at them. Baba had only two candy packs left in his hand. In a flash, He let them both fly to these two men who were now overjoyed with the precious prasad of the Lord. Another beautiful wink.

If you are open to winks, you get them fast and furiously. It is almost as if receiving one wink begets another...like we become magnetically charged attracting more and more of His Grace. So when people ask me why I go to Puttaparthi at Christmas, I tell them it is because that is the time when the Lord almost blinds me with an abundance of what I call winks of His Grace. Perhaps the secret in all of this is following what Krishna told Arjuna "Give up everything and surrender to me and I shall take complete care of you".

—Jack O. Scher, Prasanthi Nilayam

*AT THE MUSE'S FLAME:*

### **Swami's Post**

With letters handled through the post  
You need a stamp or two at most  
To have your message carried through  
To family or friends you cannot view.  
But write to Bhagavan a line Or two;  
You will have the time.  
The letter folding do with care,  
To envelope just add a prayer.  
Address it if you please- above  
The stamps you will need are Pure Love.

## Swami's Line

I sit and wait: "Australia on the line."  
So much confusion, difference of time  
But Swami talks to me each day;  
No charge, no delay in what He has to say.  
There is never static on the line  
And with my questions I can take my time.  
My line's constructed by Belief,  
Available through joy or grief:  
Available through night or day  
Or any time I want to pray.  
But let me say before I end this page,  
With Swami's Line there never is "Engaged".

## My True Self

To know and be as one with God  
That is my biggest goal.  
To feel the wondrous joy of life,  
To understand my soul.  
To lend an ever helping hand  
To friends along the way;  
Share love with those so close to me  
A love that grows each day.  
And if it is my fortune  
That these things will come to pass,  
I know I will see my own true self  
As in a mirrored glass

—Joan Miller, N. S. W., Australia

*The establishment of Dharma (Righteousness) is my aim. The teaching of Dharma, the spread of Dharma, that is my object. These miracles as you call them are just a means towards that end. Some of you remark that Ramakrishna Paramahansa said that siddhis or yogic powers are obstructions in the path of a Sadhaka. Siddhis may lead the sadhaka (spiritual aspirant) astray. His ego will bring him down if he yields to the temptation of demonstrating his yogic powers... The mistake lies in equating me with a sadhaka. These siddhis or yogic powers are just in the nature of the Avatar—the creation of things with intent to protect and to give joy as a spontaneous and lasting creation.*

—Baba

## **Prasad—the Guru's Grace**

*For what we are about to receive  
May the lord make us truly thankful!*

Many times during Swami's Darshan, I have received blessed Prasad. Excited devotees would buy an assortment of delicious sweets; place them on a shiny silver platter and carefully decorate the offering with an abundance of colourful flowers. Often, by the side of the sweets lay packets of tiny golden lockets, letters and deity statuettes—all lovingly arranged for Swami's attention.

Usually, the determined devotees would wait for days for a suitable seating position where Swami could bless the platters. This would mean rearranging the sweets, and improving on their floral skills, until finally, each platter resembled a beautiful bouquet of flowers.

Often, the devotee's efforts received Swami's blessings. He would walk along until he reached a superbly decorated platter, stop, look and bless the sweet offering. While doing so, he would take large handfuls of the delicious selection and throw them over the seated devotees. With loud ahs and whoops of joy, and small gestures of gratitude, the sweets would be accepted and passed around to others, or sometimes kept for loved ones and friends.

I remember many wonderful moments with Swami as he blessed sweets. Frequently, He would throw them high into the air and one would land on my head, chin or nose. His favourite target seemed to be my headband. Once, a sweet lodged itself between the folds of my shawl, and not until I stood to leave, did it fall on to the floor where I could retrieve it. But mostly, sweets would simply land in my lap or even underneath my cushion—how they found their way there, I will never know. But always, I felt elated when a blessed sweet came my way. I would keep my 'precious catch' until a quiet moment, then eat it slowly savouring the delicate flavour.

On one occasion in 1992, when seated in the front line in Prasanthi Nilayam, Swami came along and playfully tossed sweets to those seated all around, but missed me altogether. It had been one of those days when I had felt less than happy with myself and therefore, undeserving of a blessed sweet. Mentally, I expressed to Swami that I didn't deserve one.

Immediately, he turned and tossed, with determined accuracy, a large toffee. The missile landed with a loud thud on my head, shattering the silent moment. This of course, left me startled, because Swami had read my mind!

Blessed sweets are 'Prasad'—a gift from the Guru; a gift that has the power to change our lives. When a master gives food to his devotees, he is in fact, giving of his energy. If we take Prasad with this understanding, it can gladden our lives and bring us closer to Him.

No matter how we receive Prasad, or what form it takes, be it sweets directly given to us by the Guru, or blessed food shared with us by others, it is always full of Divine Energy. Having accepted such blessings, we accept the Guru's grace. The secret is to appreciate it.

**—Yvonne Northrop, U. K.**

AVATAR VANI:

## Realise God through Love

"Asthiram Jivitham loke" (Life in the mundane world is impermanent). Life in this phenomenal world is not permanent. "Asthiram yavvanam dhanam". Youth and wealth are not lasting. They are like passing clouds. "Asthiram daaraputraadi". Wife and children and other relatives are liable to vanish like white mist in a moment. "Dharmam Keerthi dwayam sthiram". Righteousness and fame endure forever. In human life, righteous living and a good reputation are the two that are everlasting.

In the history of mankind several religions arose to promote the moral advancement, the prosperity and the welfare of humanity.

*Vaishnavites have esteemed Vishnu as the Supreme  
Saivites have given the highest place to Sambhu  
The worshippers of Ganapati accord the highest place for Ganesha;  
Saraswati is adored as the Supreme by the seekers of knowledge;  
Muslims regard Allah as the Supreme Lord  
While Christians hail Jesus as the Saviour;  
Buddhists worship Buddha as the Supreme Enlightened One;  
Jains accord the highest place to Mahavira;  
Parsis adore Zoroaster  
Sikhs deem Nanak as the Supreme teacher  
Baba devotees adore Sai as the Supreme  
The wise regard all of them as equal.  
All religions should be revered equally  
Because God is one and the same God for all of them.  
God is Truth. He is Righteousness.  
He is peace. He is the embodiment of Love.* (Telugu poem)

### *Embodiments of Love!*

It is essential to realise and act on the basis that the purpose of religion is to promote unity in diversity, banish divisive tendencies and make human beings lead ideal lives.

### **The common essence**

The essence of all religions, the message of all scriptures and the destination for all mankind is the same. But because of selfishness, narrow-mindedness and concern for self-interest, religion is used as a pretext for promoting differences and conflicts. *"All religions teach only what is good if they are studied intelligently. If your mind is good, what religion can be bad?"* (Telugu poem)

Morality and integrity, righteousness and charity, truth and tradition, forbearance and non-violence are basic tenets of all religions. These basic truths are common to all religions. But over the years men have forgotten these truths and have fostered divisive tendencies in the place of

unity. As a result, respect for human values has gone. It is essential to recognise the Divine unity that suffuses all the diversity in human existence.

(Bhagavan gave a brief account of the Jewish concept of the creation of the cosmos and referred to the birth of Jesus as the son of Mary and Joseph). As the name and fame of Jesus spread, opposition to him developed among a section of Jews. After his father's death, young Jesus considered it his duty to help his mother and revere her as divine. Jesus preached the primary obligation of everyone to show one's gratitude to the parents. Jesus came with his mother to Jerusalem when he was eleven years old. His mother was worried about the activities of Jesus. Jesus was critical of the ways of the Jews in the temple in Jerusalem. He came out against the harmful practices in the temple and preached the omnipresence of God in all living beings. He exhorted the people not to cause harm to anyone.

What he preached was in accord with the basic teachings of all religions. He engaged himself in a mission of mercy to the sick and the poor. He offered food to the hungry. Seeing his acts of love and kindness people declared that he was a "Messenger of God". Jesus constantly referred to God as the father. Later he declared, "I and my Father are one". Jesus dedicated his life to the propagation of faith in one God who is common to all mankind.

Men today celebrate the birthdays of great holy men but they do not follow the teachings of the masters. There is nothing great about the celebration of birthdays. People must resolve to uphold their ideals and act up to their teachings.

### **A unique book**

(Swami referred to a book compiled in Britain around 1530 A.D., containing all the information about Jesus gathered during the preceding centuries. The Russians condensed all this material in a small book which they preserved in a place on the Black Sea coast. Swami produced the little book by a circular wave of His hand and held it before the audience, He said: "This is the book. (cheers) You can see the cross on the cover page. The book was designed to demonstrate the common features of all religions. What is contained in this book is not to be found even in the Bible. It contains an entirely new account of the life of Jesus.

It is not open to all to understand the ways of the Lord. To know about God one has to develop godly feelings. In this book, there are bookmark threads which distinguish every faith by a sloka relating to it. There is one page which contains the sloka from the Bhagavad Gita in which Krishna exhorts Arjuna to give up all beliefs and take sole refuge in Him and assures Arjuna that thereafter he will absolve Arjuna of all the sins (cheers).

The essence of all creeds is one and the same thing. Man's primary duty is to surrender to God. "Surrender" means attaining the state in which the devotee feels he is one with God. This feeling arises out of the conviction that the same divinity is present in all. Bodies of human beings are varied like bulbs, but the current passing through them is the same. The colour of the bulbs or their wattage may vary. But the current activating them is the same.

This book contains the Vedic saying: "Ekoham bahusyaam".

The same God dwells in all beings. There is no justification for differences on the basis of religion. It is attachment to the body which accounts for religious differences. Do not regard the body as permanent. It is a water bubble. The mind is a mad monkey. Don't follow either of them. Follow the conscience. That is the main message contained in this little book. The culture of Bharat has experienced this truth in the concept of Sat-Chit-Ananda (Being-Awareness-Bliss).

Today people read all kinds of books and go after all sorts of "great persons". They do not enquire about what constitutes greatness. Realise that there is no one greater than each of you. But you have not discovered the real truth about yourself, like an elephant that does not know its own strength. A mahout with a goad is able to control it.

Recognise the fact that the whole universe is within you. You have all the powers in you. They are derived from the Divine Spirit within you. It is the Divinity which endows you with a Free Will. Forgetting the supreme power of the Spirit, people place their reliance on the powers of the body, the mind and the intellect.

Embodiments of Love! If you want to realise God, if you wish to experience the Divinity within you, if you want to know your true self, you have to develop pure, unsullied love. It is this love that binds all people. It is described as the tether of love ("Premapaasam").

Today there are numerous sects within Christianity all of which are engaged in propagating their respective doctrines. While this preaching goes on, there is very little of practice in daily life. Practice is most important. People may be entitled to propagate their creed. But that does not achieve anything lasting. Only practical example matters. When you practise what you preach, others will be inspired by your example. No one will care for the teaching of a person who does not practise what he preaches.

I have often told the students that of all forms of knowledge, the one that is most beneficial is practical knowledge which is relevant to everyone. You have to act on the conviction that the same Divine Spirit dwells in one and all.

Oblivious to this truth, man is immersed today in selfish pursuits. This selfishness is degrading man to the lowest levels. To develop true humanness, everyone has to foster the feeling of spiritual oneness. This sense of oneness constitutes true religion. Religion means "realisation" of your true self.

Develop the love of God. All other forms of love are not love at all, but only fleeting and impermanent attachments. Man's biggest folly is forgetting his divinity. All should realise that they come "from God". All are children of God. Everyone should seek to get nearer and nearer to God. That is sadhana. You must feel that God dwells in your heart ("Hridayavasi"). You must develop compassion in the heart, because without it the heart is only a stone.

That is the message of Jesus—the message of love. Love is God. Live in love. Start the day with love. Spend the day with love. End the day with love. This is the way to God (cheers). Only the person who is filled with love will be dear to the Lord.

This book contains the declaration: "Yo madbhaktah". "The devotee who is filled with love of God is dear to me", says the Lord (in the Gita). God alone is your unfailing friend in weal and woe (cheers). You must acquire His friendship.

There are many devotees from overseas here today. They should be firm in their devotion whatever changes in the situation they may face.

You may begin worshipping God with specific form and name (sakara). But when you are faced with difficulties you experience God as a helper. When you have some desires, you pray to God for fulfilling them. You are then an "artharthi" (seeker of favours). In these different ways the devotee has to develop his relationship to God.

(To illustrate how God responds to the prayers of devotees, Swami related the story of a rich man with four wives, who expressed what they wanted him to get for them during a trip abroad. The first wife, who was spiritually enlightened, prayed for his safe return. The second wife wanted him to bring some sacred books. The third wife, who was ailing, wanted him to get some medicines. The fourth wife, who was a "modern", asked him to get her saris and jewellery. The merchant on his return, gave the three wives what they wanted and stayed with the first wife because she had no other desire except to have him back. Drawing the lesson of this story, Swami said.)

### **How God responds**

God responds to devotees in the same manner (cheers). To those who aspire for wealth, He gives wealth. Those who seek knowledge, He will help them to acquire it. Those who are ailing and who pray to God will get the relief they pray for. God builds hospitals for their treatment. Those who pray to God for oneness with Him, will realise Him. This is the way God responds to the four kinds of devotees.

The devotees should consider God alone as important and not other mundane desires. If you have God with you, all other things are got easily. So, God is your real wealth. Real health is God.

Men should strive for God-Realisation because they came from God and should go back to Him.

Today there are devotees here from many countries—Germany, Japan and others. Whatever happiness you may have experienced here, you will have to go back to your countries when your money is exhausted or your visa expires. Your aim must be to acquire a permanent visa to stay here permanently. That is got by God's grace. You can get it through love and love alone. When you have that love, your proximity to God is ensured forever.

Embodiments of Love! There is love in every one of you. Develop that love. Share it with others. When you have this love there is no need for you to go in search of ashrams. There are some foolish persons who go on hopping from one ashram to another. This is sheer folly. There is no need to go anywhere. The Divine is in your heart. Adhere to one belief firmly. Do not change your faith from day to day. Follow one path with firm faith. That is the Love principle.

Bhagavan concluded His discourse with the Bhajan, "*Prema muditha manase kaho*", in which the thousands gathered in the Mandap joined with fervour.

—From Bhagavan's discourse on December 25, 1996, in the Sai Kulwant Mandap

## Sai Teachings and Science

If we look back into European history we will find that there has never been a real friendship between religion and science. It may be said that the scientific revolution, as we know it today, began with the publication of the heliocentric theory (i.e. the revolution of planets round the sun) by the Polish astronomer Copernicus in 1543. Since then science has gone through a rather bumpy ride to come to its present state.

In those days Church leaders, specially those of the Vatican, viewed science with suspicion and regarded it as a threat to the survival of religion. Considering the nature of society as it existed then and the perception of God's role for the salvation of man, it was not unnatural for them to hold such a conviction. They were a very powerful group of men. They had a strong hold on society. In consequence, anyone who dared to publish his scientific work or ideas had to endure harsh criticism, insult and even harassment. Galileo, in order to save his neck, had to submit to Vatican. Even when, in 1623, one of his long-time friends became Pope, the Vatican's injunction on him was not fully lifted. Another case that comes to my mind is that of Darwin. We know how much insult, anguish and pain he had to go through to establish the 'Theory of Evolution'.

Since the publication of Copernicus' heliocentric theory, we have come a long way in terms of religious tolerance, albeit the existence of a few pockets of resistance. Today almost all religious leaders, irrespective of who they are and where they are from, accept without any question the validity of science and its right to exist. They now happily use the appliances of science to explain about God and His message. But the same principle, the same consensus, does not hold good for scientists' acceptability of religion or God. Unfortunately, the boot is now on the other foot!

Scientists are divided in their approach to religion. Some of them clearly believe in God while others are either agnostics or atheists. This division is not uniformly apparent throughout the world. For instance, the vast majority of Indian scientists and technologists do believe in God whereas a good proportion of European scientists are agnostics. About two years ago a debate on the subject 'Does God exist?' was held in the Oxford University Students' Union. It was televised and the Chairperson was Ms Sheena MacDonald. As I watched the programme, what struck me most was that the majority of those who spoke against the existence of God were British University Professors. Some of them are professors of high reputation and have earned a great deal of respect throughout the world. A recent Mori Poll commissioned by the British Humanist Association has suggested for the first time that in the UK those who do not believe in God are in a majority (BBC CEEFAX news, 9<sup>th</sup> June 1996).

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Most of the scientists not believing in God are Humanists. I must admit I do not know why the British Humanist Association has come into being. Their literature says, "The good, open society will only emerge if Humanists join together to establish an effective Humanist presence which can make a significant impact on society. Please join the British Humanist Association today - every addition to our numbers adds force to the Humanist cause".

Here again one can detect a tone of 'us and them' and a zeal for increasing numbers as if that alone would resolve all social and other problems. Is there any proof, scientific or otherwise, that only they can bring about a good and open society? This indicates that their conviction in their perceived way of living is similar to that expressed by those convinced of the superiority or exclusive right of their faith. The language of the contention may be polite; however, the objective is virtually the same.

Another aspect that is seen as a divide between science and religion is man's ability to analyse and understand Nature through science. In his book History of the Physical Sciences, E. E. Snyder has written, "Since an understanding of the natural world was possible through science, it was also possible through science that man should be able to alter the world to his own ends and thereby improve his nature. The burden for man's progress, then, was on man, not God. God created the universe so that it obeyed certain natural laws. These laws were discovered by men (scientists); therefore God was not particularly necessary except in a personal sense".

This is a reasonably accurate description of the scientist's mind towards religion and God. But, are they really, fully confident of themselves? On April 11, 1970, while the astronauts on board the spacecraft Apollo 13 were attempting to land on the moon, there was an explosion inside it. The scientists and engineers at Mission Control, on hearing the explosion, immediately sent out, through television and radio transmission, requests to all the people in the world to pray for the astronauts' safe return. Such is the situation. God is relevant only at times of danger!

As Prof. Snyder has pointed out, man has been using science for his own ends. It has changed, especially since the end of World War II, our way of life beyond recognition—a fact which our ancestors could not even dream. The advancement in the fields of medicine, transport, communication and even agriculture has been so great that it was beyond human imagination even a hundred years ago.

Yet, despite such a forward leap, people all over the world are now more unhappy than they have ever been. Social unrest and the rate of suicide are on the increase. There is an alarming, progressive rise in the break up of marriage and the divorce rate. In consequence, children are facing enormous problems and difficulties while growing up. All over the world the crime rate is growing, and more and more people are jailed every year. The list is endless. What is most disturbing is that even the practice of religion appears to be unable to halt such a downward slide to social chaos and confusion and degradation in human values.

The success in the advancement of science has not been obtained without cost. There has been an enormous depletion of natural energy resources resulting in an unprecedented amount of environmental pollution and depletion of the ozone layer with the consequent effect of global

warming. We are dumping radioactive waste in seas and ocean, and industrial, chemical, and poisonous wastes into rivers killing fish and aquatic animals and polluting water, the very substance on which our life, indeed the life of all creatures and plants, depends.

Yes, we need science. We have to use scientific appliances. But, surely this is not the way forward. Nature represents perfect scientific balance. Because of our ego, we are destroying it and in the process creating problems for ourselves. Scientists have discovered and understood many Laws of Nature. They still do not know how many more there are. These laws could not have suddenly appeared just like that. There must be a cause. The sooner we realise it, the better it would be for everyone in the world.

There was a time when religious leaders rejected science and its protagonists. On the other side of the coin, today the scientists do not fare any better. This is despite the fact that in the course of their investigations the deeper they have delved into Nature, the more mysterious it has become. Still some of them, if not all, are unwilling to accept the inevitable. Therefore, where does the truth lie? Where do Sai Teachings stand in this respect?

Sai Teachings constitute Dharma. Religion is for human beings only. Dharma is for everybody, every creature and even plants. It is the way of Nature. In it there cannot be a concept 'us and them'. Everyone and everything belongs to Nature which is a material expression of God.

Sai Teachings recognise that a person has two distinct yet interdependent features: scientific and spiritual. The human body consists of so many limbs and organs such as hands, legs, eyes, ears, heart, lungs, kidneys and so on. They are all live, scientific instruments, and function in a perfectly scientific manner. A person also embodies abstract entities such as conscience, intellect, mind and emotion. They work under the command of the Spirit, Soul or Atman. There is a direct relationship between them and physical organs. In their absence (e.g. after death) the physical organs do not function while without the latter it is virtually impossible to prove the existence of the Soul and the dependent abstract entities.

Therefore, in Sai Dharma, spirituality and science are mutually complementary and not exclusive or separate. Sai Baba runs a university, a number of colleges and many schools. In all of them both science and spirituality are given almost equal importance. The establishment of the Super Speciality Hospital is direct evidence of His approval of science and technology. However, He would always use them only for the benefit of mankind.

We all know that Baba has never converted anyone. What can conversion achieve except causing pain to a particular society? We are all heading toward the same goal although our approach, our path, may be different. In the Sai Temple at Prasanthi Nilayam everyone is welcome to sing Bhajans, to pray to God and contemplate on Him. Nobody is questioned about his/her religious or social background. To believe in Sai Baba and to follow His Teachings there is no need to change one's cultural heritage, tradition or name. What is important is what we do and how we do it, not what we think we are or others think we are, for we are all the same, a spark of God.

Nature exhibits both science and spirituality. We are all a part of Nature. Sai Dharma is natural and universal. Therefore, if we all live naturally in our environment and respect that of others,

rather than attempt to mould them in our way, it will pave the way for understanding, friendship and common spiritual reality between one person and another, one society and another, and one nation and another. That is the essence of Sai Dharma.

—Prof. Jatindra Saha (Sathya Sai Baba Magazine, U.K.)

*VOICE OF THE STUDENTS:*

## **The Best Two Years of Our Life**

What does stay in a Sai School mean to the young students who are away from their parents? Here is an account of the experiences of two Parsi girls (twins), Ushaina and Sashaina—daughters of a long time devotee of Bhagavan Baba, Dr. Fanibunda—who studied in the Sathya Sai Higher Secondary School at Prasanthi Nilayam, for two years. The unvarnished story shows what love they bear for Bhagavan Baba and what ideals they imbibed during their years at school.

To us students who have been in Swamiji's school, the single, foremost experience He confers on us is that of His unbounded, all-embracing Love.

We have completed our XI and XII standard at the Sri Sathya Sai Higher Secondary School. Swamiji, knowing that this was to be our first venture away from home, called us for an interview before we joined the school. He said, "I know you have a lot of attachment for your mother, but she is only your physical mother. I am your real Mother. I will look after you". And there was not a moment when He didn't.

There have been so many instances wherein Swamiji has blessed His students and taken away their illnesses. At sports time, (in our XI standard) one of us fell sick with a terrible attack of asthma. This was the time when she most desired the care and affection of our bodily mother to get better. The school doctor had given her some homeopathic medicine, besides the other allopathic medicines that she was taking. But they were of no avail. The asthma persisted and it was getting worse. Our Principal spared no efforts to make her comfortable. She even shifted her from our dormitory to the Principal's room. Our father informed Swamiji about her illness. At the next darshan, as Swamiji approached the Principal, He asked, "Where is that girl? How is she?" "She stood up and with a half-choked voice told Swamiji, I can't breathe, Swamiji." (Now we must mention that owing to some smoke in the atmosphere she felt that her asthma had been aggravated. But Swamiji smiled and very lovingly turned it into a joke. He said, "A lot of breeze comes into the dormitory, not smoke. Smoking-only your husband does." (much laughter) They all knew she was unmarried. Thus the Divine Mother consoled and cajoled her and allowed her to take padanamaskar! That did it! The asthma disappeared!

One day as she was tidying her shelf in our dormitory, she found yet another sign of His infinite Love. She had taken the homeopathic medicine and had left the empty paper folded in a corner of the shelf. Some days later she unfolded the paper and lo and behold, it was full of Vibhuti.

During our XII standard, at the time of Akhanda Bhajan both of us fell sick with the same problem of asthma. Once again, where medicine did not work, Swamiji sent us twelve packets of Vibhuti. A few days later, when we were better and sitting for darshan, He came straight to us and enquired, "How are you?" We replied, "Better, Swamiji." He materialised Vibhuti and gave it to us. Once again the Divine Doctor had cured us.

It is our experience that Sai, our Mother pays attention and fulfills our smallest need. For instance, when we were in the XII standard, a friend's Physics record had been misplaced by Ushaina. She was very much upset and searched everywhere. She checked her friend's desk too, it was nowhere to be found. She prayed sincerely to Swami and after a few minute, the book just appeared on her friend's desk. Another similar incident occurred in our XII STD. We were watching a film in the Poornachandra Auditorium. We had to shift places for some reason and Ushaina found to her dismay that in the dark she misplaced her Chemistry text book. After a thorough search she gave up and prayed to Swamiji. Within a few days the book appeared on the top of a pile of books in our school prayer hall! Now, who do you think put it there? In a recent discourse Baba said, "Do not beg from others, instead of that, beg from God. He will give what is essential for you.

When the Final Board Examinations were nearing, Our Headmistress remarked as to how healthy we were. It is true we were off all medicines and without the slightest trace of asthma. Our Divine Mother knows what is best for Her children and accordingly takes care of us.

Owing to the pressure of our studies we used to get up early in the morning and we had an alarm clock ring. Invariably the alarm would go off awakening a number of friends, but tired, sound sleepers as we were, we would miss the alarm—only to wake up later 'in alarm'! Realising this we thought better and decided to rely on the Divine Alarm within us. On the eve of our Biology Board Examination, as we still had to revise seven chapters, we prayed to Swamiji wake us up at the appropriate time. Indeed the Divine voice woke us up at 2:30 a.m. sharp.

In December 1987, Swamiji instructed our parents to have us initiated into the Zoroastrian Navjote Ceremony and to come for blessings thereafter. We were invested with the sacred Kusti, which is like the Yajnopavitam. Thereafter we came to Prasanthi Nilayam. Beyond our wildest expectations the Mother of the Vedas initiated us into the Gayatri Mantra. It was the 1st of January, 1988, and Swamiji told us, "This is my New Year's Gift." Then the Divine Mother proceeded to materialise a gigantic laddoo (6" in diameter), which was broken and distributed to all the devotees present there as New Year Prasad. How kind and loving the Lord was that day! This Gayatri Mantra has been our guide and support ever since our initiation. Whenever there have been any doubts or problems we have been able to solve them with the help of the mantra. For instance, in our Biology Board Examination, after chanting the mantra, we were able to pinpoint two specific pigments, which had eluded us.

We experienced the real meaning of selfless service from the Warden, Headmistress and our teachers. We admire them greatly and take this opportunity to express our heartfelt gratitude to all the staff. The teachers took great pains to prepare the students in their subjects and were ever willing to solve doubts. Students studying for their Board Examinations would be given 'Night Food' to reinforce their energies.

There was nothing they would not do to help the students. When we were ill and missed our home environment, it was the Warden and Headmistress who took full maternal care of us. We have never experienced such a variety of excellent food as in the school. The best 'sambar' we have ever tasted has been at the Sri Sathya Sai Higher Secondary School!

Every Thursday and Sunday, Swamiji as the Divine Mother (knowing the pangs of hunger creeping up on us children who had breakfasted very early in the morning) would distribute sweets to His children. Lovingly enquiring if every student had received a sweet He would sometimes tell the little boys to eat their sweets quickly for they would be safe in their stomachs.

Experiencing Swamiji's Darshans, His loving glances consoling words and listening to His nectarine discourses have anchored us firmly in the ideal way of life to be good, see good and do good. That is the way we have to earn a good name for our parents and Swamiji's Institute.

Swamiji is truly love personified—forever giving and forgiving. How fortunate are we a handful of students chosen by the Lord from among thousands and thousands of children yearning to study at His Lotus Feet. To have basked in His Love and Grace is indeed our greatest good fortune.

**—Ushaina and SashainaFanibunda**

*(The writers are twin sisters, daughters of Dr. Fanibunda, along-time devotee of Bhagavan and author of the book, "Vision of the Divine".)*

### **The Prisoner of Love**

There is One, in this world  
Who is unlike any other;  
for He is the servant of all.  
the willing, loving prisoner.

Our hearts lock and bind Him.  
Our prayers hold Him firm.  
We pray for Him to guide us  
Through this life that is a storm.

He is the willing captive  
The chains that bind are strong:  
A prisoner of our rapture,  
When our heads do long.

He holds us in His spell,  
Just as we hold Him in our Love.

No other in our hearts will dwell,  
None other cause to move

The yearning of our deepest self,  
Devotion full, pure and true;  
A glimpse we gain of Bliss itself,  
And we are born anew.

—Phillys Cottingham, New Zealand.

### **Pursuit of Futility**

We accumulate so many things  
That do not matter: bombs and bonds and banks,  
And we forget the peace that prayer brings;  
We put up gilded temples in your name  
To cover up our shamelessness and shame.

—B.F.R.

#### ***A TESTAMENT FROM BRAZIL***

### **"The visit that changed my life"**

The impact of Bhagavan Baba on the innumerable persons who come to Prasanthi Nilayam varies from individual to individual for a variety of reasons. But in one way or another, a transformation takes place. Here is a revealing account of the "subtle, but definite way" in which "a simple, but unforgettable visit" to Bhagavan Baba changed the life of a Brazilian Professor of Biology, Dr. Dalton de Souza Amorim, of Sao Paulo.

#### ***Describing his experiences, Dr. Dalton writes:***

I have belonged to a study group of Yoga in the city of Sao Paulo for almost twenty years. We have studied nearly every spiritual topic along all this time, not for literacy knowledge, but rather to find means of self-realisation. About two years ago we began to study Sai Baba's teaching.

Baba's life and teaching immediately touched us by its coherence and vivid love. After not much time, it was quite clear at least to some of us that He is an Avatar. This makes a lot of difference! In the beginning of 1996, our teacher went to India to visit Swami. Our Yoga teacher is not a wealthy person and the means by which he got to go were very special: he just did not expect to go, but he was suddenly gifted with the air tickets without ever asking or even telling to anyone (except Bhagavan) his inner desire to be close to Swami.

His experience in India was very touching, and he could describe what it was like to meet the Avatar! So simple, but never to forget. This was a big encouragement. I decided to go to

Prasanthi Nilayam as soon as possible. I had an international congress to attend in Florence in August, so I decided to extend the trip to India to spend at least some few days to meet Swami.

A number of small problems occurred while preparing the trip, with a number of small solutions. They ranged from problems with the visa to a roadblock in the way from Bangalore to Puttaparthi, and many others in-between. I went with my wife and it was very special for me to share with her such a special moment in my life. Also, it was particularly interesting to hear her own experience, from a considerably different point of view.

Our trip at last was restricted to five days in Puttaparthi. I knew that there was some risk of arriving there when Swami was leaving for Whitefield. Anyway, by His grace, He was there all the time.

The everyday routine was simple. To wake up in the morning, to make my personal sadhana, to go to darshan, to wait for the afternoon darshan (with some walk around in the village), to attend to the afternoon darshan, so spend the time until sleep after the night sadhana done. I would have appreciated an opportunity to be involved with some service in the ashram, but the short trip and some other limitations unfortunately made it difficult. I would have felt much better, however, if I had been successful in becoming involved. We bought two books about Baba to be read before the darshans, since sometimes we waited one or two hours before He would come out. I had never been in India before, so it was also interesting to talk a bit to some people in the village about South Indian culture, art, costumes etc. However, my main interest was the very seeing of Bhagavan.

It is very hard to find words to describe what happens there—it is difficult for me in Portuguese and much more in another language. The strong impressions began even before arriving at the town: to find a marvellous university in a rather poor region of the country; to find the extraordinary Super Speciality Hospital; big schools for children; another hospital; the ashram.... It did not seem very "real", since it was where we would not expect to find it. Some miracle occurred around.

The atmosphere in the ashram is mostly enlightened. But the darshan is still more impressive. When He comes out, a soft music is always performed. His presence completely fills the environment with a "light love"; I believe this could be 'translated' as a completely selfless and passionless love, at the same time so intense that it comes through to us with no barriers. Even sceptics can feel it. To meet anyone with such extreme simplicity from an egoistic point of view is a most impressive experience. My heart had a kind of pain feeling His love and my love for Him—a "good" kind of pain, actually a sensation of light pressure on what may be the Anahata Chakra.

Everyday, with similar (but never repeated) routine, His presence is just Divine. After years looking for Light, I would say something so special of a particular "human being" because I could feel a complete absence of "ego". His manners, His care for each one to whom He speaks, His light and tender but firm way of looking at the large crowd, His movement of hands, everything in him is particularly beautiful and touching. It was possible to see Him 'produce vibhuti from nowhere" many times a day and to distribute it with love to devotees. I had the

Grace of having the letters I took to Puttaparthi taken by Him from my very hands on the second day of darshan. This was a very special experience in my life. Before going to India, I had heard some rather detailed descriptions of what and how the darshan was. I could even see some videos of the darshan. However, I realised there that I did not get the essence before being there myself.

I believe there is something very important to understand before the visit. There is a very strong process related to the ego of each one visiting Sai Baba. It has been referred to by many people who have been there about their own experience and about other people's behaviour. It is also something addressed by the Sathya Sai Centres that organize visits to Swami. It is a strong process and one without the necessary preparation may get very disturbed. This may be quite surprising at a first glance: why in His presence would someone get mad? However, later I could understand it better. This may be just like the cure of an "infection": fever and inflammation are natural reactions. Getting close to God cannot be acquired without at least being aware of (if not getting rid of) some of our bad habits, our bad feelings, our bad ideas. Moreover, some want that Sai Baba should do what they (or their ego) expect Him to do. This is something very serious and applies to our every day spiritual experience: we often get away from God because we blame Him for our frustrations. "Well"—says our ego—"while visiting the ashram the least He could do for me is to call me for an interview, and materialise something for me; He should give me the status that I really deserve," etc. etc. We are here to serve Him, not the other way around. We are responsible for our own acts, for our karma, for our darkness. On the other hand "take one step towards me," says Swami, "and I shall take ten steps towards you." To be there is by itself an extraordinary experience, possibly one of the most marvellous things that can occur in anyone's life. Do not expect anything else, materially speaking, from Swami than seeing Him. He has really a lot of practical things to carry out - decisions about schools, hospitals, healthcare of people really in need, orientation of those closer to Him who have big responsibilities etc... But there is something even more important: the essential part of Swami's activity is not in the physical plane. He really comes in our dreams, in our meditations, and in response to our calls. To demand that He should attend on us personally in Prasanthi Nilayam is not to understand His very Divine and infinite nature.

I tried my best to prepare myself to spend some days only seeing Him at the darshans, without other expectations. My ego was somewhat reluctant. I was very happy to be able to give Him by hand the letters I took. On the same day I was allowed to sing bhajans in the temple inside the Mandir in the presence of Swami Himself. This was another blessing and filled me with happiness (I sing in chorales since 1976, but I never had so special an "audience"). That was far more than I could expect within five days of darshans.

On the other hand, my "limitations" came very clear in my consciousness right on the first day of darshan: What is my contribution to my community (Karma Yoga)? Why did I avoid joining the Sai group in my town before (Bhakti Yoga)? What kind of help was I really giving to people in need? What kind of activity (free of payment) have I done in recognition of the Divinity present in other people? Why do I try to feel often better than other people? For many years I have concentrated myself on certain aspects of Jnana Yoga. Quite recently, I was able to develop a little bit of Bhakti Yoga, but nearly nothing of Karma Yoga. Baba, however, says clearly that in our sadhana seva is very important: 'The hand that helps is more sacred than the lips that pray'. I saw very clearly how much I had been investing on my ego. I had been even forewarned about



these points by my Yoga teacher before, but I did nothing to change. I felt bad. After the first day, I decided on some strong compromises with myself on what to do when back in Brazil. Some of my doubts were answered on the following days.

At last, to come back home was quite difficult. The sensation is just like going away from Shangrila, the lost horizon in Tibet. We feel in the way back how special is Prasanthi Nilayam and how far is everything else removed from Divinity. However not to come back—apart from some very special situations—may be just another ego laziness. We all have responsibilities towards Him. We can transform our home, our village, our town, or our country into an extension of Prasanthi Nilayam. That is a big task, but we can rely on Him for His help.

This is a sincere report of what I felt. My life has been changed in a subtle, but definite way, and now each day is a step on the journey to become united to Him. The biggest obstacle on the path is to overcome the ego.

### **Until I Met You**

Swami!

Until I met You

I didn't know the meaning of the word friendship

Until I met You

I never knew how to truly serve another  
nor the real meaning of love

And since I have known You

I've seen the entire cosmos in the light of Your Eye  
I've seen You bend to serve the lowest of the low

You are beyond all that is good. You are even beyond love  
You held my hand when no one else would

—**Michael Hollander, U.S.A.**

### **What are the devotees doing?**

*Here is a devotee's impression of this year's Christmas festival:*

Christmas 96 has been a festive event. Devotees from 116 overseas countries gathered here to celebrate X-mas at the holy feet of the Sai Avatar. Among them was a big group from Finland in white dresses and cornflower blue scarves, the colours of their flag. They all looked so happy. So much beauty, so much lovely music and carol singing moved many to tears of joy.

On X-mas day the moment Bhagavan entered the mandap, faces were lit up by big smiles. Everyone felt the love and the warmth that radiated from his Divine presence. There was intense silence as He moved around among the devotees giving darshan, enveloping everyone with His love.

The carol singing by devotees from 86 nations was superb.

As Bhagavan sits there on the dais so quietly, with a life-size brass lion on each side of his chair, symbolic of His majesty and strength, he fills the whole hall with his presence. One may observe Him discretely wiping a tear from the eye and one wondered what are we doing with ourselves in this world filled with so much beauty. Are we living the teaching of the Sai Avatar? Are we making our lives more worthwhile and inspired by His presence amongst us? Do we really live in that harmony of which this festival was an expression? The compassion of the Sai Avatar is limitless and he is tireless in his work elevating our lives, expanding our awareness and helping us realize our true nature in terms of love and harmony. For us to live everyday in that harmony and strength was this year's Christmas message.

—"GITA", Prasanthi Nilayam

AVATAR VANI:

## Be Prepared for a Life of Sacrifice

*The moon illumines the night  
The sun illumines the day  
Dharma illumines the three worlds  
A good son is the light for his lineage.*

It is the moon that sheds light during the night. During the day the sun gives light and shows the way. For the three worlds the illumination comes from Dharma (Righteousness). A good son is not only a beacon for his family, he is the light for his entire community (Jati).

Education is the means of unfolding the moral and spiritual potentialities of man. Education reveals to man what is right and what is wrong.

For a good son, who is a student, five things are essential. First, right education (Vidya). Vidya means that which expels darkness (the darkness of ignorance). Second, Vijnana (discrimination). This refers to the power to discriminate between the permanent and the transient, the true and the false. Third is discipline (Kramasikshana). Discipline is not got from books. Fourth is nationalism, love of one's people and country. Fifth is good character (Satseelam). Only the person endowed with these five qualities can be regarded as a man of virtue.

Students should recognise these five qualities as their five life-breaths (pancha pranas). It is only a virtuous son endowed with these five qualities who lends lustre to his family and his nation.

The social scenario and the educational system today are riddled with many defects. Education today is concerned with imparting worldly knowledge, with no place for ethics or spirituality. It does not equip the student with competence or capability. It is essential to carry out a total, radical change in the educational system. What is needed is a total revolution. Only then the value of education will become apparent.

In this context, a change in the student's attitude is also necessary. There should be a change in the student's approach to the educational process. Only then he can secure true education. All along education has remained an exercise in acquiring bookish knowledge. What is needed today is practical knowledge.

Every student should acquire a good character, moral values and develop a spiritual bent of mind. These three constitute true learning. These three have been held in high esteem from ancient times. Unfortunately from the beginning of the modern era, morality has disappeared from the scene. Righteousness and spirituality have vanished. Neither the teachers nor the educational authorities have shown any concern for these vital elements.

Indian culture is sublime. The Vedas Upanishads, the Puranas and the great epics are veritable oceans of supreme wisdom. The sun every day turns into vapour vast quantities of water from the ocean and gives it back to the earth in the form of rain to sustain nourishing crops for mankind. Although the amount of water vaporised by the sun is immense, the ocean's depth does not diminish. Nor does the level of the ocean rise even by a little despite the inflow of waters

from the rivers. The immensity of Bharatiya Culture is like the ocean which neither swells nor goes down. From days of yore, the sages of India absorbed this culture and propagated it among the people and ennobled their lives. Bharatiyas today have not attempted to understand the greatness of their cultural heritage. On the other hand, many people in foreign countries have explored the treasures of this vast reservoir of knowledge and benefited from it in many ways. The Russians and the Germans made ample use of the Rig Veda and Atharvana Veda to promote their national interests. The Atharvana Veda is a source of valuable knowledge regarding the arts and weapons of war. In India today no one seems to bother about the Atharvana Veda.

### **Greatness of Samskrit**

Bharatiya culture is entirely based on Samskrit. All Bharatiya students should recognise Samskrit as the mother of all Indian languages. Without a knowledge of Samskrit, one cannot understand the elements of Bharatiya culture.

Recognising the value of Samskrit, Russia, Germany, Japan, Malaysia and other countries are introducing the study of Samskrit in their educational curriculum.

The intimate relations between foreign countries and Bharat from ancient times have not been understood by most Bharatiyas even today.

### **Indonesia's example**

You may be aware from your study of books or from other sources that Indonesia has named its airlines as Garuda Airways. (Garuda is the divine bird which is the vehicle of Vishnu, according to Indian mythology.) The banks in Indonesia are named after Kubera (the Hindu deity representing wealth). While Bharatiya culture is surviving so prominently in overseas countries, it is not so well appreciated in Bharat itself.

The first President of Indonesia was Dr. Sukarno. His father was a great student of the Mahabharata. Admiring the great qualities of Karna as a warrior and a magnanimous donor, who never refused anything which a supplicant sought from him, the father named his son Sukarno (though he was a Muslim). In this manner, foreigners cherish what is great in Bharatiya culture. But, Bharatiyas, oblivious to the glory of their culture, are imitating occidental practices.

It would be good to remember the supreme sacrificing spirit of Karna. Although because of his association with some evil minded men, his name got tainted, no one can equal the spirit of sacrifice of Karna.

The great Mahabharata war came to a close on the seventeenth day with the fall of Karna. The Pandavas were celebrating their great victory over Karna. The Kauravas felt utterly hopeless as Karna was their greatest warrior. The Pandavas rejoiced in the fall of their most powerful opponent. But, Krishna was sitting apart and appeared to be immersed in sadness. Arjuna went to him and asked why he was feeling sad on a day when they should be rejoicing over their victory. Krishna told him that Bharat had lost its most heroic warrior that day. The hero who had brought glory and good name to Bharat had fallen. "I feel immensely sad because the country is losing such a great hero."

On hearing these words, Arjuna looked at Krishna with a feeling of amused surprise. He said: "Krishna! To ensure the victory of the Pandavas you chose the role of charioteer. Because of that, Pandavas won their victory. Instead of rejoicing over this victory, why are you feeling sad over the fall of our enemy?"

### **Karna's greatness as warrior and donor**

Krishna replied: "Karna is the very embodiment of sacrifice. Sacrifice is a synonym for Karna. In the entire world you can not find one other man equal in the spirit of sacrifice to Karna. In weal or woe, triumph or defeat he could not forget the quality of sacrifice. Have you got that spirit of sacrifice? No." Krishna then asked Arjuna to follow him.

Darkness had enveloped the battlefield. Krishna was proceeding with Arjuna. In His sweet voice, Krishna was exclaiming: "Karna! Karna!" Karna was gasping for breath in his last moments. He cried: "Who is calling me? I am here." Following the direction from which the words came, Krishna went near Karna.

### **Krishna's test to Karna**

Before approaching Karna, Krishna assumed the form of an indigent Brahmin. Karna asked him: "Who are you, Sir?" Karna was nearing his last breath. Even at that moment, without any hesitation or faltering in his voice, he put that question to the stranger. Krishna (as the poor Brahmin) replied: "For a long time I have been hearing about your reputation as a charitable person. You have acquired fame as 'Dana Karna' (Karna the great giver) "Today, not knowing about your plight, I came to ask you for a gift. You must give me a donation." "Certainly, I shall give you whatever you want", replied Karna. "I have to perform the marriage of my son. I want a small quantity of gold", said Krishna. "Oh what a pity! Please go to my wife, she will give you as much as gold as you need", said Karna. The "Brahmin" broke into laughter. He said: "For the sake of a little gold have I to go all the way to Hastinapura? If you say, you are not in a position to give me what I ask I shall leave you." Karna declared: "As long as breath remains in me, I will not say 'no' to anyone." Karna opened his mouth, showed the gold fillings for his teeth and said: "I shall give this to you. You can take them". Assuming a tone of revulsion, Krishna said: "What is it you suggest? Do you expect me to break your teeth and take the gold from them? How can I do such a wicked deed? I am a Brahmin."

### **Karna's prayer to Krishna**

Immediately, Karna picked up a stone nearby, knocked out his teeth and offered them to the "Brahmin". Krishna in his guise as Brahmin wanted to test Karna further. "What? Are you giving me as gift teeth dripping with blood? I cannot accept this. I am leaving", he said. Karna pleaded: "Swami, please wait for a moment." Even while he was unable to move, Karna took out his arrow and aimed it at the sky. Immediately rain dropped from the clouds. Cleaning the teeth with the rainwater, Karna offered the teeth with both his hands. Krishna then revealed His original form. Karna asked: "Who are you, Sir"? Krishna said: "I am Krishna. I admire your spirit of sacrifice. In any circumstance you have never given up your spirit of sacrifice. Ask me what you want." Beholding Krishna's beauteous form, Karna said with folded hands: "Krishna! Aapadbandhava! (Oh! Reliever of troubles!) Lokarakshaka (Protector of the world!) Oh Lord, who hold the Universe in your palm, what can I seek from you? At this moment of my passing, to close my eyes gazing on your Divine form. This is my greatest blessing. This is boon enough

for me. To have the vision of the Lord before one's passing is the goal of human existence. You came to me and blessed me with your form. This is enough for me. I offer my salutations to you."

### **Lesson for Arjuna**

Arjuna was observing the whole scene. Krishna turned to him and said: "Are you prepared for this kind of sacrifice?" Arjuna bowed his head in silence. The Lord praised the greatness of the quality of sacrifice in man. Of all kinds of sacrifice, the greatest is the sacrifice made for God.

"Oh Lord! That heart which you gave unto me, I am offering to you. What else can I bring to offer at your lotus feet? I prostrate before you. Please accept my offering." This was the prayer addressed by Karna to Krishna.

Man forgets his true nature because of attachment and egoism. Man should develop firm faith in God. Faith should be like your life-breath, which goes on inhaling and exhaling at all times without respite. Respiration goes on whatever work you may be doing and whatever the state of your mind.

Likewise, in all situations and at all times, your faith in God should never leave you. It should not change according to whether your desires are fulfilled or not. Like your life-breath, your faith should remain steady, though joy and sorrow, loss and gain, pain and pleasure.

Treat whatever happens as good for you. Have that sense of fortitude. When you have faith in the self, even wild animals will be gentle towards you.

Every man should recognise that the body has been given to him to render service to others. You must use the body for promoting the welfare of society. Of what use is the endless study of books if you do not use your knowledge for the good of others? A mind that is not utilised for imparting joy to others or a body that is not used for the service of others are totally useless. The best way to love God is to love all and serve all. Students should imbibe this ideal.

Man should strive to become good and virtuous. Only when a man is filled with good thoughts and good feelings and performs good deeds will his life become meaningful. These good qualities will serve to make a better man of you. That is the purport of the saying: "A good son illumines his lineage." ( Suputro Kuladeepakah"). As good sons all of you should pledge yourselves to serve and protect the nation.

Students! your secular studies will help you in worldly life, but will not promote your spiritual progress. Without spirituality, all worldly accomplishments are worthless.

### **Avoid bad company**

"With all his prowess, why did Karna come to a bad end?" Because of his association with the evil-minded Duryodhana. If he had not made common cause with Duryodhana, Karna would have become an effulgent star in the firmament. All his native good qualities turned into ashes because of bad association. Your company determines your character. Hence from the outset cultivate the company of godly men. Without it, all other things are useless.

Today wherever you turn in Bharat you see only disorder. Violence and fear. What is the reason? People have lost their faith in the Self. They are fostering attachments to worldly objects. They are forgetting that true bliss is derived from the Divine.

Students! Develop broad-mindedness. Cultivate unity. It was because of lack of unity, Bharat came under the rule of a small nation like the British, though it did not lack great warriors, scholars and administrators. Today the nation is afflicted with two bad qualities: lack of unity and insatiable greed. Education should be pursued for the sake of wisdom and virtue, and not for securing jobs. Develop the spirit of sacrifice like Karna. Honour the plighted word. Dedicate all your actions to God.

As alumni of our Institute you should stand out as ideal students and as examples to the world. Realise that there is no greater quality than truth. Truth is God. Dharma is His ornament. Adhere to these two as the highest attributes of humanness. Students! Your hearts are tender and unsullied. From this age itself you must foster pure thoughts. Plant the seed of love in your pure hearts. From that tree of love you will have the fruits of forbearance, compassion and kindness. Always be smiling. Face every situation in life, including death, with a smile. (Bhagavan sang stanzas from "Bhaja Govindam").

(Referring to the speeches made earlier by some students, Bhagavan said:) The students spoke very well, sweetly and delightfully. Their speeches would be immensely effective if the words came not merely from the lips but from their hearts. There should be complete harmony in thoughts, words and deeds.

I desire that you should all redeem your lives by contemplating on God, cherishing good thoughts and engaging yourselves in the service of your fellow men. I bless you all.

(Bhagavan concluded His discourse with the bhajan, "*Bhajana binaa sukha santhi nahi.*")

**—From Bhagavan's discourse in the Institute Auditorium on January 19, 1997**

## **Encounter in a Train**

In how many ways and in how many forms does Swami come to us? We know not, we recognize him not, and only after the event we realize that we missed the opportunity of our life.

It was Thursday, May 23 1996. After work I was returning home riding the train. I was reading intently the latest issue of Sanathana Sarathi (April, 1996). I was oblivious to the surroundings. Suddenly a gentleman, a passenger, from behind, asked: "Are you reading a Hindu religious book?" I replied: "No. It is a monthly and it does not deal with Hinduism, it deals with humanism." He observed: "Such journals should be available in U.S.A." I continued: "You can subscribe from here, you can get an address." I was thinking glibly that he may get interested. Out of curiosity I asked: "What is your profession?" He answered: "I teach mathematics." I

asked: "Where?" And he politely mentioned: "I teach in Harvard, MIT, Brandeis. I teach when I have something to teach." I was impressed. I was still dazed and I continued: "Mathematics would have a close relationship with philosophy." He seemed to agree. At the next suburban station, he turned to me and said: "This is my stop." I did not pay much attention and said "Thanks."

Well, he did not get down! He accompanied me to the terminus (Alewife). We got down together and walked several steps together. We continued the conversation. He finally mentioned, "Please open the page you were reading in the train." I opened it and he pointed to Swami's declaration: (p.97)

"Sathya and Dharma are the two rails on which the locomotive of the nation runs; when Sathya is given up, chaos prevails; when Dharma (righteousness) is discarded, might becomes right."

"Unfortunately India today is affected by consequences of seven grievous sins.

1. Business without morality
2. Politics without principle
3. Education without character
4. Worship without sacrifice
5. Acquisition of wealth without hard work
6. Human existence without regard for ancient Scriptures
7. Devotion without austerity."

Immediately he said rather forcefully: "Let me add", and he added in Swami's inimitable style:

1. Money is less important than honour;
2. Honour is less important than life;
3. Life is less important than thought;
4. Thought is less important than freedom!

"Let me add" I said: "You mean not freedom, you mean liberation." He said: "No. freedom." And he turned back, walked a few paces, and disappeared. I could not believe it.

Such a thing has not happened in years. I could not sleep the whole night, yet in the morning I was still fresh. The message in the four lines composed impromptu was important for me. I could read a special meaning into them during the night.

All professionals care more for honour than for monetary rewards but they neglect life, theirs and of those around them. They may tend to be oblivious to the humanness or human element while engaged in their profession. Besides, in their pursuit of perfection they tend to regard others less knowledgeable as less worthy. They then become unmindful of the purpose of life on this planet, viz., to realize the **Self** that is beyond senses, the mind and the intellect. Their narrow pursuit often results in pride and frustration. **Ego** rides over them. The word **freedom** is pertinent. Swami has emphasized it in His discourses to students. Students claim they are free or they deserve freedom. Swami reminds them, "You are not free, you are bonded slaves to your senses.



Till that bondage is got rid of, you are not free.” Good thoughts are valuable for the individual and they make a precious contribution to the welfare of society. But such good thoughts can be bondage if viewed and pursued rigidly.

Read together, the two messages of Swami seem to be closely linked. The message quoted in Sanathana Sarathi is aimed at the entire humanity. Swami's main mission is spiritual regeneration of humanity and the quote provides a prescription. The individual has to follow these injunctions to help His mission. This quote is general and applies to all sections of the community; businessmen, politicians, scholars and common men. The base of the society is the individual. His renewed emphasis on students and young ones whom He repeatedly chastises for yielding to the pressures of the world, instead of being steadfast to the values of life, adds meaning to the aphorism. (In Sanathana Sarathi of May 1996 Swami's address to students on March 31, 1996, is reproduced. The address reemphasizes the need for students to stand up against the temptations of the world including jobs with high salary and dowry that brings wealth in exchange for what Swami calls 'sale' of the groom.)

—Chandrabhas Shah, Boston

## **Have Firm Faith in God**

"Like the moon that illumines the night, the sun that illumines the day and Dharma that illumines the three worlds, a good son sheds light on his entire lineage" (Sanskrit poem).

This vast world needs light for its existence. A man of wisdom is more powerful than a physically strong man, just as a puny mahout is able to control an elephant. It is not enough for people to rely on physical strength alone.

Man depends on four sources of light for dispelling darkness. The moon dispels darkness at night. No one except thieves loves darkness. Good people, well-intentioned persons have no liking for darkness. Darkness also signifies ignorance.

During the day the sun is the natural source of light. Human life will be impossible without the light of the sun. The sun is the cause of rains, which enable crops to grow and sustain human life. Sun is also the source of health and of happiness.

Dharma (right conduct) illumines the entire world. The word "Dharma" means that which "upholds". It is Dharma which teaches the right relationship between man and man, man and society and society and society. Dharma reveals to man through his heart what is right and what is wrong. What is true and what is false. It is Dharma which promotes the welfare of society. Dharma protects its protector. The world cannot exist without Dharma.

A good son is one who sets an example by his conduct. One who pursues selfish ends cannot be a good son. A good son is one who reveres and serves his parents, who honours his preceptor, who is humble and respectful towards elders and who earns a good name by his service to

society. It is because such sons have become rare that the country is today bedeviled by wickedness and evil practices.

### **Revere the parents**

Boys and girls! Your foremost duty is to revere your parents. The mother gave birth to you. The father protected you. You have to esteem the preceptor as divine because he imparts knowledge to you. Without reverence for these three, all your other achievements in life will be worthless. The mother, the father and the preceptor represent the Divine Trinity Brahma, Vishnu and Maheshwara (as creator, sustainer and remover of ignorance respectively). But above all of them is the one God who is in all beings. Develop love of God and thereby show your reverence for all. Moreover, faith in God will ensure you what no one else can give.

### **Markandeya's example**

Markandeya was allotted only a life-span of sixteen years. The mother looked after him all those sixteen years as the apple of her eye. The father protected him from all dangers from any quarter. The teacher took care of his education. But none of them had any control over his life-span. The lad realised this truth. Hence he placed his reliance on God regarding his destiny. A few days before he was to complete his sixteenth year, he went to the Siva temple and prayed: "Oh Lord! My parents have protected my body. The teacher looked after my education. But God alone can protect my life. Hence, make me one with you." Placing his head on the Siva linga, hugging the linga with both his arms, he declared: "Easwara! You are my sole refuge!" saying so he closed his eyes.

When the sixteen years were over, the Lord of Death arrived and cast his noose to take the life of Markandeya. The noose did not cover Markandeya alone. The Siva linga was also caught in the noose because Markandeya was embracing the linga. When the Lord of Death started drawing the noose, Siva emerged from the linga. Siva asked the Lord of Death: "How dare you cast your noose on the one who had become one with me and also cast me in the noose?" Siva chastised the Lord of Death saying that he would be entitled to take the life of Markandeya if he had been alone, but not when he had become one with Him. "No one is entitled to touch a person who has united himself with Me", said Siva.

Siva chastised Yama and protected Markandeya with immortality. With the grace of the Divine, Markandeya got the blessings of all his parents and preceptor.

Students should not only revere parents and teachers, but also strive to earn God's grace.

A young student, (who had spoken earlier) has said that truth is the ornament for speech. Students should always speak the truth. There should be harmony between thought, word and deed.

Students! Apart from your studies, you should try to earn the grace of God by making your heart pure. You must remember the example of Rama who sacrificed the kingdom for honouring the words of his father. Dasaratha yearned for Rama administering water to him in his last moments. Unfortunately he did not get it. But Rama performed the last rites for the eagle Jatayu, when he

cried "Rama! Rama!! In his last moments, Jatayu secured the ministration which even Dasaratha could not get.

For receiving God's grace there is no distinction such as an animal, a bird or any other creature. Wherever there is devotion, there God's presence can be experienced.

Students! you must acquit yourselves well and earn a good name even after you leave the Institute. You must bring a good name to the Institute among all the people you meet. Together with your academic knowledge, you must develop good conduct. In this troubled world, deem God as your sole protector and guide:

(Bhagavan referred to the children's presentation of a play on Sankaracharya, in which Sankara tells his mother that a crocodile has got hold of his leg and he can be free only if he becomes a sanyasin and his mother permits him to take to sanyasa, and explained the true meaning of sanyasa. Bhagavan said that sanyasa does not consist in wearing the ochre robe, but in giving up all bad qualities like lust, greed and pride.)

True devotion consists not in merely chanting the name of Rama but in rendering service to society and offering help to the needy. Only then you can become worthy of God's grace. Hanuman exemplified the ideal of implicit obedience to God's injunctions. The true devotee should give no room for doubt. He must act with full faith in God. He must realise that everything belongs to God. He should give up all senses "I" and "mine". This was the lesson which Rama taught to Kaikeyi when she sought his forgiveness for all the wrong things she had done to Rama.

There is a basic difference between the attitude of the Gopikas to Krishna and that of the Yadavas in Dwaraka. The Gopikas felt: "Krishna! We are yours". The Yadavas felt: "Krishna! You are ours". Their attitude was based on a sense of possession (Ahamkara). That was responsible for their ultimate destruction.

You should all realise that God is present equally in all beings. This spiritual oneness of all was taught to Sankara by Siva in the form of an untouchable, when Sankara bade the "untouchable" not to approach him. Sankara immediately prostrated before the untouchable as a preceptor who had taught him "Samatvam"(spiritual equality). Bodies and temperaments may differ from individual to individual, but the Divine is one and the same in all.

Students! cherish faith in God as your life-breath. That faith will sustain you at all times and in all situations.

(Swami then related an episode from the life of Ishwara Chandra Vidyasagar, when he happened to travel by train in a compartment with some English men. He sat between two of them. One of them asked: "Who is this donkey?" The other one asked: "Who is this pig?" A third English man asked "Who are you?" Ishwara Chandra coolly replied: "I am a human being sitting between a donkey and a pig". The two English men felt ashamed of themselves. They felt even more ashamed when they saw a large crowd of persons with garlands waiting to receive Ishwara Chandra when got down from the train. The English men then realised that though Indians might

appear simple and unlettered, they were inherently noble and gentle. Swami advised the students to maintain the highest standards of Bharatiya Culture.)

Bhagavan concluded His discourse with the bhajan: "*Hari bhajan bina sukha santhi nahi*"

—From Bhagavan's discourse in the Assembly Hall of the Primary School on  
January 23, 1997

## Language of the Heart

It was a beautiful evening Darshan time at Prasanthi. The captivating music was in the air and the gentle breeze was making it even more enjoyable! After the long wait through the lines and tokens, it was like Heaven to be sitting in the front row, awaiting the Master's Arrival. All the ladies were packed a dozen to an inch with absolutely no gap in between. And guess who came? A lady Sevalal to ensure that we were packed close enough! She was a stern old lady seeming to speak only Telugu. She came straight to a lady sitting near me (who was from a foreign country) and commanded her: "Ae Amma Deggara Koorcho, Deggara Koorcho". The foreigner, already tired and exhausted, said, "...Well, How much more can I koorcho, I am koorchoing already, I cannot koorcho anymore". At this, a lovely smile lit up on the volunteer's face and she nodded an understanding OK and moved on. Everyone around us burst out laughing! Immediately, it made me think about the use of language for communication. I remembered Swami's words. "There is only one language, the language of the heart". It made me realize that understanding is really beyond the realm of language. So many ways He chooses to bring home the point! Oh How sweet it is!

—Latha Swaminathan, New Jersey, U S A

AVATAR VANI:

SANKRANTI SANDESH:

## Let Prema and Tyaga be Your Ideals

*Students! Embodiments of Love!*

"Uthsacham, Sachasam, Dhairyam, Buddhi Shakti, Paraakramam, Shadaithe yathra thishtanthi thathra Devasahacyakritam" (Where zeal, determination, courage, intelligence, ability and heroism are present, there Divine help is manifest) (Sanskrit Sloka).

In any field, at any time, for any man who is endowed with these six precious qualities, success is assured. These qualities contribute to the all-round prosperity of a man. All success attends on one with these six qualities.

However, these qualities confront various difficulties from time to time. Just as a student has to face various tests these qualities also are subject to trials. Such trials should be regarded as stepping-stones to one's high achievements. These trials are in the form of losses, troubles, pains,

suffering and calumny. One has to overcome these troubles with courage and self-confidence and go ahead.

Students in particular have to develop self-confidence. Without self-confidence, the six qualities cannot be acquired.

In fact, self-confidence should be the life-breath of every person. Unfortunately students today lack self-confidence and have become a prey to peace-less-ness because of their involvement in sensual pleasures.

Students should develop self-confidence and embark on the journey of life with faith in God.

Vishwamitra, relying on his intelligence and physical strength, the power of his weapons, sought to wage a war with the sage Vasishta, who relied on the power of the Divine. Ultimately he realised the truth that his powers were of no avail against the power of the spiritual and, giving up his kingdom, undertook a severe penance.

Physical prowess is no power at all. It is really a sign of weakness. All physical powers are indeed powerless. All worldly wealth is impermanent. Man today pursues these fleeting pleasures, forgetting his inherent divinity.

### **Cultivate self-confidence**

Students should cultivate self-confidence and manifest their divinity in their speech, their songs, their sports and all actions. However, occasionally the weakness in them may come out. For instance, when they succumb to troubles, are overcome by grief and are unable to face losses they show their inner weakness.

Students should confront such situations with fortitude. Be fearless. When you face difficulties with courage, you are bound to succeed. Hence, have confidence in yourself and achieve success in all areas of life.

It may be asked: What is the benefit one derives from these six good qualities? The answer is that you will secure both worldly and spiritual benefits from these qualities.

### **Duties And Rights**

Self-confidence is helpful to secure advancement of the individual, but it is not enough to promote the welfare of society or the world. A whetstone is used for sharpening a razor and not for making the stone smoother. Similarly good qualities have to be fostered for refining one's nature. These qualities are essential like the different limbs in a body for its well-being as a whole. People should realise that human birth has been given to them to lead ideal lives. Good qualities enable one to lead a good life. But even for the good life a price has to be paid. That price is good conduct. This means that you derive the happiness that results from a good life only when you discharge your duties. Pleasures are of two kinds: temporary and lasting. Permanent happiness can be got only by performing your duties. First do your duty and then enjoy the fruits.

Today people do not discharge their duties but wish to enjoy the fruits thereof. This cannot give them happiness.

Everyone should realise that he is born to discharge various obligations and not to enjoy rewards for unrendered services.

Man should realise that he has no claim to rights. His role is to carry out his duties. When he performs his duties, he will reap the rewards in due course. People today do not discharge their duties, but fight for their rights.

Students! At the outset realise your duties and carry them out. Duty is God. Work is worship.

It is foolish to expect rewards without performing one's duties. People are wasting their sacred human birth by neglecting their duties.

Students should realise that neither youth, nor wealth, nor wife and children are permanent. Only truth and righteousness are everlasting.

You must base your lives on truth and righteousness and should be prepared to face any challenges with courage and confidence.

### **Five advisers**

Everyone has five advisers in life. They are: Who, When, Where, What and How. Before undertaking any action, answers should be got for these five questions.

When the correct answers are got, the action based on them will be the right one. People today act without concern for these factors. In this matter everyone can rely on his own judgement, using his powers of observation and discrimination. All the instruments for this purpose are available to everyone in his organs of perception and action. In every limb and organ there is a divine power. This divine potency is called Angirasa. The name is derived from the fact that the Divine is present in every limb (Anga) as an essence (Rasa). There is no need to search for the Divine outside yourself. You are Divine. All your powers are Divine potencies.

Develop the conviction that whatever happens to you is for your good. Education is not solely for earning a living. Essentially it is a process of Self-realisation. Without understanding his own Self, how can one understand the world or achieve anything worthwhile? Without Self-knowledge what is the scientific knowledge (Vijnana) he can acquire? What is the value of scientific knowledge without wisdom? Hence one should acquire, along with scientific knowledge, discriminatory wisdom and awareness of Self (Atma-Jnana).

### **Inner meaning of festivals**

All Bharatiya festivals have esoteric significance. They have a deep spiritual meaning. Today's holy festival is related to the beginning of the apparent northward movement of the sun (Uttarayana). The sun moves every month from one house of the zodiac to the next. Today the sun enters the house of Makara (Capricorn) and hence it is known as Makara Sankranti. This auspicious day heralds the conferment of many worldly and spiritual blessings on man. The

Sankranti day is a witness to the prospective successes of man in many fields. The advent of Sankranti is glorified in a song which describes how farmers greet the sun and celebrate the gathering of harvest and enjoy the fruits of their labours. (Swami sang the song in Telugu).

Sankranti day marks the arrival in the farmers' houses of the grains which are the fruit of their labours. Sankranti is a holy festival for a worldly achievement. It is also a cherished day of rest in the cool atmosphere. Man needs days of rest after a period of hard work. Only then he can enjoy peace of mind.

"Samyak kranthi iti Sankraanthi" Sankranti confers peace and heralds a welcome change. It brings out the inner joy in people. It effects a change in the life-style. It generates sacred thoughts.

People today do not recognise these sacred changes. They are all immersed in worldly acquisitions and have no regard for higher things. They should instead seek every opportunity to cultivate good qualities.

### **Avoid envy and hatred**

These good qualities are the six (mentioned at the beginning of the discourse). When these qualities are present, there will be no room for any bad tendencies to develop. Today, students suffer from two bad qualities which are undermining their humanness. These are envy (Asooya) and hatred (dwesham). These two are partners in evil. They are twin pests. A beautiful tree with rich foliage can be destroyed by a pest operating at its roots. Envy is such a pest. It converts even a happy, affluent person into a miserable being consumed by envy. In the Mahabharata, Krishna described to Arjuna how the Kauravas were consumed by envy towards the Pandavas even though they were enjoying the kingdom. (Bhagavan recited a poem in Telugu). The demon of envy had seized hold of a good royal family and was ruining it.

Students feel envious towards a boy scoring good marks. Envy rears its head when a boy is exceptionally intelligent. Some feel envious seeing a person who is well off and happy. Some tend to be envious of those who appear to be cheerful and confident. Envy has no limits. Students should see that they give no room for envy. Envy is a self-consuming malady. It is incurable. One who is always blissful will overcome all difficulties. The courageous man can face death without fear.

### **Glory of Sankranti**

Students! You must understand that the Sankranti festival has come to remind you of your latent potentialities. People look forward to many worldly benefits also from this sacred occasion. It is also celebrated as a day, when a sacred bull is taken from house to house, while the owner recites the Ramayana story. (Swami sang a ballad describing the scene as it was in olden days). The festival is also a joyous occasion for the young folk. The Sankranti festival is more important than any other festival because it is the day when the newly married son-in-law visits the home of his bride and is entertained lavishly. (Swami sang a poem describing how the son-in-law is honoured by all the people in the village).

From ancient times such festivals have

been a source of joy to the people of Bharat. Alas! such festivals have gone and the people have taken to purely worldly pleasures. Of what avail are these pleasures? They are artificial. People have forgotten the heart and lost their peace in the bargain.

### **Ubiquitous fear**

The whole world is ravaged by unrest and fear. (Swami sang a song in which the poet mourns the plight of modern man, steeped in fear and misery). Man is haunted by fear wherever he goes or stays. The only way out of this situation is for people to take refuge in God. The protective grace of the Divine will free men from fear. Where devotion and love exist together, there will be no room for fear. It is their absence that is the cause of fear everywhere.

Students! In whatever you do, either studies, or games, in singing or in the jobs you may take up, see that you invest them with sacredness and purity. In the songs you sing, if there is no joy for the listener, what is the use of your singing? "Why sing if you cannot be melodious? What is the use of education without humility? Without a pure heart, why worship Siva? A heart without love is a block of stone" (Telugu Poem) (cheers).

Fill your hearts with love. That love should be pure and genuine. Today mutual courtesies have become artificial and insincere.

### **Divine Love**

Students should cultivate selfless love as one of the basic human values. Position, wealth and strength may come and go. Only divine love is permanent. Love is God. God is love. That is the truth irrespective of nationality, race or religion.

Education should be divorced from jobs. Its purpose should be the acquisition of the highest knowledge (Vijnana). That is the concept upheld by Bharatiya Culture. Students will be ideal citizens of the nation only when they develop Self-Confidence and the feeling of spiritual oneness. Develop the spirit of sacrifice and become defenders of the nation's integrity and honour. You must strive to promote the welfare of society. Eschew ideas of "me" and "mine". You will then become one with the Divine. When you identify yourself with all, you can derive infinite joy.

Once upon a time the demons were present in small numbers. But today it is difficult to tell who is a demon and who is a human being. Get rid of any trace of demonic qualities. Become human and then go towards divinity.

Students! you have received today prizes for your success in sports. In the same manner, you should score successes in your lives in the outside world.

### **Bhagavan's example**

Develop the quality of forgiveness (Kshama) and refrain from harshness in speech. Sai is the example for you in this regard. All sorts of people indulge in calumny and criticism. Swami remains totally unaffected. Why should I follow their example? I must follow my own way. If I follow another I am a slave. Therefore, I never follow another's ways. I adhere firmly to what I deem as good.



You must realise that if you give up forbearance and forgiveness, you will have no peace. I am always at peace. What is the reason? Because I am always patient. You must also remain likewise. Whatever any one may do to you, do not bother about it. What is it you lose on account of their behaviour? If you resort to retaliation, you will worsen your condition. You have no idea either of your strength or your disability. You must face boldly such attacks and not allow yourself to get agitated over them. Students should win by their forbearance. Forbearance should be your life-breath and your ideal.

By your fearlessness set an example to the world.

### **Double blessing**

It is an auspicious coincidence that today you have both the prize distribution function and the holy festival of Sankranti. On this doubly blessed day you have to enjoy the sweetness of this combination, like the mixture of sugar and milk, and pledge yourselves to lead a dedicated life. The Upanishads have described the Lord as verily sweetness itself ("Raso vai saha") You have the sweet essence of kindness (Karunaras) in you. You are also filled with compassion and peace. Luckily you are free from grief ("Sokarasa"). You are free from bad qualities. Do not let them in. Foster the spirit of kindness. Treat life as a great game and be victorious in it by leading an ideal life.

Life is a game, play it!  
Life is a challenge, meet it!  
Life is a dream, realise it!  
Life is Love, enjoy it!

This is what you have to achieve (cheers). Therein lies your true human worth. Human life does not consist in getting married, bringing forth children and being caught up in that endless round. They are the routine of worldly existence. There is nothing wrong in it, but it should not be your ideal. Whatever you may do in ordinary life, base your life on the ideal.

In the army, people are assigned different duties. But two things are common to everyone: parade (drill) and use of the gun. Likewise, two things are essential for students: love (Prema) and sacrifice (tyaga). Adhere to these two ideals. Love all. Be prepared for any kind of sacrifice. Without the spirit of sacrifice life has no meaning. For the sake of helping others or for promoting the welfare of society you must be ready even to give up your lives. To realise God, continually yearn for Him. You must constantly pray for the opportunity to experience God. Ramakrishna Paramahansa used to feel sad if he did not have the vision of the Mother on any day. Pine for God at all times. When you get God's grace, all the planets will be in your favour. You must ceaselessly strive to win God's grace. Never give up the search. (Swami sang two songs to illustrate how the devotee should pray to God). Do your duty and God's grace will follow. Pray from the depth of your heart for the well-being of all people.

Bhagavan conferred His benediction on all the students and devotees and concluded His discourse with the bhajan: "*Prema muditha Manase Kaho!*"

## **"Of such is the Kingdom of Heaven"**

Two centuries ago, Wordsworth hailed the French Revolution with the lines: *"Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive! But to be young was very heaven!"* Today the Sai Revolution is headed by the children of Bhagavan and one may well exclaim: *Bliss is it in this dawn to be alive; But to be young is very heaven!*

Swami has often said that when He is among children, He is a child. When He is among children, the children become angels. This was the feeling one got when Swami visited the Primary School on January 23 for the distribution of prizes to the winners in the Sports and Cultural Meet. From the moment the children received Bhagavan with the chanting of Vedic hymns till He left after spending nearly two hours with them, the atmosphere was suffused with joy and love.

The children, boys and girls, provided a delightful programme of dances, dramas and songs, which Bhagavan enjoyed and appreciated. Speeches of welcome were made by students from the II standard, IV standard and VII standard. The youngest of them prayed to Bhagavan "to bless us that we may become worthy instruments in the most glorious Sai Mission", recalling how Rama had blessed a squirrel. The IV standard boy described how everything about Bhagavan was sweet and sang the song which concludes with the refrain: "Sarvam madhura".

Sai Kiran, of the VII standard, in a natural, felicitous speech, said: "From London to Prasanthi Nilayam and Sri Sathya Sai Primary School—that was the turn my life took when last year, I prayed to Swami to admit me to His school. My life with Swami started when I was a one-year-old child and my parents brought me to Swami. I was given a different name by my parents. But Swami named me. And so, I stand before you, Swami, today as Sai Kiran. My only hope and prayer is that I will live up to the name you have given me. I sometimes ask myself, why not? Swami, you are there for all of us, to bring out the best in us and one day we are sure to be your little rays, brightening every nook and corner of this world by our goodness and purity.

"Oh Lord, when you look at us, our hearts dance with joy. When you talk to us, we feel redeemed. When you allow us to touch you, we feel purified. Fortunate, indeed, are we, that we are living with you and learning the essentials of life from you. Swami, bless us so that we make our lives your Message and make us hollow, so that you can breathe your Divine Melody through us. Our loving pranams at your Lotus Feet again and again."

### **"We love you"**

It was indeed a thrilling moment when all the children joined in singing the song: "Humko tumse pyaar kithna", concluding with the refrain: "We love you, dear Sai! We love you!" At that moment the entire hall seemed to be filled with the innocent love of a thousand children.

Bhagavan watched the programme, sitting on a tastefully decorated jhoola.

After the distribution of prizes, Swami visited the hostel library where there were special midget chairs for the tiny tots. Swami visited also one of the dormitories where there were rows of cradle-like bedsteads for the younger children.

Swami left the school after a brief lunch and the offer of arati by the teachers. All of them were deeply moved by Bhagavan's visit.

—F.A.C.

### **The Abode of Peace**

In the depths of your spirit  
Is an island, deep within  
Where, if ever you can reach it,  
Liberated you will be

This Island deep within,  
Is an island of peace  
Where the clamour of this world  
Can never ever reach

This Island of Peace  
His eternal Abode is  
who created the worlds  
And all in it.

This Abode of His  
Of him who created thee  
Is the Abode of Love  
And it's always full of Bliss

The souls in this Isle  
Of Love, Peace and Bliss  
Are pure souls of those  
The Lord calls His

To reach deep within  
Till the supreme Isle of Bliss  
You need clean your soul  
With the Name that He gives

—Noor Kara, London

## **The Leader Who Transforms**

All around the world, large as well as small business organizations are looking for the right kind of leadership to successfully bring them through the chaotic turmoil of the modern world. As a result, there has been a revitalization of interest in the concept of the 'charismatic leader'. Max Weber, the eminent sociologist, coined the term from the Greek word "charisma" for divine gift. Such a leader has a personal and strong emotional appeal, arousing special popular loyalty or enthusiasm from followers, especially in a time of crisis when there are strong needs for direction.

As I continue to witness and learn about the change Sri Sathya Sai Baba is creating in India, and in the hearts and lives of His devotees around the world, I stand in awe at the kind of leadership He exhibits. From major projects like the Super Speciality Hospital and the massive water project to smaller scale, but no less significant, undertakings like softening the hearts of inflexible critics, He leads with an effectiveness rarely seen.

We certainly observe in Sri Sathya Sai Baba the charisma to instill in His devotees loyalty and enthusiasm for His message. Moreover, His message comes during a time of crisis when the needs for direction are strong, not just for His devotees but for the whole world. However, it is more than allurement or charisma which He uses to engage us.

As a psychologist I have had a strong curiosity about how He captivates so many people for their own good. In leadership studies the "path-goal" theory evolved to explain that it is far more than emotional appeal which creates the leader-follower bond. It is the leader's program of action which grips followers, that is, the goal as well as the path to achieve it. Swami has said, "The final goal has to be realization of the unity of the self with God." In addition to describing our goal, His teachings are filled with directions towards that goal. We need His direction because, as He has said, "getting lost on the way makes the journey longer." He describes for us three clear paths for our journey: the emotional path which is devotion, the path of action which is serving God in our brothers and sisters, and the rational path of wisdom. While one avenue may be easier than the others for some people, He teaches us that the three "cannot be untwined: all are essential."

To follow a leader who has only charismatic appeal is not only limiting but dangerous. The potential for misdirection is evident. Such leaders may attempt to satisfy their own unquenchable needs for approval and power as they guide their followers. Swami warns us that "praise feeds the fire of egoism." He also adds that "Praise is no substitute for love".

A different concept of leadership, one that goes beyond charisma, has developed that of the "transformational leader" who changes the outlook and behaviour of followers. The essential difference is that, rather than manipulating follower behaviour, the transformational leader strives to go beyond the bounds of the ordinary to bring about a change in follower thinking that will redirect follower action. Research on transformational leadership includes a measure of two

factors in addition to charisma: (1) intellectual stimulation (2) individual attention to followers. Swami demonstrates both these factors.

As our Teacher, Swami stimulates our thinking by instructing that "thought manifests itself as word, which manifests itself as deed, which develops into habit, which hardens the character." "So," He adds, "watch the thought." Lest we become complacent in our thinking He continually surprises us. Just when we think, in our arrogance, that we understand the Avatar, He confuses and humbles us. He has said, "Every thought acts like a stone thrown in to the stillness of the mind, setting up a circle of agitation that affects to the farthest end." As we stand baffled and bewildered, we remember to "watch the thought" because we do create our own confusion.

In addition to stimulating our intellect, Swami reminds us of the continual attention He pays to each one of us when He teaches that "God will never desert, deny, or turn away from you." His nearness to us proves our dearness to Him. Over and over devotees tell of personal examples of His presence in their lives.

As a leader, Swami may initially attract us with His appealing nature, but His intent is to transform us. Getting the attention of His devotees is not enough. He gives us His attention, His very personal attention. The awareness of that truth is not only stimulating but thrilling as we think of the fullness of His love for us. He has laid out both the goal and the path-in His words, "Love is the impetus and truth the gain." His message to us is clear and His life demonstrates it.

The transformational leadership of Sri Sathya Sai Baba is the force which is bringing us through and out of the turmoil and into the truth of who we really are. He tells us, "My name is Truth, I am the Truth, and since I am in every one of you, you too are the everlasting Truth." The bond that He is using to lead us is love. Swami has said, "As far as I am concerned, only one rule binds you to Me, the rule of Love."

As organizations and individuals around the world continue to look for the right kind of leadership to direct them forward in these chaotic times, they will eventually find it in leaders who adhere to Swami's message "Might must ever bow to right." Truth marches majestically forward and the Avatar is here to lead us on the journey.

—Dr. Jack Feely, Ph.D., St. Louis, U.S.A.

### **The Lure of the Divine Flute**

Why dost Thou, my God! play without respite?  
To heed it not is beyond my little might,  
Pray! Oh! Pray! set aside for a while Thy magic lute,  
I shall hurry through this world, while Thou art mute.

Eloquent are folk-lore's immortal and Epics of yore  
Of those, who, from worldly bondage fondly tore

On hearing Thy enchanting melody which them did lure,  
Those fortunate few with hearts so pure.

'Tis said, on the banks of the Jamuna very long ago,  
No restless monarch, battling with his foe,  
No tattered beggar, nor frightened doe,  
No weary soul burdened with great woe,

No home-bound farmer with heavy plough,  
No wild jackal, nor gentle cow,  
No great Sanyasi with a rigorous vow,  
Nor hardened soul bereft of all love,

No boat could tow, ah! no soul could go,  
No maiden with her pitcher could bend so low,  
Heedless of thy haunting, immortal melody,  
When "Ah! it is He:" whispered the Blessed in ecstasy,

While some more did listen, but yet did ponder  
Why He cast on them this spell of wonder,  
While yet some more did casually say,  
"It is that cow-herd going his way."

Long before in Mathura and in Brindavan, they say,  
Thou wert always so frolicsome and gay,  
countless were the stories told each day,  
Of Thy captivating masterful winsome way.

Of how the trees did gently sway,  
The surging Jamuna did readily give way,  
Of how the blossoms did dance with glee,  
And the birds did twitter: "Sure it is He"!

When thou played on Thy flute like divine piper,  
Of how, bellowing with joy came to Thee many a heifer,  
And thought she, each damsel, Thou wert calling to her  
As she lay dreaming in the shade of the massive fir.

The old and the young, the weak and the strong,  
The sinner or the saint journeying long,  
The lonesome soul or the merry throng,  
Were charmed by the melody of Thy divine song.

Seeing many a damsel go divinely mad,  
The ignorant ranted: "He is a Cad."  
Little did they know that Thou wert the Divine,

Come to claim those who longed to be Thine.

These damsels, they say, were sages of old,  
Who had prayed unceasingly to be in Thy fold,  
That as Sai Ram Thou hadst blest them and told them,  
As Gopis they would be born to experience bliss untold.

What charm hast thou that has so bewitched me  
For I long to be like the Gopis—beloved of Thee.  
Yes, I shall bind Thy Feet to my yearning heart  
The Sai-Giridhari from me you can never never part.

—Jayalakshmi Gopinath (written in 1948)

*The most direct method of spiritual success is action without any attention or attachment to the fruit thereof. Perform action as a duty, as dedication, as worship. But action and the fruit thereof are not separate entities. The first is inherent in action. Fruit is the climax, the conclusion. The flower eventually becomes the fruit. The action becomes the consequence. One's duty is to act. Act well, act in fear of God. Act within the bounds of morality.*

—Baba

*Man is the child of immortality. He is the repository of Divinity. He can by various paths attain the status of Divinity itself. A machine without the power to activate itself is of no use. So too a human body without the Divine spark is of no avail. Without that spark, man is a tree which bears no fruits, a cow that yields no milk. He must become aware of the spark. He must know how to illumine himself and cover himself with its splendour.*

—Baba

*Temples are intended to instruct men in the art of removing the veil OF attachment that lies over their heart. That is the reason why Thyagaraja cried in the temple at Tirupati, 'Remove the veil within me, the veil of pride and hate'. The fog of Maya melted away before the rays of Grace and so, he could discern and describe the image of Divine Charm in the song, 'Sivudano Maadhavudano' and drink deep the sweetness of that Form. The churning of his heart by the Divine Formula produced the spark of Jnana, and it grew into the Flame of Realisation.*

—Baba

## **The Name of Sai**

When nothing works out and everything goes wrong,  
Keep your faith in the name of SAI!  
When you seem abandoned by kin and friends,

Keep your faith in the Name of SAI!  
Though your dreams be shattered and your goals unfulfilled,  
Keep your faith in the Name of SAI!  
Though you cry your heart out till there are no tears to cry,  
Keep your faith in the Name of SAI!  
Though your spirit be broken and you never get  
The things that you've wanted—you want to give up and quit—  
Keep your faith in the Name of SAI!  
Though He says nothing to you... does not come in your dreams...  
Does not look in your eyes, though your heart pleads and screams...  
And you leave the PRESENCE feeling worse than when you first came,  
Keep your faith in the Name of SAI!

When those close to you laugh, because you keep trying...  
And warn you to quit—a lost soul—you are dying,  
Keep your faith in the name of SAI!  
When troubles keep coming in huge wave after wave  
And nothing appears to help you to save  
Yourself from the calamities that befall you,  
Keep your faith in the Name of SAI!

Repeat the Name and nurture it—with the intensity of pure love  
Let it saturate you; Let it mature you; Let it fill your mind and heart.  
Let His Name be always what you're thinking of...  
Have faith in the Name and from it never depart!  
And if you should die with no other gain,  
Just die with faith firmly in SATHYA SAI'S Name!  
It's the wealth you will take into your new life  
Where there's only contentment, a world without strife.

Though I cannot convince you by position or fame,  
Great riches or power, to have faith in His Name,  
Still please keep your faith in the Name of SAI!  
Though I'm not an officer—I don't even count—  
The work done through me doesn't even amount  
To a "hill of beans" in BABA'S great scheme.  
You can find your ways out of illusions and dreams...  
Just keep your faith in the Name of SAI!!!

**—Rev. Robert E. Pipes, Baptist Minister, Matins del Rey, California**

### **This I Believe**

Yes, I believe that earth is charged with God;



And I believe that God is everywhere;  
And I believe that there is nothing bare of God;  
that He is dreaming in the sod;  
That He is spilling fragrance in flowers;  
That He is motionful in birds and beasts;  
And He is worshipful in nuns and priests  
Who chant His hymns and sanctify His hours.

—Benito F. Rayes

*CHILDREN'S CORNER:*

**What Swami Means to Me**

When I was a little girl, my grandfather used to come to visit us every summer in our house in Toronto. I was about 9 years old and I immediately associated his visits with a hoard of books and videos featuring a strange, orange cloaked being with hair that radiated around his dark, mysterious face, a face which seemed to evince several emotions at once. Being a child, I was naturally curious about one who spoke in a clear, powerful voice, commanding the rapt attention of a multitude of enthralled devotees focused only on him. What struck me most was the beautiful, genuine smile, an all-knowing smile which hinted at a divinity not present in any other earthly guru. This being soon manifested himself in the form of a beautiful close-up picture, which was added to our puja room. At last, the mystery of his identity was cleared when I was told that this was "Sai Baba" who was God in human form. I accepted this because this was what my parents told me, but I had a persisting question that arose every time I tried to pray to him: Who, exactly, is Sai Baba, and how is he "God on Earth"?

I'm trying to express in my own words what Sai Baba means to me, and hopefully what he essentially means to all of us. Of course, this is not a simple task: Swami is sometimes so lucid and simple in his teachings, and yet he himself poses a huge mystery to scientific minds probing to discover how he "creates" things out of thin air. But I think that everyone who has experienced his Divine Love feels the same emotion towards him as I do: a feeling of awe and wonderment at his mystery, a feeling of joy and elatedness at our fortune of having been blessed to witness his Leelas, and most of all, a feeling of pure love towards our Divine Mother. No matter how lofty a position we've achieved, or however elevated we are in social rank, we are just meek children at his feet as we learn more about the Divine path. For me and probably for all us, he takes on only one form in mind: GOD; all-powerful, all-knowing, and all-loving, a being who bestows Ananda and removes all worries.

As I grew up, Baba took on a more definite meaning in my mind. He was the one I prayed to for good luck when undertaking a strenuous task, whom I asked to help me when I had a stomach ache or a fever, and the one I thanked profusely when I inevitably realized my wishes and dreams, however petty they might have been. He was also the one who taught me bitter lessons about the consequences of being irresponsible or disobedient, and the one whom I questioned

bitterly about the concept of Divine love when I saw graphic news reports about more violent deaths and murders.

### **Bhagavan's leelas**

I began reading more books about Baba and wished desperately for miracles like manifestations of vibhuti and materializations of objects to happen to me. As I read these books, I formed a clearer picture of Swami in my mind: a teasing, humorous God who taught serious lessons while entertaining people with his delightful Leelas. The stories brought back memories of the Krishna stories I had read in dusty Amar Chitra Kathas I had voraciously devoured as a child, and when I concentrated on his picture, I could almost see in the wise, kindly face the youth and playfulness of Krishna himself. The stories about Bhagavan's 'tests' to the weathered devotees (where he ignores them with a view to deflate their egos) fascinated me, and I dreamed of the day when I would be advanced enough to endure one of these hard "tests". I experienced several mini-miracles of my own: sometimes, when I was feeling upset and wished for a solution to my problems, I would pick up a Baba book and as I opened the page, there would be the most wonderful and perfect solution to my problems, in his divine words! Though this may seem 'small' to devotees who have had interviews and other divine graces bestowed upon them, my joy at finding that Swami really did know and care about my problems was exhilarating.

Singing became a form of expression of my love for Swami. I began to learn all the bhajans I could, and listened intently to Swami's own divine voice sing "Hari Bhajan Bina Sukha Santhi Nahi", which soon became one of my favourite bhajans. As I sing, I close my eyes and Swami's glorious form fills my mind as I pour out my love in the form of a melodious tune. Every bhajan is an experience as I can literally feel Swami singing through me. I feel now that every bhajan brings me closer and closer to Swami and try to sing a bhajan to him every day.

### **Swami's gifts**

Now, three wonderful darshans, two vivid and thrilling dreams, and a hurried but treasured padanamaskar are with me. With Swami's grace, my younger sister and I have composed a bhajan for Swami and hope one day to get the opportunity to sing it for him. Swami has given me strength, joy, and perseverance; the power to go that extra mile when I feel exhausted, the love that saves me in times of grief, the compassion to help others with whatever heartfelt ability I can. He also gives me a Conscience, to prevent me from voicing the tempting lies that threaten to spring from my mind. There have been times when I can't understand how a real God could be so cruel; yet, despite how many times I get 'angry' at Swami, I am always drawn back to him in the end, as I am sure we all are. His energetic, ethereal aura and his Divine, playful Leelas prove unmistakably his omnipresence and compassionate warmth, which is all I need, but he is still so enigmatic, that he is too much for any human mind to decipher. I still have so many questions to him about how to put his sayings in practice, living as a teenager in the U. S., having to face problems like bad company, vices, and cheating daily. I draw on Swami for strength to refuse to get involved in things I think are questionable, and Swami has never let me down!

### **The bond of love**

I think all of us have a special bond with Swami in one way or other; a common bond that in effect links us all together as well. When we love Swami, he pours that love back in us so we can love and recognize the Swami in others. Swami is present in all our lives in the smallest details,

the minute instances. Swami himself has said a miracle occurs every day in the life of every person. Now, I try and appreciate the things I have by looking for that miracle each day.

What, then, does Swami mean to me? There is no way I can explain what Swami is within a few paragraphs, but there is one undeniable fact: He is **PURE LOVE**, always forgiving, always generous, always understanding. Every day, I thank God that I have had the fortune to be alive when he has graced the earth as an Avatar. His wonderful metaphors and explanations are so easy to understand and simplify the complexity of life, and he is always there to gently and lovingly guide me on the straight path, calm my agitated mind, and listen to my feelings of joy and sadness. Through the years, my faith in Swami has grown more solid, and I now know with all my heart that he is unmistakably **GOD ON EARTH**.

—Jnani Krishnaswami, Dallas Youth Group, U.S.A.

*VIDYAGIRI SAMACHAR:*

### **Yet another Memorable Sports Festival**

The sprawling Sathya Sai Hill View Stadium, ringed by brown hills and canopied by an azure sky, shone with a new splendour on 11th January 1997, for it was on this day, the Annual Sports and Cultural Meet of Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning and also that of Primary and Higher Secondary Schools of Vidyagiri Complex, Prasanthi Nilayam, were held. The stadium, already aglow with fluttering flags, flying balloons and gorgeous attires of participants, glowed with splendour when the grand procession with Bhagavan standing on the sports car, started moving towards Santhi Vedika. The procession led by two equestrian riders on immaculate white horses, band party, Sai Geeta, Bhangra dancers, and escorts was a delight to behold.

As Bhagavan arrived on the stage, two toddlers of the Primary School, dressed gaily for the occasion presented Bhagavan with a bouquet of flowers, seeking Bhagavan's blessings for the success of the Sports Meet. Bhagavan lighted the ceremonial lamps, marking the inauguration of the Sports Meet. The March Past of the students of the three campuses of the Institute and that of the students of the Sri Sathya Sai Higher Secondary School led by the respective house captains was an impressive curtain raiser for the day's programme. The long column of students, marching to the drum beat, clad colourfully in their respective uniforms, was a feast for the eye. Bhagavan, the Chancellor of the Institute, hoisted the Institute flag, released pigeons and balloons and lit the Olympic torch which was carried to the mountain top by a winged horse (a mechanical contrivance) where the torch would burn non-stop throughout the Sports Meet. The students took the oath that they would participate in the Sports Meet in the spirit of true sportsmanship and fair competition, for the glory of Sai and for the glory of Sports.

The first performance which set off a series of stunning feats was that of a Vth standard girl student who astounded everyone with a daring feat of Para Sailing, the youngest child in India to perform such a feat.

The Brindavan campus of the Institute started its magnificent performance by para-planing in the empyrean. The para-plane was piloted by two students of Brindavan Campus, without

professional help. While para-planing stunned the spectators, equally breath taking was the performance of the gliders. The campus presented a synthesis of the North Indian as well as South Indian styles, through two dance performances popular in the two respective regions. The arrival of the huge Prasanthi Cup, accompanied by two mammoth cricket balls and a mammoth cricket bat, a prelude to the performance of cricket Drill exhibiting different batting and bowling styles, was warmly cheered by the lovers of cricket. The cricket drill marked by excellent skill and perfect co-ordination earned the appreciation of the spectators. The campus concluded its presentation by giving a grand ovation to Bhagavan in the form of a song, sung by all participants of the campus.

The Prasanthi Nilayam Campus, consisting of the students of Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning and Sri Sathya Sai Higher Secondary School (Boys Wing) started their performance with an elaborate exposition of the theme, Sathyam, Sivam, Sundaram (Truth, Goodness and Beauty) the very quintessential message of Indian as well as Greek thought. Sathyam or Truth is portrayed by the recognition of the Divine who is Truth. Sivam is both auspiciousness and goodness. This is portrayed by the manifestation of the Divine. Sundaram or Beauty is perceived when Sathyam and Sivam blend in one harmonious whole. The manifestation of the Divine chosen here is Surya, the Sun God who bestows life and bodily health. The performance started with the worship of the Sun-God set against the classical Sun temple of Konark in India. The Sun worship expressed through Surya-namaskars and Mexican Sun dance was highly evocative. This was followed by an array of Greek athletes appearing in front of the temple of Apollo and the demonstration of various forms of games and sports of ancient Olympics. The display of martial arts like Karate and Kung-fu, portraying courage, concentration and precision, and an obstacle course, the modern version of ancient Olympic Games elicited applause from the spectators. This was followed by a 'games medley' consisting of giant puppets, students on stilts, aerobics, ball game, mask drill etc. which thrilled the audience by their colourfulness and superb skill. The giant puppets towering 13 ft high, and boys on stilts clad in gorgeous exotic costumes, and various drills going on simultaneously was a magnificent spectacle. The giant see-saw 30 ft high and weighing two and half tonnes, operated and balanced by two students was most thrilling. The performance of Sheersasana (standing on the head) on the moving see-saw was an incredible spectacle. The performance of acrobatics, by well-trained youngsters deserves special mention for all the thrilling feats which they did with extreme ease and skill. The last item reserved for display in front of Bhagavan was a series of adventurous sports. This showed boys performing breathtaking feats on motor bikes and maneuvering them in various permutations and combinations. They were quite thrilling and exciting. The performance of the Prasanthi Nilayam Campus came to a close with the grand finale of all participants standing in a beautiful formation. Bhagavan stood on the Sun Chariot flanked by students who sang their hearts out with gratitude for allowing them to present their little display in the Divine presence.

The evening session of the Sports Meet started at 3:30. It was the turn of the women students of Anantapur Campus to present their performance. Naming their offering as "Tribute to the Supreme", the students dedicated their programme at the Lotus Feet. The flower dance with which they started their performance was an enjoyable one, with participants playing on a variety of musical instruments like Kanjira, drums, cymbals etc. The complex pyramid formations performed by the students also imparted rich lessons in human values. The lesson that the

mansion of life should be built on the foundation of devotion and discipline imparted through pyramid formations is a significant one.

Skating on a revolving disc with a diameter of two feet was a challenging one and the students who were skating on the disc proved themselves equal to the challenge. The performance of Yogasanas in varied convolutions on ropes was a captivating one. The ease with which the performers changed asanas instantaneously and the dexterity which they displayed deserves commendation. Not satisfied with the performance of Indian exercises, the students gave to spectators a taste of Chinese games which involved perfect concentration and superlative skill.

The revolving disc, set in the centre of the ground once again became the arena for many stunning feats like bicycling, gyrating, skating etc. The performance of the students of Anantapur Campus came to an end with a prayer to Bhagavan to mould them into worthy children of Mother India.

The last to come but not the least in performance were the students of the Primary School, Prasanthi Nilayam. They began their performance with Peacock dance, set against a sylvan background, studded with bowers and cottages. The dance performed to the tune of a devotional rendering was extremely charming.

The peacock dance was followed by Kavadi dance in which children carrying floral Kavadis delighted the audience with their performance. Watching the tiny toddlers wagging their big tails is an unforgettable experience. The children performing a variety of dances and drills, with ribbons and decorated sticks, was a fascinating sight. A variety of exercises performed on rings and poles, displaying enviable concentration and skill earned applause from the spectators. The bonanza of colour, skill and charm came to a close with a grand finale of deepam dance climaxed by Bhagavan standing amidst them. The rhythmic movements of hundreds of children carrying little beacons in their hands in the twilight was a sight for the gods.

On January 12 and 13 the final events of extra-mural sports and games were held. On the 14th, the three-day meet concluded with the prize distribution function in the Sai Kulwant Hall.

Bhagavan entered the Sai Kulwant Hall in a procession led by Captains of different Houses of the Institute and Institute Band. Bhagavan arrived on the stage at 2:55 and lit the ceremonial lamps. Dr. Venkatraman, Vice-Chancellor of the Institute, extended a cordial welcome to all those present on the occasion, for the prize distribution function. In his short speech he asked the students to ruminate on the oath they had taken on the day of the Annual Sports and Cultural Meet and emphasised that the oath they had taken should be an oath for life. He concluded his brief talk by praying to Bhagavan to lead us all from darkness to light.

Bhagavan graciously gave away prizes, medals and cups to all those who had distinguished themselves in sports and cultural activities. Bhagavan gave to all the campuses of the Institute special cups for their commendable performance in the Annual Sports and Cultural Meet. Bhagavan presented a special golden cup to the Primary School for their exceptional performance.

The prize distribution was followed by a brief speech by Dr. Sandeepan Chatterji, Lecturer, Department of English, and Prasanthi Nilayam Campus. Dr. Chatterji expressed his deep gratitude to Bhagavan for helping the students realise the dream of a sportsman, by involving Himself in the Sports Meet from the very beginning.

Then Bhagavan bestowed on the students the benedictory address exhorting them to cultivate virtues like courage, endurance, intellectual alertness, valour, enthusiasm and strength to distinguish themselves not only in sports and games, but in the game of life as well. (The details of the discourse are published separately.)

It was on 19th January Bhagavan went to the Institute auditorium to give away prizes to the students of Sri Sathya Sai Higher Secondary School (Boys Wing) Prasanthi Nilayam. Bhagavan was received with Poorna Kumbham and Vedic Chanting. As Bhagavan proceeded to the stage in a procession led by Captains and Veda boys, students threw flowers at the Lotus Feet of Bhagavan as a mark of their joy and devotion. After Bhagavan took His seat on the ornamental chair on the stage, students dressed as religious leaders like Jesus, Zoroaster, the Buddha, Adisankara etc. placed floral petals at the Lotus Feet of Bhagavan expressing their deep gratitude to Bhagavan. Sri Y. Sivaramakrishnayya, the Principal of the School, extended a cordial welcome to the guests present on the occasion and expressed his deep gratitude to Bhagavan for blessing the school. It had maintained its record of exceptional performance in the all India CBSE Examinations held for X and XII class students. The brief report of the Principal was followed by a speech by M. C. Ramana, a student of IX standard. On behalf of all the students, he expressed in his speech how much the students owed to Bhagavan and prayed to Bhagavan to shape them as worthy instruments in His Divine Mission. Pleased with the noble sentiments expressed by the student, Bhagavan materialised a gold chain for the young speaker and blessed him by putting it round his neck.

Thereafter young poets, who penned poems in different languages, clad in the costumes of the region from which they come, recited poems in the Divine presence. After a brief introduction to the poet and the poem, made by two announcers, the young student poets recited poems in English, Telugu, Marathi, Hindi, Urdu and Tamil. The theme of all the poems was adoration of Bhagavan.

Bhagavan at the conclusion of the poetry recitation, gave away prizes in the form of cups and medals to all those students who had distinguished themselves in different activities. After giving away the prizes to students, Bhagavan blessed the students with a discourse highlighting the excellence of Indian cultural heritage and exhorting them to imbibe the values of our immemorial culture. (The details of the discourse are published separately)

—R.M.R.

## **A Historic Celebration**

The celebration of their New Year Day by over 1500 Chinese devotees, from a number of Asian countries, in the presence of Bhagavan Baba, at Prasanthi Nilayam, is undoubtedly a historic event in the saga of the Sai Avatar. February 13th was indeed a day of fulfillment for the Chinese - fulfillment of a dream and a vision cherished for over a decade.

Mrs. Deirdre West, who spent many years in Mainland China as a teacher and who spoke about Bhagavan to Chinese students, has contributed the following report about the New Year Day Celebrations in Prasanthi Nilayam:

### **An offering to Bhagavan**

Unity, Love and Sacrifice, values so dear to Bhagavan Baba, were fully evident in the cooperation between the different groups taking part in the celebrations of February 12-14, in their deep devotion and their generosity in expenditure of time, money, and energy to make this first Chinese New Year at Prasanthi Nilayam an offering fit to be placed at the Lotus Feet of Bhagavan.

A total of more than one thousand five hundred devotees from Malaysia, Singapore, Hong Kong, Taiwan and Indonesia attended, who included Indians and other races as well as Chinese. A group of Chinese from Australia were also present. The Japanese too were invited to join with these Far Eastern devotees in the seating blocks in the Sai Kulwant Mandap, bringing a truly oriental populace to Swami's presence there.

Preparations, which had begun in their own countries, got into full swing on 11th February. In the Poorna Chandra Auditorium, rehearsals began early. The participants in the cultural programme missed the Darshan to give maximum time to their work. In addition shed 22 was a veritable hive of activity with many different groups working happily together and very fast to get a thousand and one tasks done by the next day. Painting and construction of scenery, carving of polystyrene, making of decorations, careful unpacking of numerous treasures flown in had to be done. Two groups were preparing mushrooms, for eventual cooking!

The Northern canteen was to house the splendid exhibition of Chinese Tradition, Religion, Aspiration and Culture done mainly by the Youth Section of Malaysia, who were a little anxiously awaiting the screens for mounting the exhibits. Need it be said that they arrived in time as well and all was well for the opening?

Although the first day of the Chinese New Year falls on February 6, it had been decided to have the main celebration on February 13, as the seventh day is considered to be the Birthday of all Mankind, and is highly auspicious. However a beginning was made on the preceding day when Baba entered for Darshan to the accompaniment of Chinese music, of such a sweetness and serenity that people remarked it would help them greatly in meditation. It was very soft and enhanced the peace that always descends in the presence of Swami as He moves with such grace and quietness among the crowded but silent assembly. Already some of the red Chinese lanterns had been hung and the Ashram was taking on a Chinese look.

There followed Bhajans sung by the Far Eastern groups. The singers were allowed to sit close in front of Swami's chair in the Mandap, to their very great happiness. An excellent book of Bhajans had been prepared in such a way that all could participate. The tunes of Bhajans well-known in India, and now around the world, had been used for Chinese words for the first overture and then the second time everyone could sing the fast section using the familiar Sanskrit. The sheer joy on the faces of the young singers as they looked up at Swami was a delight to see, as they clapped enthusiastically and sang their best. Swami looked very happy as the first Arati of the day was performed.

### **The decorations**

When He had left for Poorna Chandra, the many activities continued and by afternoon the entire Ashram had been bedecked with thousands of Chinese lanterns, red buntings and many, many traditional Chinese New Year greetings and pictures. They were every where! The inside of the Mandap had not only many beautiful lanterns, but on each side of Swami's chair there were huge pots containing real peach blossoms, reminding one of the plantations in the New Territories of Hong Kong and elsewhere, at this time of the year. They were hung with red silk tassels and little gold decorations carrying greetings, which looked quite exquisite.

Each of the great pillars was hung each side with magnificent scrolls of red cloth, on which were sayings of Baba in gold capitals at the bottom and above that a Chinese translation in the form of a beautiful couplet in traditional Chinese style. These were done in Hong Kong. It is still a tradition in the countryside of China to paste the two sentences of an auspicious couplet each side of the door on red paper at the Spring Festival, as it is called on the mainland.

### **Nagarsankirtan with lanterns**

At 5: 00 am on February 13, a very large number of devotees assembled ready for Nagarsankirtan as soon as Omkar had finished. It was a thrilling sight, as many of the Chinese women were dressed in traditional red satin embroidered suits which shone in the light of the many, glowing red lanterns they were carrying, as they circumambulated the Ashram. They sang Sanskrit Bhajans until at last they reached the Mandap, when they burst into Chinese. Behind them came the men, many of them wearing traditional high collared suits of cream satin or brocade. Many onlookers were impressed by the vibrancy of the singing.

Inside the Mandap, now complete with two great painted dragons up above, on the balcony, as well as paper ones on the frieze above Swami's chair and festival lions looking out each side of the gateway where Swami enters, as well as above the main central gate, (even the bronze lions were garlanded in red!) all devotees were anticipating Baba's entrance with joyful anticipation.

### **Procession of Gods and Goddesses**

We have seen many glorious processions at Prasanthi Nilayam for the various Hindu Festivals, but here came a new one, moderate in its length but thrilling and dignified as it preceded Swami into the Mandap. There were seven male and six female characters: The Jade Emperor—the Chinese equivalent of Lord Indra as King of Heaven; Buddha; God of Earth; The God of wealth; Ne Zha; Monkey God; boy attendant to the Goddess of Mercy; Ma Zhu; The Seventh Fairy; Immortal Lady He; Lan Caibe; Goddess of Mercy; and a girl attendant to the Goddess of Mercy.



The costumes and makeup were truly Chinese and the King of Heaven moved in a way reminiscent of some characters in the Beijing Opera, or like someone walking on the moon! It was exciting to see these figures glide down the aisle leading our most beloved Lord, who is bringing the entire world to Prasanthi Nilayam in unity, under His leadership of all embracing love.

### **Homage to Bhagavan**

Swami found this morning that there was a Chinese Altar behind His chair, as well as the paintings of these divine personages like a backdrop. Mr. Jagadeesan invited Swami to light the candles on the altar.

Bhagavan lit the candles, while the entire gathering cheered in ecstasy. Mr. Jagadeesan introduced the gods, pointing out their parallels in Hindu tradition and showing the many affinities between Indian and Chinese culture. They in their turn offered flowers to Swami and took padanamaskar. Perhaps we were all most enchanted by the Monkey God who was so endearing with his monkey movements. Almost everyone could feel the resemblance to Hanuman.

There is an interesting story concerning one of the "gods." A man had come with the group who had to do with the costumes. He was not a devotee, knew very little about Swami, and was if anything rather sceptical, but at the first Darshan he attended, he was sitting quite far back becoming more interested in Baba as he saw the huge crowds. He thought to himself, "How can I get into the first row?" It was then found that one of the "gods" could not be spared from the drama rehearsals and so Mr. Jagadeesan put this man in his place. He was then not only in the front row but even got padanamaskar. Yet another proof of Swami's all-encompassing kindness.

After the God forms had offered their respects, two young Chinese families came forward and offered their respects in the Chinese tradition to the Head or Elders of the Home—in this case their Divine Father. Baba graciously accepted the two Chinese scrolls.

Then Mr. Wee Lin, the Chairman of the SAI Council of Singapore, prayed to Bhagavan to sign and bless a traditional Chinese tablet that read in Chinese calligraphy: "Blessings from Heaven!" This tablet is traditionally placed in front of Chinese homes for blessing. It was announced that this tablet with the Divine signature and blessing will be reproduced for all who want them - to be placed in front of homes: a unique double blessing indeed for those involved.

Finally, the Chairman of the Organizing Committee for the 1997 Chinese New Year Programme at Prasanthi, Mr. Cheah Woon Kwong, stepped forward and offered Bhagavan the special souvenir programme in both Chinese and English that announced the theme of the New Year Celebrations TRAC. TRAC stands for "Tradition, Religion, Aspiration and Culture"—a theme they had taken from Bhagavan's Sathya Sai Vahini—that in essence the path of Dharma is for one to uphold and follow the teachings and practices of one's Religion, Tradition and Culture.

As the God forms sat in front of Bhagavan, the exhilarating and unusual Chinese Bhajans commenced. Though all the Indians and other foreigners present could not follow the words of

the Chinese Bhajans, they had no difficulty in following the vibrations that emanated from the hearts and souls of the singers.

### **Mr. Jagadeesan's address**

After the Bhajans, Mr. J. Jagadeesan, Central co-ordinator for Sri Sathya Sai Organisations in Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, Philippines and Brunei, conveyed the thanks of all Chinese and other devotees to Bhagavan for allowing them to celebrate the Chinese New Year Day in Prasanthi Nilayam. He said: "On behalf of all the Chinese devotees who have come here from around the world and especially those who have spent hours and hours of time and effort to make this event a success, we thank you Bhagavan for giving us this opportunity.

### **A historic phenomenon**

"For the people of the West, coming to seek spirituality in India is nothing new. This has been going on for over a 100 years. But, never in the history of human civilization have we seen Africans coming to India seeking a Living God, Japanese come to India seeking a Living God and never have thousands and thousands of Chinese flocked to India seeking a Living God. This is the first time in the history of the world that this phenomenon is taking place."

"Many may wonder as to how Bhagavan has reached the hearts and minds of millions around the world. No promotion is being done by the organization itself. All we do is to serve the community. But Baba has reached out in His own way. We have vibhuti manifestations pouring out of pictures around the world: Japan, Australia, USA, Malaysia, Indonesia etc...

"When I first heard about the avatar in 1966, I became a very strong anti-Sai Baba. One day we had an argument about Baba in my auntie's home. I criticised Swami for two and a half hours and at the end I challenged Him, I said, "If you are who you say you are, show me a sign." Dear Brothers and Sisters, Vibhuti came on Baba's picture.

### **The greatest miracle**

"Swami, the truly great miracle You have brought to this world is the transformation of man. You have transformed many selfish individuals, previously looking after only themselves and kith and kin, to selfless sevaks who now spend countless hours wanting only to do one thing, to serve their fellowman. This, Swami, is the greatest miracle.

"What we see here today is another indication of the transforming power of the Avatar. Normally, on the occasion of the Chinese New Year in countries where the Chinese are a dominant population, the entire city comes to a halt. The Chinese work very hard the whole year and during New Year Day they close shops. After finishing their prayers, it is a time for enjoyment, mahjong, gambling etc. Look around today at the Chinese who have flocked here. They have left their homes and left all their traditional Chinese ways of celebrating the Chinese New Year. They have worked hard and dedicated themselves to make this Chinese New Year the greatest ever in their lives. Thank you Bhagavan. You have fulfilled a vision that some of us have had for the last ten years to have a Chinese New Year celebrated in Prasanthi Nilayam.

### **Decline in human values**

"Swami, many years ago, when we had the Education in Human Values Programme at Prasanthi Nilayam, You warned the world that the time would come very shortly when human values would decline rapidly and that unless Education in Human Values Programmes are launched, there is no hope for the world. We are now witnessing times of rapid decline in human values and things like basic Culture, Religion and Tradition are rapidly being lost. Let me give you a small example, what is happening in Malaysia. In the homes of all the people, be it Chinese, Malay or Indian, hardly thirty years ago, if a child or a young boy walks across a hall where the parents and elders are sitting down, he would bend down and put his hand forward and walk forward crossing the hall, in a silent body language sign of respect. Today, a young child walks across and says, "Hey Pap, Hey Mum!" and the parents would be lucky if he does not put his leg on the table. Today, like the rest of the world, the Chinese are facing a big problem. I would like to describe what is happening in Singapore showing the decline of filial piety. The Singapore government has passed a law today that a father or mother can sue their sons or daughter to look after them. This law has been passed because of the neglect by youngsters of their parents. The great Chinese tradition of filial piety is declining. Everyone thought that this was a ridiculous law. On the first day when the office of this agency opened, seven Chinese families came forward to file suits. In one Chinese family, there were seven children and the mother was quoted as saying that "my daughter prefers to feed her dog rather than feed me."

### **Observe dharma**

"In Sathya Sai Vahini, many years ago, Swami said, the first step to ensure, peace and harmony to mankind is for each one observing the Dharma or the code of Conduct laid down for him in his own religion. If one holds his own faith and its essential principles mandatory one can serve himself best and also serve others well.... Dharma in this context means action in accordance with the Tradition and Cultures of the land. Swami, you have given us now the clue as to how we can implement the year of Dharma. If we can bring Tradition, Religion and Culture back into our homes, we revive Dharma. That is why we have decided to make use of this auspicious occasion of Chinese New Year to revive Chinese Tradition, Religion, Aspirations and Culture. We pray Bhagavan that all Chinese devotees who have come here will take back to their homes and implement some aspect of their Chinese tradition, religion and culture.

### **Call to devotees**

"The International Chairman of the World Sathya SAI Organisation has requested me to convey to all present a special request from him. All of us should leave behind here one vice, one bad habit of ours and take back one virtue. This is the best way we can show our devotion and gratitude to Bhagavan for what He has given us today.

Mr. Jagadeesan then invited Mr. Billy Fong, "the first National SAI Youth Coordinator anywhere in the world," to address the gathering.

### **Mr. Billy Fong's address**

Billy Fong Goon Poy said: "On behalf of all my Chinese brothers and sisters who are here, on behalf of thousands of Chinese devotees around the world who are unable to make it here and on behalf of future Chinese Sai devotees, I would like to thank Bhagavan Baba for allowing us to celebrate the Chinese New Year in Prasanthi Nilayam. It is the most important festival for the

Chinese. The fact that it is today celebrated in Prasanthi Nilayam makes us Chinese feel proud and feel that Prasanthi Nilayam is our home.

### **What Baba has done to the Chinese**

"The primary objective of this celebration is to revive the ancient values in the Chinese Tradition and Culture. The younger generation have slowly forgotten the inner significance of the Chinese New Year. Many Chinese are not having daily prayers. Many Chinese are not showing respect or do not know how to show respect to parents. Many Chinese are not doing communal prayers. I was such a Chinese and would have continued to wander in this wilderness until Bhagavan Baba came into my life. Because of Bhagavan Baba, thousands of Chinese are now having daily prayers. Thousands of Chinese now respect their parents. And thousands of Chinese now have communal prayers in Sai Centres. This Chinese New Year Celebration in Prasanthi is indeed a lighthouse to millions of Chinese throughout the world.

"The challenge for all of us is how to impart our rich and great Chinese heritage to the younger generation. We pray that Bhagavan will guide us and give us instructions on how we can do this.

"Bhagavan Baba, you have given beautiful glimpses of the inner significance of various religions of the world, viz. Hinduism, Buddhism, Christianity, Sikhism and Islam. We pray that Swami would give us deeper glimpses of Chinese Tradition, Religion and Culture especially on Chinese God Forms.

### **Filial piety**

"Filial piety is a cornerstone of Chinese civilization. The fact that all of us Chinese are gathered here today reflects our filial piety to our father, Bhagavan Baba. We pray that Bhagavan Baba will let the Chinese New Year be an annual event at Prasanthi Nilayam.

"Our International Chairman has urged Sai devotees to leave behind one vice at Prasanthi Nilayam and to take back one virtue. I would like to be the first person to take up this challenge. I would like to leave behind the negative quality of jealousy and envy and take up the virtue of patience. Bhagavan Baba, please guide me and give me the strength. Sai Ram."

After the address came the moment all had been waiting for, the Divine Discourse by Bhagavan Baba. This discourse is reproduced elsewhere in this issue.

### **Distribution of Prasad**

After Bhagavan's discourse, Mother Sai fed us all with Prasad. This time the food was brought out in red covered boxes trimmed with gold and was in neat little red and gold envelopes such as Chinese grandparents use to present money to their grandchildren at the beginning of the New Year. Finally Swami left us all showered with ananda. Many people went to see the exhibition which was to open at ten o' clock.

### **Exhibition of Chinese History**

A beautiful altar had been arranged outside the entrance to the stately building where the exhibition was held, with a chair for Swami in gold brocade, in case Swami should come. Of course His presence was there but He sent Sri Indulal Shah to do the opening. He was taken

round the exhibition and shown the various exhibits presenting a brief outline of Chinese History from the 16th century B.C. to the present day. The exhibits also showed: New Year customs up to the Lantern Festival at Full Moon, which included the bowing to parents in the morning, distribution of money to grandchildren, different traditional dishes, decorations and the Dragon dance; Popular Deities, being eight in number, having some relationship to the ten Avatars in India; A set of excellent cartoons explaining the basic teachings of Zen Buddhism; Calligraphy, giving a historical view of the evolution of Chinese characters and different styles of different periods.

This was not all. The enthusiastic group which had planned the exhibition, being truly practical Chinese, had arranged for demonstrations which took place on two days and little groups of devotees of any country could be found sitting on the floor struggling with the intricacies of making Chinese knots or folding papers to make very pretty lanterns. There were cookery demonstrations and Chinese dramatic make-up. Every one enjoyed all of these activities. There was an excellent bilingual 36-page handbook on Chinese culture for sale in aid of Baba's Pure Water Project. The room was very beautifully decorated and everywhere one could find Swami's face as little stickers had been added to every possible decoration.

### **The cultural programme**

The afternoon and evening programme in the Poorna Chandra began with Bhajans. Because of some delay in the starting of the Cultural Programme, there was an unscheduled discourse by Bhagavan, preceded by a brief speech by Prof. Anil Kumar.

The Cultural Programme began with a very nice introduction from Mr. Cheah. Mr. Jagadeesan spoke again on the subject of the parallels between China and India in matters of culture, illustrated by slides which made the comparisons still clearer. This was followed by a demonstration of modern overseas Chinese Tai Qi by a group from Indonesia and Singapore.

### **The play is the thing**

The big item of the day was a dance drama "showing how the sincere yearnings and prayers of parents bring results." In this ambitious production, an attempt was made to bring out the inner meaning of many Chinese traditions and religious festivals so that young people might understand them and make their rich heritage meaningful in daily life. The message to all Chinese was: "follow Swami's teaching, bring back Dharma as a living reality, by bringing back into your homes Chinese Tradition, Religion, Aspiration and culture as a way of life."

The drama was woven into a story of a modern Chinese home whose traditional parents (devotees of Bhagavan Baba) bemoan the loss of their eldest son, who having gone to the USA to seek his fortune had not been heard of for years. As the Chinese New Year approaches yet again, the parents feel the pangs of separation, for the New Year traditionally heralds family get together and expressions of filial piety. The parents explain to the younger children the significance and origin of various Chinese traditions and through a clever use of "flash backs" the rich tapestry of ancient Chinese heritage is revealed. The parents pray to Baba and all the Chinese Gods to bring their son home for the New Year and through the intervention of the Gods, the son returns. There is a dramatic confrontation between father and son on the values of modernization and Chinese TRAC. Finally, the miracle of love overpowers the pull of

modernization, and at the climactic end that brought tears to the eyes of many, the family is reunited in love and Chinese TRAC was a small battle.

### **Songs and dances**

There were a number of outstanding performances and the entire cast, which seemed immense, worked together so well. The speaking of the lines was mercifully slow and clear for non-English speakers to understand, and the costumes, make-up and sets all deserved high praise. The music too was well chosen and there was some delightful dancing. We heard one truly traditional Chinese soprano in the performance of the Dumb carrying an Insane Child. Ribbon dancing, martial arts and the tableau on Human Values were all carried out excellently by the children of Malaysia, while children from Singapore presented a charming Lantern dance, and lighting of Lotus. As always, the moment the whole cast was waiting for, was when Swami Himself joined them on the stage for the photographs at the end. It came, but they had another surprise to come the next day.

### **The Lion Dance**

Next morning, we discovered that the festival was not quite over and all the beautiful decorations were still there. At Darshan time, Swami took a great deal of time meeting everyone. He not only presented beautiful shawls to many of the Drama team but also materialised three rings for those mainly responsible for the performance.

Then a group of Chinese percussionists, with their drums and gongs, were given the word to begin and Swami sat down to enjoy what seems to be a favourite of His, the dancing lions! There was one large red and white lion and two smaller green, white and yellow lions. They responded to the masked masters so amazingly, wriggling their entire bodies, prancing, rearing up and retreating, becoming very coy and then advancing again. They are indeed most loveable and how everyone adored seeing them advance right up to Swami and take padanamaskar. Who could have had a dull heart that morning? The big lion was allowed to parade right along to the end of the men's aisle and then came most way along the women's side so that everyone might see and admire these wondrous beasts at close quarters. At the end masks and lion costumes came off and we could see the performers who had enchanted us so much.

### **Prasadam for all**

And then an array of red boxes were brought out and everyone got an apple and two sweet balls with coconut. There is no end to Swami's generosity and outpouring of love. After Bhajans as Swami slowly walked out, He paused by the exquisitely beautiful silk embroidery hanging which was just below His balcony at the Poorna Chandra. It was fascinating to see him make that characteristic circling motion of the upturned right hand seemingly to the characters in the picture.

During the morning there were further demonstrations in the exhibition hall which was still open, but the decorations began to be taken down and by next morning everything had vanished, and we are left with unforgettable impressions of a new, and for many of us deeply significant festival, at this stage of His Story.

## One with God

Let me erase the wounds and scars of strife,  
The traumas of disaster and despair:  
The burdens of the cares I had to bear,  
The galling inequalities of life.  
Let me, by one inclusive act of mind,  
Abolish all resentments I have gathered  
Through all the years of pain and anguish fathered  
By ignorance of being dumb and blind.

Yes, I declare them all dissolved and gone:  
And there is nothing now but joy and truth,  
And wisdom with its fund of quiet fun,  
And beauty with its gift of health and youth.  
And God is all in all; and soul and sod  
Are both divine, and I am one with god.

—Benito F. Rayes

*You have to busy yourselves with activity in order to use time and skill to the best advantage. That is your duty, and duty is God. The dull and the inert will hesitate to be active, for fear of exhaustion or failure or loss. The emotional, passionate individuals will plunge headlong and crave for quick results and will be disappointed if they do not come in. The balanced persons will be active, because it is their duty; they will not be agitated by anything—failure or success. The godly will take up activity as a means of worshipping God and they leave the results to God. They know that they are but instruments in the hands of God.*

—Baba

## Sai Messages across the U.S.

Dr. Michael Goldstein, Deputy International Chairman of the Sathya Sai Organizations, gave a series of talks in New York, Connecticut, New Jersey and Washington, D.C., between the second and fifth of January 1997. He emphasized the importance of love and faith, the need to understand and incorporate the principles of spirituality that Swami stresses and the aims of Sai Organizations. Following are excerpts from his talk.

Loving God unites us. It empowers us to selflessly love others and to serve. It enlightens us so we are always aware of our divinity. Our love for God can do all these things if we love deeply. The depth of our love is a function of our faith.

To communicate the meaning of Spirituality is to communicate the nature of a reality that we all share—a universal reality. Spirituality is the essence of Swami's message.

Swami teaches us that God is love and that spirituality is practising love. The love Swami refers to is selfless—love that is unpolluted and undiluted. Love is the language of God, and spirituality, his message.

### **Service not status**

As members of the Sai Organization, we seek the inner view of Divine reality, not the out view of the illusory world. We seek to render service, not to acquire status. We have interior motives, not ulterior ones. Sai centers, in appearance and in program, must reflect the universal message of spirituality taught us by Bhagavan Baba. People from all races, religions and nationalities should feel welcome and should be able to derive spiritual benefit from attending a Sathya Sai Baba Center.

All Sai retreats, conferences, workshops and programs must be conducted with reverence and dignity. They should not degenerate into market places where people come to sell wares, such as books, tapes or videos. They should not degenerate into frivolous entertainment in which the conference planners ask well-known people to speak in order to attract a large attendance. Commercial taint and zeal to do what is popular is not what we are about. We must always remember about the spiritual purpose of these gatherings.

Dr. Goldstein concluded his talks with pertinent words for the New Year.

Ultimately, each person must rely on himself or herself. Swami teaches that we must seek answers within our own hearts. We must not look for magic or for people with special knowledge or powers. All knowledge and power lies within and is accessible to each of us.

Let us begin the New Year thanking God and contemplating the beauty and wonder of His many blessings. Let us start the year by making the decision and the commitment to strengthen our faith, to act upon the dictates of our own conscience, and to become exemplars of Swami's Love. That is spirituality. That is Swami's message to each of us.

### ***TESTAMENT OF A SCIENTIST:***

## **Science and Faith**

Dr. Y. T. Thathachari was an outstanding scientist from South India who did significant research at Stanford University over three decades in Crystallography and Molecular Structures. He came to Bhagavan Baba in 1966 after what he regarded as a miraculous cure from cancer. He had a second invitation from Stanford, but was doubtful whether he should leave India. Baba advised him to go and said that God would be with him to protect him always. In October 1993, with plans to settle down in India, Dr. Thathachari came to Prasanthi Nilayam to seek Bhagavan's grace. He went to the Superspeciality Hospital for an examination of his heart and to undergo a valve replacement. An abdominal problem came up. The nature of the ailment necessitated his



being treated, at first, in a hospital in Bangalore and then in Madras. The Divine will was such that he attained the Lotus-Feet of the Lord on 23rd November, 1993—Bhagavan's 68th birthday.

The following are extracts from an address he delivered at Stanford recalling the major events in his life and the relationship between Science and Faith:

I was born and raised in Srirangam, a small but ancient town in Southern India - 200 miles south of the city of Madras. For more than 13 centuries of recorded history, from this ancient town, great saints have been teaching the gospel of "Absolute Surrender to God." Ramanuja was the most famous of them all. He lived in the 11th century. One of the earliest spiritual ancestors of Ramanuja was Nathamuni, a great sage who lived in the 8th century. Nathamuni collected 4000 verses of intense devotion sung by great saints known as Alvars who lived centuries before him. Nathamuni felt that those verses contained direct testimony of the experience of God and should be treated as scriptural authority on a par with the Vedas and the Upanishads. From this time on, these 4000 verses in Tamil have become part of our sacred literature.

My father was a spiritual teacher in the line of Nathamuni and Ramanuja. He never really talked to me about God or religion. However, my aunt, grandmother and mother used to tell me countless stories of Hindu mythology when I was a child. I still vividly remember my making up my own prayers and saying them silently at nights before I slept. It seemed then as if God was a personal friend who listened to me, a child—three or four years old.

### **Silent prayers**

When I was about four, my father started me on Sanskrit. While still a small boy, I read works of great writers and reformers—some of them fiercely attacking the injustices of the Indian society of that time. Movements, occasionally violent, had been launched in our part of India—against Brahmins and against Faith in God. I was greatly influenced by all that I read and heard then. Sometimes I would have debates with my cousin and aunt on the provability of the existence of God. But my silent prayers still continued.

My father died when I was fourteen. When my mother died eighteen months later, I was already in college. I completed my master's degree in Physics in a well-known Jesuit college in the adjacent town of Tiruchi. The faith and dedication of the Jesuit fathers had a profound impact on me.

From Tiruchi I moved westward to the city of Bangalore to enroll as a research scholar in Physics in the Indian Institute of Science, a premier institution of advanced research in India.

All these years, besides my science, I continued to read, by myself, a lot of Sanskrit works and books of every kind—religious or otherwise. I pondered about them all. During these years, it seemed to me that my nightly prayers were continued more as a habit than sustained by deep conviction. And for long stretches of time I gave up these prayers altogether as if I was proving to myself that I could throw out a hypocritical practice.

When I finished my graduate studies in Bangalore, I married Madhuri, a sweet girl of seventeen, who was in a master's programme in the Madras University which I joined as a junior faculty

member. After she finished her master's degree, we both left for Cambridge, Massachusetts, U.S.A., where I joined the MIT Biophysics Lab as an associate of Alexander Rich.

Within a few months, I developed pain in my neck, hip and knees which worsened as months went by. In the summer of 1961 we moved to the Stanford Biophysics Lab on the invitation of Howard Pattee. The warmer climate of California did nothing to reduce the pains. On the other hand they grew much worse. In addition, several bumps appeared on my scalp. I also developed double vision which became alarmingly more frequent and severe. I had a scary feeling inside - that I had a brain tumour. But every time I expressed my fears to our physician, Dr. Eckert, he would dismiss them with an assurance that all my problems were linked to a rheumatic condition and there was nothing to worry about.

Though such assurances seemed so welcome, my misgivings continued, as my troubles became unbearable. Finally, on insistence of Madhuri and me, Dr. Eckert reluctantly ordered a skull X-ray. Dozens of X-rays and planigrams followed. A punch biopsy was performed on my scalp by Dr. Jamplis, a clinical professor of surgery at Stanford.

### **Brain tumour**

In about a week, Madhuri and I were facing a panel of doctors, Jamplis, Eckert and others. It was during the latter part of October 1962. It is so vivid in my memory. "It is not good news," started Jamplis: "It is a tumour. It is malignant. It has metastasized widely. Let us not kid ourselves about a cure—cure there is none." The blows came one after another, dealt with a savage fierceness, it seemed to me.

"For over a year, I had expressed my fears and you ignored them", I accused Eckert. "Once the first cell starts to divide, the die is cast. In these small cell tumours, earlier diagnosis would have made no difference: nothing could have arrested the inexorable progress of the disease", Jamplis responded.

The doctors would not start any treatment and wanted me to return to India immediately to spend my last days in the midst of my dear ones. They were not sure if I would last even two weeks. "However", Jamplis concluded graciously, "Miracles sometimes do happen. We hope it happens to you."

All these many months, I was tortured by the fear of an incurable cancer. Now my worst fears were realized. But, suddenly, a calmness came within me. I somehow felt that God was going to save me. "Which God is going to answer my prayers?—the one whose existence I often tried to establish as unprovable?"

### **The miracle occurs**

Deep within, I felt some remorse and embarrassment. In spite of my doubts, I somehow had the confidence that God was going to rescue me.

Madhuri and I returned to Madras. Madhuri comforted me by saying I was definitely going to be well soon. Her parents and brothers and sister—all said the same thing and all prayed sincerely for my recovery. The distinguished physician attending on me in Madras was a deeply religious man and he told me with a smile that I would fully recover and soon. I was given nitrogen

mustard which many would not tolerate and which was, at best, a palliative, if at all. However, within a few days, the bumps on my scalp disappeared and the double vision had gone.

In the next eighteen months I had two major relapses when my hipbone and my liver were seriously affected. Again, in spite of the worst misgivings of some of the doctors, I quickly responded to the treatments.

I now felt well and free from all pain. But deep within I was troubled. Will the recovery last? Or will the illness strike again—to kill? I was often disturbed by these thoughts. Meanwhile, Dr. Eckert wrote to say how pleased he was to know that the miracle he wished actually happened to me. My friend, Scott Blois, asked me if I would consider returning to Stanford to start a research programme on melanins. I was reluctant to leave India again.

### **Visit to Baba**

It was then that Madhuri and I heard of a holy man known as Baba and said to be a healer. Millions in India looked upon him as God. When we met him, he showered much kindness on us. He told me to accept the invitation from Stanford. He assured me that God would be with me to protect me always. In spite of lingering doubts, I was greatly comforted by his words.

We returned to Stanford in 1966. I was in excellent health. I often worked sixteen hours a day. I walked briskly several miles a day and had no need for the painkillers which I consumed in dozens every day with little relief just a few years ago. Suddenly I realized, too, that though I still expressed doubts outwardly, deep within there is a confidence that God was protecting me as Baba had assured me.

Following Baba's suggestion, I gave monthly talks on Upanishads for two years. I also took part in many academic discussions on faith and religion. Among my interests, I boldly list theories of knowledge, philosophy and religion - along with crystallography and molecular structures.

It became clear for me that practising science need not mean the denial of faith. In fact, it seems to me, relying on reason on which science is based, is itself an act of faith.

### **Ramanuja's teachings**

Every religion has its own appeal and must be a path to God. I will talk briefly about Ramanuja's teachings.

Battling the monists, Ramanuja asserts that, ordinarily, one does not perceive the ESSENCE of things and knowledge is based on discrimination or perceiving differences. If one comprehends only the common essence of things, Ramanuja humorously asks, why is it that a person looking for a horse, having seen a buffalo, does not return satisfied? Also, it is no help to say that the world is illusory. Imperfect knowledge remains quite valid as long as the constraints remain. One who sees a serpent in a rope reacts just as he would, when he actually sees a serpent. His reactions will persist until the "rope-ness" is established and the "serpentness" is negated.

Ramanuja discusses the basis of knowledge emerging from perception, evidence and inference. He discusses the relationship of God, the controller, to the world of consciousness and the world of material existence.

Ramanuja recognizes that there is no moral responsibility without free will. The question, then, is: How does free will fit in the context of the perfect God who is the controller? Ramanuja has to postulate that God gives us free will and the freedom to choose the path of surrender leading to redemption from pain.

### **Faith versus intellect**

It is clear that in spite of the brilliant arguments he advances, unanswered questions will still remain as in every intellectual approach to religion. Finally, he asserts what the other religions and the Upanishads say: it is not intellect or scholarship that leads to God or sustains faith. It is the simplicity of faith that leads to this discovery. Snobbery of every kind is a hurdle in this path. But intellectual snobbery is especially pernicious since, unlike snobberies of power, wealth and heritage, it is often seen as an allowed form of snobbery.

Chaitanya who lived four centuries ago was a great scholar. But he rejected all his erudition to return to the simple faith—chanting God's name.

Ramanuja and Yamuna before him and the Alvars long before either of them and many saints in other faiths as well, talk about their deepest sufferings and of ecstasy. It would thus seem that it is intense suffering that spurs the need for faith and only unconditional surrender leads to the manifestation of Grace that ends sorrow. In the starkest terms, this seems to be the message of most of the religions, however it may be couched due to cultural or traditional variants. True experience of faith and grace seems to be only under these circumstances. All other academic discussions of faith are in a sense irrelevant.

Much as we would like to believe it, we cannot build our faith on the faith of another. In particular, it may appear that the faith of a scientist (especially from the "hard sciences") is more reliable than that of the simpler folks. Nothing can be more wrong.

In one's own experiences it may be possible to observe the effect of "giving up the struggle." I have tried meditations of different kinds including the well known TM. I have always found that deep meditation occurs only when I stop consciously attempting it and when I give up the struggle. So long as I consciously try to relax I make myself tense.

In our tradition, the value of service has always been emphasized. There is nothing demeaning about the menial work. It is also God's work. When I vacuum the rugs or sweep the garage, I notice sometimes that my mind is totally free of all thoughts and there is peace within.

### **God as protector**

In summary, what is the state of my faith today? I may still have doubts on the surface and I may voice them. But deep within, there seems to be the faith that God (in whatever form) is protecting me. I may still say that faith in God is not an issue in conventional science. But there is no question whatever in my mind that there is an intense need for faith in God, spurred by

suffering. An intellectual approach to God is neither necessary nor useful. A simple faith is the one that truly sustains. In this, one has to be oneself: no sophisticated strategies of marketing or merchandizing are involved.

I will conclude with a translation of a favourite folk song in Hindi: "I cannot carry a tune. But I sing a song in praise of God. The words of the song may have profound meanings of which I know nothing. You ask me if those words of praise revealed God to me. But I am too simple a person to answer such learned question. I am satisfied even as I merely repeat, Lord, Oh my Lord."

**(The text of this lecture was supplied by Prof. S. Sampath, former Vice-chancellor of Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning.)**

AVATAR VANI:

CHINESE NEW YEAR DAY MESSAGE I:

### **The Gospel of Work, Love and Sacrifice**

*There is no penance equal to a peaceful mind;  
There is no greater happiness than contentment;  
There is no worse disease than desire;  
No righteousness can equal kindness.*

#### *Embodiments of love!*

There is no penance superior to peace (of mind). Every individual, every family, every society, every nation seeks peace in all possible ways. Every man should strive in every way to achieve peace as the most desirable objective.

There is no greater happiness than contentment (santhosham). Man is perpetually in quest of happiness. But what is the happiness he seeks? Worldly happiness, transient pleasures? These cannot confer true happiness. Only spiritual happiness can give true happiness.

Why has man lost this happiness? Because man is afflicted with insatiable desires. These desires are the cause of various maladies. It is only by limiting desires and thereby eliminating the diseases arising from them that man can secure peace.

Next, what is meant by Dharma? Charity alone does not constitute Dharma (right conduct). Charity is quite different from righteousness. A temporary, worldly act is equated with Dharma. Dharma in its true sense refers to something which is lasting. "Atma-Dharma" (the Dharma of the spirit) transcends all worldly actions.

Many people in the world consider religion as identical with Dharma. But Dharma is quite different from religion. Religion is like a river. Dharma is like the ocean. There is a well known saying: "The ocean is the final destination of all rivers." All rivers ultimately merge in the ocean. The essence of all religions, the goal of all scriptures, the objective of all aspirations is Dharma.

## **Dharma and religion**

It is totally wrong to equate the vast ocean of Dharma with the river of religion. "Religions are many, but the path is one. Jewels are many, but the gold in them is the same. Cows are of many colours, but their milk is white. Living beings are numerous, but the indwelling spirit is one and the same. Flowers may be many, but the worship is one only." (Telugu poem)

Religions have come into existence for the purpose of regulating human life. What is common to all of them is the principle of love (Prema-tattwa).

Man is governed by morality. In all countries morality and integrity should be like the life-breath. It is only when men adhere to morality that human ideals like fraternity, equality and liberty can become meaningful in daily life. It is because moral values have been given the go-by that you find today society bedevilled by disorder and unrest. The world will have respite from violence only when progress in science and technology is accompanied *pari passu* by development of ethical and spiritual values.

In the economic sphere, when human desires are governed by righteousness, a divine impulse will arise in man. When the quest for wealth and the concern for sensuous pleasures are based on righteousness (Dharma), the mind will spontaneously turn towards God.

## **Man's misbehaviour and natural disasters**

In the vast cosmos, man is like a speck. Essentially, there is no conflict between man and creation. Just as a child is entitled to enjoy the milk from its mother and the bee is entitled to enjoy the honey from flowers, there can be no objection to man enjoying the resources of nature. But as a result of uncontrolled desires and reckless exploitation of natural resources, Nature is exhibiting frightening disorders. Natural calamities like earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, droughts and floods are the result of disturbances in the balance of Nature caused by reckless exploitation of natural resources. Mankind today appears like a foolish man who is wielding the axe at the branch of a tree on which he is sitting.

## **The power of love**

Men have to develop a sense of spiritual oneness. Out of that sense of oneness, love will grow. Love alone can bind the whole of humanity into one unit.

What do you see in this hall today? Here are people gathered from Japan, Indonesia, Malaysia and other countries. What is it that has brought them together in this small village? It is only love and the sense of oneness with others (cheers).

The bliss of life is I embedded in this love. Pure bliss is derived from this love. When this love is shared with others you have the bliss of collective joy. When your life dances on the waves of this love it attains the fulfillment of humanness.

Man today does not recognise this sense of oneness. Man does not mean the body alone. Man has the mind, the intellect and the Atma (the Spirit). It is the combination of all these four that constitutes true humanness. When the balance among these four constituents is upset, man is plunged in troubles. When man maintains the balance among these four, the nation will prosper.

### **The transformation process**

The transformation of man is based on transformation of the mind. When men are transformed, the nation is transformed. When nations change, the world is transformed. Hence, if the world has to be changed, there has to be a mental transformation at the individual level. The human mind should be filled with love.

The mind is a remarkable entity. When it is filled with wisdom, it makes a man a saint. When it is associated with ignorance, it turns into an agent of death. Hence it has been declared that the mind is the cause of human bondage or liberation. All change, in education or other spheres, has to begin with transformation of the mind.

### **Lessons from animals and birds**

Indifference, bad company, disrespect, arrogance and jealousy, these five tendencies reduce man to the level of the animal. No one with these vices can be called an educated person. To get rid of these vices, it is necessary to take note of some of the good qualities in animals and birds. Man can learn any number of good qualities from animals, birds, insects and worms. One animal which is viewed with contempt is the donkey. But there are quite a few virtues man can learn from the donkey. The quality of patience to be found in a donkey is not to be found even in man. Whatever burdens may be heaped on its back, it bears them all with forbearance. It puts up with any amount of beatings. Even when it is starved of food and water, it presents a calm face. Man has thus to learn the quality of forbearance from the donkey.

The ant is one of the tiniest among insects. But there are many lessons to be learnt from it. The ant has a capacity for foresight. With foreknowledge of the rainy season ahead, the ant starts storing food from three months in advance.

Then, there is the spider, from which lessons can be learnt. Determination is one of its traits. How many times its web may be destroyed or broken, the spider will go on remaking it with relentless determination.

Then, there is the dog. The dog is treated with neglect and indifference. But the fidelity displayed by a dog is not found in any other creature. Getting a few morsels of food from a man, the dog shows its gratitude to him by following him and wagging its tail out of affection. But such gratitude is lacking among students who have been nourished, educated and placed comfortably in life (by their parents). Many do not have even a fraction of the gratitude displayed by dogs. Has their education or intelligence any meaning?

### **Monogamy among birds**

Next, take the example of the parrots. Conjugal fidelity is a supreme quality among parrots. The firm attachment to each other in a parrot couple is not to be found even among highly developed human beings.

The story of how Valmiki was deeply moved when a hunter killed one of two birds who were a loving couple is well known. When one of the birds died, its mate followed suit, unable to bear

the pangs of separation. Out of the intense sorrow and compassion of Valmiki, the first sloka emerged from his lips and that was the beginning of the great epic.

When its mate dies, a bird will not seek another partner. It will starve itself to death. How many men care to follow the example of the birds in their devotion to monogamy? Many are ready to remarry after the loss of the first wife. The supreme virtue of monogamy is a quality man can learn from birds.

Thus, there are many useful lessons to be learnt from animals, birds and insects. Book knowledge alone is of little use.

In fact, the human heart is the best teacher in the world. Time is a supreme preceptor. This vast Cosmos is the ideal book for all. And there is only one true friend and that is God. (Cheers).

There is no need to go in search of a preceptor, your heart is enough. If you follow the dictates of your heart, every action will be sanctified.

It is necessary also to recognise the importance of Time. Time determines many of our actions in life. Time is a great teacher.

The universe is a vast textbook. By properly studying what is happening in the cosmos you can learn any number of lessons.

God is your best, unfailing friend at all times. All others are mere time-servers. People waste their lives believing in such petty fair-weather friends. Your best friend is residing in your heart as the Indweller.

### **"Your heart is your country"**

Today the Chinese devotees are observing their National New Year Day here. What is the origin of the word "China"? It is derived from the two words "Chung" and "kuo" (Cheers). "Chung" means the human heart. "Kuo" refers to the country (desam). The word "China" therefore means that "My heart is my country". This concept is applicable to all countries and all religions. For instance, Bharata. It is derived from the two words: "Bhaa" meaning "effulgence" and "Rata" meaning "to rejoice." The heart is the source of effulgence. Bharatiya is one who rejoices in the effulgence emanating from the heart. Every man is attracted to the heart. God is not confined to any particular place. His real abode is the heart.

### **The Chinese Tradition**

The Chinese have esteemed the heart as their native land. The heart is subject to troubles and difficulties. From ancient times—and to some extent even to day—the Chinese have observed one ritual every morning before beginning their day's chores. They declare, "Difficulties are our friends. Let us invite them". The Chinese have looked upon difficulties as their true friends. They have recognised that without trouble no good can be realised. They used to start the day's work with this thought before them. The Chinese also realised that true happiness comes from the satisfaction of a task well done. In Bharat also there is the dictum, "Uddhareth Aatmanaa— aathmaaanam" ("Raise the Self by the Self") What is it that can raise the Self? It is our own good



conduct. Our good conduct is not for elevating the country, but for elevating ourselves. A whetstone is used for sharpening a knife, not for making the whetstone smoother. Likewise, in this world, your good conduct improves you and, as a result the world.

### **The cult of hard work**

There is a proverb current in China: "The most delicious food is that got by hard labour." What is got by arduous effort is relished with joy. One who enjoys his food without having laboured for it is an idler. In China everyone works hard to earn his living.

This cult of work should activate every human being. Unfortunately this is forgotten today.

### **China and India**

From very ancient times there have been close relations between China and Bharat. A short while ago a speaker mentioned how in the Chinese pantheon there were deities corresponding to the deities worshipped in Bharat like Lakshmi, Bhudevi, Kubera and others.

Similarly a common saying current in China regarding government regulations is applicable also to the situation in Bharat. Comparing government regulations to a net, the Chinese used to say that the very small fish escape through the holes in the net, while the very big break through it. Only the middle sized fish get caught in it. In Bharat also it is a fact that the lowest among the people are unaffected by government regulations. The very rich and powerful drive a coach and force through them. It is only the middle class that suffers most from these regulations. (cheers).

I have often indicated the rule by which people should govern their lives. They have to follow the dictates of their conscience "Make conscience your master" You can then face any difficulties in life and overcome them. Never give way to despair in the face of difficulties.

### **Man and god**

Realise the relationship between your body and God. You are a limb of society. Society is a limb of the world. The world is a limb of nature. Nature is a limb of God (cheers). Instead of realising this integral relationship between man, nature and God, people are lost in the pursuit of wealth. This is totally wrong. People should enshrine God in their hearts and contemplate incessantly on the Divine. People today think of God only for money. God is sought only for money. Men resort to all devices to get money. Men go round wealth in adoration like the earth round the sun." (Swami sang a Telugu song). This is the travesty of devotion that we witness today. Think of God. Money will come of its own accord. Today money rules every aspect of human life. Money has its place in life. But excessive wealth is a source of harm to the individual and the nation. You must strive to acquire wealth that will give you real happiness.

### **Devotee's duty**

Today there are millions of devotees all over the world. The world would be a much better place if all of them practised at least one good principle in their daily life.

Jagadeesan (from Malaysia who had spoken earlier) called upon the devotees participating in the Chinese National Day festival in Prasanthi Nilayam to give up one bad habit and cultivate one good habit as a mark of their visit to Prasanthi Nilayam. In respect of Sai, it is enough if you

observe one good precept, namely, "Help ever, hurt never" (cheers). Indeed, you should cultivate the spirit of sacrifice. When you cultivate love with sacrifice, you will progress spiritually.

When you plant a sapling you have to water it and manure it to make it grow. Likewise, for the plant of life, you have to provide the water of love and the manure of sacrifice to enable it to grow well.

### **The craze for wealth**

The obsession with money is totally meaningless because you come with nothing in the world and leave it with nothing. (Swami sang a poem pointing out that even a millionaire cannot consume the gold he hoards.) Is it not more desirable to utilise the money on acts of charity? Many persons in Bharat deposit their ill-gotten wealth in Switzerland and some other country and leave the world empty handed. The money you make in Bharat should be spent here for the people's welfare. Help the poor and the needy. Support educational and medical institutions. Money is given to you only for helping others. There is no meaning in hoarding it.

Sacrifice! Sacrifice! Sacrifice! That is the supreme quality you have to cultivate. The Vedas have stridently proclaimed that immortality can be got only through sacrifice and not by any other means. Only through sacrifice can there be real enjoyment of what you acquire. What you earn with one hand, give away with the other. Without sacrifice life is a waste.

I give you three formulae: One: work, work and work; Two: enjoy the fruits of your labour. Today there is no gospel of work in the country. Everyone wants to enjoy without doing hard work. Whatever the troubles, work hard. Three: use your earnings for the public good. When this kind of renunciatory outlook develops among the people, the nation will prosper immensely.

### **Love and sacrifice**

Love and sacrifice (Prema and Tyaga) are the two most important ideals in life. Love all, even those who hate you. That is the index of your devotion.

In the name of devotion, people are flocking to Prasanthi Nilayam, at great expense. What is it you have accomplished by coming here? What have you learnt? Being a Sai devotee, if you practise even one or two good qualities like morality and integrity the nation will benefit immensely. There is neither truth nor morality among most people. "A people without morality are worse than a monkey", goes the saying. A great monkey served the Divine and became the recipient of His grace. Men today talk about devotion, but have no regard for the Divine injunctions.

Peace, truth and love are inherent in man. Why do you search for them outside? Manifest these qualities which are within you. You must cultivate forbearance and compassion. This is the way to foster the love principle.

### **Reign of selfishness**

Today the demon of selfishness has reared its head everywhere. If selfishness goes, divinity enters.

Today people are steeped in desires (aasalu). How many live for the sake of ideals (aasayaalu)? People develop attachment to the body (deha), but do not care to develop love for the country (desaabhimaanam).

Man's primary spiritual effort today should be in the direction of getting rid of selfishness, narrow-mindedness and attachment to the body and developing love of God, a broad outlook and devotion to the nation. Develop confidence in the Self.

Today is the Chinese New Year Day. It is a new year for the whole world, because every one's heart is his native land. Every human being is a resident in the kingdom of the Heart.

### **Duties and rights**

Everyone should recognise his responsibilities in the kingdom of the Heart and not be concerned about his rights. What meaning is there in fighting for rights with a polluted heart? Your rights will be ensured if you discharge your duties properly. There are officials who receive salaries in thousands. Are they doing enough work to justify those salaries? One who does not do enough work to justify his salary is a traitor to the nation, he is cheating the people. When you do enough work to justify your salary, you will be deriving boundless satisfaction. Duties must come first. That is the basis of Indian Culture.

### **The story of a dog's devotion**

Let me tell you a story from my early years. I was then staying in the old mandir (in Puttaparthi). An English couple was living with me at that time. They presented me with a couple of puppies. They said that the presence of the puppies with Swami would give them the feeling that they were with Swami even when they were away. I accepted the puppies. They had been named Jack and Jill. How did they live with me? At night when I went to bed, one would sleep near my head and the other at my feet.

One day, the Maharani of Mysore came to Puttaparthi. She was a very orthodox lady. She would not take her food if she heard the bark of a dog. She sent a message to Swami that if there were any dogs in His premises, they should be kept confined in a room. In those days there was no direct approach road to Puttaparthi. The Maharani kept her car in Karnatapalli (on the other side of the Chitravati) and came walking to Puttaparthi. There were no hotels at the time. The driver of the car had to come to Swami's place to take his food and get back. The Maharani said she was staying in Puttaparthi that night. The driver took his food and was returning to the car at night. As the driver would not be able to find his way in the darkness I told one of the dogs: "Jack, you better go with the driver and come back in the morning."

Jack led the way and the driver was following the dog. They reached Karnatapalli. Then the driver slept in the car. Jack slept underneath the car. The driver got up in the morning. It was chill outside. He was in a hurry to start the car and keep it ready for the Maharani. He reversed the car for a short distance. One of the wheels ran over the sleeping Jack and its back-bone was broken.

Students and scholars and all others should note how much devotion the poor dog had for Bhagavan. In great pain, the dog came dragging itself all the way to Swami's residence. It had to

drag itself over the Chitravati sands. It was profusely bleeding. At the gate of Swami's residence there was a watchman called Chakali Subbanna. He rushed to Swami and said: "Swami! Our Jack's spine is broken. It is crying as it is dragging itself." Bhagavan came out and called out: "Jack!" The dog came crying, collapsed at my feet and passed away.

See, what devotion in an animal! It dragged itself all the way to give up its life at the feet of Swami. Before it passed away, it was gazing at Swami. I got some milk to be brought and gave it to the dog. It placed two of its front paws on my palm and gave up its life. What an amount of devotion in an animal!

After Jack's death, Jill gave up eating food. A few days later Jill died. Today behind the Old Mandir, there is a Samadhi for the dogs.

What loyalty and what devotion in a dog! How much better mankind would be if only people had a fraction of the love and loyalty displayed by that dog?

### **"Give up the bad and take the good"**

Today people have no faith. They remember God in times of difficulty and forget Him when they are all right. How many follow the ideals of Swami? They only multiply their desires. What greater folly can there be than this?

There is one thing to be learnt by all people whether they are from China, Japan, India or America. The God who is in all of them is one and the same. Your love of God should remain unwavering, whatever may happen. Love is God. Live in Love. This one truth will protect you at all times. Leave all your bad qualities here and take back good thoughts and good habits. That alone will justify your coming here. Become good and improve the society.

When you go back to your country with good qualities, people will mark the change in you after your visit to Puttaparthi. Treat Prasanthi Nilayam as a spiritual workshop.(cheers). No charges are levied here. Everything is free. I am ready. Make the best use of your stay here.

Bhagavan concluded His discourse with the bhajan: "Bhajan bina sukha santhi nahi."

**—From Bhagavan's discourse in the Sai Kulwant Mandap on the morning of 13-2-1997**

## **The Only One**

Who is Sai Baba?  
I really don't know!  
What do you know about him  
Nothing!!  
Then, why do you go to Him?

Well  
To be in his presence is always a bliss  
There is nothing in this world that I miss  
Just one look  
He reads me like open book  
One smile  
I forget myself for a while  
One word  
I am lifted to a different world  
One touch  
The experience is so rich  
One pinch of holy ash  
It cures all my ills in a flash  
One boon (an Interview)  
I will be up on the moon

What else do I need on my life's D-day  
Than to sit and sing His glory all day  
and so I go to him and cry  
and no one can ask me why

In search of God and Peace.....  
I was thrown from teacher to preacher  
Only to be called a sinner and a silly creature  
But Baba was the Only One  
who revealed: I am the immortal one  
He said that all are One  
For, God is the Only One  
Now I know who He is  
He is I  
I am HE  
He and I are One  
He is the Only One

**(From the Quarterly Newsletter of Dallas Sai Centre)**

**AVATAR VANI:**

**CHINESE NEW YEAR DAY MESSAGE-II:**

### **Transcendental Value of Sathya and Dharma**

On the afternoon of the 13th, Bhagavan delivered an unscheduled discourse in the Poornachandra Auditorium, before the evening's cultural programme was to begin. Bhagavan's discourse was preceded by a short speech by Prof. Anil Kumar on the historic significance of the celebration of the Chinese New Year Day in Prasanthi Nilayam.

In the course of His discourse, Bhagavan said:

When people from every part of the world have gathered here to rejoice in a great celebration, they are being described as "foreigners" and the residents of Prasanthi Nilayam as natives. Who are the natives and who are the foreigners? When this question is examined, it will be seen that wherever Truth and Righteousness are respected and practised, the people there are to be deemed Bharatiyas. By merely taking birth in Bharat, people do not become Bharatiyas.

Bharatiya culture proclaims the two virtues: Sathyam vada; Dharmam chara (speak the truth; follow righteousness). Whoever practises these two principles is a Bharatiya.

The whole world is one vast mansion. It contains many rooms. Each country constitutes one room in this mansion. Hence, the whole world should be considered as one home.

When you regard all the limbs as parts of a body, you should consider the function of the heart in it. It is the heart that supplies blood to every part of the body. Likewise, Sathya and Dharma (Truth and Righteousness) constitute the blood sustaining all countries.

### **The devotee and God**

God is considered and adored as the creator. God created the living creatures but these beings are "creating" God. Hence these beings are also creators. God is not created by Himself. It is the devotees who are "creating" God.

The supreme devotee, Prahlada, was able, by the intensity and sincerity of his devotion, to make God manifest in a pillar. The child Dhruva could make Narayana manifest Himself in a forest. It follows that every being is a creator. Every human being is Divine. But, because of identification with the body, man considers himself an ordinary being. The difference between creation and the Creator relates only to the external form (Upaadhi). When the physical form is ignored, what remains is the Spiritual Reality.

### **China and Bharat**

In different countries, peoples of the world observe their respective festivals. Today is considered as the beginning of their new year by the Chinese. There is no difference between Bharat and China with regard to the calendar. The Chinese have dates which represent the apparent northward and southward movement of the sun (Uttarayana and Dakshinayana). In Bharat we have lunar and solar months. In China also there is such a two-fold division. In Bharat in some parts of the country, the beginning of Uttarayana marks the commencement of the New Year. They base their calendar on the lunar cycle (chandramasa). In other parts of the country, they go by the solar time (suryamasa). In China, they have a lunar and a solar year. In the Bharatiya view, there is an intimate connection between the moon and the mind and between the sun and the eye.

### **Human unity**

In this perspective, we can see that basically there are no differences between different countries regarding matters like the almanac and the celebration of festivals. For all things, the root cause

is the human heart. When the idea of oneness gets entrenched in the human heart, the ideal of human unity will be realised.

*Sarvaroopadharam Saantham*  
*Sarvanaamadharam Sivam*  
*Satchidananda Roopam Advaitam*  
*Sathyam Sivam Sundaram*

(Bhagavan recited this sloka, with which He had begun His discourse. The sloka means: The One Absolute, who is Being, Awareness and Bliss, is the embodiment of Peace in all his forms, all His names are auspicious, and He manifests the triune attributes of Truth, Auspiciousness and Beauty).

### **Sathyam, Sivam, Sundaram**

"Sathyam, Sivam, Sundaram"—Truth, Auspiciousness or goodness and Beauty—these three constitute the essential nature of humanness. In ancient times, this was the description given by Plato (the Greek philosopher). The Greeks could see the oneness underlying these three attributes. Plato expatiated on "Truth, Goodness and Beauty." Bharatiyas expressed the same thing in the terms "Sathyam, Sivam, Sundaram." Though there is a difference in the language of the words used, their essential meaning is the same. Such correspondence between concepts in Indian metaphysics and the doctrines of Christianity and other faiths exists in respect of ideas regarding the relationship between man, nature and God.

### **The love principle**

Based on their different regional and ethnic differences, people in different regions of the world developed different faiths and cultures. But the essence of all their beliefs is one and the same principle. That is the principle of love. There is no human being in the world without love. However, that love expresses itself in many ways. In a mental asylum there are people with many kinds of delusions. In a sense the entire world may be considered as a mental asylum. There are in the world people crazy about money. There are others who have obsessions regarding their health and sickness. There are others who are crazy about power and position. In this manner every individual is obsessed with some desire or other. There are, again, some who are obsessed with the idea of God. Of all these forms of madness, the madness for God is most commendable.

From birth to death, man is haunted by twelve kinds of worries. (Swami sang a poem describing the different kinds of worries and concluding with a call to men to get over all the worries by concentrating their minds on God.) By worrying about God all other worries can be got rid of. You must seek to know that by knowing which all else can be known, by attaining which everything else can be attained. The Upanishads have declared: If you knock, the door will open; If you ask, He will answer; If you seek, He will give you what you want.

Every one knocks at the door and asks. What does he ask? He does not knock at the right door. You must knock at the door leading to liberation ("Mokshadwara"). Man today knocks at the door leading to hell. Man who should seek the Bliss of the Spirit craves for earthly pleasures.

Instead of seeking the Presence of the Lord as the supreme bliss, man is distancing himself from the Divine.

### **Words and actions**

You must pray to the Divine and redeem your life. You must enter the door leading to spiritual liberation. Today people are not seeking the grace of the Divine but are appealing to the devil for favours. How can divinity be experienced by such people? You need not go anywhere in this quest. All that you have to find out is what belongs to you. Your words or your writings do not belong to you. Only your actions are yours. Today there is no harmony between deeds and your words. Your writings have no relation to your real experience. Hence, you are unable to experience real bliss.

It is better to act than to speak. Speech is easy. Practice is difficult. There is real sadhana only when you practise what you profess. There must be complete harmony between thought, word and deed. The ancients proclaimed the supreme quality of this triple harmony and purity ("Trikarana Shuddhi"). Where there is divergence between thought, word and deed, Vedanta declares that it is evil. The triple harmony is the mark of high souled beings. The wicked revel in disharmony.

### **Merit and sin**

People should develop spiritual oneness and the triple purity. Then Divinity will manifest itself. The Divine is within you. Sin and merit are related to your actions. Hence, men should engage themselves entirely in pure and sacred acts. Vyasa defined merit and sin in terms of the good or harm you do to others. ("Paropakaram" and "Parapidanam"). "Para" should be understood as referring to the Divine. Whatever action is conducive to "Self-realisation" is meritorious. Whatever action is unspiritual-antagonistic to the Self is sinful. The one Self is present in all beings. To differentiate between different beings is sinful. To consider what is one as separate and divided is a sin. "Paropakoarah punyaaya" (To help "others" is meritorious) The real meaning of this statement is "nearness" (upa) to the Divine ("Para") is meritorious. Merit consists in getting closer to the Atma (the Self). This is the inner meaning of Vyasa's statement.

### **Unity and diversity**

Hence, you should not regard countries as different and languages as barriers. The underlying unity has to be understood. Different people use different words to describe the same thing, for example, water. Whatever the words used, the substance is the same.

It is essential to see the unity that underlies the apparent diversity. When more and more people recognise this unity most of the world's problems will get solved. All social conflicts will end when people learn to see the one Divine in all beings. It is the hatred born of divisive feelings which is the cause of deadly discord in society. The Atmic Principle is the means of liberation. Self-control is the means to secure divine grace.

### **Transformation is vital**

Embodiments of love! There is no need to celebrate the New Year. Every second is the beginning of a new year. People celebrate year after year New Year days, but there is no change in their lives. The body grows from year to year but the life span is ebbing away at the same



time. People should be concerned about this. Time is most precious. God is the over-lord of Time. Time wasted is life wasted. Never waste time, because lost time is beyond recall. Do not waste time in idle gossip. Today you are celebrating the New Year instead of thinking about God, who presides over the passage of years.

God is the basis for all that exists. Rely on God rather than on things which are dependent on God. Develop self-reliance on the basis of faith in God. This was the lesson which Jesus taught to a man who was starving. On the first day he gave the man some fish to eat. The next day Jesus met the man and asked him: "You ate the fish I gave you yesterday. How are you going to get the meal today? How long am I to relieve your hunger by giving fish day after day? You must know how to secure fish for appeasing your hunger. Then you will have no need to depend on others." What everyone has to learn today is how to be self-reliant and not depend on others. How is one to be self-reliant? By developing Self-confidence (Atma-vishvas). From the moment Bharatiyas lost Self-confidence, all institutions in the country started to decline. People have to develop Self-confidence. They must adhere to Truth and Righteousness.

Whoever has confidence in the Self and follows Truth and Righteousness is a Bharatiya, no matter who he is. It is not the accident of birth that makes one a Bharatiya. The three basic verities should be practised.

Terms like natives and foreigners should not be used on territorial considerations. The terms should be applied on the basis of their beliefs and practices.

### **Truth and righteousness**

People should realise, as Sankara said, that only Truth and Righteousness are lasting and all other things, including this body, wealth and kinsfolk are impermanent. Manifest the truth within you and put into practice that truth. What you need for spiritual progress are three things: A heart free from attachment and hatred, a tongue that is not tainted by untruth, a body not polluted by violence. The one who has these three is of sacred birth. Without these three, all penances and religious practices are of no use. You have to pray incessantly for Divine grace to confer these qualities. Realise that the Divine is within you.

Life is given to you to realise lasting bliss by the right use of the body, the mind, the intellect and the inner motivator (Antahkarana). You have to acquire the wisdom to lead such a life based on the love of God.

Bhagavan concluded His discourse with the bhajan: "*Prema muditha manase kaho.*"

## **A Glorious Sivaratri Festival**

An unprecedented gathering of devotees from all parts of the world filled the vast Sai Kulwant Hall on March 7th, when the Sivaratri celebrations began in the morning with a soul-filling programme of devotional music.

As Bhagavan sat under the glittering canopy after finishing his darshan round, showering His blessings on all the devotees, the students of the Institute began their music programme, which included special songs in adoration of Siva and Bhagavan Baba. The songs were in different Indian languages, Hindi, English, Telugu and Tamil. The programme concluded with a recitation of hymns dedicated to Siva: the Linga-ashtakam and Bilva-ashtakam and Sivastotra. All the boys of the secondary and primary school joined in the recitation and made it a thrilling experience for all the devotees.

Bhagavan then blessed the prasadam to be distributed to the devotees and was offered arati before leaving for the Poornachandra.

In the afternoon, Bhagavan came to the Sai Kulwant Hall at 4:30 p.m. and gave darshan to all the devotees before 'the evening's proceedings.

Bhagavan's scintillating discourse was preceded by short speeches from Sri Shivaraj Patil, former Speaker of the Lok Sabha, Mr. Justice Bhagavathi, former Chief Justice of India, and Mr. V. K. Narasimhan, Editor of "Sanathana Sarathi". All the three speakers dwelt on the significance of the Sivaratri celebrations and the Avataric role of Bhagavan Baba in the present predicament of mankind.

Sri Shivaraj Patil, a long-time devotee of Baba, said that the advent of Sivaratri marked the end of winter and the arrival of spring with flowers blooming on the trees. He wished that the flowers of good thoughts should blossom in the hearts of one and all. Describing Bhagavan Baba as the ocean of love, he said that only with His blessings they would be able to proceed on the right path in life. People who come to Prasanthi Nilayam get charged with the love of Bhagavan and return transformed in their hearts and minds. He pleaded for unity among the people as the essential need of the hour.

Mr. Justice Bhagavathi, a member of the Sathya Sai Central Trust, spoke on the Sivatatwa in all its nine aspects. Bhagavan Baba is the embodiment of all these aspects and is engaged in the mission of transforming all humanity spiritually. He urged that man should transcend the craze for wealth and power and develop devotion for the Divine, who is omnipresent.

Mr. Narasimhan said that it was a thrilling sight to witness that vast gathering from all parts of the globe, from Australia to Argentina, united in their adoration of Bhagavan. Nowhere in the world could they witness the celebration of a festival like Sivaratri in which people of all faiths and all nations participate with such fervour. All festivals in Prasanthi Nilayam are invested with a unique holiness as a result of the presence of Bhagavan. He invoked the blessings of Bhagavan on all devotees.

Before addressing the gathering Mr. Narasimhan submitted to Bhagavan copies of his book, "Bapu to Baba", to be released by Him on the auspicious occasion of Sivaratri Bhagavan graciously blessed the book.

Bhagavan then delivered His discourse (details of which are published separately.) He concluded His discourse with a series of four bhajans, which held the entire gathering in rapture. It was an appropriate beginning for the night-long bhajan sessions associated with Sivaratri.

The bhajans were sustained all through the night by students from the different campuses of the Sathya Sai Institute.

The next morning, Bhagavan came at 6 AM and after going round the devotees in the Hall, delivered His discourse (published separately).

Prasadam blessed by Bhagavan was then distributed to all the devotees. The memorable celebration came to a close with the offer of arati to Bhagavan.

AVATAR VANI:

SIVARATRI SANDESH-II:

### **Bhajans and Bliss**

*The goddess of prosperity walks in the wake of truth;  
Fame follows sacrifice;  
Knowledge follows diligence;  
The intellect is governed by actions.*

(Sanskrit sloka)

"Sathyaanusaarini Lakshmi". As long as people adhere to Truth, prosperity will attend on them. Truth is that which is valid for all the three categories of Time—past, present, and the future. Truth is Divine. The one who adheres to Truth will lack nothing in the world.

"Thyaagaanusaarini Keerthi". Fame will follow the man who has the spirit of sacrifice. In the world today both truth and sacrifice are rare. These two are the proper goals for human existence.

"Abhyaasaanusaarini Vidyaa". Knowledge is gained by the extent to which it is diligently pursued. Diligent study is essential for the acquisition of knowledge. The Gita has declared that earnest practice leads to success in meditation. Meditation helps to promote the spirit of sacrifice. Peace is secured from sacrifice. Hence, diligence is essential for achieving anything. All actions in one's life are performed well through constant practice (Abhyasa).

### **Actions and the Mind**

"Buddhi Karmaanusaarini". (Actions determine the course of the Intellect). In the actions performed by a person, there are two types: the proper and the improper. Man's intellectual tendencies depend on the nature of his actions, good or bad. Bad actions pollute the intellect.

Good deeds purify the intellect. Hence, the condition of the intellect is determined by one's actions.

To ensure that one's actions are good, one has to cultivate good company. Association with the good influences the intellect in the right direction. Your company shows what you are. It is, therefore, necessary to cultivate the company of good people and foster good qualities.

In this world, who is a true preceptor? One's heart is the true preceptor. Time is a true teacher. The world is the best guidebook. God is the ideal friend. Hence, there is no need to search for a preceptor. The heart is your conscience. When you consult your heart or conscience, it tells you what is right. It is the right preceptor. It will not let you go astray.

Then you have Time. It is going in the right direction. In any circumstances you cannot go against Time. Teachers are of two kinds: the painful and the illuminating. Time belongs to the type of teacher who illumines. Time is the devourer of all things in due course. But the Lord (Easwara) is master over Time itself. Therefore, one should act according to the needs of the Time, with full faith in the Lord. This is the proper way to act.

### **The cosmos as teacher**

People read all kinds of sacred books: the Gita, the Bible, the Quran, the Granth Saheb and others. All these books confine their teachings to specific subjects. They do not cover other subjects related to the physical, the social etc. But the cosmos itself constitutes the most comprehensive textbook, covering all subjects, the physical, the mundane, the ethical and the spiritual. The cosmos is therefore the best text. There is nothing you cannot learn from the universe.

However intelligent a man may be, he learns all that he knows from the world around him. Without the world knowledge cannot exist.

In the distant past, the world was enveloped in darkness. For millions of years the world was covered by a heavy mass of clouds. Then started a downpour which lasted for thousands of years. This was followed by the formation of oceans, mountains, rivers and forests on the earth. The dissolution of the clouds gradually dispelled the darkness enveloping the world. Then, the sun and the stars became visible from the earth. Man has to learn many things from the phenomena taking place in the universe.

### **God is the best friend**

Next, there is the question: Who is one's best friend in the world? There are any number of fair-weather friends. Who is a lasting friend, who will stand by you in weal and woe, who is pure and unselfish? God alone is such a friend. When you make God your friend, you will be free from all troubles. Your worldly friends may desert you any moment. But God will always be with you, above you, around you. Your dearest and unfailing friend is God alone.

All of you were engaged in bhajans the whole of last night. They appeared to be largely a kind of ritual (vyavaharikam). What is the origin of this worldly ritual? It has come from the spiritual (Paramarthika). This shows that there is an element of spirituality even in worldly actions—

whether it be the practice of a profession, or a business or the pursuit of knowledge. Worldly activities get sanctified by association with spirituality.

### **The ocean, waves and foam**

From the worldly activities arise what are called "Pratibhashika" activities (unreal reflections of the worldly activities): What is the relationship between these three types of activities? The Paramarthika (spiritual) is like the ocean. From this arise the waves of worldly activities. (vyavaharika). The main characteristics of the ocean are to be found in the waves also like chillness, saltishness etc. "Pratibhashika" is represented by the foam arising from the waves. The foam has all the qualities of the ocean. The relationship between these three types has to be properly understood. Without the ocean, there can be no waves. Without the waves, there can be no foam. It is clear that without the Paramarthika (the spiritual) there can be no Vyavaharika (worldly) phenomenon. Without the vyavaharika waves, there can be no Pratibhashika foam. Their interrelationship is comparable to a grandfather (the ocean), father (waves) and son (the foam). The ocean is not diminished by evaporation or swollen by the flow of river waters. This equanimity is characteristic of the ocean. It is free from egoism and possessiveness.

### **The spiritual and the worldly**

People, however, consider the three states (Paramarthika, Vyavaharika and Pratibhashika) as different from each other. This is totally wrong. The worldly activities (Vyavaharika) should not in any way be divorced from the spiritual (Paramarthika). Only then can peace be got from worldly activities. What is the cause of sorrow in this world? It is the result of separating the worldly activities from the spiritual hand considering them as distinct from the other. The transient nature of worldly activities should be understood. It is by associating them with the spiritual that they acquire sanctity. The spiritual basis of all activity should never be forgotten.

### **Spiritualise the bhajans**

The bhajans this time were done in a ritualistic fashion. Greater attention was paid to raga, tala, laya and shruti (the melody, the beat, the rhythm and the tone). All these are conventional qualities (vyavaharika). To elevate the bhajans to a spiritual level what are required are true feeling and the ecstasy of devotion. The songs should flow not from the lips but from the heart. When the songs come out of the heart they will be blissful for the ears.

That heart is comparable to the ocean. Hence, the Lord is described as "Hridayavasi", the dweller in the heart. The heart is the seat of compassion in man. Only when men are kind, you can call humanity "mankind".

Do not think that God dwells in some temple, shrine or place of pilgrimage. He is omnipresent and His abode in man is the human heart.

When Narada sought to know from Vishnu what was His permanent abode, the Lord replied: "Wherever my devotees chant my glories, I am present there." When God dwells in the heart, why should devotee seek Him elsewhere?

Conduct your bhajans with a pure unsullied heart, oblivious to all worldly desires. When you chant the Lord's name with a pure heart, you will experience the Divine. "If a man devotes one

moment of the time devoted to thoughts of family, friends, business and wealth, to thoughts on the Lotus Feet of the Lord, he will have no need to fear the messengers of death." (Swami sang a Sanskrit sloka). Men's thoughts today are wholly concerned with acquisition of material possessions, power and pelf. How much happier would they be if they devoted a fraction of their time to contemplate the glories of God. Hours, days, years are wasted in the pursuit of things of the world. One moment devoted to thoughts of God will make all the difference.

What meaning is there in acquiring millions? A contented man is happier than a millionaire. The poorest man in the world is the one who has insatiable desires.

### **Truth and sacrifice**

Be content with what you get and carry on your duties. This is "Tyaga", a life of sacrifice.

Today the world needs *Truth and Sacrifice*. *What does sacrifice mean? Today there are millions of people who consider themselves Sai devotees. There is no need to go outside the Sai fold. If only the Sai devotees alone adhered to Truth and Sacrifice, the entire world will be transformed (cheers).*

If you wish to change the world, these two principles are the recipe. Truth (Sathya) purifies the heart. Sacrifice (Tyaga) transforms the physical environment. By this double transformation the entire world is divinised.

How long will men continue to wallow in the mundane world, forgetting the Divine? You must yearn for God and redeem your life.

Men desire to become millionaires. But how many of the millionaires have peace of mind,? Money can give many things that are conducive to comfort. But it cannot give peace of mind.

It should be realised that the body and all the appurtenances of the mind have been given to man to enable him to achieve spiritual peace (Atma-Santhi). If spiritual bliss is not attained, all other physical attainments are worthless.

Man has been endowed with a body to practise righteousness. Man has to rise above the level of birds and beasts. Dedicate your lives to the service of your fellowmen. Do not lead an idle life. Bharat has any amount of land and water. Why should people suffer from want? Because they are not engaged in the right type of activities. Many are wasting their time. Time is God. Time wasted is life wasted.

### **Worship of forms**

In the worship of the Divine, there are two schools of thought—those who worship the formless and those who worship the Divine in different forms. The differences over this issue are fruitless. Water that is formless acquires a form when it becomes ice. The formless water molecule and the ice block with the form are one and the same. Vedanta has clearly pointed out the futility of this controversy.

People get confused by the way some scholars deal with spiritual subjects on the radio and the T.V. The teachings are often based only on bookish knowledge without any practical experience. Knowledge should be based on experience. For instance, the saltish water from the ocean that is turned into vapour by the rays of the sun becomes pure and sweet. It has no trace of salt in it. It has been transformed.

The same process takes place when the grace of the Lord's rays falls on the polluted mind of man and transforms his thoughts into pure and sweet feelings.

### **Actions and consequences**

The importance of the mind in the process of transformation should be properly understood because the mind is the cause of bondage or liberation. Your actions are the cause of your happiness or sorrow. Do not blame others for your condition. Every thought, every word and every action has its reflection, resound and reaction. It is a sign of weakness to blame others for your troubles. You have to bear with the consequences of your actions. If they are unbearable, pray to God for relief. God alone can give relief in such cases. He is all-powerful and therefore take refuge in Him.

Pray to God and draw from Him the magnet of His grace and offer to the world the power of His electrical energy.

### **Energies in man**

This is the energy which man can mobilise for the good of all. It is all-powerful, because it is Divine. It is within you. What a pity that people should be unaware of this and feel themselves powerless! All energy and all bliss are within us. Because of ignorance people are resorting to all kinds of useless exercises. They are unnecessary. Have full faith in your spiritual power (Atma-shakti). Adhere to the truth of your faith, without criticising others.

Whatever you do, have the name of the Lord on your lips and faith in God in your heart. Thereby work will be transformed into worship.

### **The bliss of silence**

Today, you have to open your hearts and close your mouths. But people are doing exactly the opposite. This is treason to God. Practise silence as far as possible. Open your hearts as much as possible. The ancient sages practised "mounam" (absolute silence) as a spiritual discipline. Today people indulge in excessive talk over the trivial and the important. When silence is practised, bliss will manifest itself. The one who talks much will do little. One who acts will talk little.

I have been observing how the bhajans are sung. When the girls sing, the boys do not follow in chorus. When the boys sing, the girls do not respond. When both are singing the Divine name, why should not they sing in unison? What is the reason for this narrow separatism? This should be given up.

Once Emperor Akbar asked his court musician how he would account for the fact that a wayside beggar's music moved him more profoundly than the music of the state musician? The latter

replied that while the beggar sang from his heart to please God, his music was constrained by the desire to please the Emperor.

You should sing whole-heartedly with the desire to please God. God makes no distinction between a proficient musician and a beggar in the street. It is the devotion and sincerity that matter. Merge your soul in the bhajans you sing. Spiritualise your bhajan singing. Then you will experience real bliss.

### **Swami's teachings and expediency**

In following Swami's teachings people tend to follow them according to their convenience. For instance, when Swami said that there is only one caste, the caste of humanity, this statement is used as authority for uninhibited marriages between any two persons. This is a travesty of Swami's teaching. Caste differences are to be eliminated. But cultural differences should be respected. Swami has emphasised that every cultural group should adhere to its culture. Swami's teachings should be adhered to in their entirety and not selectively according to one's convenience.

Swami concluded His discourse with a fervent appeal to all devotees to participate in bhajans with their heart and soul and make community singing a blissful spiritual experience for one and all.

Bhagavan sang the bhajan, "*Sathyam, Jnanam, Anantam Brahma*" before Arati was offered to Him.

**—From Bhagavan's discourse on the morning of March 8, 1997**

### ***A LETTER FROM CYPRUS:***

### **Experiences of a Greek Cypriot**

"Have you ever met a very strong man in your life, Bob?" I asked Robert Natzemy. "Yes, George, I met Sai Baba," he told me. When he was leaving Cyprus he opened my hand and placed in my palm a small wooden cross which smelled of sandalwood. "This is from Sai Baba," he said.

Robert Natzemy is an American who has been living in Athens for many years. He speaks Greek very well, he writes books on improving people's lives, conducts seminars and has founded a non-profitable organization called the Harmonious Life in Greece. He came to hold a seminar, at the invitation of my friend, Dora Morphetou, some years ago.

All I knew of him was that Dora Morphetou participated in one of his seminars in Athens. When I found out that he was to come to Nicosia from a village where he had stayed for a few days, I volunteered to go and fetch him, urged by a strong and inexplicable wish. I ended up by accompanying Floros, Dora's husband, because he had arranged the trip beforehand.



From the very first moment I saw Robert Natzemy I felt that he was going to become a close friend to me. When he left, I happened to find one of his books, "Introduction to Sai Baba's Teachings," I was amazed by what I read. It was the story of an Avatar, meaning an incarnated God, who acts almost in the same way as Jesus Christ. I was really sorry that I didn't put more questions to Bob Natzemy about Sai Baba. Having finished the book I felt Sai Baba's presence whenever I meditated. I began an internal dialogue with him discussing anything which was coming into my mind.

Those days I was planning to go to Switzerland, to participate in a six-week seminar on Ayurveda, the Science of Life, organized by the Mahesh Yogi Organization. When I first heard a speech on Ayurveda, I felt that it was something very important and useful for people. It is said that Ayurveda originated many thousand years ago, when a lot of diseases infested some part of India. Some wise people decided to get together and by continuous meditation create the proper environment through which a very wise doctor of that period would be able to find solutions to the country's problems. Ayurveda was born from this deliberation.

I had agreed with my wife that I would attend this seminar provided I did not have to borrow money for this purpose. I had a stock of cosmetics, which I packed in a bag, went out in the streets and sold them. Finally I managed to get the 2000 pounds I needed. I had all the qualifications needed for someone to be accepted at the seminar. I had previously attended so many seminars on Ayurveda and read so many books, that I believed I would be one of the best participants. Apart from that I was the secretary of the Maharishi Organization in Cyprus.

As the day of my departure approached and I did not receive a message from anyone, I decided to call the Maharishi Headquarters in Holland. The answer was that my application was rejected because the report by one of the teachers of Transcendental Meditation in Cyprus on me was not good. I experienced the biggest disappointment of my life.

Since I had a lot of money I decided to propose to my wife to take a trip to Greece. The first evening in Athens we were invited to the house of some friends. There we learnt that a 26-member group was leaving for India to visit Sai Baba.

I called the airlines representative and learnt that there were two seats available. At that moment I felt that Sai Baba had invited us to visit him. From then on everything was taking place as if directed by an invisible force. The moment my sister-in-law heard that I will spend all my money for the tickets she lent me 200 pounds. And her oldest son went to his room and brought me another 100 pounds, his entire savings.

We applied for visas at the Indian Embassy which were supposed to be ready in 24 hours. When we went there the next day to pick up the passports we were told that they had been lost. No way, I said, they will be found. The passports were indeed found in awhile and the next day we flew to India.

There is a commercial road separating Puttaparthi, the village where Sai Baba was born and Prasanthi Nilayam, the place of Supreme Serenity, where Sai Baba now lives.

We were put in a big room (Block) where only couples stayed. In the evening we had dinner at the restaurant for Western people. The people preparing the food sing while working. The psychological mood of the cook, when the latter prepares the food, is very important, because the food takes the vibrations of the thoughts of the cook.

We were a group of 27 people. This number was very big to fit into Baba's interview room. Consequently when Baba asked a girl with a Greek scarf, "How many are you"? and she replied "27," he was unable to receive us all for a personal interview. Maybe if I had known that beforehand I would have taken with me some scarves (with the Cypriot flag) and he would have chosen us. The visitors were some thousands. An Italian told me that there were 500 people from Italy and a Mexican student told me that he belonged to a big group of students who had come here to serve. The Japanese march rhythmically in lines. Here you can hear all the languages of the world and see all the national costumes.

One day I found myself sitting in the first row. My feelings were changing from one moment to the other. Gratitude and enthusiasm at one moment because Sai Baba would pass very near me and might call me for a personal interview or materialize vibhuti for me, and concern and anger because I thought he was not going to notice me. When he passed next to me I was so confused that I do not even remember if he ever passed by me. When I saw him some meters away from me I used some known Cypriot phrases that are usually said when somebody is angry. I heard that many people behave in the same way because of the quick change of strong emotions.

But Baba is with me every time that I perform my meditation programme. This can take place in reality or in my imagination. I prefer to believe the first. There he is like a good friend and I tell him everything.

One afternoon at the darshan time I found myself sitting on the marble floor inside the temple. We said OM twenty-one times and then we meditated, each one of us practising the meditation he knows. I was feeling Sai Baba's presence very strongly. Now when I reflect upon it, I think that he was in a compact form of energy and since I had the same form myself, I could talk with him. I told him that I had heard about his likely departure from Prasanthi Nilayam the next day and that he definitely had to let us have a personal visit, especially my wife who had suffered a lot during the first days there. It would be nice if during the interview he was to give her a ring or something he materialized in front of all, for a present. I repeated my request 4-5 times. Finally I said: "If you do not understand Greek I will speak to you in English." I spoke to him in a very angry way as if I was a child: "If you receive my message send me a sign." I repeated the last phrase 4-5 times. Finally I had the impression that it was just him and me in the temple. "Send me a sign that you received my message." I felt a mass of energy like an electric shock hitting me on the chest. My back was frozen and I was speechless. When I came to myself I said: "So you received my message." I went out of the temple with the most peculiar feelings. I had felt the hand of God hitting me. I sat on a stone and remained speechless for a long time. I came to myself when I heard the voice of my wife who was looking for me. "Where are you? I have been searching for you for one hour." I told her my story. I also repeated it to an old Greek woman, who had been a resident of Prasanthi Nilayam for some years. "Be careful, George. Sai Baba received your message, but he did not promise you an interview." And he didn't give us any. Now that I write these lines I feel that there was no reason at the time for him to see us.

On our last day we were desperately looking for the key of the room to give it back as we had promised the man at the office. We looked everywhere. My wife who is a very careful woman took our clothes out of the suitcases, one by one, and was shaking them to find the key. In vain. I went to the office and paid some money for the key's value. When we arrived at our house in Nicosia my wife opened the first suitcase and with the first piece of clothing she took out the key fell. This is a gift from Sai Baba instead of a ring, I told her.

A year after my return from a second trip to India I was sitting outside a health food store. An Indian man and an Indian woman came to my table and said, 'hello'. They told me they had seen a book on Sai Baba in the store. They had asked the store owner who had brought the book and she had indicated me. They told me they used to live in Zambia and that since the first day they arrived in Cyprus they had been trying to come in contact with someone related to Sai Baba. On that day they had taken their car to a carwash and while waiting they went opposite to see the store. They saw a book with Sai Baba's picture and then met me. They were very pleased and since then we have been doing Sai Baba's programme every Thursday in Nicosia, and once in Limassol, the first Sunday of the month, for all Sai Baba's devotees all over Cyprus.

—George Psychis, Cyprus

### **Redemption of the Wasteland**

Because the mystery of creation is unknowable  
Because right must conquer wrong  
Because the power of truth must prevail  
Because His presence must awaken man's spirit

Because we are hollow hearted, sheathed in doubt,  
Wandering lost in labyrinths of drought  
Because we know not who we are or why  
Digging deep wells in sensation's arid sands  
Seeking there the treasure ignored within  
Because we are Timeless Awareness on assignment here  
And know it not—though knowable, we know it not,  
So the Lord is come as Sai, the One that is the All

Ask that He allay the suffering that surrounds  
Ask that you may see and serve others as Him  
Ask that your temperament be calm and steady  
Ask that you know happiness as union with Him  
Ask that His love irrigate the dryness of your heart

Ask and dedicate your lives to Him alone  
Then seeds of sacrifice shall at last be sown

And Dharma's Golden Path He shall restore  
This wasteland of selfishness shall bloom once more  
Washed by the waters of His Love,  
By His Truth revealed  
By His Bliss redeemed

—Hal Honig

AVATAR VANI:

SIVARATRI SANDESH:

### **Service, Love and Sacrifice**

*The individual self is always the Eternal Self (Sivam)  
Sivam is ever the indwelling Spirit in the individual,  
The one who is aware of this oneness  
Is verily the knower of the Self, none other.*

#### *Embodiments of Divine Love!*

Only the one who realises that there is no difference between Siva and the individual is a true knower of the Self (Atma-Jnani).

Scientists are seeking to explain the mystery of creation in various ways. The Science of spirituality has also been explaining creation in various ways. Whatever any one may say, what is perceived by us is the atom. Without the atom there can be no universe. Rocky mountains, wooded forests, the waters of the ocean, the mud of the earth and the flesh and bones of the body are all composed of atoms. No object will be perceivable without the presence of atoms. The food you eat, the water you drink, the objects you see and the earth you tread upon are all made up of atoms.

When you enquire into the nature of the atom, you realise that the whole world consists of atoms.

The Veda described the Divine as "subtler than the subtlest atom and vaster than the vastest object" ("Anoraneeyaan mahatho maheeyaan").

Many regard the atom as something which is not visible to the eye. This is wrong. The atom consists of particles which are not visible.

The ancient sages considered that the Divine was immanent in the atom. "Oh Lord! You are extremely subtler than the atom and vaster than the vastest object. You are said to be manifest in the 84 lakhs of species in the universe and declared to be omnipresent throughout the cosmos. How can we hope to recognise you?" (Swami sang a song in Telugu).

For a thousand years scientists have been trying to explore the nature of the atom. But a long time ago, the young lad, Prahlada, knew that God was immanent in the atom and proclaimed that truth. He stridently told his father: "Do not have any doubts as to the presence or absence of the

Divine from one thing or another. The Lord is all-pervasive. You can find Him wherever you seek Him!" (Telugu poem) Young people should realise the superiority of spiritual power over the power of technology.

### **Science and the Veda**

The Pranava mantra (Om) contains within it the powers of Siva and Shakti. These two powers, Siva and Shakti, correspond to what scientists call electron and proton (the two constituents of the atom). Proton forms the nucleus of the atom. The electron is moving at great speed round the proton. The Veda has described the phenomenon in different ways. It has declared that Siva and Shakti are inextricably associated with each other. This corresponds to the relationship between the electron and the proton. Anterior to the electron and proton is the particle known as neutron. This corresponds to what the Veda has called "Sat". In common parlance "Sat" is regarded as something effulgent. This is not correct. "Sat", in fact, means darkness. Out of this darkness is born light. Out of the darkness called "Ashanti", comes the effulgence of "Prasanthi". Thus darkness is called "Tama". One meaning of "Ta" is "nectar". The other meaning is "garbha" or womb. This womb is called by the scientists as "space". The second syllable "mah" means poison or Time. Thus the word "Tamas" encompasses space and Time, which are the determinants of the human predicament.

### **The human saga**

What is the origin of man? At the beginning there is "garbha" or space. In this garbha (womb or space) human life originates and has the form of a bubble on the seventh day. On the 15th day it takes the form of the embryo. On the 30th day it becomes foetus. On the 60th day, the head starts taking shape. On the 210th day, the foetus quickens with life. On the 240th day, the full body is formed. On the 270th day the child comes out into the world. The Veda declared that space and time are essential factors in human birth.

Instead of understanding the miracle of human existence, men are wasting their lives in the pursuit of transient worldly pleasures.

Although superficially it may appear as if there are differences between the findings of science and the declarations of the Vedas, essentially there are no differences. The Veda has revealed many truths not discovered by science. Science has not yet found many of the truths declared by the Vedas.

People should try to find out how much of the powers of the Divine are present in man. The individual (Jivi) and God are not different from each other. The individual, however, by his attachment to the body, is leading a mundane existence. The day man develops love of Spirit, he will realise the oneness of the individual and the Divine.

Men should understand the true relationship between the external phenomenal world and the world of the Spirit inside. The external world is a reflection of the inner being. All the happiness that he seeks from external objects is within himself.

### **Clouds, rivers and the ocean**

Take the example of the ocean. The water that turns into vapour from the ocean assumes a different form and quality. It acquires purity and sweetness and returns to the ocean in another form. Look at the changes it goes through in this process. Going up as vapour, becoming a cloud, coming down as rain, flowing as rivulets, it joins the ocean as a river. The change into vapour is "Sathya" (Truth). The formation of the cloud is Dharma (Right Conduct). Coming down as raindrops corresponds to drops of love. When the drops join to become a river, there is the flow of Ananda (Bliss). This stream of bliss merges in the ocean of Grace.

Sometime or other what has come from the Divine has to merge in the Divine. This is the natural destiny of all living beings. Taking birth as a man, leading a godly life, one ultimately merges in the Divine.

Considering the Divine as formless, some scholars have raised controversies regarding this process. The truth is that there is no object in the world which is formless. Even the minutest sub-atomic particle has a form. Only the ignorant can think otherwise.

It was for this reason that the ancient sages adored the Divine in various forms. Holding that all forms are made up of atoms, they recognised the Divine in all forms.

### **Holiness of Sivaratri**

"Sivaratri" has a variety of meanings. "Ratri" implies the darkness of night. But "Sivaratri" connotes not darkness but the special sacredness of this night. There is darkness in this night also. But this darkness is invested with auspiciousness. The reason is on this Chaturdasi day (14th day after the Full Moon), the moon, who is the presiding deity for the mind, has shed fifteen of his sixteen digits. This is an auspicious time for having proximity to God. (Bhagavan sang a Telugu song to extol the days when good people gather to meditate on God, when kith and kin fraternise in the home, when hospitality is extended to strangers and when the needy are helped. They alone are real days, all other days are indeed days of mourning).

The Upanishads refer to the attributes of the Divine as "Sathyam, Sivam, Sundaram". Plato regarded Truth, Goodness and Beauty as the attributes of the Divine. "Sivam" represents the principle of auspiciousness. It is associated with Truth on the one side and beauty on the other.

"Sivaratri" was regarded as a sacred day by the ancients. Experiencing bliss on that day they offered it to the world.

People should realise the impermanence of worldly pleasures and the transient nature of youth, wealth and progeny. People should turn their minds towards the eternal Divine.

### **Good and evil**

It may be asked if the Divine is present in all things, is there no difference between good and bad, truth and falsehood? For the person who has the conviction that the Divine is present in everything there is no good or bad. He sees the Divine equally in all things. Good and evil exist for the one who looks at these things in terms of these differences.

In the Gita, Krishna pointed out to Arjuna how he was the active force behind all events and Arjuna should consider himself as an instrument of the Divine . When anyone acts out of the firm conviction that he is an instrument of the Divine and dedicates all his actions to the Divine, he will see no distinction between right and wrong. It is attachment to the body that produces the illusion of individual doership. When that attachment goes, there is realisation of oneness with the Divine.

No doubt the body is necessary for certain purposes. But it should be regarded as an instrument and all actions should be performed as offerings to the Divine.

### **Belief in God**

Divinity is present equally in all, irrespective of their beliefs. The believers should conduct themselves on the basis that the Divine is present in them and redeem their lives by acting up to the injunctions of the Divine.

Some scientists may deny God, but they do not realise that the powers of the electron and proton are derived from the Divine. God may be called by any name, but God is one. The atheists may adore something without calling it God, but nonetheless the Divine is present in it.

Once some persons approached Buddha and put to him questions about God. Buddha told them: "Why are you wasting your time on these futile controversies? If you were told about God, you will not believe. Why should you waste my time on this matter? The basic requisites for life in this world are Truth, Righteousness and Non-violence (Sathya, Dharma and Ahimsa). Regard Truth as God. Adhere to truth. You will realise everything."

Some people ask "How are we to believe in God when we have no notion of his form?" This is sheer folly. Here is a flower. It has a form, but the fragrance emanating from it has no form. Can you deny the reality of the fragrance because it has no form? Fragrance has a form, but that form is manifested in the flower.

### **Truth behind forms**

Take, for instance, Prema (love). What is the form of love? It is your fault if you do not recognise its form. Love has a form derived from the persons who exhibit love. Without someone expressing love, love cannot exist, just as fragrance cannot exist without a flower. So, in these examples we can see the inextricable relationship between what appears to be formless and the source of its form.

To take another example: Here is a person whose form can be described in terms of various physical features. But does this description in terms of height, weight reveal anything about his internal qualities like forbearance, peacefulness, compassion, love and sacrifice. Are not these qualities very real and significant? He is prized mainly for these qualities, not for his physical features. To judge him only in physical terms is meaningless. His formless virtues are more important. When one is judged in respect of his qualities, the form is irrelevant.

### **Ashtavakra teaches a lesson**

The utter ridiculousness of judging a person solely on the basis of his physical form was demonstrated by Sage Ashtavakra to the learned Pandits in Emperor Janaka's court when all of them laughed on seeing the crooked figure of Ashtavakra. The sage laughed even louder at all of them. When they asked him for an explanation, Ashtavakra told them that the scholars who laughed at his uncouth figure were no better than cobblers who judged things by the nature of the skin. Ashtavakra told them that the truly wise person sees the Divine in all beings. "Pandithaah Samadarsinah"). Those who judge by the external form are no better than cobblers. "I laughed at all of you because I wondered how the Emperor happened to esteem you all as scholars."

This means that those who judge anything on the basis of the external form are utterly foolish. No purpose is served by trying to explain to a blind person the nature of something he cannot see. Likewise, how can anyone speak about God to a person who has no intimacy with the Divine or yearning for God?

### **Worship of forms**

Your conscience is the Divine. God dwells in the heart as a witness. This is the truth about the omnipresence of God. To experience the Divine within you, you have to cherish godly feelings. To acquire such feelings you have to perform certain spiritual exercises.

The formless Divine has to be worshipped in the form of Rama, Krishna or other forms according to one's preference. Just as air or water assumes the form of the container in which it is kept, God acquires the form in which the devotee worships Him. All forms are His.

To worship God as immanent in every atom or cell in the body is the highest form of worship.

### **Ways of the Divine**

Embodiments of Love! Through love you can achieve anything. A man without love is as good as dead. Serve all with love. The Divine is both the lover and the beloved. He is the director of the play and He is also the actor. (Swami sang a song in Telugu about the double role of the Divine in human affairs).

*"He will bring tears to your eyes;  
He will wipe away your tears."*

How does He do it? When you are immersed in worldly affairs he brings tears to your eyes. When you are immersed in spirituality he wipes away your grief.

*"He will drive you crazy.  
He will drive away your madness.  
Verily He is the ever blissful Sai."*

He makes the devotee crazy about Swami and makes him cry: "Swami! Swami! Swami!" He rescues the devotee from the crazy attachment to the world.

*"He will make the hedonist miserable;*



*He will make the miserable happy."*

An affluent pleasure seeker is rendered miserable. A miserable person is made happy. When a man becomes affluent he gets afflicted with the disease of worldly attachments.

### **The world's seven maladies**

Today the world is afflicted with seven kinds of diseases. First: business without morality. This is a major malady afflicting the world. Second: Politics without principles. Third: Education without character. Fourth: Sustenance without sacrifice. Fifth: A harvest without labour. Sixth: Humanness without virtue. Seventh: devotion without faith.

What is the use of devotion without faith? What is the use of claiming to be a man without human qualities? How can you expect a crop without cultivation? What is the use of education without character?

Three things are most essential today. One: There must be morality in business. Politics with principle ("nijaayathi") Education with character.

Today the above mentioned seven diseases are causing all the troubles to the nation. Wherever you turn, there is disorder, misery and fear. Everyone should resolve to rid the country of these seven grievous ills.

### **Love is the panacea**

How are these diseases to be got rid of? Love is the only means. Love is God. Live in love. When love is developed, hatred will have no place. Injustice will be out of bounds. People will not indulge in falsehood. They will not resort to wicked ways. People will follow the right path.

Therefore, deem love as God. Buddha declared: Ahimsa is the foremost virtue. Sathya Sai declares: Love alone is the form of the Divine (cheers).

Love all. Love is God's only property. It does not belong to man. It is not a purchasable commodity. It issues from the heart. It alone can be said to be divine. Divine love is different from human attachments. It is timeless. It is omnipresent. Make it your sole ideal. It is inherent in you. Manifest it in the proper way. If there is sugar at the bottom of a tumbler filled with water, you can make the whole water sweet by stirring the sugar and dissolving it in the water. Likewise, your heart is a tumbler. At the bottom, there is Divinity. Take the spoon of Buddhi (intellect). Stir the heart by the process of sadhana. Then, the Divinity in the heart will circulate through the entire body. Then, every action of yours will be sweet, your speech will be sweet, your walking will be sweet, your looks will be sweet, your thoughts will be sweet. You will be sweet all over (cheers).

Realise that that sweetness is within you. Turn your intellect inwards and discover that sweetness by filling the intellect with love.

### **Sweetness of Rama's name**

Saint Ramadas proclaimed the same truth when he sang his song calling upon all devotees to share the sweetness of the Rama nama. (Swami sang the song in Telugu in an appealing voice) "Here is the sweet of Rama's name. Eat it and enjoy bliss. Do not go after any other silly things sold in the bazaar. This sweet has been made out of the flour of the Vedas, mixed with the milk of the Mahavakyas, and is offered to you by the ancient sages. They made it with the sugar of inward contemplation and the ghee of pure thoughts, removed the taint of falsehood from it." The chanting of Rama's name costs you nothing. Why do you go after bad things, paying a heavy price for them?

The blissful name of Rama contains the essence of the Vedas, is the goal of all spiritual endeavour and is the essence of all spirituality. All things can be accomplished by chanting the Lord's name.

### **Eliminate the ego**

Do not look upon Sivaratri as only an annual festival. Deem every night as a Sivaratri (holy night). Wherever and whenever you entertain sacred thoughts and contemplate on God, you have Sivaratri then and there.

"Sivam" means auspiciousness. It calls for the eschewing of egoism. Those who know Telugu can see how the letter "Sa" becomes "Si" by the shortening of the mark at the end the letter "Sa". The elimination of the ego makes all the difference between "Sivam" and "Shavam" (a corpse).

Every human being should strive to destroy the ego (Ahamkara). Unless the ego is eradicated, Divinity cannot be realised.

Consider this example. Here you are, devotees who have come from distant parts of the world at great expense and trouble. Who sent you any invitation? Why have you come here? You have come to experience the love of Swami (cheers). Swami is moving amongst each of you with joy and laughter and filling you with happiness. It is because of Swami's abundant love that you are drawn to this place. If ego prevailed here, none of you would come here. It is the total absence of ego that attracts you to Swami. This was the feeling that animated the gopis of Brindavan. Their only desire was to be near Krishna at all times and in any condition. (Swami sang a song describing the gopikas' longing for Krishna's company, whatever the form in which he may appear.)

This is the true relationship between the individual and God. But people are forgetting this and wasting their time. They should be prepared to make any sacrifice to realise God, which is the primary purpose of human birth.

### **Advice to students**

Students! Whatever may be your parents' plan for you or your own plans for your future, never give up meditating on God. Serve your parents. Follow the example of Rama, who became adorable as a God by his exemplary life. He sacrificed everything to uphold the plighted word of his father. Doing your duty is true yoga. Your duty as a student is to respect your teachers, revere your parents and earn a good name in society. After you get married, you must lead a virtuous

and purposeful life in society. This is the culture of Bharat. It calls for a life of purity in thought, word and deed.

### **Seva, prema, tyaga**

This is the primary message of Sivaratri. I am giving you three maxims which you have to bear in mind: "Seva, Seva, Seva". Never forget the duty to serve. For this you have to develop love. To develop love, you have to promote the spirit of sacrifice. Service will become meaningful when it manifests love that issues from sacrifice. Consider service as conducive to your own spiritual development. 'Be good, do good'.

Bhagavan concluded His discourse with a series of bhajans, beginning with the song, "*Siva, Siva, Siva anaraada*".

**—From Bhagavan's discourse in Sai Kulwant Hall on the evening of March 7, 1997**

## **The Play behind the Play**

"Are you writing a drama?" Swami asked me in September of 1996. When I answered 'yes' He then talked about Surya, one of the students whom I had brought to the Summer Course the previous year. "Very good actor, Very good singer," Swami said. Those words were tantamount to a command. And the process of writing, casting and producing a drama for Bhagavan Baba's 71st birthday had begun, a process complete with Sai leelas to remind us that He is in complete command, in all ways and always. With the help of Audre Johnston in New York, we began the necessary research and writing for the play that was entitled "Abraham Lincoln: The Dharmic Leader".

The two principal characters were cast in California but it was more difficult to fill the smaller roles. I phoned a Sai friend in Connecticut to find out who was going to India for the birthday. While talking, I had a sudden and strong thought to ask if her husband, who had never been to India, would be interested in playing a role. "Curt has never been on stage before and he has never been to India," she said. "He has promised me that one day he will go with me. It is my deepest prayer that he come but this is short notice and his company is very busy. I'll certainly ask and let you know but it is very unlikely." Fifteen minutes later, I received a phone call. Bitsy was breathless with excitement. "He said yes! I can't believe it. He will call you tomorrow morning from the office to get more information. I can't believe it! My prayers are answered! How wonderful!" The following morning, Curt phoned, "I have never been on stage before. What part would I play?" he asked. I told him that our drama was on Abraham Lincoln and that he would be a member of Lincoln's cabinet, William Seward. There was a long silence and I wondered if the connection had been broken. "Curt, are you there?" I asked, "Yes, I am but what did you say?" he answered. I repeated that his role would be that of William Seward who was Lincoln's Secretary of State. "Oh," Curt said, and paused, "I wrote my thesis on Seward." It was clearly a Divine Invitation wrapped in His Leela. Others were to follow.

### **A backdrop takes shape**

The play had been cast, but a large backdrop had to be created for the Poorna Chandra stage. In reply to an announcement made at the two local Sai Centres, six artists came forth to offer their help. Splendid help it was, for it was an example of working together in high spirited and happy harmony. The team soon agreed on a theme and on the appropriate colours to be used. However, we needed to find an appropriately wide backdrop fabric, preferably seamless, and we needed to have it quickly. At that point, one of the artists who works as a set designer phoned to tell me that exactly what we wanted was most unexpectedly offered to him free of charge provided it could be taken at once! It just so happened that one of the other artists lived around the corner from the theater and the fabric was delivered almost immediately. A few minutes later, I received an excited phone call from the artist whose home was being used for the work to be done. "The material is here and it is perfect." she said, "and I just found the name of the manufacturer stamped on the corner of the cloth: it reads as Sai-Clo-Rama!" Shortly after, the paint arrived and then another phone call: "The name of the paint manufacturer is Murali! Isn't that wonderful!" With the ego free pooling of creative energy, artistic temperament was centered on the unity that comes from loving service to Sai. The names of Rama, Krishna and Sai were present and the product and the leelas were memorably beautiful.

Although there was little rehearsal time, the play went well and the experience of the 71st Birthday was perfect. Upon return to the United States, four of the players who lived in Connecticut felt guided to open a new Sai Center in their area. This is now happily functioning as a successful effect of the Lincoln drama. Nothing happens without His Will and what Grace to be permitted the opportunity to be His Instruments!

—H. H., New York

### **The Problem of Evil**

The world now is in a real mess and we have created it ourselves. What is even worse is that many of the so-called scientists and sociologists don't admit that we have been destroying and plundering the planet and that we are in deep trouble. So, they are carrying on with their mindless research programmes and the so-called modern method of solving the complex social, political and religious issues.

Therefore, the assurance of the Sai Avatar of the recurrence of a new Golden Age is timely and comforting. Many of us in our eagerness would like to see the Golden Age to be here and now. However, we must be patient for it cannot begin until the mess we are in is cleared up first.

#### **What is evil?**

It appears to be a simple question. In reality it is a rather difficult and complex question involving many complicated and ambiguous issues. Evil exists. It will continue to exist even when the Golden Age returns. Perhaps it will not be as much a threat and menace to our society as it is today. Perhaps it will have a much lower profile among men Nevertheless it will be there in one form or another. Therefore, we are entitled to ask, "How does God permit evil in the

world when He Himself is all Love and Compassion and Truth?" These questions require appropriate answers if we are to eliminate or at least drastically reduce the problem of evil from our society.

The English Dictionary defines an evil as something bad, harmful, wicked. The problem starts as soon as we begin to interpret these terms for what is bad or harmful to one may not be the same to someone else. For instance, ionizing radiations are harmful to normal healthy persons, yet they are absolutely necessary for treating cancer patients. War is essentially destructive and wrong and yet sometimes it has to be employed to remove a wicked dictator. We are helpless without rain. But, on the other hand, there are occasions when it causes devastating flood destroying lives and property. A fire may cook one man's meal; it can also burn another man's house.

These examples are chosen to illustrate the ambiguity of situations that we normally come across in our daily life. That does not mean all situations are like them. Indeed there are many situations that can be easily identified as either evil or good.

### **Nature and the law of karma**

In the universe Nature is the most interesting element. It has so many things with breathtaking beauty, yet there is so much of violence in it. For example, in the beautiful underwater world a big fish has to swallow small ones for its survival. In turn, it is food for sharks. But, the sharks cannot escape the process. They are hunted by other aquatic animals.

It is not very different on the surface either. A small insect is eaten by a big one. One reptile kills another one for food. The tigers, lions and bears have to kill other animals for survival. And the list goes on.

Therefore, should humans be blamed for killing animals for food? But there is a difference between animal behaviour and human conduct. Nature came into existence along with the creation of the universe. It cannot be sustained as a haphazard or disorderly entity. There must be an order or a law for its natural sustenance. That law, irrespective of whether we believe in it or not, is the Law of Karma. Insects, reptiles and animals do not violate that law. They do what they have to do for survival. They behave in a natural way. They play their respective part in sustaining the ecological balance in Nature.

A man, on the other hand, is a law unto himself. He breeds animals to be slaughtered for food. To him an animal is food, not living creature. He treats animals as potatoes, bananas. They are livestock and money. Man considers himself as the Master of Nature. He decides which animal should live, which should be slaughtered. He commits poaching and culling, all for the good of animals or even birds! On the one hand he breeds animals for eating them; on the other, he deliberately commits culling to control their population. Everything has to be according to his convenience. If their population comes to the point of extinction, he becomes even more generous! He starts taking conservation measures. When animal farming becomes a cause of major ecological disaster, he blames Nature for what has happened. He must have free will. He loves it. But, when he misuses it, then it must be the fault of others. Extrovertism is such an easy escape route. Wonders will never cease to exist.

## **Origin of vices**

Problems, whether they are social, religious, political or any other, do not grow like mushrooms. They are created by man. The above examples illustrate very clearly how they come into existence. They also demonstrate that habitual vices such as greed, temptation, dishonesty, deceit, hypocrisy and similar others are perception, indeed creation, of the mind, not creation of God.

These vices have always been in existence. They will continue to exist. The question is, "Did God create them to cause problems for man?" If so, it amounts to a deliberate act of destabilisation of His own creation. This is impossible, unthinkable. God cannot be God if He were to be responsible for such an act. Let us take a few examples to clarify this point.

BSE is a typical, indeed topical, issue. Scientists and technologists who devised through scientific research ways to turn animal offal into rich protein source were aware that cows are herbivorous animals. To feed them with offal is against their natural way of living. Yet they went ahead with their so-called scientific research, apparently to save money, many of them must now be regretting their actions.

All over the world there are so many tobacco industries. They provide employment, income and livelihood for thousands and thousands of people. Nevertheless, it has been fully established that tobacco causes lung cancer, kills people. They hide behind the argument that nobody is forced to buy cigarettes. At the same time they design advertisements to increase sales. They employ scientists to conduct research to reduce the tar and nicotine content of cigarettes. It is a step in the right direction for it is likely to reduce the number of deaths from cigarette smoking. But death, it will always cause. There is no escape from it. Can the tobacco industries invest their capital in a different way? The problem is solved if people stop smoking. But can they? Or will they?

There are many people in the world who grow poppy seeds, cocaine and marijuana to earn their living. They know these materials cause a lot of social problems, even death. Still they cannot refrain from growing them. Their perception of morality and ethics is not the general norm. They look at their social and family requirements from a completely different perspective.

I was not fully aware of the effect of the National Lottery until it was introduced in the UK. It has been a national weekly event in many countries. There are people who do not like paying a high rate of income tax. When the element of temptation, of getting wealthy instantly is introduced, they gladly part with their money. In the process the National Governments, instead of taking money as income tax, take a substantial cut of the lottery income, a few people get rich overnight, but most people lose out in the end. Indeed they lose more money through the Lottery than they would have otherwise done if they paid income tax at a slightly higher rate. What is most unfortunate is that it is making some people habitual gamblers. But how many people would like to stop it now? (One can also say that unaccustomed wealth has ruined the lives of some of the lottery winners.)

### **The role of religion**

These are a few examples of human frailty, if one would like to view them in that light. It is possible to cite hundreds of such examples. They indicate how perception differs from one person to another and how the mind creates such situations. It is not difficult to discard such instincts or at least improve them. We do not take that step. Instead we ask, "Why does God permit evil?"

The general perception of adherence to religion is that praying to God, singing hymns or bhajans in praise of God, going to temple or church, is enough. Also, there is a general tendency to believe that a sin, however it is committed, will be washed away if one prays to God. Belief such as this has given way to people succumbing to temptation, even wrong doing. This is a misguided conception. There is no doubt that sincere prayers have beneficial effects; however, adherence to religious practice is only meaningful if it is supported by righteous living.

Therefore, the principal role of a religion is to show the way to righteous living, a way of life that takes one away from temptation, ill thoughts and wrong doing. If we would have lived in that way, the world would not have been in such a mess. The law of nature is that whatever we do today will return like a boomerang- good as good, bad as bad. Our future is in our hands.

### **Can Sai Baba and His teaching help?**

The short answer is, yes. Bhagavan Sai Baba has the largest individual following in the world. This is not confined to one religion or one nation. This is because what He is, what He preaches, what He has been doing is for humanity.

Sai Baba is Avatar of the Age. An Avatar is God in a human body. Baba says, "I am yours, you are mine.... There is no distinction and distance." This is because the invisible entities—the soul, mind, conscience, heart and intellect - that we represent are the same as His for their origin is One and the same God which He is. Therefore, the way of an Avatar is to demonstrate that it is not necessary for the mind to be involved in temptation, greed, ill thoughts or wrong doings. It is possible to lead an honest, peaceful and virtuous life even when one is surrounded by so many vices and temptations. The life of Sai Baba is a perfect practical example of that nature. He has been demonstrating it since He was a little boy. He has never said to anybody, "Thou art evil. Thou shall go to Hell," for His way is not to condemn but to help us realise our Divinity.

Bhagavan Baba has already cleaned up some of the mess we have created. But the process is slow. We need to be patient. If we would like to see the Golden Age come early, we must at all times follow His footsteps and respond to His call for help. We must set examples to others as He has been doing to us. That is the only way forward.

**—Jatindra Saha (From the U.K. Quarterly Magazine dedicated to Sathya Sai Baba)**

*Young men have to spring into the sphere of action and strive to the best for the building up of a resurgent India, and a happy peaceful world. They must shed the desire for power. The desire to uproot corruption and immorality, and the urge to work hard should firmly be implanted in the heart of every student. Mother India's future depends on them and she is waiting for them.*

*Even as it is the duty of children to serve and please their mother, it is the bounden duty of every child of Mother India to make her happy. To serve the Motherland selflessly should be the sacred ideal of one's life.*

**—Baba**

## **Where the Search Ends**

Imagine entering a world which is free from hunger, thirst, illness, sorrow, old age, death and impurities. In this world we see a vast and beautiful lake whose waters are like nectar and whosoever tastes this water is drunk with joy. Besides this beautiful lake is a tree whose nectar yields the juice of Immortality. Within the heart of this world is a secret dwelling—a beautiful lotus and within this dwelling is a space which is as vast as the Universe in which are contained the earth, the heaven, the stars, the sun and the moon. This is where man finds freedom, from all worlds. This is where all desires find their fulfillment in the Self. This is what the Upanishads call the city of Brahma or Brahmapuram. Christ called it the 'Kingdom of God' and St. Teresa described it as the "Interior Castle". This is the abode of our true Self, the Atman or the Eternal Spirit whose thoughts are Truth and whose love is Truth. The Vedas call upon man to rediscover himself by tracing his path to the Truth that lies within him and realise that he is nothing but God Himself. Swami has declared, "I have come in order to repair the Ancient Highway leading man to God." It is for guiding us back to the City of Brahma that Swami has, being the very Embodiment of love and truth, descended upon earth.

Etymologically, the word Brahman originates from 'Br' meaning to breathe and 'Brih'—to be great. Its qualities are Sat, Chit, and Ananda: Being, Consciousness and Bliss. Brahman describes a state of consciousness beyond time and space, in which Being, Consciousness and Bliss merge to become One. That which is beyond eternity. Om is the sound of Brahma and at the end of Om is the silence of Joy. This consciousness of joy is far above ordinary consciousness that allows man to apprehend the Reality of God. The Taittiriya Upanishad says: "Words and mind go to him, but reach him not and return. But he who knows the joy of Brahman fears no more." This is also reflected in the 14th Century Christian manual, The Cloud of Unknowing, which says, "By love He may be gotten and held; but by thinking never."

We come into this world in search of that which is Permanent within us but get lost in the impermanence of life and everything that we come in contact with externally. Time and again, we join the cycle of birth and death, having failed to realise our goal. Plato describes this best when he says that we are all sitting in a cave and looking at the shadows that are cast on the wall. Only a very few of us turn our heads in the direction of the light and venture into its Truth.

What do we understand by the word Truth and how different is it from the concept of 'truth' as we know it in our daily lives? According to Swami, "Truth is something that is not modified by time or space or guna (quality). It must be the same forever, unaffected and unchanged; then alone is it truth. It should not prove false by some subsequent event or knowledge."



## **Two forms of truth**

Sri Sankaracharya talks about two forms of truth. The first form of truth is what we perceive through the senses and which holds good in our daily lives. The universe seen in its individual aspect is called Vyavaharika Sathya or practical truth. But the higher form of truth which transcends our sense perceptions is referred to by Sankaracharya as Paramartha Sathya or the Ultimate Truth. Man has to be led by a burning faith in the spiritual values like honesty, morality, love, truthfulness and charity in his daily life in order to evolve towards the Ultimate Truth. Swami says, "It makes no sense to adore God as the incarnation of Truth, if you neglect truth in your daily life."

'Sathyam' is the Sanskrit word for Truth. In the Chhandogya Upanishad it is divided into three syllables: Sat-Ti-Yam. Sat is that which is immortal, Ti is that which is mortal and Yam is what binds the two together. Thus: "He who knows this goes day by day to the heavenly world." Looking at it in a different light, the first and the last syllable are the truth and the middle is enclosed on both sides by truth. It thus assumes the nature of truth itself. He who realises this remains untouched by untruth.

Why is it so difficult for man to know the true essence of his life and attain that oneness which is called Supreme Consciousness? Some of us experience what Swami describes as a "flash of wisdom, which is like lightning amidst the clouds in the sky." But not many are able to foster and preserve this light of wisdom. Since our perception of life is limited to the transitory world of the body-mind intellect, we are unable to understand the greater truth within us. This is the source of all our pains, sorrows and despairs. The Upanishads tell us that there is really no difference between this Supreme Reality and the essential Reality behind the delusory world of names and forms: "What is within is also without. What is without is also within. He who sees difference between what is within and what is without goes evermore from death to death." The knower of Truth or illumination sees that all finite things have their origin and their end in that which is infinite and Eternal. His vision changes and even in the midst of pain and sorrow he sees nothing but the Self's joy and bliss. Realisation of this Oneness is the hallmark of a truly evolved soul. Such a soul, according to Eckhart, lives with "one eye on time and the other on eternity."

## **The Nachiketa's Story**

The inspiring story of Nachiketa from the Katha Upanishad, illustrates the faithful endeavour of a young boy, who seeks to discover the secret of life and death by making the Inward journey to the City of Brahma. Nachiketa's father is an old Brahmin priest who, at the end of the priestly career performs a great sacrifice to obtain heavenly gains. Forgetful of the true meaning of sacrifice, he gives away his possessions with considerable pomp and in the process compromises by giving away old and non-productive cows. Nachiketa realises that his father, though a great master of the scriptures, has not really transcended his desires and attachments. Moved by a burning spirit of inquiry, he repeatedly asks his father, "I am also your valued possessions, to whom will you offer me?" In utter frustration his father replies, "To Death do I give you." Thus begins Nachiketa's journey into consciousness which takes him to the doorsteps of Yama, the God of Death himself. Yama tempts the young boy with many worldly gifts, but Nachiketa, standing as a symbol of the reborn Spirit, rejects all these and single-mindedly tells Yama: "Teach me the Truth."

Seeking the Ultimate Truth is no easy task. "The path is narrow as the edge of a razor" says Yama to Nachiketa. He points out two paths which man can take: Shreya, the good or the beneficial path of the wise man, and Preya the pleasant path of worldly man. Most men take the latter path, Yama explains to Nachiketa, saying "Again and again they come to me." Plato also points out this truth in the Phaedrus when he says, "In every one of us there are two ruling and directing principles, whose guidance we follow wherever they may lead; the one being an innate device of pleasure, the other an acquired judgement which aspires after excellence. Now these two principles at one time maintain harmony, while at another they are at feud within us, and now one and now the other obtains mastery."

The Katha Upanishad gives utmost importance to this present life of ours. It states that Brahman can be realized only in this life or in the highest spiritual realm. In none of the other spiritual regions can Reality be apprehended. Therefore, man has to seize the opportunity of this lifetime to work towards his goal, since failing to do so would mean returning to the cycle of birth and death. Few, however, attempt to tread this narrow path to Self-Realization. Most of us strike a compromise between the Naked Truth and our beloved egos. As Lord Krishna says to Arjuna in the Gita, "Among thousands of men perhaps one strives for perfection; and among thousands of those who strive perhaps one knows me in truth."

### **The city of eleven gates**

This City of Brahma is also called the eleven-gated City, the eleven gates being the eleven senses which have access to and from the Soul. Therefore, a constant vigilance has to be kept over the "traffic" that passes in and out through these 'gates'. In other words, while outward activity is unavoidable, control of the bodily senses is absolutely necessary for the integrity of the Soul. Control does not mean repression of the senses but a constant watchfulness which prompts one towards right thoughts and actions. In the words of the Gita: "He who withdraws himself from actions, but ponders on their pleasures in his heart, he is a deluded man and is called a hypocrite."

The concluding words of advice given by Yama to Nachiketa are: "When all the desires that cling to the heart are detached, then the mortal becomes the Deathless. Here and now he attains the Brahman." What do we understand by the word desire? According to Sri Krishna Prema, "Desire is a movement of the psyche towards or away from (for aversion is only the negative of desire) some object thought of as outside itself. It is thus a movement of ignorance, for there is nothing that is in truth outside the Soul." Ignorance is what makes the individual assert that 'I am this body,' 'This is mine' and encourages him to become ego-centric and seek domination over others. Selfishness and attachment to sense objects create a sense of separation (bheda-buddhi) and therefore are the most serious obstacles to Self-Realization. True happiness lies in giving and transferring the ultimate interest of one's life towards the well being of all. Only then does man become conscious of the unity behind the multiplicity and recognize his true existence which is centered in the Divine.

The Chandogya Upanishad compares the mind to the movement of a bird that is tied to a string. After flying aimlessly in all directions and finding no resting place elsewhere, the bird returns to the very place where it is tied. Similarly, the mind (also called the Jiva or transmigratory soul) is

tied to the Prana. Through ignorance and desire, it seeks the pleasures and pains of the activities of the external world. Tired of this aimless wandering, and failing to find freedom and happiness in its external activities, it returns to its original refuge in the Paramatman. After all, in the words of Plotinus, "The Soul exists *in revolution around God* to whom it clings in Love."

In the Gita Lord Krishna defines three attitudes or gunas which influence the way each of us pursues his or her activities in life and which generate a feeling of attachment to them. The Satwa Guna binds one to happiness and knowledge; the Rajas gives rise to desires for acquisition of things, the Tamas, which is born of ignorance, leads to inaction and idleness and loss of one's capacity to discriminate between right and wrong action. To be free is to transcend one's lower impulses and selfish passions and lose the ego-sense. Lord Krishna says, "He who with never-failing love adores me and works for me, he passes beyond the three gunas and becomes one with Brahman."

Few are those who have been able to transcend the three gunas and get a glimpse of the light beyond. Sri Ramakrishna said that even after the illumined soul attained knowledge of Brahman and experienced "Samadhi", he still retained the "ripe ego" in order "to taste the Bliss of God and teach people". Sankaracharya maintained the "ego of Knowledge", to teach people. Hanuman, after realising God in His Personal and Impersonal aspects, is believed to have retained the "servant ego" or the attitude of a devotee in the service of God.

### **Inward Purity**

Truth is thus a consciousness that has its origin in one's inner wisdom (also called intuition) guiding us to do the things which are right and avoid wrong actions. Sri Ramakrishna, while inculcating this inward purity in his devotees, once said: "When I renounced everything with an offering of flowers at the Lotus Feet of the Mother, I said: 'Here, Mother, take Thy holiness. Here Mother, take Thy Dharma, take Thy adharma. Here Mother, take Thy sin, take Thy virtue. Here Mother, take Thy good, take Thy evil. And give me only pure bhakti.' But I could not say, 'Here, Mother, take Thy truth, take Thy falsehood.'"

Each man follows his own destiny which is governed by his desires. The law of karma has brought us once more into the field of action of this lifetime. It may take us one or several times to realize our full divinity, depending on the level of our spiritual evolution. But let us resolve to tread the path of the wise by putting into practice those truths which will secure us Swami's Divine Grace necessary for leading us back home to the City of Brahma. Swami says, "After long searches here and there, in temples and in churches, in earth and heaven, at last you come back to your own soul and find that He for whom you have been seeking all over the world, for whom you have been weeping and praying in churches and temples, on whom you were looking as the mystery of all mysteries shrouded in the clouds, is nearest of the near, is your own Self, the reality of your own life, body and soul. That is your nature. Assert it, manifest it." May these immortal words of Supreme Truth of the Taittiriya Upanishad resound in the very core of our divine being: "From joy all beings come, by joy they all live and unto joy they all return."

—Indira Pradhan, Ohio, U.S.A.

## **A Memorable Visit**

To thousands of Sai devotees in Madras city and Tamilnadu, Bhagavan's two-day visit in April—all too brief—was verily like a sharp summer shower after a long spell of drought, coming as it did after an interval of over fifty months.

Responding to the earnest prayers of the devotees, Bhagavan left "Trayee Brindavan" for Madras early in the morning on April 10th after the offer of arati by Bangalore Seva Dal members and residents of Brindavan.

The intense yearning of the devotees to have darshan of Bhagavan was evident from the fact that thousands of them had lined up in orderly rows in and around "Sundaram" from 7 a.m. although Swami was expected to arrive there between 10 and 11 a.m. Many who could not find room within "Sundaram" were seated in the spacious shamiana put up outside "Sundaram."

Bhajans began at 10 a.m. when a message was received that Bhagavan's motorcade had reached the outskirts of the metropolis.

Bhagavan's arrival at 10:30 was greeted with cheers from the eager crowds. The Seva Dal had made excellent arrangements to regulate the crowds.

On arrival at the entrance, Bhagavan was received with ceremonial honours as He stepped out of His car. Bhagavan first went to the shamiana outside "Sundaram" and blessed the gathering with his Abhayahastha. Bhagavan then proceeded towards "Sundaram" led by a nadaswaram troupe and a group of Vedic chanters. Bal Vikas children offered flowers at the feet of Bhagavan as He graciously walked on the red carpet, blessing all the devotees around as He moved. Here were His loving devotees who had been patiently waiting in the sun for His darshan.

Bhagavan then entered the Mandir and ceremonially inaugurated the newly reconstructed sanctum with a fine life-size portrait of Bhagavan Baba flanked by an artistically designed megamangalagiri.

After this function, Bhagavan proceeded to the Shirdi Shrine to the north of the mandir. Here He materialised a multigem star-shaped jewel which He pressed on the forehead of the Shirdi Baba idol. It was indeed an ecstatic moment for the devotees present in the shrine, including Srimati Anjelidevi. Bhagavan blessed them all.

Bhagavan then went up to the first floor of "Sundaram" and showered His blessings from the balcony on all the waiting devotees before retiring to His room.

An announcement that there would be bhajans in the evening, followed by a Divine discourse, was greeted with joy by everyone.

A mammoth gathering of several thousands filled every inch of space inside the Sundaram grounds and all the available space outside well before the afternoon meeting was to begin.

Bhagavan came out at 4:25 p.m. and went round the gathering before going up the Santhi Vedika. Bhajans went on, with all the devotees joining in chorus.

The meeting began with invocatory prayers. Sri T. G. Krishnamurthy, President of the Tamilnadu State Sai Organisation, welcoming Bhagavan, expressed the gratitude of all the devotees for the blessing conferred on them by Bhagavan's visit after a lapse of over fifty months. He invited Prof. Sampath to address the gathering and prayed to Bhagavan to bless the gathering with His benedictory discourse.

Prof. Sampath—former Vice-Chancellor of the Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning, in his brief speech in Tamil spoke about the perennial wisdom contained in the teachings of Bhagavan whose epochal mission was to transform people and divinise their lives.

Bhagavan then gave His discourse (published separately).

After arati the function came to a close.

On 11th April, crowds started gathering right from 3:00 a.m. to have darshan of Bhagavan at the end of Nagarsankirtan. The crowd was estimated at more than twenty thousand at 5 a.m. The roads on either approach to "Sundaram", Greenways Road and Chamiers Road, were closed for vehicular traffic and were filled with people.

After Nagarsankirtan Bhagavan gave Darshan at 6 a.m. from the lotus shaped balcony of "Sundaram."

There was bhajan at 7:30 a.m. when Bhagavan went round the entire gathering and blessed them.

In the afternoon, there was a huge gathering of devotees anticipating Bhagavan's discourse though only bhajans had been announced.

Sri S. V. Chitti Babu, former Vice-Chancellor of Madurai and Annamalai Universities and a member of the Governing Body of Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning, gave an illuminating talk highlighting the unique integrated education given free at the Sathya Sai Institute. It was a model for others to follow in the interests of the future of the country and the world.

Then Bhagavan gave his Divine Discourse (published separately).

After arati the function concluded.

On 12th morning, huge crowds of devotees congregated for Suprabhatam and Nagarsankirtan. After Suprabhatam, when the Nagarsankirtan of ladies started there was a sudden cloud-burst and torrential rains followed accompanied by thunder and lightning. It was an amazing spectacle to see the vast number of women and men fully drenched by the downpour, not swerving from their march singing divine bhajans. They assembled back at Sundaram and were all the while standing fully drenched by the continuing showers, which ceased just as Bhagavan came out for

Darshan at 6:05 a.m. They had their hearts full of joy and bliss on beholding their Beloved Bhagavan's captivating form.

Bhagavan left "Sundaram" at 7:30 a.m. after blessing all the devotees assembled.

—G.S.R.

## **Festivals Galore in Brindavan**

Unprecedented devotion and gaiety marked this year's Yugadi celebrations in Brindavan on April 8th. Sai devotees in Bangalore spared no effort to make the decorations in Sai Ramesh Hall and its environs a spectacular show for the great occasion. The Santhi Vedika, with its shining bronze figure of Venugopala, decorated with multi-coloured garlands, was made resplendent with artistic floral draperies in the background depicting peacocks and elephants offering homage to the Divine.

Large shamianas had been put up in front and around Sai Ramesh Hall to accommodate the prodigious gathering of devotees from Bangalore and various parts of India and the world who had gathered in Brindavan to greet the advent of the New Year "Easwara" in the divine presence of Bhagavan. Never before had such a large gathering assembled in Brindavan for the celebration of the New Year. Floral banners put up on arches at various points conveyed greetings to Bhagavan on the auspicious occasion.

As thousands of men, women and children eagerly awaited the arrival of Bhagavan, Swami came from "Trayee Brindavan" at 8 a.m. heralded by a Nadaswaram troupe playing music appropriate for the happy occasion.

Bhagavan went round the gathering, blessing one and all. After He took His seat on the Santhi Vedika, the bhajans began. At 8:30 arati was offered to Bhagavan and sweet prasadam, blessed by Bhagavan, was distributed to all the devotees.

In the afternoon, devotees started streaming into Brindavan as early as 2 p.m. eagerly waiting for Swami's discourse at 4:30 p.m. Precisely at 4:25 p.m. Bhagavan entered the hall accompanied by the former Home Minister Sri S. B. Chavan, and the former Speaker of the Lok Sabha, Sri Shivaraj Patil. After invocation by students of the Sai institute, the warden of the Brindavan Campus, Sri Narasimhamurthy, introduced the two distinguished guest speakers, Sri Chavan and Sri Patil.

### **"The only hope"**

Sri S. B. Chavan, in a short speech, offered pranams to Bhagavan on behalf of all those assembled and declared that this generation was singularly fortunate to have Bhagavan amidst them to guide them on the right path. He referred to Bhagavan's efforts to transform the society by establishing model educational institutions to give free value based education to lead the country and the world. He referred also to the establishment of the Super Speciality Hospital and

Bhagavan's stupendous drinking water project which was a model to the State and Central Governments. The project to provide pure drinking water to 750 villages in the drought-prone district of Anantapur was an amazing achievement that was made possible only by Bhagavan's Divine Will. He said that all these projects were carried out within a limited time that was inconceivable for any government. He commended this as an example not only for India but for the whole world. He concluded his talk by declaring that Bhagavan was the only hope for bringing about world peace and prosperity based on the spiritual oneness of mankind. Sri Shivraj Patil began with a confession of the inability of a politician to reach the height of spirituality. He said that Swami's abode was verily a heaven on earth. One did not have any feeling other than love and devotion in the presence of Bhagavan. He said: "We are beholden to this living God, who is Sathyam, Sivam and Sundaram, and we are extremely fortunate to have His Darshan and the blessing of His Divine Message on this holy and auspicious occasion. We have to take account of our failures in the past year and pledge ourselves to avoid such lapses in the future and strive to progress on the path of righteousness as taught by our Divine Master."

Bhagavan then delivered His Divine Discourse (published separately).

After arati, prasadam was distributed to the devotees. Bhagavan left for Madras on the morning of the 10th and returned to Brindavan on the 12th after spending two days in "Sundaram."

### **Vishu celebrations**

April 14th was a sacred day for the people of Tamilnadu and Kerala as it marked the beginning of their New Year according to the solar calendar.

Hundreds of Keralites had gathered at Brindavan for the celebration of "Vishu" in the Divine presence of Baba. They had decorated the stages and premises of Sai Ramesh Hall in typical Kerala style. Several lamps mounted on earthen vessels painted with designs of coconut palms adorned the stage.

Bhagavan arrived at 8 a.m. and blessed all the devotees, going round the hall. The devotees from Tamilnad and Kerala, who were seated in separate blocks, were blessed by Bhagavan. Sri Sreekumar from Kerala sang a few devotional songs.

After the music programme, Bhagavan took arati and prasadam was distributed to the entire gathering.

In the afternoon, an overflow gathering was present in Sai Ramesh Hall for Bhagavan's discourse. After a few bhajans and invocatory Vedic prayers by students, Justice Eradi, former Supreme Court Judge, addressed the gathering on the significance of Vishu. Maj. Gen. Mahadevan spoke about the significance of the Tamil New Year day. Bhagavan then gave his Divine Discourse.

### **Sri Ramanavami**

The holy Sri Ramanavami festival was celebrated on 16th April.

The entire premises of Brindavan and Sai Ramesh Hall were decorated lavishly with flags and banners. The stage in Sai Ramesh Hall was tastefully decorated with a profusion of floral designs enhancing the sanctity and beauty of the Mandap.

Bhagavan came to the hall precisely at 8 a.m. and went round the huge gathering of devotees blessing them all. After a programme of bhajans, sweet prasadam was distributed in the hall. In addition, the devotees were treated to the traditional paanakam (jaggery syrup) and mixture of pulses and cucumber slices, which are offered to Sri Rama on His birthday.

After bhajans and Vedic invocations, the meeting was addressed by Sanjay Sahani, a member of the faculty of the Brindavan Campus. Speaking on the significance of Sri Rama Navami, he related several acts of exemplary virtue performed by Rama. Rama considered no sacrifice too big for honouring his plighted word.

Bhagavan then gave His Divine Discourse (published separately).

After arati and distribution of prasadam, the day's function concluded.

—S. R.

*WITH BHAGAVAN IN TRAYEE BRINDAVAN: I*

### **Memorable Evenings at the Lotus Feet**

If students of the Brindavan Campus look forward, like the proverbial chataka birds, to the arrival of Bhagavan in Brindavan in March, it is no matter for surprise because Bhagavan's edifying evenings with them in "Trayee Brindavan" are not only a source of inspiration but unforgettable moments of ecstasy. Bhagavan's informal talks in the artistic precincts of "Trayee Brindavan" have a unique nectarine quality. His message is conveyed with the directness and intimacy of a heart-to-heart dialogue while elevating the hearers to a high level of spiritual awareness.

The students and the staff are exceptionally fortunate and privileged this year because Bhagavan's stay in March-April (from March 19 to April 17) in Brindavan was longer than in previous years and Bhagavan's talks covered a wide range of subjects. Bhagavan was concerned on every occasion to impress on the students their essential divinity and their obligations to their parents, their preceptors and to society as a whole.

#### **Nation builders**

In one of his earliest talks Swami narrated at length the career of the engineer-statesman, Mokshakundam Visvesvarayya, who transformed the face of Mysore state by his irrigation and hydro-electric schemes and by promoting the all-round industrial development of the state. Swami pointed out how perseverance and devotion to public welfare contributed to Visvesvarayya's memorable achievements.



On another day Swami referred to the role of Subhash Chandra Bose in the freedom movement, his dauntless courage from his school days, his fervent patriotism and his unfortunate end before the dawn of freedom. Bhagavan reminded the students that the lives of heroic leaders like Subhash Chandra Bose should be an inspiration to them to render dedicated service to the country in an utterly selfless spirit. In this connection Swami deplored the prevailing trends in the country, wherein the unscrupulous pursuit of power and position had demoralised the entire political system.

### **The triple purity**

Swami repeatedly laid emphasis on the triple purity of body, speech and mind ("Trikarana shuddhi"). In one talk, He observed: "Man possesses body, mind and soul. If he concentrates his attention on the body, to the exclusion of the mind and soul, he turns into an animal. If he allows the body and the mind to prevail to the exclusion of the soul, he becomes demonic in nature. If the body, mind and soul function in harmony, he manifests his humanness (manavatwam). If the soul dominates over the mind and body, the person attains Daivatwam (Divinity)."

Referring to the need for purity of the heart, Bhagavan said: If you write a word on water, it will vanish instantaneously. If you write it on sand, it will stay for a while till the wind blows it away. If you inscribe it on a rock, it will stay for centuries. Similarly, if you give the word to the body, it will go off at once. If it is given to the mind, it will last only for a short while, as the mind is fickle and subject to lapses of memory. But if the word is implanted in the heart, it will last for a long, long time. Remember, a good and pure heart is the abode of the Divine."

### **Bhagavan and Hanuman**

One evening, Bhagavan, in a reminiscent mood, recalled an episode in His boyhood days which He had not disclosed so far. Swami said:

I want to mention an occurrence about which I have not spoken before.

I was eight years old at that time. I was in Puttaparthi. A lot of young boys of my age used to gather around me. Some older boys also used to join us. I used to teach them reading and writing as well as singing. They were not in the habit of taking daily baths. I insisted that they should bathe and remain clean when they come for the classes.

I used to take them to a pool in the vicinity of a Hanuman temple in the village. I advised them that after taking a bath and wearing clean clothes, they should go to the Hanuman temple with the image of Hanuman enshrined in their hearts and the name of Sri Rama on their lips. One day, the boys insisted that I should also go with them to the temple. I completed one round around the temple and stood still. The boys tried to pull me for a second round. Despite their combined efforts I could not be moved from where I stood. The boys were puzzled. Then I told them: "I am unable to move because Hanuman has come out of the temple and is holding me, saying: Sri Rama cannot go round Hanuman. Hanuman will go round Sri Rama. At that moment the boys had a vision of Hanuman standing in front of Sri Rama. Where Rama is, Hanuman stands by. (Swami went on to describe another episode concerning Sri Rama, Sita and Hanuman).

### **What Hanuman meant for Rama**

On the day of the coronation of Sri Rama (after his return from Lanka) in Ayodhya, Sita observed that everyone present was receiving a gift from Sri Rama, but no gift had been given to Hanuman. After a while she asked Rama the reason for this omission. Rama said: "What present can I give to Hanuman that will match his devotion? Your father, King Janaka, gave you to me when you were a Kannika (an unmarried girl). Hanuman brought you to me when you were a grihalakshmi. What can I offer to Hanuman that will be commensurate with this great act of his? You should know that, in many ways, Hanuman is like a father to me." These golden words on Hanuman were spoken by Sri Rama. What greater tribute can the Avatar pay to a devotee?

### **Transformation of an addict**

On another occasion, Swami related the story of a Muslim classmate of His sixty years ago who, after falling on evil days as a result of becoming a morphia addict, underwent a tremendous transformation as a result of his faith in Sai.

Swami recalled that the Muslim boy was fond of "Raju" (as Swami was called by his classmates). When Swami left school, the Muslim boy continued his studies and later worked in an insurance company. He was doing well and had many children. But after his wife died, he got depressed and took to morphia injections to forget his sorrows. He had to sell all his property and the whole family became utterly destitute. It was in this situation that a miracle occurred. He happened to pass by the house of a Sai devotee where Sai bhajans were going on. He remembered his boyhood days with "Raju" and hoped that Sathya Sai might save him from utter ruin. He took a pledge that he would abstain from the injections for three days, with utter faith in Sai and see whether Baba would rid him of the addiction altogether. For two days he struggled in agony to resist the temptation. On the third day he went into a state of deep sleep at midnight. He got up early in the morning and told his children: "Baba came to me and spoke to me. I feel good and am released from my ailments, mental and physical. My God has saved me. Sai Baba is my God."

From that moment his life changed. He got a job and his condition improved. His is a case of one coming up from the depths of degradation to a meaningful life by the grace of God.

A short while ago, at a meeting of Muslims in Hyderabad, this Muslim openly proclaimed: "I see my Allah in Sai. He is my omnipotent God."

Swami stated that this Muslim's daughter's marriage is scheduled to take place in Hyderabad shortly and before the marriage he and all the members of his family would be coming to Swami for His blessings.

***(To be continued)***

*Come to me eager to learn, to progress, to see yourself in Me and I shall certainly welcome you and show you the way. You will indeed be blessed. All scriptures, all texts, the Gita which is the Milk of all the Upanishadic Cows, are intended to instill thirst into you. The thirst has to be like that of the creeper for the tree trunk, of the magnet for the iron, of the bees for the flower, of the*

*water for a fall, of the river for the sea. The pangs of separation must gnaw the heart, the entire being must yearn for union. Do not vacillate or change or try a series of Nama (Name) or Rupa (Form) that will fritter away time and energy. Ceaseless contemplation of the Lord will give ceaseless taste of Amritam to you.*

—**Baba**

*Remember always that it is easy to do what is pleasant, but it is difficult to be engaged in what is beneficial. Not all that is pleasant is profitable. Success comes to those who give up the path strewn with roses and brave the hammer blows and sword-thrusts of the path fraught with danger. As a matter of fact, no road is strewn with rose petals. Life is a battlefield, a Dharmakshetra where duties and desires are always in conflict. Smother the fiery fumes of Desire, Hatred and Anger that rise up in your heart. It is sheer cowardice to yield to those enemies that turn you into beasts.*

—**Baba**

*Youth is the stage in life when the slightest turn towards wrong will spell disaster. Thoughts shape the career. You plan to earn much wealth, because you imagine that rich people are very happy. The rich have plenty to eat, but hey have no appetite. The rich wield power over others but they are held down by disease. The rich can have many servants but they cannot live in peace. So, plan to be rich in virtue, in devotion and dedication to good causes. Be rich in sovereign character. What exactly is character? Steady adherence to truth, renunciation, genuine love, selfless service these are the essential components of character. Follow the dictates of your conscience: You can never be wrong.*

—**Baba**

AVATAR VANI:

YUGADI SANDESH:

### **Right Use of Time**

*Like the oil that is in the til seed,  
Like the presence of ghee in milk,  
Like fragrance in a flower,  
Like juice in a fruit,  
Like fire in a piece of wood,  
So does the Divine permeate the cosmos.*

If we wish to discover the presence of the all-pervading Divine in the universe, we have to recognise the Divine in our daily life. Like the power of sight in the eye and the power of hearing in the ears, God manifests as consciousness in the human body. There is no place in the world where God does not exist. God pervades everything.

Creation is a manifestation of God. It is the form of God. It is called Prakriti (Nature). Hence, man, who is a child of nature, is inherently Divine.

Man is born with Divine qualities. Just as a sapling grows out of a seed, a flower from the sapling and fruit from the flower, God is the seed of the entire cosmos.

Man is intrinsically a combination of morality, righteousness and spirituality. Unfortunately, forgetting these basic qualities, man today is bereft of morality, righteousness and spirituality. When we consider the sacredness of human birth, it is a shame that man should be so degraded today.

Man is an embodiment of Sat-Chit-Ananda (Being-Awareness and Bliss) which are the attributes of the Divine. But forgetting his humanness, man has descended to the level of the animal and behaves like a demon. People do not respect the words of elders or follow the teachings of the wise.

In the land of Bharat where virtues like truth, righteousness, forbearance and compassion were highly esteemed' today cruelty, selfishness, intolerance and ill-feeling are rampant. Love is hardly present anywhere. What passes for love is not real love at all. There is a simulacrum of love for selfish purposes.

Many people are installing the statues of great men. While installing these statues, they are giving a burial to the teachings of these great men. Why carry on these ostentatious shows? It is not fitting for human beings to install statues and ignore the teachings.

### **The trinity in man**

The true nature of the Trinity—Brahma, Vishnu and Maheshwara—should be properly understood. They symbolise the qualities of Satwa, Rajas and Tamas which are present in every human being.

Who is Easwara? The Veda has described Easwara as Atma. It has proclaimed the identity of the heart with Easwara "Easwavas-sarvabhoothaanam" declares the Gita. (The Gita declares: Easwara dwells in the region of the heart of every living being.) Hence, Easwara is described as "Hridayeswara" (the Lord of the Heart).

The seat of thoughts is the mind. The mind has been described as symbolising the form of Vishnu. Vishnu means one who pervades everything. The mind has the power to reach out for anything in the universe. Hence the cosmos is rooted in the mind.

The thoughts emanating from the mind find expression in words or speech ("Vaak"). Brahma symbolises the power of speech. Thus, the heart, the mind and speech together constitute humanness. Sanctifying these three has been described as "Trikarana shuddhi", purity in thought, word and deed. The worship of the Trinity really calls for purification of the mind (Vishnu), the heart (Easwara) and speech (Brahma). Men today are immersed in transient worldly activities. They should sanctify all actions by purifying their feelings.

We are celebrating this day as New Year Day. The New Year is called Easwara. Easwara means one who is endowed with all forms of wealth. People greet the New Year as if it is going to

confer on them some new benefits. The good or evil, the gains or losses, the renown or infamy experienced by people are not the outcome of the passage of years. They are the consequences of their own actions. "Samvatsara" (the year) is one of the names of God. Because God is associated with time He is also known as Time-Spirit (Kaalaatmaka). Hence, we should not consider the Lord, who is the Spirit of Time, as likely to cause good or ill to us. Our actions, good or bad, bear fruits according to their nature.

### **The New Year**

There is no need to wait for a new year to bring new tidings. Every moment is new. Many are wondering what troubles and losses the New Year will bring. For all our troubles and difficulties the year is not responsible. Our conduct alone is responsible. If our actions are good the results will be good. Bad actions will lead to bad consequences. People think that good and bad are related to bad time. Not at all. Their thoughts are the cause. Hence, they should develop good thoughts and do good deeds. They should cherish good failings and associate with good persons.

People should realise the preciousness of Time. Most of the time available is wasted by people. This is utterly wrong. Time should be used always for right purposes. That is the foremost duty of every man. Waste of time is waste of life. The Lord of Time protects those who take refuge in Him, even against the Lord of Death ("Kaala"). Time takes its revenge on those who misuse it. A nation's prosperity is dependent on how people use their time in the performance of good actions.

Bharatiya culture is based on two fundamental principles: "Speak the truth. Follow righteousness". The heart is the seat of righteousness. It should be filled with compassion. As the in-dweller in the heart is the same in all beings, people should cultivate the spirit of unity. Shivaraj Patil (in his speech earlier) pleaded for unity among the people. He also urged that in addition to unity and purity, there should be love. When unity, purity and love come together, oneness is experienced.

### **Lack of unity**

What is the situation today? Where is unity to be seen? Today nation is divided against nation. There are conflicts between states and within them. There are disputes over borders between states. When there are inter-state disputes, how can there be unity in the nation as a whole?

All are brothers; all belong to the human fraternity. There should be unity among all the people. All should strive to promote the reputation of the nation. No one can claim any right to a particular state. All have equal rights.

"The one Spirit is the indweller in all beings". If this truth is recognised there will be no room for internecine conflicts. Selfishness is at the root of all conflicts in the world.

All are human beings. The Caste of Humanity. The Religion of Love. The Language of the Heart. This unifying truth should be recognised. Everyone is constituted of the same five basic elements. Why, then, there should be differences between them?

All claim to be devotees. But if they are real devotees, why should there be differences amongst them? What is the source of these differences? What is the cause of envy?

**Who are devotees?**

The truth is that people merely call themselves devotees. It is a delusion. They should examine whether they have the qualities of devotees. Everyone seeks to know what good he can derive from other individuals or from society. No one asks himself what good or benefit society derives from him. Start with rendering benefit to society.

Everyone goes about trying to see what he can get from society. Today, thanks to the influence of the Kali Age, two kinds of diseases have grown: One is the insatiable thirst for wealth. In every city there is a mad rush for making money. Everyone is caught up in this craze for money. No doubt money is necessary, but only up to a limit to meet one's needs. Owing to excessive desire people lose all sense of proportion. Men turn into demons in the pursuit of wealth.

It may be asked whether at least they make good use of their immense wealth. No. Ultimately, the money may fall in the hands of robbers or others. What you get from society, give it back to society. That is the primary value to be cherished by every one.

The second malady is the thirst for power. The thirst for power and position is unquenchable.

Afflicted with these two maladies man is converting the whole world into a madhouse.

**Do your duty**

The desire for wealth and power is not wrong as such. But wealth and power should be used for right ends. Whatever position you occupy, see that it is used worthily. A cobbler stitching shoes is pursuing as worthy an occupation as a Prime Minister governing the country. Therefore, everyone has to do his duty properly. There is no high or low in these matters. To each person, his occupation is a matter of pride. Hence, do your duty sincerely. Everyone should be filled with this feeling. He should see that he does his job well without any lapse or defect. When everyone does his duty in this spirit the well being of the whole world will be automatically ensured.

People proclaim that they desire the well being of one and all in the world, but they do nothing to promote it. They are concerned only about their own well being.

This is not the right attitude at all. This year goes by the name Easwara. At least in this year everyone should cultivate the "Easwara bhava" (godly feeling) and live in amity with each other.

Everyone should be filled with the feeling that the Divine dwells in his heart (that the heart is Divinity itself), that the mind should be filled with godly thoughts (as it symbolises Vishnu). No mean thoughts should be allowed to enter the mind. The mind should not be allowed to go astray.

Brahma is said to have emerged from the navel of Vishnu. He symbolises speech. When the Trinity are seen as symbols of the Divine qualities in man, man will discover the divinity within him. There is no need to seek the Divine outside one's self. It is futile to go on pilgrimage. The scientists are committing the same mistake. They are exploring outer space, but are making no effort to explore the heart within.

### **The Divine in the heart**

The devotees are going from one mutt to another. Of what avail is it? The Divine resides in your heart. Seek him within you.

God is omnipresent. God is in every one of you. All of you are Divine. Do not harm anyone. Develop such qualities. Sage Vyasa's ultimate advice was: Help Ever; Hurt Never.

It is disingenuous on the part of people to plead that in their busy preoccupations they have no time to think of God. Persons who waste their time watching T.V. or playing cards in clubs cannot pretend that they cannot spare a few moments for God. Make proper use of time. Time is sacred. Time is Divine. Dedicate every activity to God.

Seek to serve society and your fellow beings. There is no need to worship anyone. People worship inanimate idols, but ignore the needs of living beings around them. What kind of worship is it which ignores the needs of fellow human beings? God comes in human form. Human beings are Divine.

### **Ashoka's lesson**

Once Emperor Ashoka was going round his empire together with his minister. At one place he saw a Buddhist monk. He went up to the monk and bowed his head before the feet of the monk. The minister felt unhappy over the emperor's action. "Should the head of the great Emperor Ashoka be placed at the feet of an ordinary monk?" he thought.

After returning to the capital, the minister expressed his feelings to the emperor. He told Ashoka: "The head of the emperor is supremely precious. Is it fitting that it should be placed at the feet of a mere monk?" This, he said, saddened him. Ashoka did not give any reply. He smiled and retired to his apartment.

Ashoka was waiting for a suitable time. After a few days, he summoned the minister and told him: "I want three heads." "What are they? I shall certainly get them," said the minister. Ashoka said: "The heads of a goat, a tiger and a man."

The minister went out, found a goat and got its head. He went hunting in a forest and obtained the head of a tiger. He went to a cemetery and got the head of a dead man. He informed the emperor that he had brought the three heads as desired by Ashoka. The emperor directed the minister to take the three heads to the market place, sell them and bring the proceeds. In the market, the goat's head and the tiger's head found ready buyers. But there was no buyer for the human head. The minister returned to the emperor and told him that no one was willing to buy the human head. The emperor told him to give the head free to anyone who might accept it. No one came forward to accept it.

The minister reported to the emperor that there was no one to receive the head even as a free gift. The emperor then told the minister: "This head has value only when there is life in the body. When life is gone, it is utterly valueless. Therefore, even while there is life, place your head at the feet of the noble ones and secure their blessings". (cheers)

The moral of the episode is that you must make proper use of the body while there is life in it. What is wrong in prostrating before a monk? Many atheists as well as believers criticise those who offer their prostrations to holy persons. Such prostrations represent the proper use of the body given to human beings.

What is meant by "siras" (the head)? It is the storehouse of intelligence. "Prajnanam Brahma" declares the Upanishad ("Constant integrated awareness is Brahman"). The head bears prajnanam as long as there is life in the body. When life leaves the body, prajna also goes.

### **Duryodhana and Bhima**

In the Mahabharata war, towards the end, Duryodhana was on his last legs. Bhima was approaching him with intense bitterness. Duryodhana lay on the ground gasping for breath. Bhima kicked Duryodhana's head with his foot. Duryodhana said: "Bhima! I could have shown my strength if I had been in possession of my vital powers. To kick my head when I am dying is it heroic on your part? Very soon, crows and vultures will feed on my dead body".

The head has its value while there is life. Hence, the head should be used while you are alive to acquire merit by placing it at the feet of the holy ones. This is the value of prostrating before noble souls.

Hence, while one is alive, one should engage himself in good deeds and lead a sacred and meaningful life. All relationships are confined to the living. God alone is the only unfailing kinsman throughout life and beyond it. He is the only constant companion wherever you may be. Realise that life is impermanent. Only your good deeds will protect you. Peace, truth and virtue have to be acquired only through your actions. Achieve proximity to God and then become one with God.

Today you call yourself human. If you develop your devotion to God, you can divinise yourself. Divinity is your real nature. This has been proclaimed by the Upanishads in the famous declarations "Aham Brahmasmi", "Ayam Atma Brahma", "Tat-twam-Asi" ("I am Brahman", "This Atma is Brahman", "That thou art"). Develop this conviction, with confidence and courage.

### **Two astrologers and a king**

You are prepared to believe in the words of an astrologer. Once a king summoned an astrologer who had acquired some reputation. The astrologer felt proud that he had been invited by the king himself. Most astrologers are full of ego and conceit. The astrologer examined the king's horoscope. Because of his conceit, he did not realise how he should speak on specific occasions. He told the king after examining the horoscope that all his sons would die early. The king was very angry. He ordered the servants to take the astrologer to prison.

The prediction was correct, but it should have been conveyed to the king in an appropriate manner that would not cause consternation. The king summoned another astrologer to verify whether the earlier astrologer's prediction was correct or not. This astrologer was a man of humility. He examined the king's horoscope and said: "Maharaja! You have a very long life.



Your sons may not live so long." This manner of conveying the prediction was more satisfying to the king.

### **Sweetness in speech**

Sweetness in speech lies in the words you use and the manner of speech. The first astrologer, by predicting the premature deaths of the king's sons, provoked his anger and displeasure. The second astrologer conveyed the same prediction in a less unpleasant way by predicting long life for the king, though it would mean his outliving his sons.

This means that even in conveying truth one should see that it is not conveyed in a harsh or unpleasant manner. Even an unpleasant truth should be conveyed in soft words. For instance, if you see a blind man, you should not ask him brusquely: "Oh you blind fellow! Come near me". It is bound to wound his feelings. How much better is it to go near him and say "Oh Surdas! Please get up".

The words you use should be sweet and pleasing. For this, you should have love in your heart. Only the man who fosters love in his heart is a true human being. A man without love is a lifeless corpse.

### **Prospects for "Easwara"**

This is the New Year Day. Its name, "Easwara", holds the promise of all prosperity in the coming months. It is also associated with the heart which is the abode of the Divine (Easwara). From today try to cleanse the heart of whatever impurities there may be in it. How is this to be done? One, by meditating on God. Secondly, by service to society. By these two alone is purity of the heart achieved. If you secure the love of God, you can secure anything. There is love in you. Use it to win the love of God.

### **Love and Bliss**

#### *Embodiments of love!*

Many pray to God all over the world. They pray for the realisation of worldly desires of one kind or another. This is not the right kind of prayer. You should pray to God for the grace of His love. That love is everlasting. It is infinite. God has another attribute. He is the embodiment of bliss. He is Sat-Chit-Ananda (Being-Awareness-Bliss). Pray to God to confer that bliss on you. God's bliss is boundless and everlasting. All mundane pleasures are transient and ephemeral. Only he is a true devotee who prays to God for His love and bliss. One who prays for other trivial things is no devotee at all. Worldly benefits come and go. They are not the things for which you should pray. Seek what is eternal.

Pray for God's love and bliss. Seek to realise your Divinity. Then you will experience the Divine in the entire cosmos. You will experience the bliss that fills the universe.

### **Change your vision**

When you see the world with the eye of divine bliss, you will find bliss everywhere. If there is hatred in your vision, you will see hatred everywhere. Hence, change your vision to start with. Look at the world with the vision of peace, love and compassion. Then the whole world will

appear loving and peaceful. When your heart is filled with love, you will experience the Divine in the entire cosmos. See the Divine in everyone. Eschew hatred and ill will.

After years of devotion, many still lack a broad outlook and an all-encompassing love. Embodiments of love! Promote love in your hearts incessantly—the love that is immortal and infinite.

Bhagavan concluded His discourse with the bhajan: "*Prema mudita manase kaho: Rama! Rama! Ram!*"

**—From Bhagavan's discourse in the Sai Ramesh Hall, Brindavan, on April 7, 1997**

AVATAR VANI:

TAMIL NEW YEAR DAY MESSAGE:

### **Serve the Nation with Pure Hearts**

*Life in this world of impermanent;  
Youth and wealth are transient;  
Wife and children are not lasting;  
Righteousness and renown are only lasting.*

In this mundane world, human life is like a water bubble. Youth is like a fleeting cloud that does not stay long. Wealth is impermanent. Wife and children are equally impermanent. Dharma and fame are the only permanent things in the world.

"Fire emerges from the rubbing of two sticks. Butter emerges from the churning of milk. By constant meditation on name and form Divinity is experienced. Listen, oh valiant son of Bharat" (Telugu poem).

God is omnipresent. Just as there can be no light rays without the sun, this cosmos cannot exist without God.

In the modern age young people consider the phenomenal world as the only reality. This is not so. "Having taken birth in this impermanent and sorry world, adore Me" says Krishna (in the Gita).

The life span of man is melting away every moment like a block of ice. Youth is transient. The only permanent and changeless entity is the Divine. Forgetting this man is going after fleeting, trivial pleasures.

What is it that is permanent in this world? What is the purpose of human life? When one puts these questions, he does not get the right answers. Men pursue studies, jobs, wife and children in the search for happiness. They find no peace in any of these. Why? Desires are the cause of peace-less-ness. Without purifying the heart, all desires can only lead to unrest. Moreover,

impurity in the heart is the source of many diseases. When the heart is pure, man will be free from disease.

How, then, is the heart to be purified? There is no other way except cherishing godly thoughts. All other rituals are of no avail except to provide temporary mental satisfaction. But the mind does not get satisfied easily. It is continually wavering and is uncontrollable.

What should be done is to divert the mind towards God?

### **The Greatness of Rama's Name**

Once, a lady approached Kaushalya. When Kaushalya enquired who she was, the lady replied: "Mother! Don't you know that my son leapt over the sea in one jump? I am the mother of Hanuman."

A short while later, another lady came there. She informed Kaushalya that the sea, over which Hanuman leapt in one hop, was drunk by her son in one gulp. "I am the mother of Agastya, who performed this feat", she said.

Kaushalya smiled on hearing their claims. She said: "For your son leaping over the sea or for your son drinking the waters in one gulp, it was the name of Ramchandra which made it possible. I am the mother of Rama."

The three ladies were conversing in this manner. There is a saying that when three ladies meet even the stars will tumble down during the day!

While they were discussing who among them was great, Rama joined them. "What are you discussing?" he asked. Kaushalya said: "Son! By chanting your name Hanuman was able to leap over the sea. This was possible because of your grace."

She went on: "Again, by the power of your name, Agastya drank the sea in one gulp. This also was by your grace. I am supremely fortunate in giving birth to such a son."

Rama, who was utterly egoless, then told the three ladies: "These feats are not the result of my grace. This body was given the name Rama at birth. It is the power of this name that has enabled them to accomplish such heroic feats. It is because this name was given to me I was able to overcome the valiant Ravana."

Thus, the name of the Lord is all powerful. By chanting the name of God, all latent powers in man are awakened.

### **The name helps Draupadi**

You all know Draupadi. Her husbands were great heroes including the powerful Bhima and the valiant Arjuna. In their presence, Duryodhana sought to humiliate Draupadi in the open assembly. Neither the powerful Bhima, nor the valiant Arjuna, nor the very embodiment of Dharma, Yudhishtira, ventured to come to her rescue. Ultimately she cried out: "Oh Krishna!

The kinsman of the hapless!" Physical prowess did not come to the rescue of Draupadi. Only the name of the Divine came to her help.

People tend to treat lightly the name of the Lord. They do not realise the potency of the two syllables in the name of the Lord. All the power of the cosmos is contained in those two letters. You must understand properly the significance of the name and use it in the right way.

Chanting the Lord's name (namasmarana) is the panacea. It is the easiest path to God-realisation. It is the boat that will take people across the ocean of mundane existence.

How does the chanting of the Lord's name transform the devotee? Every word that we utter sets in motion waves that fill the world. The radio waves sent out from the broadcasting station in Delhi reach out to every part of the world.

### **Pollution everywhere**

Today the atmosphere is filled with discordant and disturbing noises of various kinds. These radio waves get into the minds of people and pollute their thoughts. Hence, if we wish to listen to pure sounds, the atmosphere must be free from pollution. The pollution cycle starts from smoke and clouds and ends in the food we eat. Hence the state of our minds depends on the kind of food we consume. The nature of the food depends on the environment. The environment is determined by human actions. Today men's actions are not along right lines.

Most devotees are like the fruits of the fig tree: attractive to look at from the outside, but infested with worms inside. Devotees should strive to purify their hearts. For this purpose they have to chant the Lord's name.

### **Namasmarana**

The effect of Namasmarana has to be properly understood. Chanting the Lord's name purifies the environment. The first step is to purify one's own heart. Transform yourself before you set out to transform others.

The role of bhajans in purifying the atmosphere should be recognised. In this context, the role of community singing should be understood. Singing bhajans in your home, you may indulge in your fancies and derive whatever joy you get therefrom. "Sankirtan" (community singing) calls for whole-hearted, soulful singing, which moves the hearts of the listeners. Bhajans should not be a routine ritual. You must put your heart and soul into the singing.

In reciting the names of the Lord you have to bear in mind another fact. When you recite the names thousands of devotees are listening. You must chant names which are familiar to all of them. You should not expect people to follow whatever you sing. You should see that they can easily respond to your song. The names you chant should be short and sweet. If you use big words and complicated terms, the devotees will not be able to follow you. In that situation they may get depressed. What can they do when they do not hear you properly and cannot respond in chorus? They get disgusted.

### **Simplify the bhajans**

Therefore, in your bhajans use short names like Rama, Krishna, Allah, Yesu and so on. Then all would be able to follow you with ease. If you use high-sounding words, few can follow you.

Eschew any aversion to any faith or nation. Have no ill will towards anyone. Do not cause hurt to anyone. Look upon all alike. This feeling of oneness should spread all over the world.

Krishna declared: "The entire cosmos is sustained by a fragment of my potency." This means that the Divine permeates the entire cosmos. What, then, is our duty? To fill our hearts with love. Then the whole universe will be filled with love.

There is no use in singing bhajans if the singers' hearts are filled with jealousy and hatred.

There is no greater spiritual recipe for people in the Kali Age than the chanting of Hari's nama.

### **Sai bhajans**

Foolish people speak derisively about the bhajans conducted in the presence of Swami. They have no idea of the joy derived by the devotees from the singing of the Lord's name. "Will the bees which are fond of honey in the lotus go after any other flowers?" "By constant eating even the leaves of the neem tree acquire a sweetness of their own." "By spiritual sadhana all objectives are achieved." (Swami sang lines from a Telugu poem).

Wherein lies the greatness of chanting the Lord's name? This was the discovery made by Adi Sankaracharya, the supreme exponent of Non-dualism (Advaita), who declared that there was only one Absolute and no second. Even he had to seek recourse to dualism because he found that apart from chanting the Lord's name there was no easy way to experience the Divine. Out of this conviction was born the famous devotional song. "Bhaja Govindam" (Swami sang stanzas from the song).

### **"Bhaja Govindam"**

The message of the song is clear. There is no meaning in dry scholarship. The only thing that will save a man in his last moments is adoration of Govinda. Sankara called upon the youth to realise that there is no room for feeling proud about one's youth and wealth, which may vanish in one moment in course of time.

Hence, when participating in bhajans, you should enjoy the singing and share that joy with others. Do not be indifferent to the reactions of others to your singing.

Leaders in bhajans should realise that many overseas devotees are deeply interested in bhajans and are eager to take part in them. The bhajans should be simple and easy for them to follow.

The goal of all religions is one. The underlying meaning of all names is the same. You must appreciate this oneness. Whatever name may be used, all are children of one God. All belong to the caste of humanity. The distinctions between religions are the result of historical and geographical factors. People may use diverse names for God, but God is one alone.

### **Who are Bharatiyas?**

Having been born in Bharat, you may feel legitimately proud about Bharatiya culture. But mere birth alone does not make one a true Bharatiya. All those who adhere to Sathya and Dharma (Truth and Right Conduct) are Bharatiyas. They may belong to any country, America, Japan or Germany. Truth is God. This is the cardinal principle of Bharat. Recognising this fact, people must strive to spread the message to all.

Sai devotees should understand the essence of our culture. Sacrifice and service are the two basic elements.

### **Two paths to God**

There are two ways of God-realisation. One is the path of devotion where the devotee considers himself a servant of God. By repeatedly declaring, "Dasoham" ("I am your servant") he goes on reducing his ego till the bondage of worldly attachment falls off. The other means is the path of knowledge (Jnana marga). By constantly developing the sense of oneness with the Divine ("Sivoham—I am the Divine") his consciousness expands to the point where it becomes one with the universal consciousness and all worldly bonds are snapped.

Give no room for the ego. If any one examines his position in this vast cosmos, he will realise his infinitesimal smallness. Egoism arises out of ignorance. Expel the ego and develop love. With love, develop the spirit of sacrifice. Sacrifice alone can confer immortality, says the Upanishad. Sacrifice can confer bliss and health. Experience the joy of sharing. Renunciation is the key to sound health.

Do not indulge in criticism of others. Count your own faults and rectify them. See the Divine in one and all.

Elevate the quality of human life by living in amity with all. Chanting the name of God is the sure means of cultivating this universal love.

### **The music that God loves**

There is special merit in singing the Lord's name with due regard for melody and rhythm. The Lord is a lover of music. Moreover, when singing is done with fervour, it helps to drive out all bad thoughts from the mind. Melodious music can move the Lord and move all the participants. (Swami demonstrated the effect of melodious singing by rendering the song: "Rama! nannukaapaadumaa"—‘Oh Rama, protect me’). Melodious music will move the Lord Himself. Hence, when you take part in bhajans sing with all your heart and soul. You must sing with such love for the Divine that you forget yourself. When you sing the praise of God with a pure heart, you will purify your environment, your country and the world.

People are looking forward to April 14th as the New Year Day. The name of the New Year is Easwara. What does Easwara mean? As Chittibabu (who spoke earlier in Tamil) said, the Lord is "Ammal-Appa"—mother and father. Their coming together is represented by the concept of "Ardhanareeswara"—the Divine couple in one body. Every man is a symbol of "Ardhanareeswara." The body is inert. The Atma is consciousness. The body is Prakriti (Nature). The Atma is Easwara. The combination of Prakriti and Paramatma constitutes humanness.

Therefore, you should regard yourself as a symbol of "Ardhanareeswara" (The Divine Couple in one body).

### **The pursuit of power**

As the New Year approaches people are wondering what it has in store for them. It is not the year that brings good or ill. Your actions determine what you will get. What have the years that have gone brought you? Each year brings you the fruits of your past actions. Do good and reap good results.

Your conduct should be good, befitting your human condition. Revere elders. Love all. Honour your nation. Give up attachment to the body. Then you will have fulfillment in life.

You all know what troubles the country is going through on account of the political situation. The basic cause is selfishness. Leaders are fighting for their own personal ends and not for the sake of the country. No one seems to be bothered about what is happening to the society, to the people and the country. "MY power and my position" is all that each one is concerned about. How long will the chair last? When the body itself is impermanent, what is the meaning in chasing the chair?

Hence, all should develop a broad outlook. Banish narrow considerations.

From the New Year, cherish broad ideas, truthful ideas, loving thoughts and noble ideals. Only then the nation will be peaceful and prosperous.

Bharat lacks nothing by way of natural endowments. It is a misfortune that it is in its present plight today. Realise the sacredness and great culture of Bharat.

I bless you all that from the New Year you should lead pure lives chanting the Lord's name, and promote the prosperity of the country.

Bhagavan concluded His discourse with the bhajan: "*Prema muditha manase kaho: Rama! Rama! Ram!*"

—From Bhagavan's discourse in "Sundaram": Madras, on April 11, 1997

### **The Hypocrite and the Cobra**

The other day just outside of the city  
An incident occurred worthy of your pity.  
A cobra bit a hypocrite. As an onlooker cried  
The hypocrite just smiled—'t was the cobra that died.

—Hal Honig

## The Perennial Message of the Rama Story

*In this phenomenal world, all forms manifest peace. All names are auspicious. Sat-Chit-Ananda (Being-Awareness-Bliss) express the One Absolute. Its attributes are: Truth, Beauty, Goodness.*

(The opening Sanskrit sloka.)

*The Supreme, that is to be comprehended through the Veda, took birth as the son of Dasaratha became the soul of Ramayana of Valmiki (the son of Prachetas).*

(Sanskrit sloka)

Valmiki proclaimed in the Ramayana that the Supreme Lord took His birth as the son of Dasaratha and shone as the embodiment of the Vedas. Nevertheless Valmiki described the saga of Rama as that of an ordinary human being. Valmiki saw the Divine in Rama as an ordinary human being. Ravana saw Rama entirely as a mere man.

The entire Ramayana is like a game of chess. The scene in the Ramayana is a kind of battlefield. It is a battlefield where the forces of right and wrong are waging war. Rama represents righteousness and Ravana represents unrighteousness. The battle between the two is the war fought on the battlefield.

Ravana taught a great lesson to the world. He exclaimed: "Oh men! Do not live as I have lived and ruin your lives." What is the root cause of Ravana's ruin? Unable to conquer his desires, unwilling to get rid of his impulses, he ruined his entire clan. His sons were killed, his brother and other kinsmen were killed and ultimately his country itself was reduced to ashes. Ravana confessed: "In the end I ruined myself." This was the message Ravana gave to his countrymen in his last moments.

Only by suppressing desires does a man manifest his humanness. A man who is unable to put an end to his desires, puts an end to himself.

A good man by his good conduct achieves greatness. Ravana sought to achieve greatness but did not strive to lead a good life.

### **Rama's precepts**

Rama's career is different. He aspired only to be a good man and did not seek greatness.

The world today is in dire need of the message of the Rama story. For one thing, sons today do not follow the injunctions of their fathers. Fathers do not set the right example to the children. Disciples do not respect properly the preceptors. Preceptors do not treat the disciples with affection. There is no love lost even between friends. Relations are estranged among themselves.



In all fields of life—in the administration, in agriculture or business or politics - discord is rampant. Divisions and conflict prevail in social, political and even spiritual fields. If you enquire into the causes for this situation you find that selfishness is at the root of it all.

The basic elements are common to all mankind. The world itself is one family. All men are brothers. Rama preached to the world this basic truth. He taught the world the duties of everyday life, the social duties and family obligations. This triple stream of duties is the message of the Ramayana. Whoever bathes in this triple stream is absolved of his sins and is redeemed. Such a great work as the Ramayana has to be read, reread and lived up to by everyone.

### **Greatness of Rama**

It is impossible to describe the greatness of the life of Rama. The great qualities of Rama are countless.

Valmiki wrote his Ramayana while Rama was still reigning over the kingdom. Rama was ruling over Ayodhya at that time. What does Ayodhya signify? It symbolises the place which cannot be penetrated by evil forces and which is invincible. That place is the heart. That is the place where Rama resides.

What is needed today is to make every human heart an Ayodhya. It should be free from any kind of pollution. It should be pure and firm. Then there will be room in it for the story of Rama to enter.

### **Valmiki and Lava Kusa**

After completing his great epic, Valmiki was considering how to make it known to the world and how to sanctify the lives of people by spreading its message. The Ramayana evokes joy in the listeners by the very sweetness of its poetry. Its slokas relieve people of their sorrow. Kusa and Lava (the sons of Sita) who were dressed like ascetics and who could sing melodiously and move the hearts of the listeners by their charming music, came to Valmiki and offered their salutations to the sage. The two children were like twin birds. They were extraordinary children. They were utterly fearless. They would not shrink from anyone out of fear.

When the two appeared before Valmiki, the sage told them: "Children! I have composed the Ramayana with a pure and unsullied heart through arduous effort. You should proclaim to the world this sacred story". Lava and Kusa reverentially accepted the sage's command. They offered their pranams to Valmiki and said: "Guruji! Give us your benediction. We shall go forth into the world and make the Ramayana known to every nook and corner of the land."

At one place, many sages had come together in a big assembly. Lava and Kusa went to them and sang the Ramayana in their sweet voice. The sages listened to their recitation in rapture, oblivious to everything. They felt that such a moving story should be propagated to the whole world.

### **The Ramayana in song**

The two boys went along singing and entered Ayodhya. Standing in the heart of the city they went on singing the Ramayana. All the people strolling on the road stopped to listen to the song.

They were rooted to their places and were lost in the music of the great epic. This is known as "Bhava-samadhi"—the state of blissful feeling. The hearts of the listeners were filled with the bliss of the soulful music. At that moment Rama was coming in his chariot to that spot. He heard the singing. Returning to the palace, he sent word to the two boys to come to his palace for singing their songs.

In this manner Lava and Kusa sang the story of Rama in a manner that moved the hearts of one and all—from commoners to King Rama himself.

### **Rama hears his story**

Thus Rama himself enjoyed the narration of his story in song. He posed as if he did not know his own story. In this context, the human aspect of Rama should be noted. He lived like a common man, but ordinary men did not live like Rama. That is the secret of this phenomenon. Though Rama was divine, he moved about like an ordinary man. Common men should live like Rama to manifest their divinity. It is not enough to recognise the human aspects of Rama. People should also realise the divinity in everyone.

Rama dwells in the heart of everyone. "Ramayathi ithi Ramah" ("Rama is one who pleases"). The word of Rama has another meaning. It refers to a woman ("Stree"). Ramayana means that it is the story of Sita. Hence Ramayana is esteemed as the story of both Rama and Sita.

### **Secrets in the epic**

In the sacred epic of Ramayana many profound secrets and truths are embedded. But Rama did not impart these secrets to anyone at anytime. What is the reason? A ripe fruit is bound to fall. Rama felt that people will realise the truth spontaneously when their hearts ripen in due course. Because Rama faced all the ordeals, troubles and difficulties of life with great fortitude, he was hailed as Ramchandramurthi. Rama taught the world how to remain unruffled in the presence of difficulties or joys, in pain or pleasure. He responded with a smile to any criticism. He did not exult over praise. Thus he displayed total equanimity in weal and woe, success or defeat, gain or loss. This is the attitude which everyone should cultivate.

Today devotees tend to get elated when they experience pleasure and get depressed when they face adversity. This is the result of attachment to the body. In Rama's days, there was not this body-consciousness. People were indifferent to the body. They were immersed in the bliss of the Spirit (Atma-anandam).

### **Rama's glories**

"Aatmaabhiraama" and "Abhinayarama" ("Rama the indwelling Spirit" and "Rama the dancer") Rama acted and danced as the indwelling Spirit, without attachment to the body. People today perform many spiritual exercises. They study many scriptures and engage themselves in meditation and bhajans. They sing the glories of God and offer prayers. All these are all external exercises. No one asks himself what for all these are being done and for whose sake. They are being done with selfish interests in view.

### **Guru and shishya**

There used to be a preceptor and a disciple. The disciple used to carry out the preceptor's commands. He did not know what for he was doing all that. The guru asked him to shut himself in a room and perform sadhana. The disciple was doing as he was told. Meditation had to be done three times a day—morning, noon and evening—according to the guru's directives. One day he was offering worship to the guru at noon. At that moment the guru came to his house. It was very warm outside. The heat was scorching the feet. The preceptor could not bear the heat and cried out: "Shishya! Shishya!" and knocked at the door. The disciple asked from inside: "Who are you? You are disturbing my puja". The preceptor answered. "I am your guru". The disciple said: "You should not interfere with my sadhana. Please wait for a while." The guru asked: "Whom are you worshipping?" The disciple replied: "I am worshipping you."

The disciple was worshipping the guru, but kept him standing in the scorching heat.

This is the way spiritual sadhana is being done these days. What is the purpose of worshipping the guru? Why all this sadhana? They are being done out of self-interest and not to revere the guru truly.

Likewise, what is the use of claiming to worship Rama without realising Rama as the indweller in the heart? It is only a physical exercise related to the body. The first requisite for all spiritual aspirants is spiritual yearning ("Atma-abhimanam"). Attachment to the body should be given up.

### **Greatness and Goodness**

It was because of his attachment to the body that Ravana was a prey to all kinds of troubles.

This was the message given by Ravana: "Oh people! Because I could not kill my bodily impulses I killed myself. I destroyed my entire brood. Hence, be warned from my fate."

Rama's message was: "Citizens! Live like me and achieve a worthy end."

Ravana met with a bad end ("Durgati"). Rama achieved a glorious destiny ("sadgati"). Ravana had a wicked mind. Rama's was a pure mind (sumati). Rama's words were righteous. Ravana's words were evil.

Hence, people should strive to have pure minds. People take any number of births, but there is no transformation of their minds. Without such transformation all spiritual practices are utterly useless. The Rama principle offers to the people a sacred path to God-realisation.

### **Rama and Lakshmana in Mithila**

After the completion of his sacrifice (yaga), Vishwamitra took Rama and Lakshmana to Mithila. Both of them saw the beautiful places in Mithila. They knew that they would have to witness the lifting of Siva's bow the next day and then return to Ayodhya. They wanted to go round the great city of Janaka. Rama told Lakshmana that they were under the care of Vishwamitra and should not do anything without the permission of the sage (guru). They approached the sage with their request. Vishwamitra was surprised at their request. He told them: "You have incarnated on earth

to protect all the world and put down the evil forces. Do go round the city of Mithila and sanctify all the people of the city."

Rama and Lakshmana set out to go round the city. As they were going, it seemed as if they were illuminating every place where they went. Everywhere the people looked at them without a wink. Children playing on the streets rushed towards them on seeing them and lovingly clasped their hands. "Uncles! Where from have you come! Please visit our homes", cried all the children. Everyone was attracted by the brothers. Ladies going on the roads were keen to see the beautiful eyes of the two brothers. They scattered flowers in front of them hoping that Rama would look at them. But Rama never looked at women. He went on with his head bowed. This was one of the lessons taught by Rama. True devotion calls for control over the senses (the eyes, the ears, speech etc.) Because Rama had control over senses, he could win the hand of Sita (daughter of the Earth). If we wish to control the external world, we have to control our vision. One who has no control over his vision becomes a slave to the world. Such profound lessons can be gathered from the illustrious story of Rama.

### **Dasaratha's dream**

Here is another episode: Dasaratha was sleeping in his palace. He had a dream. In that dream he saw that the whole ocean had dried up, the moon was falling in a myriad pieces, an elephant in rut was tumbling down and collapsing, with the howdah on its back falling apart. He woke up with a start. "What is all this? It is said that a dream in the early hours of the morning portends what is to happen. It is now the fourth quarter of the night. What does this dream portend?" thought Dasaratha. He got up from his bed. He stood before a mirror. He noticed a bizarre change in his face. He saw grey hairs stretching out between his two ears. He realised that old age was creeping on him. He tried to drink a glass of water. He noticed that his hand was trembling. He could see that his organs were beginning to fail. He felt that he could carry on his reign as long as his senses were perfect. But now they were declining.

He went out and summoned all his ministers and the preceptor. He told them: "I have reigned for as long as I could. I sought always to please my subjects in every way. I looked after their welfare as that of my own children. This kind of feeling is possessed only by Rama. The time is appropriate to install Rama as the heir to the throne".

The subjects and ministers present suggested that the king was fit to continue to rule for some more time. Dasaratha felt that perhaps they were not in favour of Rama's coronation as king. They submitted to the king: "Maharaja! We are well aware of Rama's sterling qualities. But he is still inexperienced in the arts of administration. You may install him as Crown Prince (Yuvaraja) and give him guidance."

But Dasaratha told them that when his senses had begun to weaken, it was not proper for him to continue as king.

Today, people who have lost their sight, are hard of hearing and are not able to move about, still want to stick to their offices. The reign of Dasaratha was different. He was a Dharmic ruler. It was a government based on justice and morality.

### **Youths: then and now**

When Lava and Kusa went about singing the glories of Rama they had no nervousness or apprehension. Today, young persons hesitate to put on any auspicious marks on the forehead when they visit temples and do not venture to fold their palms in reverence when they meet elders. On the contrary, Lava and Kusa forgot all bodily considerations and sang from their hearts the glory of Rama. They thus taught what is relevant to youths today-the path to a God oriented life. There is nothing greater than chanting the name of the Lord. (Swami recited a ballad in praise of the Divine name).

*"People are eager to listen to gossip.  
But the ears are deaf to the sweet names of God.  
You do not hesitate to go to the films endlessly;  
But your eyes find it hard to look at God in the sanctum."*

What for are the eyes given? What for do you have ears? You should remember God's name and go to the abode of God.

In this manner Lava and Kusa went about glorifying the greatness of Rama joyously and telling the people how they should adore God.

Today's youth should take a resolve to spread the love of God among the people without any hesitation or fear. They should make every man realise the sweetness of the Lord's name, the divinity enshrined in it and the purity associated with it. These feelings should emanate from the heart. That is true namasmarana (reciting the Lord's name).

### **Thyagaraja's praise**

The Ramayana propagated the great ideals of Rama in song and story. Rama was ever auspicious, ever the heroic wielder of the bow (Kodanda-Rama), ever the anointed ruler (Pattabhi-Rama), and the Divine indweller in the heart. People have to enthrone him in their hearts and adore him. Thyagaraja grew ecstatic when he sang about Rama and his various attributes and glories. (Swami sang Thyagaraja's song beginning with the words: "Rama! Kodanda Rama! Rama! Pattabhirama!") ("Rama! You stand by the word you have given. For me, you are the only wealth. Your song is the only song. Your path is the only path. Rama! you are the consort of Sita (Sitapati). You are the only goal (gati). I bow to you. I surrender to you, Oh Rama") (Swami sang the song mellifluously).

*"Rama! your name is supreme  
Rama! thoughts of you are enough"  
(Swami sang this refrain and concluded):  
"Rama I am yours  
Please speak to me"*

The great devotees of Rama revelled in singing the glories of Rama in this manner.

Such a moving and inspiring story as the epic of Rama cannot be found in any other country or language. Even after thousands of years, the story of Rama continues to be related in innumerable villages and cities.

### **Rama's temples everywhere**

In Bharat today there is no place where Rama's name is not chanted or charity (danam) is not practised. Even in the tiniest hamlet there will be a small Rama temple. But these temples are not so very important. The temple in which Rama should be worshipped is your heart. God is the dweller in the heart (Hridayavasi). You need not seek Rama anywhere else. Without going out anywhere, without incurring any expense, you can experience Rama in your heart and achieve liberation.

Today, on Sri Ramanavami Day, in spite of the good fortune of being born in the sacred birth-place of Rama (Rama Janmabhumi), you are not recognising the Rama Principle. There is nothing great about celebrating the birthdays of great persons. You must put into practice the teachings of those great figures. What is the use in celebrating birthdays and ignoring the teachings? Practice is the touchstone of devotion.

Knowing the ephemeral nature of the body, people should follow the conscience and lead a godly life. That is true devotion to Rama. You should dedicate your body, mind and everything to God.

God is the embodiment of love. You should promote love in your hearts. Turn your mind to God before the end comes. It may come at any time.

### **Valmiki's confession**

Valmiki prostrated before Rama and confessed: "I have done no penance or spiritual exercises of any kind. By the constant chanting of your name I have been blessed with this beautiful experience. In my youth I had committed many atrocities and incurred many sins out of selfish motives. But, ultimately, chanting your name, I forgot my body altogether. An anthill grew over me. But the name Rama came out of it".

That is what everyone should aim at. Outgrow the body consciousness and merge in the Rama principle. You must eschew all worldly attachments and fix your mind on God. "Make good use of the Sai who has come to you. Adore the feet of this Lord at Parthi. Offer your devotion and achieve liberation. Do not go after all and sundry. Awake! Abandon your delusion" (Telugu Poem).

Develop such divine feelings. Do not go after power and pelf. The people of Ayodhya concentrated on their duties. They considered duty as worship.

When Rama was leaving for the forest the people of Ayodhya were in deep distress. They did not want to stay in Ayodhya without Rama there. Every man, woman and child was in agony at the time. That was the intensity of their devotion to Rama. The same devotion should fill your hearts today.

Dasaratha had eight dedicated and truthful ministers. He had great sages like Vasishta and Vamadeva as preceptors. If we had such ministers and preceptors today we can have Rama Rajya.

Develop faith in Rama and cultivate love for Rama. Love and faith are most important.

Bhagavan concluded His discourse with the bhajan: "*Prema muditha manase kaho: Rama! Rama! Ram!*"

**—From Bhagavan's discourse in Sai Ramesh Hall, Brindavan, on 16-4-1997**

*Educational institutions should teach students to adhere to truth and to discharge their duties as a sacred obligation. Students should not allow success or failure to ruffle their minds unduly. Courage and self-confidence must be instilled in the students. Bend the twig and shape the tree, says the proverb. The moulding of character must start with children at the earliest age. Begin developing human values from the primary school. Some are concerned about living in a "secular state". Secularism really means equal respect for all faiths and beliefs. There should be no hatred towards any faith. Other creeds and beliefs should be condemned or derided. I want each one of you to grow into a strong steady and straightforward person. Your eyes should not seek evil sights. Your tongue should not indulge in evil speech. Your hands should not do evil acts. Your mind should not seek evil thoughts. Be pure and full of love. Help those who are in a bad position and serve those who need your help.*

**—Baba**

**AVATAR VANI:**

## **The Saints of Tamilnadu**

**Embodiments of Love!**

The human being is a combination of morality (Naitikam), Righteousness (Dharma) and Spirituality (Adhyatmikam). All three constituents are contained in man. Hence, to recognise the Divine in man, his humanness should not be divorced from his Divinity. Divinity is immanent in man. Men consider themselves as mere human beings. This is not so. All of them are manifestations of the Divine. It is because men do not recognise this fact, all kinds of confusions arise in respect of human activities in the phenomenal world. Every person should develop the awareness that he is Brahman ("Aham Brahmasmi"). Only then he will understand his true nature. God is not distinct and apart from man.

Bharat has been conveying profound truths to the world from ancient times. It proclaimed the universal message: "Let all people everywhere be happy." ("Lokaassamasthaas-sukhino bhavanthu"). Unfortunately, because of attachment to the things of the world, the people have lost this sense of universal well being and are wasting their precious lives. Worldly wealth and comforts are transient. Bharatiya culture has glorified adherence to Truth and Righteousness.

God is the indweller in the human heart (spiritual heart). There is no meaning in going elsewhere in search of God. Realising this, men should lead a life of kindness to all beings. A man without kindness is an animal.

There was once a person in Tamilnadu who belonged to a place named Pompuhar on the banks of the Kaveri. He used to earn a living by weaving cloth and selling it. In the same place there was a rich man whose son was a naughty boy. This lad came to the weaver and asked what was the price of the sari he was selling. The man replied: "Three rupees" (the price of those days). The lad tore the sari into half and asked what was the price of half the sari. The weaver replied: "A rupee and a half." The lad tore it again into two and asked what was the price of the torn piece. The man replied: "It is worth twelve annas," (three-fourths of a rupee). The weaver did not get angry at the lad's behaviour. He was calm and unruffled. The young lad was astonished. He asked the weaver: "How did you acquire this quality of forbearance (kshama)?" The man replied: "Forbearance is truth. It is right conduct. It is non-violence. It is a source of joy. It is heaven itself. It is the summum bonum in this world. There is nothing greater than forbearance in this world."

The weaver composed numerous poems in praise of forbearance (kshama). This work is known as "Thiruvachakam." Its author is none other than the Saint Manikkavachakar. Manikkavachakar, who achieved the highest goal of life by the quality of forbearance, brought glory to Tamilnadu by his devotional songs.

Over the centuries many other saints known as Alvars were born in Tamilnadu.

### **Minister turned saint**

Here is another example: Among the various Tamil Kingdoms, the reign of Pandyan Kings is famous. One of the Pandyan rulers wished to develop his kingdom by breeding horses. He had a young minister in his court. He was a man of character, full of piety and devotion. He led a pure life. He led a life of integrity and dedication. The king gave him the necessary money and commissioned him to purchase horses. The minister set out on his mission with his escorts. On the way he saw a Siva temple in ruins. There he saw a holy man Sivayogi. Conversing with the yogi and listening to his teachings, the minister stayed with him as a disciple. He lost interest in the mission of buying horses. He was immersed in the contemplation of God. He used the money he had brought with him for the renovation of the Siva temple. This news reached the Pandyan King. He summoned the minister and charged with misusing the money that had been given to him for buying horses. The minister replied: "I have not misused the money. Everything belongs to God. I have used the money as an offering to God."

The king asked: "Who gave you the money?" He replied: "It all came from God. You did not earn it. It was all a gift from God. And I offered it to God."

The king sent the minister to prison. But because an innocent man had been sent to jail, the king could not sleep or take food. The prisoner was singing poems in praise of God. These poems have become famous as "Thirumanthram." This work is esteemed as another Veda in Tamilnadu. The author is known as Thirumular.



Such a sacred land as Tamilnadu has witnessed a decline in spirituality. Selfishness is rampant. Very few are filled with fear of sin or love of God. Fear of sin, love of God and morality in society have become scarce. People can experience God if they adhere to the path of truth. Very few pray to God for His grace. Most people pray for material benefits which are ephemeral. The sacred and precious human life is being wasted in the pursuit of trifles. Men are stricken with the maladies of the craze for wealth and power. What is earned should be used for the benefit of society.

There is one other disease with which all are afflicted to varying degrees. It is the disease of egoism (Ahamkara). There is no basis at all for this conceit. There is no reason at all for anyone feeling proud about one's wealth or any other possession. The only thing about which one should feel proud is one's goodness. People should cultivate love and cherish the feeling of oneness with all beings.

Embodiments of love! All your bhajans, penances and the like are of no avail unless you have a pure heart filled with love. It is like preparing food in an untinned vessel. It is bound to get spoilt.

It is to develop a loving heart that you have to embark on the spiritual path. This pure love is the direct path to God. It is love which is unbounded and divine.

The love of God should not depend on whether your prayers are fulfilled or not. Remember what ordeals the great sages and saints passed through in their devotion to God. They braved all difficulties and earned lasting fame as great devotees. Life is a challenge: Meet it! Life is a Game: Play it! Life is love: Enjoy it! Life is Awareness! The best way to love God is to love all, serve all.

Bhagavan concluded His discourse with the bhajan: *"Hari bhajan bina sukha santhi nahi!"*

**—From Bhagavan's discourse in "Sundaram", Madras, on April 10, 1997**

## **A Dream Come True**

For thousands of devotees of Bhagavan Baba in Bangalore and Karnataka, May 25 was a Red-Letter Day, when Swami inaugurated the new magnificent mandir-cum-service Sai Centre in J.P. Nagar, which He named "Sai Gitanjali." For Dr. R. S. Padmanabhan, State co-ordinator for the Karnataka Sathya Sai Organisation, it was "a dream come true" after more than half a century of devoted service to Bhagavan.

Bhagavan arrived at J.P. Nagar at 9:30 a.m. from Brindavan and was received with Purna-kumbham and Vedic chants and led to the large prayer-hall in the middle floor of the three-storeyed building. Since the previous evening, a homam had been performed to sanctify the new building. Bhagavan graciously performed the Poornahuti and blessed the entire gathering.

Swami then lit the sacred lamps on the stage to mark the formal inauguration of the new building.

Extending a prayerful welcome to Bhagavan and all the devotees, Sri Y. N. Gangadhar Shetty said that Bhagavan's advent was of unique significance at the present juncture in the history of mankind. His mission was to awaken all men to a realisation of their inherent divinity and transform their lives. His message of love transcends all barriers of caste, creed and nationality. The Sai movement today spans the entire globe.

Dr. R. S. Padmanabhan, State coordinator for Karnataka Sathya Sai Seva Organisation, said that the new building was yet another offering of love by Bhagavan's devotees in Karnataka. "It is a great emotional moment for me", he said, "since I have been a devotee for the past fifty-three years. Ours was one of the few families fortunate to have had the privilege of being with Bhagavan since 1943. This centre is a dream come true for me." He said that it would meet the needs of the large number of Bal Vikas gurus who had been feeling keenly the need for a suitable building for their educational activities. The building will also serve the spiritual needs of Sai devotees in the south zone and the public around J. P. Nagar. He said a large number of people had contributed to the completion of the project. Many serious difficulties were overcome by the grace of Bhagavan. Expressing their gratitude to Bhagavan for His blessings, he assured Swami that all devotees would perform loving service from the centre. There would be regular bhajans on all days and all other activities-like Bal-Vikas classes, study circle, educational training programmes for the weaker sections, a library, vocational guidance, specialised medical consultancy service and literacy courses will be conducted at the centre. He prayed to Bhagavan to bless them and enable them to carry on their work worthily.

### **Bhagavan on the four temples**

Bhagavan then delivered His benedictory discourse. Speaking in sweet and simple Kannada, Bhagavan called upon devotees to respect the sacredness of temples as the abode of the Divine. He said that there were four types of shrines ("Aalayams") to which people went: Vaidyalaya (hospitals), Vidyalaya (educational institutions), Bhojanalaya (hotels) and Devalaya (temples for the Divine).

In Vaidyalayas people talk only about their diseases and their the treatment. In Bhojanalayas people think of different foods. In Vidyalayas the concentration is on different branches of knowledge and the teaching and learning of various academic subjects. However, when it comes to Devalayas, people indulge in talk about all other things except God! This tendency should be curbed and people should learn to concentrate on the Divine and pray not for worldly things but for achieving Santhi (peace) and Ananda (bliss) which human beings lack today. Enduring peace and bliss can be had only through Divine Grace.

Declaring how doing one's duty itself constitutes worship, Bhagavan said: "Even without formal prayers for concentration, performing one's work or duty with concentration and as a sacred act is the correct way to the divine. Thus, while cutting or chopping vegetables one can think of cutting out one's anger or chopping off the ego (ahamkara). While sweeping the floor one can think of sweeping away from the heart all the dirt of lust and attachment and thus cleanse the heart!

People today do not have fear of sin (papa bheeti) or love of God (Daiva Preeti). People have full faith in all kinds of human agencies. They leave the care of the house in the hands of a gurkha and feel free. They surrender their heads to a barber for haircut with total faith in his competence. They entrust their safety to their drivers without any fear. But they lack faith in the Divine, who is all-powerful and all-knowing. This indeed is the basic human weakness which is the root cause of all problems facing mankind today. The result is the decline in moral values. Spiritual and service centres should try to remedy this situation by inculcating human values and in service and promoting faith in God, who is the indweller in all beings.

Giving a new interpretation to the three letters in the word, MAN, Bhagavan said, "M is for Maya or illusion which has to be transcended to realise one's true nature, the Atma for which "A" stands. This will lead to "N" or Nirvana, which is the goal of mankind!"

Bhagavan recalled the message of Vyasa to mankind embodied in his famous aphorism embodying the essence of all the Puranas: "Paropakarah punyaaya paapaaya parapidanam." (It is meritorious to help others; it is sinful to cause harm to others). Bhagavan simplified the message further in four words: Help ever; Hurt never. Exhorting everyone to cultivate divine love, Bhagavan concluded His discourse with the bhajan: "*Prema muditha manase kaho.*"

The function ended with the offer of Arati to Bhagavan.

*"knowing is not being. You must try to translate into daily life what you learn from them. The moral life is the best prescription for a joyful life."*

—Baba

**WITH BHAGAVAN IN KODAIKANAL:**

## **A Spiritual Summer at the Lotus Feet**

Bhagavan's three-week stay in the beautiful hill-station of Kodaikanal was spiritually blissful and physically enjoyable experience for thousands of devotees from overseas and various parts of Tamilnad who gathered at the Lotus Feet everyday to have the darshan of Bhagavan and listen to His nectarine discourses.

Kodaikanal, which had been rainless for some weeks before Bhagavan's arrival on April 20th from Brindavan, received welcome showers all through Bhagavan's stay till May 11th. The rains did not affect Bhagavan's daily programme of darshans and interviews and the discourses in the afternoon.

A fortunate group of ten students was taken by Bhagavan with Him to Kodai and all of them had an enjoyable and edifying time with Bhagavan. On many an evening, Bhagavan's discourse was preceded by a speech by one of the students and a talk by one or other old devotee. Bhagavan's discourses, which began on April 23, continued till May 9. Bhagavan returned to Brindavan on May 11.

Bhagavan's very first discourse was an exposition of the power of sound. "It is sound which is responsible for happiness and misery, courage and fear. Divine sound generates divine vibrations." Bhagavan dwelt on the supreme value of "Namasmara" (chanting the name of the Lord), in this Kali Yuga. It was the easiest path to God-realisation and supreme bliss.

In the discourses which followed, Bhagavan related episodes from the lives of great devotees like Thyagaraja, Surdas, Tulsidas and others to emphasise the greatness of devotion to the Lord. Underlying all Bhagavan's discourses was the power of Prema (Divine Love). Bhagavan exhorted the devotees to pray for only two things from the Lord: Prema and Ananda. The right to ask for these two divine qualities, according to Swami, can be earned only through the royal path of service to all mankind. Any work which is done with a feeling that it is God's work becomes good work.

Bhagavan's stay in Kodai was marked by two festive occasions: the anniversary of "Trayee Brindavan" (Bhagavan's abode in Whitefield) on April 26 and Easwaramma Day on the 6th of May. On April 26th prasadam was distributed to all the devotees in the morning. In the evening's benedictory address Swami mentioned the need to change our vision so as to see God in everyone. On Easwaramma Day, with Bhagavan's blessings, prasadam was distributed to all the devotees. This was followed by distribution of clothes and blankets to the poor. Bhagavan supervised the entire function which lasted over two hours. Bhagavan's discourse in the evening was an exhilarating exposition of the role of mothers in moulding the character of children. On the 7th May, Bhagavan made a lightning trip to Madurai and blessed the devotees with his divine presence.

Bhagavan and the students returned to Brindavan late in the evening on May 11. Swami's arrival was hailed by a large gathering of devotees who had been eagerly awaiting His return. Swami blessed them all and retired to "Trayee Brindavan" after the offer of Arati.

**ENCOUNTER WITH BABA:**

## **An Argentinean Journalist's Experience**

In my early childhood I participated in a quiz show and won the first prize by answering questions on Greek mythology. That event opened many doors for me, and I began to work in television. By the time I was 20 I had travelled all over the world and interviewed personalities such as the Pope, President Carter, Jane Fonda, and Woody Allen. Still, I found that my life was rather empty. I was sad. I had everything, but something was missing. That something was spirituality.

Starvation and social injustice in Latin America and Africa overwhelmed me. I was not an active person and I was just letting life pass me by. When I reached the deepest point of depression I thought I would rather die. But I decided to live. I had a wonderful wife and two sons who gave me the motivation to live. I decided to get involved in life and show people things that were helpful so that they could become better persons. You have to be a good person, for good thoughts bring good things and bad thoughts bring bad things. Things (in this day and age) are happening very fast, and while there are terrible things happening, there are also wonderful things happening. This is not just the end of a century but the end of a millennium. Today we are able to speak freely of things which just a few years ago we would not have dared to say in public. Swami says, "If you don't believe in God, believe in yourself." Your life has a reason so don't waste it.

Twenty-five years old, I decided to seek spiritual phenomenon. The good thing about Swami is that when you look to Him, He comes and shows you the path. When analysed, all religious books speak of the same path and the same truth-be a good person and do good. I read many books and found this.

On television I first showed a controversial documentary on healing. I wanted to shake people out of their shell and awaken a few to start thinking about the more wonderful and mysterious things that are part of this world. Of course there would be a few critics, but then the good goes with the bad.

At 17, when I first visited India, somebody gave me a book on Sai Baba as the spiritual teacher. The spirituality I felt in India I have never felt anywhere in the world. But it took me 17 years to go back to India and visit Sai Baba. The first thought I had when I saw the picture on the book was, why is He so ugly? Then I said to myself that He must be a very good and wonderful person because millions believe in His message. When I read His book, the first message that stuck in my mind was, there is only one religion, the religion of love. He says that whether you are a Catholic, a Moslem or anything else, be the best man, person and human being in that religion. The night I read that passage I was so moved that I prayed for Him, saying, "God Bless you." At the same time I asked Jesus for forgiveness because I believed Baba's message and wanted to meet Him. I remember reading that Swami said, "When the time is perfect and you desire it, you will come and visit Me." After a while I forgot about Him until I met Leonardo, the coordinator of Sai Centres in Spanish speaking countries. When I asked Leo if I could interview Sai Baba, he said that Swami had rejected "60 Minutes", so why would He give me permission to film Him? I replied that we were a highly underdeveloped country and we needed help and guidance. Leo explained to me that no private network had been allowed to film Baba without restrictions.

Anyway, he said that he would make inquiries. Three days later, he called and asked me if I would like to go to Prasanthi and said that I was allowed to film in Prasanthi. They had allowed Argentina and Japan to film Swami.

### **"Every day a miracle"**

So we went to India. Everyday was a miracle. I needed to test Him and He provided me with many more opportunities than I had even requested of Him in my mind. I can only be grateful to Him. The moment you step into His city it is different-the air, the atmosphere, the smell, the singing of the birds. The people in the city look into your eyes. I thought, This is definitely a City of Love.

The simplicity of the temple contrasts with the overpowering wealth of the Vatican. I love the simplicity. At my first darshan, just seeing Him float majestically through the people, and the love the people had in their eyes, was magical. I thought that if a human being could bring about such feelings in thousands, millions, of people present here and around the world, then He must be a holy person. The moment I set my eyes on Him, I started to cry. I could not understand my feelings because I did not love Him so much. I thought that it must be the aura and the energy. I closed my eyes and thought, if it is true that you read people's minds, please come to me and say something nice to me so that I can believe in you. I opened my eyes and said to myself I was being stupid-out of so many people who love Him, who believe in Him, why should He come to me. When He came very near, I closed my eyes and said, now or never, say something to me. I opened my eyes and saw Him come directly towards me but without looking at me. He talked to the Argentinean sitting next to me and totally ignored me. Then he spoke with the person on my other side and I thought, Good. Now He will talk to me for it is my turn. But He just turned and started to walk away. I thought to myself, this is a lesson for me in humility, and I said, God bless you for you are certainly something for these people. Just as I finished thinking this, He turned abruptly and looking at me said, "Those are nice thoughts." I looked at Him and He came towards me and laughed and said, "Of course you are going to learn things here. Open your heart, open your heart." I was dazed and wondered if I had imagined it all. To make a long story short, every day I had a test for Him and He gave me how I could do this. Could I not believe in the energy of a holy being just by being there? But I had to do it; it is my nature.

We were allowed to film in Prasanthi without any restrictions except that we could not film the verandah where the VIPs and the people who have been with Him all these years sit. The reason given was that their ego and vanity would be fanned. We spoke with Dr. Goldstein, Phyllis Krystal, artists and people from different countries. One day, Baba made us stop. I asked, "Have we done something wrong?" and Baba answered, "Eat something, keep your energy up!" and He gave us bread. Other times He gave us prasada (blessed food) and wonderful gifts. His presence and love were magical. The messages I was receiving from Him in my mind were so real. For example, Be the master of your life, open your heart and close your mind and personality and let life flow through you.

My sister-in-law had given me a letter for Baba, but my ego did not permit me to be in the darshan line with a letter. I was thinking, if He knows everything, why does He need a letter? Nevertheless, I decided to bring the letter so as not to deprive her of the opportunity of being blessed. And just in case it was good to write to Him, I quickly added to the letter. Well, when

Baba came close to where I was, I quickly hid the letter behind my back, ashamed to have it with me. But Baba stood quietly and then said, "Give it to me," and I had no choice but to hand it to Him.

Of the three weeks that I spent there, the first week was heavenly for He granted me whatever I wished for. The second week was hell because I fell very sick and thought I was dying. But the last day, when we were to take our leave of Him, was paradise. When I fell sick, I started discovering things about myself—who I was and why I was here. I was alone in the room and delirious with fever when I saw Swami come into the room. He looked at me very deeply and calmly, and went away. That night I dreamt of Him. He was outside the temple and He was beckoning me to come to Him. I ran to Him and asked Him if I could hold and hug and kiss Him. He said, "Yes." Then I asked Him a very personal question, and He gave a precise answer. When I woke up it took me a while to realise that it was a dream, for it was so real.

The only thing missing for the moment was an interview with Baba. I wanted to be a journalist for my country and to ask Him if He was really God. I was silly and vain. We had just two days left before we were to leave and we still did not have our interview. So when I was sitting in the darshan line, I closed my eyes and said, please, please, can't you understand I really need an interview. When I opened my eyes, He was there and very seriously He said, "You will have to be patient." He gives a lesson at every step. I thought to myself, what difference will it make, having an interview? Will I become a better person or will I just become more egoistic? I love him so much already and it is just my ego to show off to people that I want an interview. All these thoughts made me cry, for I realize my shortcomings. So in my mind I said to Him, Don't let me film the interview but just let me be with you and touch you like in my dream. Even if you don't give me the interview, I love You so much and I am very grateful to You and I will always remember You. But still, if You can, please give me an interview. Just after this thought a boy came running to me and said, "Swami says that what you just thought is wonderful." After a while, Dr. Goldstein came and said, "Come on, the interview with Baba is now!" I was deeply moved.

We went inside (the interview room) with a group of Greeks. This, to me, was a sign of Swami's humour, because it was Greek mythology that had first given me the opportunity of being given an interview with the Greeks! He first spoke to them and then asked us Argentineans to come forward. He took my hand and I don't know what happened to me. I just jumped over Him and started kissing till somebody said, "Don't kiss Swami so much." The first part of my dream had come true. Throughout the interview He held my hand and asked me questions and gave me precise answers. He materialised a ring and gave it to me. He took us into the inner room and sang to us and mentioned some personal things which have come true in the past year or so. He told me to be prudent about what I show (on TV) for there are two kinds of people in the world: some will love what I show and will open their hearts to it but others will not find it easy to understand the idea of universal love. He said that I should go ahead and that He would be with me throughout. I asked if it would be too difficult for me, as I was a little scared. But He said "No, no. It will be easy, and I will be by your side." I asked Him for permission to write the book. I also asked Him if I could return soon. And He said I would be returning very soon for His birthday. I had wanted to ask Him if the dream was true but felt a little shy, so He asked me to ask Him about the dream. He assured me that the dream was true and described it. Then He

pointed to the space around-the world-and said, "This is a dream." I asked Him why do we experience this illusion and how can we penetrate that veil and see the truth, and He said, "You have to deserve it."

I came for His birthday in a very unexpected way. When I returned to Argentina I was very sad because I missed being with Swami. A week before Swami's birthday, I was cordially invited to go to Puttaparthi to attend the Birthday celebrations if I wanted to. During this visit, I had a dream that I was dialing Mother Teresa's number and that she herself answered the call. She also said that she was waiting for me. I woke up feeling sad that this was just a dream but I went to the phone and called the number at 6:30 A.M. and surprise of surprises Mother Teresa herself answered and gave me an appointment! So He enabled me to interview Mother Teresa, whom I had been trying to interview for the past several years. I was able to live with her, interview her and film her charitable acts for a week.

(During this visit), I was also allowed to sit in the Verandah. When Swami came for darshan He looked at me in a funny way and I closed my eyes and said, Please tell me if what happened in my last visit was an illusion or reality. When I spend my eyes, He was standing in front of me. He assured me by nodding, and then he walked away.

In my country, 80 percent of the people now know who Sai Baba is. Many of them really like and even love Him. We have a show called A Better World in which we share Swami's message. I have also showed footage comparing the exact words of Jesus and Swami, to show how they are alike and how their message is the same. The reactions have been wonderful-exactly the way He had predicted them. For every negative reaction, I have had a thousand positive ones.

**Claudio Maria Dominguez, Argentina (Excerpts from a talk given in N. Y. in March 1997)**

*When the magnet does not attract the needle, the fault lies in the dirt that covers up the needle. When the Lord does not approach the devotee the fault lies in the heart of the devotee; it is not pure enough.*

—Baba

*The greatest obstacle on the path of Sharanagati is egoism, ahamkara and mamakara. It is something that has been inheriting to your personality since ages, sending its tentacles deeper and deeper with experience of every succeeding life. It can be removed only by the twin detergents of Viveka and Vairagya.*

—Baba

## **Buddha Poornima Festival in Brindavan**

What began as a Sri Lankan New Year Day Celebration last year, developed into an International Buddha Poornima Festival this year at Brindavan, with Buddhist devotees from half a dozen countries, including Sri Lanka, Japan and Indonesia, participating in the celebrations.



Although Buddha Poornima—the Full Moon day when the Buddha was born 2540 years ago—falls on May 22, the festival was observed in Brindavan on May 15. Over 1500 Buddhist devotees had arrived in Brindavan, most of them from Sri Lanka (1300) and Japan (200), well before the festival.

The special decorations of the Sai Ramesh Hall and the surrounding premises combined the artistic traditions of Sri Lanka and Japan.

On the 14th, the Buddhist devotees had lessons in "Sil" (The teachings of the Buddha on right conduct) in small groups.

On the 15th morning, Bhagavan was greeted by the sound of conch and the beating of drums by a group of Kandyans, as He emerged from "Trayee Brindavan" in all His glory. The Kandyan dancers were resplendent in their traditional costumes. The dances and songs conveyed the greetings of the devotees to Bhagavan and welcomed Him to the festival in Sai Ramesh Hall.

It was a colourful scene, as the 6 dancers wore the age-old traditional costumes of white, befrilled dhoti pants, trimmed with red, three wearing turbans wide red cummerbunds and braid on the chest, while the other three, wearing high, pointed hats of shining metallic material, with wide brims, wore filigree beaded chest pieces. All wore arm bangles and metal epaulettes. As they danced gracefully with beautiful arm and hand movements, beckoning and bowing to Swami, tiny bells on their feet and legs chinked along with the drums. Gradually they moved into the Hall, adorned with great beauty, drawing Bhagavan after them, whose own effulgence radiated the greatest beauty of all, from His beaming countenance, full of love and joy.

Behind Swami, three Bhikkus (Buddhist Priests), in dark rust-coloured robes, walked side by side and then came a group of white-clad Buddhist devotees, each carrying a crimson rose. The dancers having given their final welcome and namaskar retreated quietly and Bhagavan Baba moved to the front to the accompaniment of three Oms and the chanting of some ancient Sinhalese slokas. After that Swami completed His usual Darshan, moving lovingly among the huge throng assembled in the Hall and looking extremely serene and happy, while the normal Thursday morning Bhajans were sung.

When Bhagavan returned to His chair on the Santhi Vedika, He was walking into a magical House of gold, which, we heard later, represented that made by the Devas during the third week of Buddha's contemplation after His Enlightenment. The four big pillars, and the frieze above, were covered with exquisite hand-made gold paper cuts, as well as two large panels behind the Krishna statue, incorporating the swan in the design, which was the theme of the main decoration of the hall. Two beautiful carved swans on high pillars stood at each side in front and there were five chandeliers of swan and lotus design hanging down the centre of the hall plus some others in the side-aisles. The swan, able by discrimination to take milk and leave behind the water, is an important symbol of purity, dear to both Buddhism and to Sai devotees. Each pillar along the front railing of the dais was topped with a golden vase containing coconut flowers and copious jasmine and crimson roses hung in festoons in the area around Swami's chair, while two huge vases of fresh roses and foliage flanked the glittering bronze statue of Krishna. It was indeed a

setting fit for Bhagavan Baba, "The Living Buddha". Sri Lanka was responsible for all this decoration. Outside, in addition to the usual strings of coloured pennants, bright flags were hung across the path, very striking in the sunlight. At night there were many, many coloured lights twinkling on buildings and trees, expressing the joy of the occasion.

When the Arati was sung, Swami remained on the stage, and towards the end blessed the gathering sending out so much love and joy. It was clearly reflected back to him by the devotees singing enthusiastically. Next, Bhagavan enjoyed supervising the distribution of prasadam for some time, before walking back to the Mandir.

In the afternoon, Bhagavan arrived punctually at four o'clock for the evening celebrations, taking His place behind the desk from where He would give His discourse. The other speakers came in and sat down and a beautiful performance of devotional songs began in Sinhalese and English. Some of them gave equal praise to Lord Buddha and to Lord Sai, and one was a prayer for peace in Sri Lanka. The singing came to an end on time at 4:30 when Mr. Hira from Japan, introduced the four speakers of the afternoon. He mentioned that this was the second annual Buddha Jayanti and that of the 147 countries now contributing to the Sathya Sai Seva Organisation, fourteen were Buddhist. Then came the four stirring talks by H. E. Mangala Munasinghe, Sri V. K. Narasimhan, Mr. Musashi (in Japanese) and Sister Nandini. All four speakers moved the gathering by their speeches and finally the moment came for Bhagavan to address us all with His divine discourse, which taught us much about the life and teachings of Buddha, and a great deal else besides. Perhaps to many, the news that was most moving was that Tamil Buddhists from the North of Sri Lanka had, for the first time, joined Sinhalese Buddhists from the South to participate in the Buddha Poornima Festival in the presence of Bhagavan. Who else in the world but our beloved Lord could make such a thing possible?

Outside again, we could linger and contemplate on the large cloth paintings hung on the wall of the Ashram depicting the Birth, Life, Enlightenment and Death of Buddha. Someone was distributing a nicely produced leaflet giving the parallel teachings of Buddha and Baba. Many would have been greatly enriched and blessed by all the devotion and hard work done to make this festival such a meaningful event, in a year when there is much suffering on the earth and all need Baba's loving kindness, protection and guidance more than ever. The emphasis of the whole occasion was on Love and Compassion. We pray Swami will strengthen our will to express these divine qualities to every living being and feel no enmity towards anyone.

—Deirdre West, Brindavan

*WITH BHAGAVAN IN TRAYEE BRINDAVAN II:*

### **Importance of Duty and Sacrifice**

Among the many lessons driven home to the students in Brindavan by Bhagavan Baba in His evening discourses in April in "Trayee Brindavan", one was concerned with the need for firm

determination on the part of a devotee to earn the grace of the Lord. Bhagavan related an episode from the life of Adi Sankara as a young lad.

The great Acharya was barely four years old at the time. His father, a devout scholar, used to offer daily worship to Goddess Rajarajeshwari every morning. Meditating before the Goddess with closed eyes, he would offer a bowl of cow's milk to her. When he opened his eyes after the meditation, he would find that the bowl was only half-full, the other half having been accepted as an offering by the Goddess. One day, he had to go to a neighbouring village for three days. He told his wife to arrange for the worship of the Goddess in the customary manner with the offering of milk, with the young Sankara deputising for him in the worship. In accordance with his father's instructions the young lad sat in front of the Goddess in the sanctum and performed the prescribed ritual. After meditation, when he opened his eyes, he was astonished to see that the bowl of milk offered to the Goddess remained full. He felt sad and cried out: "Divine Mother! What wrong have I done? I cannot bear this punishment. Please shower your grace on me as you did for my father." He prayed intensely for some time with closed eyes. When he opened his eyes he saw that the bowl was now totally empty. All the milk had gone! He was in distress again and cried out: "Devi! You have consumed all the milk. Where is our share of the prasadam? If we are denied this, what will mother say and what will others think? I will not leave this place till the bowl is refilled." In response to his fervent prayers, the Goddess spoke: "Dear child! When the river has joined the ocean, how can it be redirected?" Sankara said: "Nobody will believe me when I say that no milk was left in the bowl after my worship. They may think that I drank all of it. I cannot face them. Devi, without your prasad I will not leave this place. I will lay down my life at your Feet." Swami concluded this moving account of the episode with the following finale: "Devi Rajarajeshwari's heart melted on hearing the young boy's appeal. She took the bowl and poured Divine breast-milk into it and gave it to the young devotee." The compassion of the Divine, Swami said, has no limits.

### **The power of faith**

Swami emphasised the power of faith that is total. It is not erudition that counts. What matters is the sincerity of the devotee and his firm faith that God will respond to his entreaty.

Swami related by way of illustration the story of an unlettered cowherd. One day, while grazing his cattle on the bank of a river, the cowherd saw a pandit doing what appeared to him as a breathing exercise while uttering some words. Driven by curiosity, he approached the pandit and asked him what he was doing and for what purpose. The latter said: "I am doing pranayama to control my breath. I am chanting the Gayatri mantra. I am doing all this in the hope that God will be pleased and appear before me some day." The cowherd asked: "Can I also do this?" The pandit smiled and said: "Why not?"

The cowherd started doing the same exercise every day. Though he had not been taught the nuances of practising pranayama, he attempted it in his own crude way. He struggled with control of the breath. He chanted the mantra without knowing the words correctly. His intense faith in the pandit's words kept him going. A long time elapsed but he did not lose heart. One day, Lord Narayana appeared before him. The cowherd did not know who He was and asked Him. Lord Narayana said: "I am God. I am before you in answer to your prayerful exercises." The cowherd said: "I do not know you. I will go and get my guru to come here and identify you."

Lest Narayana should go away in his absence, the cowherd bound Him in a tree with a rope and set out to bring the pandit. The pandit hesitated to accompany the cowherd, but yielded to his importunities.

When he came with the cowherd, he could not see anyone there in the form of God or man. The cowherd who could see Narayana' cried out: "Unless you show your form to him and he confirms that you are God, how shall I believe you?" For a fleeting moment Lord Narayana revealed His form to the pandit. Dazzled by the effulgent vision, of the Lord, the pandit fell at the feet of the cowherd and said: "You have taught me the truth. You are really my guru."

### **Greatness of tyaga**

On another day, Swami dwelt on the supreme greatness of tyaga (sacrifice). He observed: "Sacrifice ought to become a fundamental trait of every human being. Sacrifice is synonymous with unity with the Divine." By way of illustration, Swami related the following story.

There was an old man living with his wife under conditions of extreme poverty. One day, with hardly any edibles to eat, he prepared the gruel to feed his ailing wife. As he was taking the gruel to her, there was a knock on the door of the hut. When he opened the door, a man was standing who said: "I am very hungry. Will you give me something to eat?" The woman looked at the husband and indicated that the gruel may be offered to the hungry stranger. The old man handed over the cup to the hungry stranger. The stranger withdrew and a moment later Lord Narayana appeared before the old couple and said: "I am very pleased with your spirit of sacrifice. From now on you will never go hungry."

### **Experience of an English visitor**

The story of a significant encounter between an Englishman and a leading Gujarati businessman, Sri Thakurdas of Rajkot, was the theme of one of the discourses in "Trayee Brindavan". Bhagavan recalled the great devotion and purity of heart of Sri Thakurdas, as experienced by Mr. E. J. Forester, from the U.K., who came to spend a few days with him as his guest. On the very first morning after his arrival, the English visitor observed that Sri Thakurdas was in his puja-room deeply immersed in prayer before a picture of Sri Sathya Sai. When Sri Thakurdas came out of his puja room, Mr. Forester asked him: "You have everything that one may wish to possess in life—a good and loving family, a spacious house, good health and prosperous business. What are you seeking from God through your intense prayer?" The thoughtful host smiled and replied: "I have discovered that material welfare is like a water-bubble and does not give genuine happiness. We all need God's love. We have earned very little of it to fill our hearts. We need more. We need peace of mind. We need Ananda, which is pure bliss. Sri Sathya Sai is Prema-Swaroop. He is Ananda-Swaroop. The Divine Lord will shower Love and Bliss on us, if we are serious enough and pray intensely. This is what I do day after day. I know that our salvation will come through the Lord's compassion, which is co-extensive with the universe."

The Englishman was greatly moved by these words, which came from the heart of his host. He was not well off materially and had till then been preoccupied with worldly pursuits. He went into the puja room and sat there for many hours. He became fully engrossed in his prayer for "love" and "bliss" from the Lord. He sensed the presence of Sri Sathya Sai in the puja-room.

Forester came out of the shrine with a radiant face. He expressed his sense of gratitude to Thakurdas and from that day onwards he looked upon Thakurdas as his guru.

Swami happened to visit Bombay at that time. Both Thakurdas and Forester came to Bombay to have Swami's darshan. Indulal Shah informed Swami about their arrival. Swami met them. Swami looked at Forester and asked him when he had come from Rajkot. Swami told him that he saw Forester in Rajkot and now he was in Bombay. Both Forester and Thakurdas were amazed at Swami's announcement of His presence in Rajkot.

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Apart from His own discourses, Swami called upon several elderly devotees to address the students on many days. Among these speakers were Sri. S. P. Mahadevan, Prof. S. Sampath, former Vice-Chancellor of Sri Sathya Sai Institute, Sri V. K. Narasimban, Dr. Ramaraju, former Head of the department of Telugu in Osmania University, and Dr. Ghadiya from the United Kingdom.

Altogether, the days which the students spent with Bhagavan in Brindavan were filled with memorable experiences which elevated them spiritually and inspired them to lead dedicated lives in the service of the Divine.

*"Let not the seeds of bad thoughts sprout anywhere near you. At least from this day onwards, live up to the word you have given to Swami, and walk along the flowery path shown by Sai. Receive in full Sai's Grace and Love."*

—Baba

## **Lessons from a Sai Project**

Sri Sathya Sai Water Project, which was inaugurated in November 1995, supplies pure drinking water to 800 villages in the Anantapur District of Southern India. Some idea of the magnitude of the task can be discerned from the fact that it involved the laying of 2500 kilometres of large diameter pipe lines, the construction of 125 ground level reservoirs, 268 overhead storage tanks and 250 bore wells and the creation of 7 summer storage tanks covering areas varying from 30 to 100 acres to ensure an unfailing supply during the summer months. Just like the construction of the Super Speciality Hospital at Puttaparthi some years earlier, this immense project took a little more than an year from conception to completion, an almost impossible task in a technologically advanced country let alone in a Third World country like India. Furthermore, the whole project was executed solely by the Sathya Sai Central Trust with voluntary contributions of people from several countries. It was, therefore, wholly appropriate that Sri K. R. Prasad, a member of the Sathya Sai Central Trust, should say in his speech on the inauguration day of the project "Our generation is fortunate to witness many a miracle performed by Bhagavan, of which this water project is the latest which will eclipse all other miracles."

For many of us a miracle is something that we either witness or else hear about from other people. Miracles rarely happen to us, or so we would like to think, but is this actually the case? Sai Baba says, “A miracle is born when the moment is ripe for it and the deserving person has arrived. What is given must be the right thing, at the right time, to the right person.” So a miracle is not a one way affair, an act of blind chance, a vagary of Divine Will. We help to create our own miracles. We attract Divine participation through the nature of our own thoughts, words and deeds. It is by becoming deserving people that we enlist God’s help in our earthly endeavours. Bhagavan Baba is constantly reiterating that for good work, there is always Divine Support. Every action that Sai Baba takes has meaning and purpose for us. He does nothing for Himself, for His own account. He had no need to take incarnation at this time. He did it purely for the sake of Humanity. He has no need to take action in any of the many fields of human activities. He does so only to open our eyes to the reality of our divinity. Those of us who have been privileged to draw close to Baba know that every word that he speaks, every small gesture that he makes has deep meaning and purpose. Just a single word spoken or a wave of his hand can bring about total transformation of some unwilling onlooker. So in a scheme as large as the Water Supply Project there must be many great lessons present for humanity. Although outwardly, the Project is bringing much needed fresh water to thousands of people whose needs up to now have largely been ignored by society as a whole, inwardly, the project is bringing the water of life, divine consciousness, to the parched minds not just for those who planned, supported, constructed and took an interest in this great undertaking, but to the whole Human Race.

### **A pilot scheme**

One of the lessons that Bhagavan Baba is teaching us is that we should not rely solely on our governments to do everything for us. This is the first time that a public charitable trust has undertaken a major infrastructure project anywhere in the world. By doing this Baba has taken the whole concept of Social Service onto a new dimension. If it can be done in India, it can be done anywhere in the world. In a country of great cultural diversity, the Government, the Sathya Sai Central Trust, the contractors and sub-contractors, the consultants, the specialists and the manufacturers all worked together in harmony with a single minded vision—the good of the common people—and, of course, it goes without saying that the beneficiaries of the scheme involved themselves fully as well. The Water Project has demonstrated to the whole world exactly what can be achieved by concerned people who are supported by Divinity. Let this example be a pilot scheme for similar endeavours all over the world.

### **Sacrificial service**

Another lesson that Sai Baba is teaching us is that the primary characteristic of an awakened being, who is aware of the indwelling divinity, is the expression of sacrificial service through the power of divine love. Furthermore, let us also recognise that every act of selfless service that we perform not only benefits the person or object that we serve but also aids in our own spiritual development. So let us resolve to follow Swami's example and, no matter how impossible a scheme might appear to be on the surface, let us recognise that with His support the impossible becomes possible, that a miracle will happen to the deserving person. Let us also keep in mind the symbology behind the bringing of fresh pure water to people in need. On the physical plane of life water is the sustainer of human existence. Without water we will die. Therefore bringing pure water to people, that is water suffused with love, is the greatest service that we can provide.

Similarly, on the spiritual plane of life, bringing the water of divine love to another human being is the greatest service that we can provide.

Bhagavan Baba says that there is no greater form of service than that of bringing people to God, to an awareness of the God in them. How do we bring people to God? By right demonstration of the God in us in thought, word and deed. Swami is the perfect exemplar in this respect. We have only to look at Him to see exactly how we should be leading our own lives, how we should be relating to our fellow human beings. It is our God-given right and privilege to serve all those who are in need regardless of race, colour and creed.

Finally, let us all remember that giving is not a once in a lifetime event. Many of us contributed to the Water Project in 1995, but does our giving, our commitment, end there? It is important that the impetus gained from the launch of the project is maintained. So let us look into our hearts and be conscious of the inner significance of the Sri Sathya Sai Water Project to ensure its continuing success.

—David Jevons, U.K.

AVATAR VANI:

EASWARAMMA DAY MESSAGE:

## **Mother's Love and Divine Grace**

### *Embodiments of Love!*

There is no nobler quality in the world than love. It is wisdom. It is righteousness. It is wealth. It is Truth. Everything is permeated with love. Everything in the cosmos arises from love, grows by love and merges in love.

Every human being is born from the mother's womb. He is fostered by the mother's love and enjoys many things in life because of the mother. He enjoys all happiness in life because of the mother's love. Hence, there is no higher divinity than the mother. But this divinity relates to the body alone.

Man has to recognise the truth that the food which sustains his body is derived from the sun. The sun helps food crops to grow. Hence, without the sun man cannot have food to sustain life. The term "Sathyam" (Truth) is made up of three syllables which represent life, food and the sun. It follows that man is inherently an embodiment of truth. As such, he should lead a life based on truth. Unfortunately, man today leads a life divorced from truth. Consequently, he becomes a prey to innumerable troubles. He has no peace. He is racked continually by many afflictions.

Man has to recognise the significance of Love and Truth, which are fundamental to human existence. The mother represents these two basic qualities.

### **Maternal inspiration**

Rama attained godhood because he was the son of Kaushalya. Lava and Kusa became heroic children because of their great mother, Sita Devi. It is the noble thoughts of the mother which make the children great. A mother may go wrong in other respects, but she will always strive for the well being of her children. Hence every son has to love the mother as the primary duty. Then he should love the father and revere the preceptor. The mother confers the body. The father protects it. The preceptor imparts knowledge and wisdom. For every human being all three are essential for getting on in the world.

### **Blessed sons**

Many great men have embarked on noble deeds after securing the blessings of their mothers. For instance, before going to battle to fight against the demon, Tarakasura, Sanat Kumara got the blessings of his mother, Gowri. Similarly, Parasurama received his mother's blessings before he went to fight his foes. Likewise, Vinatha blessed her son Garuda. Every mother similarly blesses her son by saying: "May Sri Rama protect you always." ("Sri Rama Raksha")

It is because of the blessings of noble mothers, the wives of great sages, that many men were able to perform heroic deeds. Sankaracharya taught that sons who did not get the blessings of the mothers suffered from various vicissitudes in life. Those who had the blessings of their mothers often secured freedom from rebirth.

Many high-souled men have extolled the greatness and power of mothers. It is the foremost duty of children to secure the blessings of their mothers for their worldly well being.

However, spiritually man's obligation is different, according to Vedanta. Here, there is room in the heart only for the love of God. Affection for the mother and reverence for the father are necessary. But parents and preceptor are transient. Even friends are impermanent. God alone is permanent and unfailing and God alone should have the permanent place in the heart.

### **Sacredness of the body**

The human body acquires its sacredness from the fact that it is the abode of the Divine. The Gita refers to the body as Kshetra (sacred field) and the Divine Indweller as the Kshetrajna. Because of the sacredness of the body, it should be used properly as an instrument of the Divine.

Man should develop faith in God. Without that faith, life will be meaningless. Man can have no happiness or satisfaction in life without the grace of God. Men today are too much immersed in affairs of the world. The result is they have no peace of mind. They can have peace only from the supreme embodiment of peace: God. He is the abode of infinite love and enduring peace. God's love should be secured by chanting the Lord's name. You should be grateful to your mother for endowing you with a body which enables you to chant the Lord's name. The greatness of the Lord's name is illustrated by the following episode.

### **Three mothers and Rama**

Once, Hanuman's mother Anjana, went to Kaushalya because her son was a great devotee of Rama. Kaushalya did not know Anjana and so she asked Anjana who she was in a sweet tone. Anjana was proud about her valorous son. She replied: "Mother! Have you not heard about me?"



Hanuman is my son. He leapt over the ocean in one jump. How is it that you did not know about one who had performed such a great feat? Staying in this palace you did not know about my son?"

Kaushalya replied in a soothing tone: "Dear mother! I now know that Hanuman is a really great hero".

While the two were conversing in this fashion, the mother of the sage Agastya came there. Kaushalya made kind enquiries about her. She replied: "I am the mother of Agastya. Don't you know that my son drank in one gulp the ocean over which Hanuman merely leapt? Are you not aware that I am the mother of such a pious saint's son?"

Then, Kaushalya addressing the two ladies said: "For your son leaping over the ocean and your son drinking the ocean in one gulp, it is the name of my son that enabled them to accomplish these exploits. Because they remembered his name they could do these marvellous deeds."

By then, Rama arrived on the scene. He was apprehensive about disagreement among the three ladies. Rama was totally free from pride and egoism. He was pure in heart and free from selfishness. He told his mother: "Mother, it is not because of my name that Hanuman and Agastya performed their great exploits. This body of mine was given the name 'Rama'. The greatness of the name Rama enabled Hanuman to leap over the ocean and Agastya to drink it in one gulp. The power of the name is at the root of their achievement".

Thus, the power of the Lord's name is incalculable. However great a mother may be, if the son does not have the grace of the Lord he will not be able to accomplish anything great. For this reason, mothers always pray to the Lord to shower His grace on the children.

### **Adi Sankara's ordeal**

Here is another illustration from the life of Adi Sankara. He was born in Kaladi in Kerala. When he was a six-year old boy, his mother, Aryamba, told him: "Son, Your father was a very pious person and he used to worship God according to the prescribed rituals. You must follow his example. You are very lucky. I am always devoted to God. Having taken birth as my son, you should conduct yourself in such a way that you achieve great name and fame and bring a good name to me. Act according to your father's example. It is the mother that makes a son noble and great. It is a noble son who brings glory to the mother. Hence, remembering this act according to your father's injunctions."

The father of Sankara was a regular worshipper of Devi (Rajarajeswari) for many years. He used to offer milk every day to the goddess. One day (when Sankara was barely four years old), the father had to leave his home to visit a neighbouring village. Every day after finishing his puja and offering milk to the goddess, he used to distribute the remaining milk to his wife, son and others as prasadam. He told the boy: "Son, your mother cannot perform the worship which I do. You better do the worship today."

After the father left, the boy followed the father's instructions. He filled a tumbler with milk, placed it before the image of the goddess Rajarajeswari and prayed: "Mother! Accept this

offering of milk." He went on praying to the goddess. When he found that the milk remained untouched, he was in great anguish. He cried: "Oh Mother! What crime have I committed? When my father offered the milk you used to take it. Why are you not taking it when I am offering it?" He was in deep distress. He was thinking whether there was any lapse on his part. He became desperate. He declared in agony: "Mother! If you don't take the milk I shall end my life. I would have dishonoured my father. I would also be guilty of failing to fulfill my mother's command. If I cannot please my parents, what use is there in my living?"

### **Devi's response**

He prayed intensely to the Goddess in great agony.

Moved by the naive entreaties of the boy, Rajarajeswari appeared before him. She told him: "Child! Be happy. I am immensely pleased with your devotion. I shall drink the milk." So saying, she drank all the milk offered in the tumbler.

The boy was aghast to see that the whole tumbler was empty.

"Oh mother!" he cried. "If you drink all the milk what is left for distributing as prasadam? My mother will think that I have drunk all the milk. I have to give prasadam to her. My father used to give some milk as prasadam to others also. Therefore please restore some of the milk in the tumbler."

How can the milk once consumed be brought back? Can the river that has joined the ocean be made to return? Can an apple that has been digested be brought back?

The goddess told the boy that it is impossible to bring back the milk that had been consumed and vanished.

The boy was in deep distress again. He thought within himself: "I will get a bad name from my mother." He prayed: "Mother! Please give at least a little quantity of milk." Responding to the prayers of the young boy the goddess drew milk from her breast and gave it to the boy. It was the sacred power of the milk which enabled Sankara in later years to master all the scriptures and earn lasting fame as a great spiritual teacher, revered by all. Knowledge of all the Vedas came to him effortlessly. It was due to the grace of the Divine Mother and the love and blessings of his own mother. When one is blessed with love and grace (Prema and Anugraha) he is transformed from the human to the Divine.

Hence every person, man or woman, should respect the parents, install the Divine in the heart and pray to God constantly. It is everyone's duty to bring a good name to one's parents. When the children are good, they bring a good name to the parents. It was because of the noble behaviour of Lava and Kusa that their mother, Sita, became renowned. When Lava and Kusa were engaged in a battle with Rama, Lava aimed an arrow at Rama with the prayer that if his mother Janaki was a "Sadhvi" (a supremely noble woman) the arrow should render Rama unconscious. Rama became unconscious when the arrow hit him. See what happened. The mere thought of his mother lent so much power to his arrow!

This shows that when you cherish the mother and seek God's grace, the blessings of the mother becomes more powerful.

In the world today such mothers are rare. Many mothers are worried about the future of their sons if they adhere to the righteous path. (They fear that such children may not be successful in life.) In ancient days mothers thought otherwise. They would be immensely happy if they found the children devoted to God. They would feel happy with the thought: "My son will be a good man. He will earn a good name."

### **Parents' duty**

Even now, in this sacred land of Bharat, parents should strive their utmost to bring up their children on right lines. Children also should revere their parents, who account for their physical existence. But they should realise what they owe to God, who is the basis of all life. Recognising this double obligation - to the mothers and to the Divine - they should redeem their lives by purposeful living. There are greater things than even life itself. The supreme achievement is God-realisation. It is the summum bonum of human life. This was the lesson which Aryamba taught to Sankara. She assured him: "When you have secured the grace of Devi, what is it that you will lack in your life? You will bring fame to the country as a whole."

Achieving a great name, however, is not all. Sankara lived in a state of perpetual bliss. Within a short span of 32 years he achieved incredible things. All because of Devi's grace.

I wish all young people to develop faith in God and lead worthy lives.

Bhagavan concluded His discourse with the bhajan: "Om! Sri Ram! Jai Ram! Jai Jai Ram!"

—From Bhagavan's discourse in Kodaikanal on May 6, 1997

*The mother is the pillar of the home,  
Of society, of the nation, and so of humanity itself.*

—Baba

**AVATAR VANI:**

**BUDDHA POORNIMA SANDESH:**

## **Purity—the Path to Liberation**

*Embodiments of Love!*

Knowledge (Jnana) does not mean mere acquaintance with books. Nor is it worldly knowledge. Only the person who has recognised the oneness of the individual spirit (Jivatma) and the universal Spirit is a real Jnani (one who possesses the supreme wisdom). True wisdom consists in the awareness of the unity the individual and the whole (samashthi).

## **Good vision**

How can a man who is not aware of his humanness recognise the Divinity within him? Hence the first requisite is the recognition by everyone of his human essence. Basing on this truth, Buddha declared that everyone should cultivate at the outset "Samyak-drishti" (a pure vision). It is only when man has a pure vision that he can get rid of impurities in the body, speech and mind. It is this purity that can protect man from invasion of impurities through the eyes and the ears. Hence the first requirement for every man is "Samyak-drishti".

The second quality that is needed is "Samyak-Sankalpam" (pure thoughts). Everyone should have pure thoughts. Only the person who has developed purity in vision can have purity in thoughts.

The third requirement for every man, along with purity in vision and thought, is purity in deeds (Samyak-Karma). Everyone should do pure deeds. Through pure deeds man is able to recognise his human essence.

Man is not merely an embodied being. By his capacity for developing good vision, entertaining good thoughts and performing good deeds, he has the power to transform humanness into Divinity.

A fourth requirement for man is "Samyak-Shruti" (listening to sacred words). When one listens to unsacred words he can have only unsacred thoughts.

The fifth quality prescribed by Buddha is "Samyak-Jivanam" (living a pure life). What is meant by "living"? It is not leading a worldly life attached to worldly pursuits. True living means making one's life meaningful by ideal actions. Man's life must be governed by idealism in action.

Next, Buddha declared that everyone should aim at "Samyak-Sadhanam" (Achievement of the highest good). Sadhana means elimination of the evil tendencies in man and acquiring good and sacred qualities. True sadhana is the eradication of all evil in a man. Study of sacred texts, meditation and penance do not constitute the whole of sadhana (spiritual exercise). To remove all the impurities in the mind is real sadhana.

After this comes what Buddha called "Samyak-Samadhi" or Nirvana (Pure Realisation or Liberation). What is meant by "Samadhi"? It means treating pleasure and pain, gain and loss alike. "Sama-dhi", equalmindedness, is "Samadhi". To look upon light and darkness, pleasure and pain, profit and loss, fame and censure with an equal mind is "Samadhi". Buddha termed this equal mindedness as "Nirvana".

It is the recognition of the sacredness of the qualities of all the senses in man that constitutes real humanness. At the very outset, one has to keep the tongue pure. This was referred to as "Samyak-Vaak" (purity in speech). The tongue has to be sanctified by refraining from falsehood, slander and abusive speech. Next comes "Samyak-Darshanam"—seeing only things that are holy. You must see only things which please your conscience. Seeing all worldly things is not proper seeing at all.

Buddha laid emphasis on seeing good, thinking good, speaking good and doing good. Seeing all sorts of things is not good for anyone. The eyes should be used for seeing only what is pure, what is holy and what is edifying.

Although all Avatars have been preaching only good things, men today are content to observe their birthdays without following their precepts. Buddha did not attach any importance to yajnas and yagas and other religious rituals. The reason is he felt that it was more important to ensure that the five sense organs were pure to begin with. Buddha sought to find out why the mind gets disturbed. He could not bear to see anyone suffering. He was deeply grieved at the sight of persons afflicted with old age. He was intrigued at the sight of a dead body. None of these natural happenings gave him peace of mind. Buddha considered the movements of the planets and the sun and the stars as natural phenomena. He undertook many spiritual exercises to find out what transcended these natural phenomena. Failing to find the answers by these exercises, he approached many great sages to find the answers. None could give him satisfactory answers. Ultimately he reached Gaya and sat under a Banyan tree to meditate on the problems that worried him.

Because Buddha did not interest himself in the study of the Vedas or in the performance of yagas and yajnas, he was dubbed an atheist. This is utterly wrong. Buddha was a pure hearted person. When he was born, a renowned astrologer had predicted that he would be either a great king or a great renunciant. On knowing this Buddha's father, Suddhodhana arranged to keep out of his son's sight all unseemly worldly sights of happenings in this world. From his childhood, Buddha could not bear the sight of anyone in pain. He was saddened at the sight of the old ill-treating the young, of men in authority harassing the people and the big fish swallowing the small ones. He realised that it was wrong for anyone to cause harm to others. Hence he declared: "Ahimsa Paramodharmah" (Non-hurting is the Supreme Dharma). No one should cause hurt to others by speech, action or in any other way. According to him true Righteousness (Dharma) consists in refraining from causing harm to anyone in thought, word or deed. Truth is God. Buddha taught that people should adhere to truth and uphold it.

Among Buddha's teachings the foremost were: Sathya (Truth) and Dharma (Righteousness). These two are the teachings of the Vedas: Speak the Truth (Sathyam vada), practise righteousness (Dharmam chara).

The name given to Buddha at the time of birth was "Sarvaartha siddha". Suddhodhana got his son married to Yashodhara, daughter of his brother-in-law, Suddabuddha. He apprehended that his son may become a recluse and turn away from the world if he was left to himself. But Buddha did not feel that a married life was the proper thing for him. Buddha felt that man was bound by various attachments in worldly life. Friends and relations were the cause of this bondage. Various human relationships are the cause of sorrow in the world. So he declared: All is sorrow (Sarvam dukham dukham). He also declared: Everything is momentary (Sarvam Kshanikam, Kshanikam). "Sarvam nasyam nasyam" (Everything is perishable).

Buddha felt that nothing was truly lasting. Parents were subjecting their children to various kinds of bonds and making their lives miserable. As soon as the children come of age the parents are keen to get them married. They do not know what kind of happiness he can get from married life.

What happiness have they derived from their own married life—physically, mentally or otherwise? No person, however intelligent, thinks about this matter. Even eminent scholars do not care to examine whether it is worthwhile pursuing sensuous pleasures instead of seeking what is beyond the senses. Buddha felt intensely unhappy that his parents and others combined to commit him to the bondage of married life. One day, at midnight, Buddha left the palace, giving up his wife and young son, Rahul.

He abandoned everything out of the conviction: "There is no mother or father, no kinsman or friend, no home or wealth. Awaken yourself!" He resolved to find out something which transcends all worldly relationships and pleasures.

Buddha asked himself: "What is this life? Birth is misery. Old age is misery. Wife is a cause of sorrow. There is misery at the end of life. Therefore, be alert and awake".

Happiness is not to be found in any of the things of the world. Everything is fleeting. Man is wasting his life in the pursuit of petty ephemeral pleasures. Nirvana is the only truth. It is the sense of oneness with all life. To turn the mind towards that which is permanent is "Nirvana".

Before he attained Nirvana, Buddha summoned his step-brother Anandabuddha. Buddha's mother Maya Devi passed away on the seventh day after his birth. Suddhodhana's second wife Gautami, brought up the child. Because he was brought up by Gautami, he was named Gautama Buddha. At the age of 28, he gave up everything and turned a renunciant. What is the significance of this step? Buddha declared: "Sangham saranam gachhami". "Hands in the society, head in the forest." He renounced everything to think about promoting the welfare of society.

He declared: "Dharmam saranam gachhami". What is this Dharma? "Ahimsa paramodharmaha". Dharma means causing no harm to anyone.

Basing his teachings on these two declarations, Buddha went about preaching his message. Buddha's message spread to many countries like Tibet, China, Ceylon, Burma, Thailand and Japan.

In course of time schisms developed which led to the decline of Buddhism.

Buddha's emphasis was entirely on purity in every aspect of daily life. Purity in vision, purity in thought, purity in speech and purity in action. He considered the spirit of sacrifice as true yajna. Sacrifice is the means for attaining Nirvana (freedom from the bondage of mundane existence). Buddha was totally opposed to anyone being forced to lead a worldly life against his will.

### **A lesson for his father**

When Buddha was going round begging for alms as a mendicant, his father, Suddhodana, called him and said: "Son! Why are you going about as a beggar? I am a king and you are leading the life of a beggar. This is not proper at all." Buddha gave him a fitting reply. "Sire, you are Brahman and I am Brahman. You are not father and I am not son. Both of us are Brahman. In the phenomenal world, you belong to the lineage of rulers. I belong to the lineage of renunciants. All those who follow my ideals are all renunciants. Your lineage is based on attachment (raga).

My lineage is based on renunciation (viraga). To those who have attachment, it becomes a disease (roga). To the renunciants, detachment becomes the means to Nirvana (liberation from bondage)".

Buddha taught his message in this way to his father, wife and son.

The Buddhist prayer must be properly understood. When the Buddhists say: "Buddham saranam gachchaami. Dharmam saranam gachchaami. Sangham saranam gachchaami", the real meaning of the prayer is: You must divert your mind (Buddhi) towards Dharma (right conduct). And the right conduct should aim at serving society. When this is done, society gets purified.

It is not enough to read the lives of avatars and messiahs. Their teachings should be put into practice as much as possible. People must gradually outgrow their material attachments and develop divine love.

Suddhodhana tried to protect his son from all external worldly influences by keeping him in the palace and not even sending him to school. Ultimately what happened? Buddha decided to renounce everything in quest of the truth about human existence and he declared non-harming (Ahimsa) as the supreme good.

What is it that people need today? These are three things: A heart pure and white like the moon, speech soft and sweet like butter, a face that is loving and kind. These are lacking in the world today. The entire atmosphere is frightening. There is harshness in speech. There is no softness in the heart. The heart should be pure and soft like butter. Today, on the contrary, people are hard-hearted. Fill your hearts with compassion. Let your speech be sweet and truthful, you will then be truly human.

### **Ahimsa the supreme virtue**

Buddha taught one great truth to the world. He declared that it is not what the Vedas and Scriptures say that constitutes truth. People should bear in mind that non-harming is the supreme virtue. Do not cause harm to anyone by thought, word or deed. The tongue is given to you to utter truth. Jayadeva exhorted his tongue to manifest its sweetness by chanting the names of the Lord: Govinda, Damodara, Madhava.

Whatever the number of religions, their goal is one and the same. (Swami sang a song pointing out how faiths may be many but God is one only). To carry on daily life in the world people pursue many vocations. But does all this constitute real living? Can a life led without remembering God be called life at all? What kind of life is it where there is no purity, no morality and no spirituality? Morality and integrity alone can lead to Nirvana (Liberation). Today these two are absent. People must strive to base their lives on morality and integrity (neethi-nijaayathi). They should become, as Jesus said, messengers of God.

Embodiments of love! We are celebrating today Buddha Poornima or Buddha Jayanti. What does Poornima (full moon) signify? It signifies wholeness. When the mind is filled with love, it achieves fullness. As long as the mind is filled with darkness (evil thoughts) there is no meaning in celebrating Buddha Poornima. Get rid of this darkness. Without the light of love in the heart,

what use is there in having illuminations outside? Light the lamp of the Divine in your minds. Banish hatred and envy from your hearts. Man is the victim of two evil planets: attachment and hatred. To escape from their grip, the only way is to cultivate love.

Bhagavan concluded His discourse with the bhajan: "*Prema muditha manase kaho: Rama! Rama! Ram!*" The entire gathering joined Bhagavan in singing the bhajan in chorus.

**—From Bhagavan's discourse in Sai Ramesh Hall, Brindavan, on May 15, 1997**

### **Sai's Call to Love**

Love grows and expands, free and unbound  
Compassion and sacrifice are its nurturing ground.  
The more you give, the more you get;  
By giving grows larger its gentle nest  
It is subtle, its nature is divine;  
Bask, O Man! Under its light benign;  
keep it bright, fresh and bloom  
It dispels all overhanging gloom.  
Love radiates Love, wherever it goes.  
No prejudices, no dualities it shows  
Love is sublime, sweet and pure  
Joy, more joy are its returns; be sure  
No force can ever stand against Love  
it may appear, though, as a gentle dove  
It brings along deep peace and calm  
For the ailing heart, a soothing balm  
Love inspires Good, it motivates  
it purifies the being, it liberates  
Love is always the first and last word of Baba.  
Come! Come all! Let us Love and say "Sai Rama!"

**—Dr. (Ms.) Veena Arora,  
Pondicherry University**

### **The Day That is Ours**

There are two days in every week  
about which we should not worry. Two days which  
should be kept from fear and apprehensions.  
One of these days is yesterday



with its mistakes and cares,  
its faults and blunders,  
its aches and pains.  
Yesterday has passed forever,  
beyond our control; all the  
money in the world cannot undo a  
single act we performed;  
We cannot erase a single word we said.  
Yesterday is gone.  
The other day we should not worry about is tomorrow.  
With its possible adversaries  
its burdens  
its large promise and poor performance.  
Tomorrow is also beyond our immediate control  
Tomorrow's sun will rise  
Either in splendour or behind a  
mask of clouds, but it will rise.  
Until it does  
We have no stake in tomorrow  
for it is as yet unborn.  
This leaves only one day - today  
Any man can fight the battle of just one day  
it is only when you and I  
add the burden of those two eternities  
yesterday and tomorrow  
that we breakdown.  
it is not the experience of today  
that drives men mad  
it is the remorse of bitterness over  
something which happened yesterday  
and the dread of what  
tomorrow may bring.  
let us therefore live.  
but one day at a time.  
and leave the rest to GOD.

—Dr. Chandler, L.I.D., Georgetown University, Washington D.C., U.S.A.

### **The Path of the Sufis**

What makes a person become a spiritual seeker? We often wonder. The Mystic says that it is the longing to reach one's source. When a person discovers the divine spark within oneself, he

develops an urge to communicate with the Ocean of Divinity and he feels the pain of separation from his 'Beloved'. He has tasted Divine Love.

In the Sufi tradition, a seeker should first go through the initial stages of training and discipline under a spiritual guide called Pir or Sheikh (Guru), as in a few other major faiths. This is called the Path (Tariquat) with many stages of progress, to be decided entirely by his guide. One of the stages is 'Poverty', which means spiritual poverty. The novice may even be rich in common meaning of the word, though spiritually he may be the poorest of the poor.

There is a story of a Sufi poet, Sheikh Saadi, who was once invited to the royal court. He put on his patched woollen frock and went to the palace, where the guards would not let him in. He had to come back, and being a man of means, saddled himself with the robes suitable for the occasion and called his carriage, driven by horses. He was received with great honour. At the dining hall, it was noticed that Sh. Saadi instead of enjoying the food himself, was trying to feed his dresses. On being questioned, he said; All this honour and hospitality is not given to me but to my dresses. Therefore, I am feeding them.

But some Sufis will take up Poverty in the literal sense and become a mendicant (Faqir) who would live by begging. It is said that Jesus had only three possessions, his woollen garment which he used for 20 years, a drinking bottle, and a comb. One day he saw a man drinking water from his cupped hand and he threw his bottle away. Another day he saw an old man combing his beard with his fingers; he threw his comb away. Once, he was sleeping with a brick under his head as pillow, a man passing by mocked at him 'Jesus, you are still dependent on worldly things.' On hearing this he threw his brick away. Trust in God is another important stage of progress a Sufi must acquire, which means that he must have trust in Him either in pain or pleasure, joy or sorrow, good or bad times. It also means that we must do our best with the faculties given to us but leave the result of our efforts to Divine Will, and gracefully surrender to that.

There is the story of Luqman the slave and his master. They respected and loved each other. One day somebody gave a melon to the master, who, out of kindness, cut a piece and gave it to Luqman and he ate it with great delight. Seeing his pleasure, the master cut another slice and gave him, and continued giving him slices till only one piece was left. The master tried the last slice and to his disappointment, found it to be very bitter. He asked Luqman, "It is so bitter, how is it that you have been showing so much delight in its taste?" Luqman said: "Master, I have eaten so many sweet things from your hand. If it was bitter, this time, how could I express anything else but delight?" Therefore, whatever we receive from our Master, sweet or bitter, we must have trust in Him.

And yet, some novice will follow the teaching to the word. One day a dervish fell in a river. Seeing that he could not swim, a man standing on the bank shouted, "Do you want help?" "No," said the dervish. "Do you want to drown?" The man asked. "No", again said the dervish. "What is your wish then?" the man urged him. "God's Will be done; what has it got to do with my own wish," replied the dervish.

—M. Ibbrahim, (From "Sai Reflections")

## **When God Said “No” And “Yes”**

I asked God to take away my pride  
and God said "No."  
He said, it was not for Him to take away  
but for me to give it up.

I asked God to make my handicapped  
child whole  
and God said "No"  
He said, her spirit is whole, her body  
is only temporary

I asked God to grant me patience  
and God said "No."  
He said my patience is the by-product  
of tribulation  
it isn't granted, it's earned.

I asked God to give me happiness  
and God said "No."  
He said, "I give you blessings;  
happiness is up to you."

I asked God to spare me pain  
and God said "No"  
He said "suffering draws you apart from  
worldly cares and brings you closer to me."

I asked God to make my spirit grow  
and God said "No"  
He said I must grow on my own,  
but He will prune me to make me fruitful.

I asked God if He loves me,  
and God said, "Yes", I will be with Him  
one day in Heaven because I believe.

I asked God to help me love others  
as much as He loves me,  
and God said, "Finally, you have the Idea!"

**—Claudia Minden Weisz**

*"It is easy to conquer anger through love, attachment through reasoning, falsehood through truth, bad thoughts through good, and greed through charity."*

**—Baba**

*"Struggle to realise Atma to visualise God; even failure in this struggle is nobler than the success in other worldly affairs."*

**—Baba**

*Man has been enslaved by money. He lives a superficial, hollow, artificial life. This is indeed a great pity. Man should seek to possess only as much money as is most essential for his living. The quantity of riches one must earn be compared to the shoes one wears; if too small, they cause pain; if too big, they are a hindrance to physical and mental comfort. When we have more, it breeds pride, sloth and contempt for others. In pursuit of money, man descends to the level of the beast. Money is of the nature of manure. Piled up in one place, it pollutes the air. Spread it wide; scatter it over fields; it rewards you with a bumper harvest. So too, when money is spent in all the four quarters for promoting good works, it yields contentment and happiness in plenty.*

**—Baba**

## **Bhagavan's Call to Historic Gathering**

A youth from Europe said, "I know now that there is hope for the future." From Africa, one delegate experienced the joy of doing work jointly together for Swami and that joy comes from pleasing Him. Over two thousand delegates from sixty-six countries attended this Sri Sathya Sai World Youth Conference which will surely be a major factor in ushering in the Lord's Golden Age. There was also a massive over 10,000 delegates from India! Never before had the Sai Kulwant Mandap witnessed such a large gathering of young Sai adults from all over the world. The delegates from overseas represented a wide spectrum of countries whose names covered all the letters of the alphabet—from Argentina to Zambia—except 'X'. The largest contingents were from Malaysia (111), Canada (176), the U.K. (143), South Africa (284) and Sri Lanka (116). There was a lone delegate from Greenland. Almost all the states in India sent large numbers of delegates, totaling in all over ten thousand.

The inaugural session began with Swami lighting the Jyoti and then a thrilling march-past by representatives from all the participating countries in pairs carrying the flags of their respective nations. While the grand rally was going on in the benedictory presence of Bhagavan, the Conference theme song "Truth needs a Hero" was sung. Then Bhagavan delivered the first of four Divine Messages. All who attended experienced the thrill and inspiration of His historic message to the youth of the world.

The balance of the opening day was devoted to a review of the teachings of the Sathya Sai Avatar in two plenary sessions in the Poornachandra Auditorium. The evening was spent in workshop sessions on the practice of spiritual exercises and "Truth and Dharma as a way of life."

The second day continued with plenary sessions on "Surrender" and the structure of the youth wing. Following Swami's Divine Message in the evening, there was a musical programme from India in the Poornachandra Auditorium.

On Friday, July 18, Bhagavan delivered His valedictory message and the evening programme was a Human Values song festival with each of the 15 world regions presenting one song. There was a wondrous variety, a beguiling sweetness and an energy and enthusiasm rarely seen.

To the supreme delight of all delegates it was announced that Baba would give a special Discourse in the Poornachandra on the 19th. That Discourse was directed pointedly to youth and specifically described the areas where change must be made. All youth worldwide must study carefully Swami's words and use this Discourse as a basis for building the Youth Wing throughout the world. Swami's Discourse covered a wide ground and indicated the spiritual basis on which a new harmonious and co-operative world should be organised.

Later in the evening the Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organisations in Bengal presented a short play in English—"Master and Disciple"—based on the life of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa and Swami Vivekananda. It was a superb performance, with the two actors in the key roles conveying the message of the great Master and Disciple in very moving scenes. The peroration

of Vivekananda must have impressed on the young delegates in the Auditorium the historic role they would have to play in their own countries in promoting Sai ideals and bringing about a great spiritual and moral revolution in the world.

At the end of the play, Bhagavan blessed all the actors.

The curtain was rung down on a memorable conference after the offer of Arati to Bhagavan. While these events were taking place, an Exhibition entitled "Youth in action: Sai Service around the world" was opened (at the North Indian Canteen) with the 15 world regions displaying their many and varied activities. The variety of services undertaken was beautifully presented.

The World Youth Conference inaugurates a new era in the Avatar's Mission. It will prepare youth for their leadership role in Bhagavan's golden age. It has been a great blessing for all who attended and an opportunity that the Lord Himself granted. This World Youth Conference was a call to commitment and Dedication unprecedented in men's history. A new and vital force of love has now begun!

(Detailed reports of the proceedings of the Conference and Bhagavan's discourses will appear in the August issue, which will also carry an account of the Gurupoornima celebrations).

—Hal Honig

### **"Buddha is My Gift"**

*A significant speech was made by Mr. Musahi in Japanese during the Buddha Poornima festival in Brindavan on May 15. For lack of time, the speech was not translated into English at the time. Thanks to "Kan-Sai-Light", the monthly magazine of the Sathya Sai Organisation of Japan, we are giving below the English version of Mr. Musahi's address.*

Prayerful pranams at the Lotus Feet of our Beloved Lord Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba. It is indeed rare chance of supreme happiness, which has been achieved after a few thousand births, to be born and living in the same era with the Avatar of this age.

India is known as the spiritual center of the world. In this great land of spiritual teachings, an ordinary person like me feels at a great loss to address this august audience. Dear revered Bhagavan Baba, please give me the strength to give this talk.

Buddhism came to Japan in the year 500 A.D. The preaching of Bhagavan Buddha started in India about 1,000 years earlier. So, for the past 1,500 years, Buddhism has been the heart of Japan and taken deep roots in our daily lives.

Ever since Buddhism came to Japan, the Japanese people have always yearned to come to the sacred land of India. India was called "Tenjiku", meaning 'Heaven'. Many saints and sages of Japan always yearned and prayed to come to India. However such prayers could not be answered due to long distances and limitation of travel facilities at that time. But for us Buddhists of Japan,

after waiting for 1,500 years our earnest desire has been answered by Swami calling us to India to offer our prayers to Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba, who is verily Lord Buddha Himself.

As most of you know, on the Vidyagiri Hill in the Divine Valley of Prasanthi Nilayam, Bhagavan had installed the statues of Lord Rama, Krishna, Jesus, Siva and Zoroaster. There was no statue of Lord Buddha till 1993. Buddhist devotees prayed and Bhagavan Baba inaugurated the grand statue of Lord Buddha in July 1993. We are ever grateful to Bhagavan. On the occasion of the opening ceremony, a Japanese devotee asked Bhagavan, "The Buddha in Puttaparthi is amongst the best in the world. Why is it so?"

Swami replied, "Buddha is my gift." That devotee kept repeating Swami's words in his mind—"Buddha is my gift." The devotee realized the true Maha Mantra of the Avatar, which meant not the statue but Lord Buddha's birth and life itself was gifted to humanity by the Avatar Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba. Realizing this, the devotee's illusion was cleared and he was filled with emotion at the Majesty and Grandeur of Bhagavan.

Sri Sathya Sai Overseas Organisations are commemorating the practice of 5 human value years as 1996-Truth, 1997-Right Action, 1998-Peace, 1999-Non-Violence, 2000-Love. This year, 1997, is the year of Right Action or Dharma. We Buddhists devote ourselves to Buddha, which is verily devotion to Dharma itself. In this year, very meaningful year of Dharma, we take this opportunity to offer our gratitude for the Buddha Poornima Festival. We pay our tribute to the brothers and sisters of the Seva Dal for having made our stay most holy and blissful.

In conclusion, we pray to Bhagavan to bestow His infinite grace on the Buddhist Sai devotees so that we may again celebrate Buddha Jayanti at His Lotus Feet, JAI SAI RAM.

## **Learning from Nature**

Over the past few years, we had many fieldtrips and all the Bal Vikas children enjoyed them a lot. This year also we had some fieldtrips and they were also enjoyable, but this enjoyment was different from the enjoyment we had in previous years. This enjoyment is related to Swami's teachings. Step by step, we share our enjoyment and total experiences. The first thing I learned in the community gardening was "Love of Sai" in a practical way. When Geetha, who came to our center and taught us the song of love, told us that she is connected with Mother Earth and does organic farming as Seva project for God, I was thrilled, because we often have Earth Day in our center. Then, I learned something else: One does not have to be a mystic or belong to a particular group, or believe in a cult to know God.

Geetha explained to us that she derives joy from fresh air, sunlight, greenness, and the music of Nature coming from the sounds of birds, insects, frogs in the pond, and rustling of the leaves in the forest.

Then I knew that Sai was around her and all of us who were there at the farm. I also remembered one of Swami's declarations "I am all around you, up, down, in and out of you."

During our second visit to the farm, we saw many flowers in her garden. When I saw a bud, I remembered a child. Some were opening up like an infant being born. It was pure joy, which raced down my spine.

Then we saw a compost heap and some snakes. The fear of snakes was there but they slid away on seeing us and so I was at ease.

We saw the greenhouse and learnt how seeds are turned into little plants. We also saw seeds at all stages of growth. A seed is like an embryo in a mother's womb. When the seed sprouts and is a plant, it's like an infant. Saplings are like children. Then I also saw a full-grown tree and that is like a full-grown man. I recalled another presentation by Rajesh, which was similar to this one. That presentation was about the growth of plants and how it is similar to the growth of a human being and a Sai center. The tree was like a Sai Center; the branches are like the families that attend the Sai Center. The flowers, buds, and fruits are like the Bal Vikas students who are going to be Sai seeds again in time. This whole concept became clear to me at the farm. Therefore, I think community gardening is a great way for everyone to learn balance and harmony in life. Jai Sairam.

—Satish Raghupatruni

*Where there is Love, there God is evident.*

—Baba

## **Lessons in Divine Economy**

It was the simple practicality of Bhagavan's advice that arrested, intrigued and also amused me. Here was a spiritual leader saying, "Switch off the light if you don't need it", "don't waste that food", "speak less". Sri Sathya Sai Baba was teaching the ultimate in home economics and dharma all at the same time.

Economy was the name of His Game.

One of the first inner communications I became aware of, rather reluctantly, was "Eat Less. Speak Less". I looked cautiously around the edges of my mind—do I really eat too much? Does He know that I eat too much?

Certainly I could do with losing half a stone, or maybe more. I will start with not having a bite with my morning tea. This soon progressed to noticing the unnecessarily full feeling after meals; to not having a second helping, and then not as big helpings in the first place. And I felt much better as old-eating habits slipped away.



Then I noticed the fear that had been behind eating too much, the fear that I might not have enough to see me through to the next meal, and it made me laugh. That idea must have been left over from sometimes in the very distant past. Fear had led to greed.

But this was only a beginning.

I noticed next that the "eating" was also related to what I ate with my eyes and ears. I do not really need to mop up all that is going on, to know everything that is in the newspaper or on the news, TV. "Just relax and enjoy. You will be given all you need."

And for "speak less"—what a relief for everyone: to have one person less to have to listen to; to have one person less to wait for until she had finished talking so they could have their say. Much energy is saved by speaking less, more time to enjoy the real speaking that often goes on through the eyes alone.

How else do I waste energy? I could see my habit of always doing, doing. Do I really need to be 'doing' all the time?

Then came the next communication, "If you cannot let Me do it, don't do it at all."

How's that for an instruction in dharma, in being just the instrument through whom His work is done? Done too with infinite attention to detail, precision befitting the circumstances and care for all.

The Victorians declared: "Waste not, want not." They are right. If we do not waste, then through the attention needed for that comes the opportunity for awareness of the Divine to develop. And develop it will, into the joyful dance with the Divine which follows naturally.

After all everything is His, to be given back sooner or later, and it creates much happiness to give it back in the very best order we can, to do it nicely. The Divine Economy is after all the precise art of keeping "the sun and other stars" spinning in their right places.

If I have to do my part by cleaning the kitchen sink as He wants it, then that's all right by me—He will let me know if and when a change is needed.

—Margaret Hooton, Auckland, New Zealand

*CHILDREN'S CORNER:*

### **Life's Really Worthwhile!!**

In this strife-torn world,  
Where you cannot trust another,  
Where evil thoughts pervade all,  
And none seems to be true.

There you know, you can trust  
one person—for HE is all.  
He is there no matter what,  
waiting for your call.  
He smiles at you, with a Knowing glance,  
"Why have you given up, my child?  
Ain't I always there?"  
And then you know that,  
LIFE'S REALLY WORTHWHILE!!

That beautiful face, the bewitching smile,  
the gentle swish of the robe,  
That sidelong glance, the gliding form, is  
all it takes  
To make your sinking spirits soar  
And then you feel that,  
LIFE'S REALLY WORTHWHILE!!

Wonder how He makes us feel,  
that life's worth it after all,  
And then it dawns on you,  
(by HIS grace, of course)  
That it is due to LOVE-pure,  
unsullied love!!!  
Love that flows from Him to you,  
Love that encompasses all,  
It is His Love that makes you know,  
That LIFE'S REALLY WORTHWHILE!!

—Miss Ramya Ramachandran B. V. Guru, Mumbai

## **Mind and Heart**

*Yes, Mind, not Life alone, but Thinking Mind,  
In every atom, every grain of sand:  
I am aware of water and of land  
As also conscious, and not dead and blind;  
The same way every leaf is conscious of  
The heat and light that filters from the sun  
Through living air, life flaming kiss from one  
Who pours in fire the passion of his love.*

*But also Heart; not Mind alone; but Heart  
Pulsating in the body of the world;*

*And full of love for every partless part,  
And curled up everywhere as joy, impearled  
In every living cell as endless Care:  
And it is everlastingly aware.*

## **How Perfect is Creation**

*What a creator You are, O my God!  
How infinite Your powers, how supreme  
Your vast imagination and your dream,  
from sky to earth, from galaxy to clod!  
How perfect is creation: there is nought  
that is misplaced; no error, no mistake  
In any mountain, valley, stream, or lake;  
Or anything which can be sensed or thought.*

*And if at any time I seem to see  
Some possible mistake, I see the part,  
And not the whole which is completely free  
From flaw: hence I advise my mind and heart:  
Look at the Whole and thus you shall behold  
Perfection which cannot be fully told.*

**—Benito F. Rayes**

## **Playing the Game of Life**

When Baba says, "Life is a game, play it." It can be taken to mean different things by different people. Can it mean, for example, that life is not to be taken seriously? Here we think of the ups and downs in life, or the undue seriousness with which we tend to take its pains and pleasures, failures and successes...and perhaps also ourselves, when too closely attached to the particular role we happen to be enacting. Take oneself and one's role in life too seriously and one may soon be unable to laugh or even smile. If one cannot be a good loser and always has to be the winner, the game ceases to be played and becomes egoism, competition, business, prestige or even out-and-out warfare. All this is fully illustrated in the professional sports world today. But to play properly it is best never to feel that the outcome will influence one for better or worse and so too that 'the game is in the playing', not in the gains or losses incurred.

Sathya Sai has pointed out that, in order to play any game...including that of life itself, one must know the rules and stick to them. Otherwise all the fun simply goes out of it and it ends in argument or ill-feeling. To learn the rules may take some application and experience, but questioning them leads only to wasted energy, because they are there only so that the game can

go ahead. Some choose to argue endlessly about the various rules and codes of life and others make rigid doctrines to prove their opinions. Murder is done and war is made for such futile reasons. The game of life can indeed be spoiled for considerations having nothing to do with the actual playing.

"As long as I can play the game, I can play it, and everything goes smoothly", said the philosopher Wittgenstein, by which he meant that we don't always need an analysis of the whys and wherefores of everything, and even if we may need one now and again, all explanations still have to end somewhere. When we do the washing up, say, we don't give a running commentary or explain each action and its reason, we don't criticise what we are doing or defend it. This helps me understand why Baba so often gives us brief aphorisms, straightforward examples and very general guidelines rather than going into details and explaining precisely how and what. A mere gesture is often sufficient. His teachings are universal - for the whole of mankind in the mass rather than for the specialised few—and do not therefore specify unduly much or go into every detail from all people's perspectives. They are still adequate as secure overall guidelines for all cultures and societies while leaving room for each of us to interpret them in relation to our own situations. It is our task and privilege to do this and to apply them accordingly.

Baba's advice on study circles underlines this, for the purpose is not to theorise but to clear up any problems of practical understanding of spirituality in daily life so that we can 'play on' confidently and according to the guidelines.

To play the game that life is can also mean that we must exert ourselves to live with a positive orientation towards the goal, not just keep going through the motions of eating, working, talking, sleeping and dreaming.

### **Realising the dream**

Baba's inimitable illustrations echo Shakespeare's: "all the world's a stage" and "we are such stuff as dreams are made on." But Baba also adds valuable advice to them, as in: Life is a dream, realise it. This has at least two distinct possible interpretations.

Firstly, it obviously suggests that living is like sleep-walking until one realises This and begins increasingly to work consciously for realisation. We speak of having a dream, that around which our life revolves. As long as we simply dream, the ideal gets no nearer, so it has to be made real. Realising an ideal is always the result of concerted thought, action, patience and determination. Relying on gratuitous grace to solve everything or resting on one's laurels will hardly do.

Secondly, as Baba has often said, at bottom the world itself is unreal, while only God is real. To be deluded into thinking otherwise and forgetting life's impermanence is not to realise the purpose of life, which can sentence us to rebirth into yet another and another such dream.

Baba describes life as some large-scale drama in which the players act according to a script, some more and some less aware of its meaning and thus how best to play their parts. Accordingly, Baba has very often asserted the unreality or illusory nature of the world we live in. Sometimes, quite to the contrary, he has insisted that we accept it as real:

"Do not tell students that the world is 'illusion' (mithya). It is intensely real so long as we are present here." (Sathya Sai Speaks Vol. XV p.1 12)

This seems apparently self-contradictory. One may ask what a philosopher like Wittgenstein would have said to this. Well, he regarded using language as akin to playing a game, where different games have different rules—sometimes quite opposite to one another. The many languages with all their local dialects, technical or private jargons, literary styles, slang and so on he compared to a collection of different games...board games, ball games, athletic games, party games etc... Each specific game has a number of rules that distinguish it from other games, and each group of games mentioned above have both similarities and differences. The same applies to language, no usages of words and sentences are standardised everywhere or once and for all. None have universal validity, for they are really only tools with temporary usefulness for communicating for some purpose. The meanings words have ultimately all depends on the persons involved, their activities and their aims etc... Therefore, no system of words can ever give one single and consistent system of truth, complete for all times and differing societies. What the same words say in one situation or for some person can say something very different in other cases—sometimes even the exact opposite! Thus, when Baba says the world is 'unreal', this answers the ultimate question from an eternal viewpoint, but we also find it 'real' enough—perhaps all too real—when having to face up to its challenges!

### **Meeting life's challenge**

In the third line of his aphorism, "Life is a challenge, meet it", Baba moves logically to the problems met during the game of life and in the dream calling these 'a challenge'. That we must meet the challenge of life, explained to us so lucidly by Baba throughout his many discourses, emphasises the inescapable reality of the world as we must live in it. Indeed, Baba has also once said "life is a prison, you must endure it" and also even, "Life is a bed of bugs" (but we note that Baba did not add that we have to go to sleep in it). Baba tells us that our imprisonment in the body and ego is the cause of the dream, the ignorance that is expressed in the first cry of the newborn, 'who am I?' (Koham) So, though he also says 'Life is awareness', this can only be relative to one's personal development. Oddly, the lengthiest challenge in the real world seems to be recognising its ultimate nature as 'illusion' (maya), while remaining engaged in the activities that this destiny on earth requires of each of us.

### **Life is love**

Through the years, Baba has alternated between two different endings to the fourth line: Life is love, enjoy it or Life is love, share it. This may well be hinting that only by sharing can one enjoy and vice-versa too. In any case, this line certainly contains the overall practical answer to the enigmas and challenges in the foregoing lines. Baba once put it simply as, Life is Love, Love is Life. None who has heard Baba talk, seen Him or been with Him can fail to know that Him message is above all else, to love, and Sathya Sai gives us the full prescription.

—R.P., Oslo, Norway

## **Role of Sai Youth in World Crisis**

*Wealth once lost, can be regained;  
A lost friend can be replaced;  
A lost wife can be replaced;  
A lost land can be recovered.  
But the time that has gone  
cannot be recovered.*

Embodiments of Love! Young men and women! Future citizens of the world!

When one's wealth is lost, it can be acquired again. If one friend is lost, another can be got. If the wife passes, one can marry again. If land is lost, it can be acquired again. But if time is lost it cannot be got back.

In this vast cosmos and among the myriad species, man is the highest and noblest being. He is sublime. He is full of good traits. If a man loses these attributes of humanness, they cannot be easily regained.

Young men and women! The prosperity and well being of the world depend on the conduct of the youth. Only when their conduct is good, the world can have an ideal future.

The night that has passed cannot be recalled by any means. The waters of the Yamuna, once they have merged in the ocean, cannot be turned back. A fruit that has been eaten and digested cannot be recovered. Man is spending his days aimlessly without any awareness of what is in store for him in the future. He is not aware of the continuous erosion of his life span by the passage of time.

Life is like a mega-clock. Its three hands indicate the rate at which the days, months and the year are passing. Man rejoices in the movement of the clock's hands, but does not realise that every movement is a reminder of his diminishing life-span. Hence, before the final hour strikes, every man should realise what his duties are and see that the remaining time is well spent.

What is the root cause of man's birth in the world? What are the duties of man? No one seeks to recognise the inherent divinity in man. Young men and women today waste a good deal of their time, without realising the preciousness of human life.

### **From the human to the Divine**

There are two qualities in man; One is the animal nature; the other is humanness. Unfortunately man is forfeiting his humanness by falling a prey to the six enemies—lust, anger, greed, envy and others—and misusing his God-given talents. He thereby degrades himself to the level of the animal. On the other hand, man should use his mind, status, and talents to become virtuous, pursue the path of righteousness and strive to raise himself from the human to the Divine. All things in the world should be used properly, and not misused. A knife can be used for cutting

vegetables or another's throat. How a knife is used depends on the man using it. His mental state should be in proper condition. A man's conduct is related to his thoughts and feelings. The heart is inherently pure. But one's thoughts can pollute it or keep it pure. One can make or mar his destiny by his thoughts and actions.

Today every where the world is haunted by suffering, unrest, disorder and agitations. Any country filled with noble beings is bound to be peaceful and happy. What is the reason for the sad plight of a country? It is the absence of men and women of high character. To protect a country it is not so important to have arms and missiles and atom bombs. It is most essential to have men and women of great virtue.

The world's prosperity or otherwise is based upon the character of the youth-men and women. Hence, young men and women should be pure hearted and render selfless service to the country. They should keep the company of the good and godly.

Losing the fear of sin (papa-bheeti) and not cultivating the love of God (Daiva priti), men today have lost the essential quality of humanness. This has resulted in the loss of peace in the world.

### **Service to society**

Every one should realise what one owes to the society in which one is born and from which one derives so many benefits. Young people should reflect on the question what gratitude they can show to the society which has given them so much. What service are you doing to society`?

Every man should show his sense of gratitude to society by rendering selfless service. It was for this purpose that the Seva Organisation was started. But even here the Seva Organisations are being used to promote one's name and fame and not to render service for its own sake.

The body is given for rendering service to society. Today wherever you turn, in the administration, in the business world, in politics or other fields, you see no spirit of sacrifice. In every field the atmosphere is saturated with pollution. This foulness has to be removed. Today the pollution affects people in authority, the parents, the educationists and intellectuals. Those who preen themselves on their scholarship have no humility that should characterise genuine scholarship.

People should consider the whole world as the mansion of one human family. When this spirit of oneness prevails, there will be no tendency to harm others. You should forgive even those who harm you. The youth should cultivate the quality of forbearance.

Forbearance is a supreme virtue in man.

### *Embodiments of Love!*

Man should be free from fear. Animals inspire and birds are subject to fear. But man should neither cause fear in others nor be afraid himself. Today's young men and women should develop fearlessness as a principal quality. You should be afraid of only one thing: fear of sin. God is the

only being to be loved. All other forms of love are transient and selfish. Love of God is selfless and everlasting (cheers).

God seeks nothing from you. He is utterly selfless. Today if you wish to earn the esteem of society you have to secure the love of God (Daiva priti). For this you have to entertain fear of sin. What is sin? It covers all those activities which are motivated by selfishness born out of regarding the body and sensual pleasures as the primary things in life. Merit (punya) arises from all actions which take one nearer to God (para+upa+kara = Paropakara). Sin has been defined as “Parapeedanam” (causing harm to or forgetting the Divine). To remember the divinity in everyone is the means to acquire merit.

Young people today have lost the feeling of forbearance and as a result have become a prey to many bad qualities like anger and envy. They should remember that today most young people are afflicted, in varying degrees, with the disease of egoistic pride ("Ahamkara"). And this is the cause of all sickness in the world. This egoism has no real basis because the individual is an insignificant speck in the vast cosmos. It is born of ignorance. This ignorance will go if man realises that the whole universe is permeated by the Divine and belongs to the Divine. Everyone should do what is good and never forget God. That is the way to overcome egoism.

It is the privilege and duty of the young men and women to promote the welfare, progress and peace of the world. Transform all your actions into sacred duties. Experience the love of the Divine. That is the meaning of Swami's declaration: "My life is my message." Adhere to the ideals set before you by Swami.

Today people tend to forget ideals (Aasayalu) and foster desires (asalu). Selfishness prevails over patriotism. This should change. Never forget your mother land. Remember that our ancients enthroned sacrifice as the supreme virtue. They stood for justice and truth. And as a result they enjoyed peace.

Today humanity is haunted by fear because there is no spirit of sacrifice, righteousness is at a discount and truth has become rare. Young people should enthrone sacrifice (tyaga) in their hearts, wear the crown of justice on their heads and carry the Sword of Truth in their hands. These are the weapons needed to defend the nation

Young people should consider the true purpose of life. They should get rid of all the impurities in their hearts. With pure hearts they should embark on service at all times and everywhere. "Hands in society, head in the forest." From today develop an unwavering mind and a steady vision. That is the way to divinise the world.

(To be completed)

AVATAR VANI:

LESSONS FROM THE RAMAYANA

## **The Greatness of Vibhishana**

The lives of two noble, meritorious and righteous personalities stand out in the Ramayana. One is Sugriva. The other is Vibhishana. The lives of these two are very sacred. Rama sought the



association with Sugriva. Vibhishana came seeking Rama only. After securing the friendship of Rama, Sugriva realised the greatness of Rama. But Vibhishana realised the compassionate nature of Rama even before coming to him. Rama was supremely pleased that he had been able to secure such noble friends.

The Mahabharata war lasted 18 days, but the war in Lanka between Rama and Ravana lasted 75 days. These battles have become memorable. But even today in the heart of every individual the Kurukshetra battle is being fought between the forces of evil (as represented by the Kauravas) and the forces of God (as represented by Pandavas). Equally the battle between Rama and Ravana is going on symbolically in everyone. This means that the war between truth and falsehood, between good and evil, is a perennial one. In the battle in Lanka many died on both sides. I do not relish dilating on wars. What we should seek to understand is the nature of the forces ranged against each other, what forces stood for truth.

Even in Lanka (ruled by Ravana) there was no lack of good people. While the battle was going on, one Rakshasa woman was running along, carrying a child in her arms. Hit by an arrow released by Lakshmana the child fell from her arms. Abandoning the child to its fate the woman continued to run. Seeing this Lakshmana remarked to Rama: "Brother! Look at the callousness of these Rakshasas. Without caring for the fate of her infant child, the Rakshasa woman is running away to save herself." The all-knowing divine Rama told Lakshmana: "Lakshmana! You are making a mistake. That woman is not selfish. She is full of devotion." Immediately Lakshmana sent a monkey to fetch the woman. He asked her: "How is it you went on running, caring only for your own safety, without bothering about the fate of the child that fell from your arms?" The woman replied: "I was not running for the sake of saving myself. It is not as if I had no love for my child. I am clinging to my life with the sole desire to serve Rama if he takes us to Ayodhya after the destruction of Ravana. I pray for the advent of Ramarajya. I want to serve Rama." Then Rama remarked: "Do you see, Lakshmana, how mistaken you were? Even among Rakshasas there are good people. Vibhishana is the supreme example. Such persons do not need any protector. They are protected by their own Righteousness."

The next day, the battle started in the morning. Both sides blew their trumpets. That day Ravana's son Indrajit used all his magical powers to inflict injuries on the monkey hordes. Vibhishana knew well the wizardry of the rakshasas. He shattered all the special missiles used by Indrajit and infused courage among the monkeys. Noticing this, Rama observed: "When Vibhishana came to me seeking asylum, all kinds of objections were raised against our accepting him as one of us. Do you see how helpful he is to us now?"

### **Indrajit and Vibhishana**

Indrajit began performing a yajna to destroy Rama and Lakshmana. Earlier, in the battle between Indrajit and Lakshmana, the latter had fallen unconscious after being hit by Indrajit's missile (Astra). Lakshmana regained consciousness after the application of a herb from the Sanjivini mountain brought by Hanuman from the Himalayas. Lakshmana resumed the battle with Indrajit, carrying himself on the shoulders of Hanuman. Vibhishana took both of them to the place where Indrajit was performing his yajna. Indrajit was offering many human beings as sacrifice at the yajna that was being performed at the foot of a blackberry tree. So long as Indrajit remained under that tree he could wield extraordinary powers. Vibhishana told Hanuman and Lakshmana

to see that Indrajit was kept away from that tree as much as possible. Hearing this, Indrajit got very angry. He burst out: "Oh Vibhishana! Are you betraying my secrets and the secrets of Lanka to the enemy? You are a traitor to your race." He went on berating Vibhishana in this manner.

Vibhishana retorted indignantly: "Indrajit! It is natural for rakshasas to be abusive as they like. But, remember that Rama is the very embodiment of peace. He is pure of heart, utterly free from selfishness. It is not possible for Rakshasas to understand the truth about such a Divine Being. Rama has entered Lanka for rescuing Sita and not for seizing the country. How can one who gave up Ayodhya itself voluntarily covet Lanka? Rama has no desire for anything. For a long time I had been warning Ravana that it is a grievous sin to kidnap another man's wife and appealed to him to restore Sita to Rama. However, Ravana paid a deaf ear to my words. He is destroying by his own hands his kingdom and his clan. Who is to be blamed for this? Is it me or your father?"

Indrajit asked: "If my father did not listen to your words, you should have remained silent and not allied yourself with our enemies. Is this kind of treachery justified?"

Vibhishana gave a fitting reply: "Indrajit! You are an ignorant fool who knows nothing about truth and untruth, right and wrong. I am one who is well aware of the rules of right conduct. It is unworthy for a person to remain silent in the face of wickedness. Such inaction can destroy an entire society."

### **Bhishma and Vibhishana**

In this context, it is interesting to study the conduct of Bhishma and Vibhishana in similar situation. It is clear Vibhishana is a greater person than Bhishma. Why? Knowing that the Kauravas were committing a grievous wrong, Bhishma remained silent without condemning them. Moreover, he accepted the role of Commander-in-chief of the Kaurava armies in the Kurukshetra battle. Vibhishana acted differently: He roundly condemned the wrong action of his brother. He advised Ravana to return Sita to Rama. Ultimately he renounced everything and sought surrender at the Feet of Rama.

Lanka had many such high-minded persons besides Vibhishana. But cowed down by the wickedness of the rakshasas, they were unable to protest against the bad persons.

When Hanuman entered Lanka he noticed Vibhishana. Vibhishana told Hanuman: "Hanuman! I am living in the midst of the wicked rakshasas like the tongue surrounded by sharp teeth. How long am I to live like this? How will I secure the grace of Rama? When will I be blessed with the bliss of being in His Divine presence? I have long been waiting for that great moment." Vibhishana lamented in this manner.

### **Hanuman's advice to Vibhishana**

Hanuman gave to Vibhishana then a significant message. "Vibhishana! Do not think that you are alone in being subject to these ordeals. There are many great souls who experience similar troubles. The rakshasas constantly harass the Sages, the Avatars and all good men. However, take note of one fact. The tongue came first and the teeth emerged later. The teeth which

emerged in the middle drop away in due course! Likewise these rakshasas also will fall away soon. Do not have any doubt on this score."

Hanuman then went on: "Vibhishana! You have been attracted to the Lotus Feet of Rama. Cling to them firmly. Either He should bless you because of your perseverance, or you should merge in Him in course of time. There is no other way. It is wrong to give up the Lord in the middle. This is not the mark of a true devotee. What is devotion? It is not mere repetition of Rama's name endlessly. While contemplating on Rama, you must take part in service to Rama."

Vibhishana desired only to promote the prosperity of Lanka and the welfare of the rakshasas. He was not interested in getting the crown. Ravana and Indrajit derided such a high-minded noble person.

Once Ravana, Kumbhakarna and Vibhishana performed a severe penance to invoke the presence of Brahma. Brahma appeared before them and asked them what they wanted. He said he would grant them whatever boon they wanted. Kumbhakarna wanted to ask that he should be never at anyone's mercy ("nirdaya"). But by a slip of the tongue he asked for "nidra" (sleep). Brahma declared: "So be it." Ravana asked freedom from death at the hands of all deities, but did not ask for freedom from death by humans because he considered them trivial beings. Vishnu then decided to come in human form to put an end to Ravana. What did Vibhishana pray for? "Oh Lord! Fill my heart with compassion and make me lead a righteous life."

Because of this boon, Vibhishana remained totally unaffected in spite of all the raillery and abuse by Ravana and his sons. Vibhishana always remained compassionate, never yielding to hatred or anger. Because his heart was full of compassion, he secured God's grace and proximity to the Divine. One without compassion is a demon and not a human being.

(Bhagavan sang a song in praise of compassion, which is the quality that redeems all, whether they are Gods or demons or human beings. All spiritual exercises or study of scriptures have no value without a heart filled with compassion).

**—From Bhagavan's discourse in Brindavan on May 26**

## **The Hand of God**

How small it is, the pale brown Hand  
That holds the world!  
How gentle is the mighty strength  
That lifts Humanity from self-destruction!  
In future aeons of Time  
When my struggling soul  
Climbs slowly SAIwards,  
Imbedded in my consciousness  
To spur me on, will be the knowledge

That I looked into the Face, the Eyes of Love,  
That once-nay twice! - I held and kissed  
The small brown Hand of God.

—P. M.

## The Nectarine Discourses

Describing the impact of Baba's discourses on the myriad variety of persons whom He addressed, **Prof. Kasturi** wrote a poem in the course of which he said:

As you hear His words you quietly resolve  
To take a step forward on the pilgrim road...  
Unfold your wings, explore the sky.  
And seek the regions beyond your ken.  
He is welcoming all who are thirsting and starving  
Or limping and groaning or climbing and sliding,  
Raising the stooping, bracing the drooping!  
He opens the eye and strengthens the limb.  
Awakening the sleeping, the sitting to stand,  
The standing to walk, the walking to march,  
The marching to reach, the reaching to merge.

## The Power of Love

From all over the world, pilgrims flock to Prasanthi Nilayam to be in Bhagavan's presence. They are drawn by the Will of the Avatar of Love calling Himself in the form of others to Himself. Millions have come and the sacred procession has only begun. The majesty of His mission moves inexorably on and His missionaries multiply mightily.

We can only marvel at the little we know of Bhagavan Baba's plan for a Golden Age, a new Era of Dharma. It is not hard to recognize the increase in the number of devotees aware of His presence. What is less apparent is His placement of Lights in all walks of life where His Name and Form are not known at all. We, whose great fortune it is to know of Him, must continually remind ourselves that the first of Sai's virtues is humility. We devotees must be careful not to judge, not to look down upon or feel superior to those whose lives are not focused on Bhagavan Baba. By many paths we come to Him and along those paths, examples of His Light can be seen if only we look with care. The measuring stick of spirituality is not the name of the Avatar nor of the Teacher but the ease with which the Divine teachings are put into daily practice. Let me tell you of a very recent New York story.

A young man, who grew up in a disadvantaged inner city neighbourhood, was charged with the cold-blooded killing of one of his peers. He had a previous police record and the jury found him guilty of murder. Throughout the trial, his face was a hard, frozen, steel mask of hatred. There was no sign of remorse, no show of feeling. There was only an unwavering evil stare.

After the verdict and before the sentencing, the judge gave the victim's family the opportunity to speak in court. Words spoken under those circumstances are usually highly charged, emotional expressions of the horror of the crime and their sense of deep pain and loss. This is not what happened here. The victim's mother walked slowly up to her son's killer, looked him straight in the eye, and quietly said, "I have no bad feelings for you. I could never hate you."

For the first time since the trial began, the defendant's look softened.

Then the victim's grandmother got up and spoke, also looking in the killer's eyes. She said. "So you did the crime and I am sorry you've got to do the time. You broke the golden rule: loving God with all your heart, soul and mind. You broke the law: loving your neighbour as yourself. I am your neighbour." Then she paused and continued. "So anyway, you have my address. You want to write, I will write you back, because I sat here two weeks, and for 16 months I tried to hate you. But you know what? I could not hate you. I feel sorry for you because you made a wrong choice."

The grandmother sat down and the judge reported that the defendant's head was hanging low. The evil stare was gone and his destructive, violent demeanour wilted before the unconditional love of these two grieving mothers.

The Judge then passed a sentence of 37 years to life in prison. He later commented that the sentence was insignificant in comparison with what had taken place in his court. The laser force of Love had penetrated the killer's heart. These two ladies are most surely evolved spiritual beings. Their surroundings are modest, their book learning and their words are simple. They are Bhagavan's Lights teaching in the only transforming way: by EXAMPLE. It is a reminder to devotees that all beings are His, that He is in every one of us. We cannot, we must not judge. With a deep sense of humility, we must learn from all. Learn and practice. The question to ask is, "Would I be capable of feeling and acting as these two women did under such a severe test? Would I be able to put Bhagavan's teaching, Christ's teaching, into practice in my life? It is for each one of us to ask ourselves and answer for ourselves. I remind myself that others like those two saintly examples may be standing next to me as I travel on the subways and buses, or as I walk the streets of this city. They are, for me, the Lord's Teachers, the Lord's Lights.

The mother and the grandmother may never know of Bhagavan Baba. They may never come as pilgrims into his presence in India. They don't need to. He is guiding and protecting them. He is always with them, filling their hearts with the sweetness and beauty and power of HIS LOVE.

—Hal Honig, New York, March 1997

## **The Sai Mission on the March**

There were occasions when some devotees of Bhagavan Baba wanted to know from Him what His mission was. It is natural, indeed absolutely essential, for His devotees and followers to apprise themselves of the objectives of His mission and the goal of His work. Blind faith is undesirable, for it could lead to fanaticism, even social and religious conflict.

The Sai mission has to be viewed in the context of what the world is like today. There is a mad rush for gold, a rat race to get rich overnight, by hook or by crook. In the process there are many who are falling by the wayside. To them life is an immense burden, a huge struggle for mere survival.

Since the beginning of the Industrial Revolution we have been consciously, indeed one might say deliberately, creating a civilisation in which our economic and social need is artificially inflated to such a high level that it cannot practically be sustained. The whole edifice is based on replacing the natural order with an artificial one. In consequence, we are stumbling from one problem to the next, from one conflict to another, not knowing where we will finally end up.

The sun is there to meet all our energy needs. Mother Earth is there to provide all necessary sustenance for our living; but in seeking to achieve so-called economic and social progress we are bleeding her white. We are polluting the atmosphere and our environment to such an extent that in the long run we might suffocate ourselves to death.

Our advance in the fields of science, technology, medicine, communication and transport is amazing, to say the least. However, it has not been matched by a similar progress in spiritual and social dimensions. What we have been engaged in is like a thirsty desert deer chasing after a mirage. The deeper the poor animal runs into the desert, the further the mirage moves away from it.

### **Soulless Progress**

We are told that we only have one life to live. Therefore, we must enjoy as much as we can while we are still here. Blinded by such a 'faith' and deliberately ignoring the inherent cause of the diversity that exists in society, we are relentlessly pursuing the cause of limitless physical pleasure. The further we chase after such a delusion, the more it deludes us. In the process not only are we causing pain and inflicting torture on others, we are fast becoming the source of our own unhappiness, frustration and even worry.

There is a distinct imbalance in so-called modern society, in the modern way of living. This is not especially peculiar to one society, one country or one religion. It is now a world phenomenon and apparent in every niche and corner of the world. The progress we have made is hollow. It is barren, to say the least. It does not have a 'soul'. And that is the cause of all our problems. That is the source of our misery, unhappiness, and frustration. We must realise that the balance in our attitude, the balance in our society, will never return until its soul is firmly reestablished.

### **The Divine Mission**

Bhagavan Baba has said, "My life is my message." To explain it further He also said, "Aeons come and go. But the Eternal Verities Sathya (Truth) and Dharma (Righteousness)—remain valid for all ages. Whenever Truth and Righteousness decline, the Divine comes down in human form to show mankind the way of Sathya and Dharma and to help them realise the Divine Source from which they have come." (Sanathana Sarathi, June 1966) Therefore, the principal objective of the Sai mission is to restore to the world Sathya, Dharma, Santhi, Prema and Ahimsa, the fundamental human values we have been ignoring and suppressing for such a long time. They are the soul, seed and source of peaceful living and a harmonious society.

Each of these human values is equally important. However, Bhagavan Baba always stresses that love should be the basis of everything. Day in, day out, year in, year out, He has been leading from the front to show how to live a righteous life, to practice love and truth to bring about peace in the world.

### **Transformation at work**

Sometimes, in solitude, I wonder how successful His mission is likely to be. As I reminisce, what I find is that since the advent of the Sai Avatar, despite so much doom and gloom and so many conflicts in the world, a quiet but steady political, social and spiritual transformation has been taking place almost everywhere. The following is a short account of such a transformation. But I believe it does not represent even one-tenth, or possibly one-hundredth, of what has actually occurred.

Political Change. Since the end of World War II, especially during the last two decades, a large number of political developments of great significance, developments which one always hoped for, have taken place. In October, 1988, Bhagavan Baba hinted to Veronica Roberts, while she was on a pilgrimage to Prasanthi Nilayam from West Germany, about the impending unification of East and West Germany. (Sanathana Sarathi, Feb. 1990) The following year the Berlin Wall came tumbling down, heralding the unification of two German States. Soon after, along with the Berlin Wall, the Iron Curtain was lifted, thus setting free the people of the whole of Eastern Europe. The Communist States of Albania and the former Yugoslavia, under pressure, have given way to the democratisation of internal politics. The problem of Apartheid in South Africa and its consequent inhumanity used to grab headlines in the media all over the world. It has gone forever. The present South African Government headed by President Nelson Mandela, is following a policy of national reconciliation. This is a transformation, as if by the intervention of Divine Grace, from mutual hate and animosity to understanding and trust.

Not long ago almost all the countries in South America were ruled by political dictators. Political opponents of these rulers used to disappear without any warning from the face of the earth. One by one their rule is now replaced by democratic governments.

Before the Second World War most of the countries in Asia and Africa were ruled by colonial powers. These countries are now independent. There is now a much better and more friendly relationship between them and former colonial powers.

Despite such positive changes, all is not well. There are still many wars and political conflicts being fought in some parts of the world. There are also many social and economic issues that require resolution to the satisfaction of all concerned.

We should appreciate that the factors such as greed, temptation, selfishness, neglect and ignorance that are responsible for creating such situations have been accumulating in the world for thousands of years. They have developed firm roots in the socio-political philosophy of all nations. To transform them into Sathya, Dharma, Santhi, Prema and Ahimsa would require time and patience. However, I believe there is now a general recognition all over the world of the need for such a transformation and things are gradually moving in the right direction.

### **Pressure Groups**

A number of pressure groups such as Friends of the Earth, the Greenpeace Movement, numerous Anti-Vivisection Societies, the Worldwide Fund for Nature and many others are now at work all over the world. Although, on occasions, their actions go beyond the limits of international law, nevertheless they have made the whole world conscious of the necessity of protecting the environment including the aquatic environment, the ozone layer, and the effect of its depletion on global warming, and the protection of endangered species. Almost all nations now agree that a programme of such protective measures is urgently required. Indeed, under an international agreement, some measures have already been taken at least to halt, if not to reverse, further deterioration of the atmosphere and environment.

### **Sai love in action**

Bhagavan Baba says, "*Hands that help are holier than lips that pray*" Example is better than precept. So, the life of Baba, since He was a little boy, is a shining example of how to render selfless service. He runs a University and a number of schools and colleges. Education is free in all of them. The Water Project in the Anantapur district supplies water to three million people. He runs three Hospitals where everything—medicine, treatment, care—is free. The Super-Speciality Hospital is a unique example to the whole world. For Baba, every day is a day of Seva. He is always there to help the needy, feed and clothe the poor, cure the sick and bring spirituality to everyone.

### **Service activities**

With His encouragement and under the auspices of the Sai Organisation many medical camps, eye camps, veterinary camps, the provision of artificial legs etc. for the poor are constantly held in many parts of India. Whether donating blood, contributing food and other materials, not least the adoption of poor villages, flood and earthquake relief etc. members of the Sai Organisation are engaged in a large number of philanthropic and service oriented projects - too many to be named here. However I would like to mention the selfless service in the U.K., of devotees like Tony Budell, Peter Kingsley-Ducane, and George and Marion Mills who constantly take truckloads of vital materials of all kinds to Croatia, Bosnia, Ukraine, Chernobyl, Romania and some other parts of East Europe, for they are special and unique in their own right and deserve such a mention.

There is a great resurgence of service-oriented work in most countries. In the United Kingdom alone, apart from the international organisations such as OXFAM, Save the Children, the Red



Cross, UNICEF etc. there are a vast number of charity organisations of every kind, for both humans and animals. Such a large number of organisations cannot function effectively without adequate public participation and generous financial support from the public. These are signs that people are gradually developing awareness of what is at stake and moving towards creating a better society.

### **Education in human values**

Education is the mother of everything. Baba says that the principle objective of education is to develop character, for without developing right character one is unlikely to have the necessary ability to discriminate between good and evil, right and wrong. Such an attribute is vital for a meaningful and peaceful life in a harmonious society. That is why Baba's EHV programme is so important. (Education in Human Values) In addition to many Indian schools, this programme has been introduced in some schools in America, Argentina, Australia, Chile, Japan, Zambia, Thailand and some European countries such as Italy, Germany and the U.K. Though it has not yet spread in the same way as the Seva programmes have done, it is encouraging that it is gaining support and acceptability in more and more schools and in many countries

### **Spiritual Rejuvenation**

When Bhagavan Baba began His mission He had very few devotees. Today there are millions of them in 137 countries of the world. The number is growing incessantly, and I am sure will continue to do so.

Recent surveys carried out in the USA and Argentina indicate that 23% of all Americans and 39% of all Argentineans believe in Karma and Reincarnation. Such a remarkable change in religious attitudes, especially in Argentina, has been attributed to the growing influence of Sai Baba. I believe that if today a similar survey were conducted in Europe it is likely to yield a similar percentage believing in reincarnation. There is also the growing popularity of the Sai mission in Japan, China and in the States of the former USSR, and the list goes on.

Throughout the world there is now a growing demand for conservation of energy, protection against pollution of the atmosphere and environment, reduction and, where possible, elimination of cruelty to animals and birds, and adjustment of life-style to comply with these measures and develop spiritual awareness to recreate a balanced society. The progressive increase of benevolent and charitable work, including that of the pressure groups all over the world, is direct evidence of such concepts and convictions.

One might argue that there is no visible evidence to suggest that the Divine Will (Sankalpa) of Bhagavan Baba is the necessary and sufficient cause of such positive changes. But they are all effects. So, what's the cause?

In order to ascertain it, let us consider them, in the light of the Sai mission which is to re-establish Sathya, Dharma, Santhi and Prema throughout the world and to bring about a spiritual rejuvenation without making any distinction between religion, colour, race and nationality. Indeed this has been the objective of Bhagavan Baba's mission right from the very beginning.

Bhagavan Baba is the Avatar of the Age. Avatar is God in human body. In the Bhagavad Gita the Lord says, "I have no work to do in all the worlds, Arjuna—for these are mine. I have nothing to obtain, because I have all. And yet I work. If ever My work had an end, these world would end in destruction... (BG III-22,24)." God acts in a mysterious way. Having regard to the avowed mission of Bhagavan Baba and the innumerable ways in which He is operating at various levels, from the top most leaders to the mass of common people, is it far-fetched to presume that He is the cause of the positive changes that have been taking place in the world? I have no doubt in my mind.

To summarise the Sai mission and work I would like to vary a famous statement of the late Sir Winston Churchill: "Never in the history of mankind has a single being dedicated His Life and work for the entire humanity and done so much for so many with so much love, care and compassion." If that is not God's work for humanity I would not know what is.

—Prof. Jatindra Saha, U.K.

### **The First Message**

*The day when I came out publicly as Sai Baba, the first song I taught the gathering, in the garden to which I went from the Telugu Pundit's house was "Manasa Bhajare Guru Charanam, Dusthara Bhava Sagara Tharanam." I called on all those suffering in the endless round of birth and death to worship the Feet of the Guru who was announcing Himself and who had come again for taking upon Himself the burden of those who find refuge in Him. That was the very first Message of Mine to Humanity. "Manasa Bhajare—Worship, Oh mind!" I do not need your flower garlands and fruits, things that you get for an anna or two, they are not genuinely yours. Give me something that is yours, something which is clean and fragrant with the perfume of virtue and innocence, and washed in the tears of repentance.*

—Baba

### **World Youth Service & Enterprise**

In 1988, I was walking along the canal in Venice on my way to my hotel, when I heard a clear communication from an inner voice, "to support young leaders in the world." This message was simple, clear and precise and nine years later, brought a group of us to Prasanthi and Sai Baba. The Organisation that has been developed is WYSE, a registered charity—World Youth Service & Enterprise. We look for young people who have vision and awareness and want to towards a peaceful world. Most of the young who come to us for the two week leadership training courses, have a great desire to be of use in the world. They want to serve, they need to be taken seriously, to be acknowledged and to be given the support of the elders in their communities. We help and encourage them to be given the support of the elders in their communities. We held and encourage them to be brave enough to speak the truth as they see it, to let their love show unashamedly, to face their doubts and fears and to reach out to all those around them, whatever

their caste or creed or colour. They learn how their inner world effects the outer. They begin to touch through song, silence and meditation the strength in being who they are—they usually emerge from these programmes from self-confidence and a sense of hope for the future. We have run eleven programmes, six in the UK, two in Australia, one in India, one in Sweden and one in Argentina. There is a programme in Italy in August of 1997, in Bali in December/January 1997/98 and in USA, in the summer of 1998. Participants have come from 40 nations.

And what has all this to do with Sai Baba? The answer is everything. It seems that the work of WYSE has been like following a golden thread that led a group of us to Prasanthi in December 1995. The young people in the group came from Australia, Great Britain, Holland and Switzerland. We were there for Christmas celebrations and it was our last together in the Ashram before leaving for a college outside Madras, where we would be participating in WYSE programme. We decided the night before that the next day, the 26th of December, would have to be it. We would not ask for any special favours from anyone. If Baba was willing to see us, we would know. I was way at the back of the temple when I saw some of the men in our group get up and walk through the temple. Yes, it was us—my heart jumped in my body. When we were side, Baba manifested Vibhuti for all the ladies. A man from Venezuela who was with us threw himself at Baba's feet. Baba got him up and tapped him firmly on his chest several times and said "You are God." He stood and looked at me and I said I was Marilyn from WYSE. He just smiled and said, "I know." He came over me, waved His hands in the air and manifested a beautiful crystal japamala, gave it to me and said "Very happy"—a moment I shall always treasure. He eventually took the WYSE group into an inner room and spent time speaking to each one like a loving and caring father/mother, letting know that He knew who we were and that He was there for us.

When we finished, we had planned to meet a lady who was a retired Head of the Philosophy faculty at Baba's University. We went to the appointed place and waited. She did not come. The man who organised the meeting went to find her. She said that on Christmas Day after Baba's speech in the Poornachandra Hall, He called a Seva Dal and sent a message to her. The message was that she need not meet us as He would be taking care of us and to tell us that we did not need Philosophy, we only needed to work from our hearts. We were dumb struck—another reminder of His omnipresence, His Love, His Care, His taking care of every detail.

### **A Journey of the heart**

WYSE has been ultimately a journey of the heart. When I recently asked some of the young people what they remember, what our visit to Prasanthi meant to them, one said—"My heart opened", another said, "It was the experience of being with someone who was pure love—and He looked in my eyes, I saw the clarity, the power the strength of Baba and knew Baba could see my very being." Another said almost a year later that she has begun to see and appreciate who He really is and He remains an inspiration to her and she keeps remembering His injunction, "You are God."

Why, we have asked ourselves, did we get to see Him? My guess is because of Baba's declared task. Yes—the young must lead—He has come to enable them to do this wisely, to work from their hearts, to lead the world back from the unreal to the real, from darkness to light, from death to immortality. The golden thread is being woven into a great tapestry full of heroic deeds of

young men and young women. Yes, the task He has set is no less than World Transformation. We cannot rest until every stone is turned. He will help us, we do not have to worry. We can do the impossible. We can create a loving society, a society based on human values, based on respect and willingness to understand one another. The matter before us is urgent. We do not need more preparation. We must act now—today—this moment! Clear the mind, open the heart, and reach out, take the hand of the person in front of you—if that is what is needed. Look for the need in our homes, communities, nations—in the world. Yes, the world! It is no longer about me and mine but about us. How magnificent it is to have a human birth, to be in the presence of the Avatar. He is accomplishing great things and this need to continue. He works through us. Let us surrender—surrender willingly all that we have, all that we own, so that we may the world transformation taking place in our lifetime. Help us support the young people of our world to find their way. Ask them, do not tell them—they too are wise. It is so simple, follow the golden thread and journey into our Hearts and He will be there to guide and support us and do great things.

—Marilyn Feldberg, U.K.

## **A Tiny Tot's Dream Comes True**

The Chairman, Sathya Sai Central Council of Nepal, writes:

A couple of months back, a strange event took place in one boy's life. His name is Master Niranjan Bikram Thapa who is a student of class I of the Sri Sathya Sai Vidyamandir, Kathmandu, Nepal.

It so happened that one day when the boy was meditating he had the experience of meeting Baba, who took him hand-in-hand for a stroll to a nearby hill, wherefrom he could see the snow-clad mountain peaks around him with beautiful landscape below. Baba then told him that it was the school that he would be attending in the near future. After about sometime in Baba's company, he was left in the school by Baba Himself, who blessed him to be a nice and obedient boy, and then suddenly vanished from his sight. This incident has had a most beneficial impact on Niranjan in terms of his behaviour.

At the time of Niranjan's remarkable experience, there was no thought of any Vidyamandir. But now, what the boy saw during his meditation has become a reality. Baba has bestowed his blessings on all of us through Niranjan by providing us with a new premise for the Vidyamandir which looks identical with the one which he witnessed in his meditation. This is indeed a miracle of Baba who is omnipresent.

—Sri Sathya Sai Vidyamandir, Kathmandu, Nepal

*A SAI MANIFESTO FOR YOUTH*

*WORLD YOUTH CONFERENCE*

### **Cultivate Character: Lead an Ideal Life**

Just as there is oil in the sesame seed, butter in milk, fragrance in the flower, tasty juice in the fruit, fire in wood, there is Divinity in this vast Universe. The Divine is all pervasive and is present in every being. It is the Divine Power inside that makes it possible for the eyes to see and ears to hear. The entire creation is the expression of the Will Power of God. Prakriti (Nature) is a manifestation of the Supreme Divine (Paramatma). Man is born to manifest and reflect Divinity. All constituents of Nature reflect their inherent qualities. Man also has to do so but is not reflecting his innate human quality.

#### **Duty, Devotion and Discipline**

Every one should consider devotion and discipline as of the utmost importance—Duty comes only next to these two. You, the youth (both male and female) are intrinsically very good, (Loud Cheers); but, you lack in discipline. You should observe good discipline. You should not waste time which is precious and sacred.

How should you utilise the time usefully? You have to follow the ideal path reflecting sacred human values. Not only that, but you should also inspire and encourage others to follow a disciplined life.

Today, people do not understand discipline. They sit in a meeting and go on cheering and clapping when a speaker tells something to please them. This is sheer waste of time and energy. Every second is valuable and should be used well. Character is the most important life principle to be imbibed. This is the golden period in your life span and if you spoil this fine opportunity in careless living, your future will be ruined.

The sapling has to be tended very carefully, so that it could grow into a mighty tree in the right manner and serve the people well. To whatever country you may belong, cultivation of character is essential at any point of time. There is no such thing as American character, Russian character and so on. Character is common to the entire humanity. There is only one caste, the caste of Humanity, one language, the language of the Heart and one Religion, the Religion of Love. Whichever country you may hail from, whatever language you speak and whichever faith you follow, you should maintain sterling human character.

In ancient times the youth were maintained good character. If you maintain good character, the future generation will prosper. Individual sacredness and purity ensure sacredness of society and country. When all countries are filled with such noble people the world will be blooming with peace and prosperity.

### **Control of senses is the hallmark of character**

If you say that the world is not a bed of roses but is a place of misery, the fault lies in you, the inhabitants. It is Character that marks the life of a good individual. If you go through history you will find that in the ancient days people were noted for their control of senses. Take the example of Janaka, the great ruler and father of Sita, offering his daughter in marriage to Rama immediately after the latter broke the Shiva Dhanush (the formidable bow of Shiva), in terms of the proclamation made by him. When Janaka repeatedly asked Rama to look at Sita and take her hand, Rama looked in a different direction because he should not look at a woman till he tied the wedding knot around her neck. This is the ideal propagated by the great Avatar Rama. Later on, when Lakshmana followed Rama and Sita to the forest and stayed with them for fourteen long years he never once looked at the face of Sita who was just an eighteen-year-old damsel. Abundant testimony to this exemplary behaviour of Lakshmana is borne by the episode when Rama and Lakshmana acquired the friendship of the monkey-king Sugriva. Sugriva bade the monkeys to bring the bundle of jewels dropped by Sita when she was being abducted by Ravana. When Rama saw this he was overwhelmed and asked Lakshmana to identify whether they belonged to Sita. But Lakshmana respectfully said " I can only identify the anklets worn by mother Sita as I used to worship her feet every day. I cannot identify the bangles or necklace worn by her as I have never looked up at her face." Because of such worthy and laudable behaviour, they are remembered even today, though thousands of years have passed. Youth should protect Character in that way. Both men and women should consider character as their very life breath.

### **Selfless service is the way to liberation**

You may go to villages for doing Seva or Service. Doing selfless service is the best way to cross the ocean of Samsara. The Vedas declare "Not by penance—not by undertaking pilgrimages to holy places—but by rendering service to humanity you can achieve the goal of liberation." Ego is eliminated by the spirit of Service and thus it is linked to progress in spirituality.

When the great Sage Valmiki completed composing the Epic Ramayana, he was contemplating as to who could propagate this great Epic to the world at large. The two boys Lava and Kusa came before him. When questioned by them as to what he was contemplating on, Valmiki said that he wanted the story of Ramayana which he had composed in poem be taught to the people and the Divine Glory of Rama should be spread far and wide. The boys with folded hands submitted to the sage who was also their preceptor, "We are ready to even sacrifice our life for your Seva. Command us and we shall follow."

Valmiki was moved to tears at the spirit of service exhibited by the young boys. He said "Go out and spread this epic story without delay" Valmiki had taught them the scriptures and moulded their character too. The nectar like contents of an earthen pot are far better than poison kept in a golden jar. The human body is only a mud pot. God exists in this mud pot as Amrita or nectar. We do not want a golden vessel with poison. The world is tempting like a golden vessel but is full of poison of worldly pleasures and pains.

### **Spread the Message of Divinity**

God resides in the heart of persons and not in shrines like Tirupati, Badrinath or Prasanthi Nilayam. He is essentially 'Hridhayanivasi' "Indweller of the heart". Valmiki told the boys: "Go and spread the message of Ramayana with the spirit of selfless sacrifice for the welfare of the world." The boys wore garlands of beads and holding musical instruments in their hands, started on their sacred journey. It is Valmiki's inspiration that made them pursue this noble task with utmost zeal. Nowadays youth are reluctant to wear Vibhuti on their foreheads and participate in Nagarsankirtan. They go forward quite willingly and openly for indulging in wicked deeds but feel shy to participate in singing the glory of God. They revel in singing cinema songs of low taste while they fight shy to sing the Divine Names. To spend life in such unholy pursuits is a wasteful exercise and will not bring credit. Morality is the backbone of the community and a society of people bereft of moral values is worse than the jungle infested by wild animals. Even beasts have season and reason while man has lost both.

### **Service to rural areas**

You are all embodiments of God. It is proclaimed in the Gita that all beings are sparks of Divinity. You should not feel shy to speak the truth when you are going to pilgrim shrines such as Tirupati or Parthi. You should not also fight shy of engaging yourselves in service especially in rural areas, as the villages lack amenities and hygienic conditions. They need your attention more. You may not be able to visit the villages frequently when you are employed in any job, due to difficulties of getting leave. When you go to a village, collect a few young persons of the village and teach them health and hygiene and impress on them the necessity to maintain environmental cleanliness. You need not spend much money for travelling to distant places. Select the villages close by and teach the villagers principles of health, hygiene and living in

clean surroundings. You can take doctors to give them treatment and health check-up. You should inspire the villagers by your attitude of service and humility.

### **Serve with humility as Hanuman**

You know the greatness of Hanuman who was the symbol of selfless service. He was endowed with mighty power, valour, strength and he was hailed as a great scholar of impeccable character. Yet when the demons in Sri Lanka, questioned him who he was, he never hesitated to reply that he was the servant of Sri Ramchandra.

You will have to feel honoured to call yourself as a servant of God and humanity. If you start serving with the attitude that service to man is service to God you will find God there. The same thing you cannot experience in japa or dhyana. You have to "shut your mind and open your heart" which happens while doing Seva.

### **Dedicate all activities to God**

Some may ask: while you are God why worship God? Even as you realise you are Divine, you have to do certain things as part of your duty. According to the tradition of Bharat, you have to do things to please God or in other words transform work into worship. When you practise this, it becomes easier to realise God. Everything you learn by practice only. Walking, talking, eating, singing and serving need practice. Practise service dedicating all activities to God.

A boy prayed to God to give him strength. What for? It is not for watching T V or movies but for serving God through service to mankind. You say diamond and gold are highly valuable. If you enquire deeply, man is more valuable than all the wealth of the world. Men alone decide the value of gold and diamond, and other materials. Man should have faith in himself. Every one should chant the name of God and engage in service in accordance with the advice given by Hanuman to Vibhishana. He said, "Mere chanting Rama's name won't do. You should also engage yourself in Rama's work." Vibhishana went on chanting the name but failed to make any effort to alleviate the suffering of Sita and Rama on their separation while Hanuman engaged himself in the service of Rama.

### **Light the lamp of Divine Love**

You should use your will power to engage in such sacred tasks. A common example can be seen in an electric light. Dharma (virtue) is the wire which carries the current, Santhi (peace) is the bulb and Prema (love) is the light. Light the Lamp of the World with Divine Love.

Divine Love lights the lamp of life which you are not able to perceive. None can regulate Divine Love. Worldly love is fraught with conditions and expectations in return. Divine Love does not expect anything in return.

### **Control of senses**

Some say they are searching for Truth. This is meaningless because you are yourself the embodiment of Truth which is nothing but God. Because you are not aware of this, you indulge in wrong pursuits. In a co educational institution, what happens is that a boy and girl in the impressionable age when there is no self-control, first look at each other exchanging glances; then it goes on developing into friendship by smiling, talking, exchanging letters and finally



leads to coming together. You should control your vision initially. Many saints have prayed to God to give them the correct vision only to see good, ears to hear songs of Divine glory and hands to engage in worship. Jayadeva in a song appeals to the tongue not to indulge in untruth, not to speak ill of others and avoid excessive talk.

Nagarsankirtan (community singing of spiritual songs) has been arranged as part of the programme of the Sathya Sai Organisation to still the mind in the cool hours of early morning and purify the atmosphere and make the singer and the listeners peaceful and happy with thought of the Divine.

You must make it a practice to observe silence for at least one hour daily. It saves your cosmic energy and ensures peace of mind. You should develop also the discipline of simple living and high thinking. You should avoid gaudy dress. Your white dress reflects the inner purity of your heart. Dress should be simple but clean.

You have to enquire "who am I instead of asking everyone else "who are you?!" You must uncover your Reality which is hidden by the outer coats of ego and attachment. You have to remove them to see your bare chest. These represent the three qualities of Satwa, Rajas and Tamas (goodness, passion and inertia) covering your innate Reality. You have to transcend them to realise your Inner Self.

### **Character is of primary importance**

*Embodiments of Love! Young men and women!*

Character is the basis for all your behaviour, quality and actions. None can be perfect but you can make an effort to develop excellent character. When you go to villages, you should create a good impression in them by your behaviour. You should reflect peaceful and happy demeanour. You should be careful not to disturb their work. They should not mistake you for a gang of rowdies. You must behave with humility and start working sincerely. Avoid talking too much.

Learn to turn over a new leaf even if you have not lived an ideal life in the past. Do not brood over the past and worry about the future. Concentrate on the present. Take everything as the gift of God; discard worry. You cannot demand sweet medicine for your illness from the doctor. You must take whatever is prescribed. Do not give room in the heart for anything else but God. The world outside is a reflection of the Inner Being. Be happy within and joyful outside and have enthusiasm for service. Do not bother about others heckling you as you are engaged in Service to God.

### **Shed tears of devotion for God**

If some are questioning your faith in God, tell them that He is in your heart and the others have no business to question your belief. Have strong and unshakable faith. Be fearless and avoid "crying." You have to shed only tears of devotion to God. Such tears have spiritual meaning, because Nara means water and Nayana means 'eyes'. Both together make Narayana. Difficulties are like passing clouds. There are no permanent clouds at all.

Even though there are millions of youth in the world, only those of you who have come here are lucky to experience this unique chance. Wherever you go for service, Swami will always be with

you. Whatever happens I shall protect you. Do not be carried away by profit or loss. Think of God ceaselessly. Even the great saint composer Thyagaraja doubted for a moment the Shakti (power) of Rama but immediately repented and said the fault was his to have doubted but God was all powerful. Never give room for doubt.

### **Prema is the essence of devotion**

The inner current of all the nine types of devotion is Prema—Love for God.

The teachings you have heard here during the four days should follow you like a shadow wherever you go. The cow consumes plenty of grass wherever it sees a green patch but goes to its shed and slowly chews the cud. Similarly, you should go to your places and recapitulate all that you learnt here and follow them scrupulously. You should stick to the principles of faith in God, and Unity in Diversity. Swami is prepared to do anything for you if you follow the path explained to you and become good and useful to the society. This is my only desire.

You must spread the message to others, each one instructing hundreds of persons in your places.

While you render service in the villages, the villagers should be inspired and encouraged to do the work themselves. When you go out for service, do not fail to take permission of your parents. If they object, tell them softly that this body is given only for doing service and not for wasting in eating, drinking, sleeping and idling. They will not object once they are convinced that you are going for genuine service. You must behave in an exemplary manner.

### **Worthy son makes father proud**

Usually, a father distributes sweets when a son is born. But a father will be really happy only when the society respects his son. True happiness is derived only when you earn a good name. Be good. See good. Do good deeds. This is the ideal Swami wants you to imbibe. All of you have been behaving well these four days during your stay here. Continue this even when you go to your places. Because of emotion you may sometimes lose self-control. You should avoid getting emotionally charged and upset. You must control emotion, reduce your talk and practise Truth. Make your life blissful. Worldly pleasure is only temporary. Permanent bliss can be had only in association with the Divine. It is “heart to heart and love to love connection.” You have Swami's Blessings in abundance.

**(From Divine Discourse to delegates of the World Youth Conference held on 19th July '97)**

*AVATAR VANI:*

*WORLD YOUTH CONFERENCE:*

## **Goodness More Vital Than Greatness**

People should realise the distinction between "greatness" and "goodness". Most parents want their children to acquire greatness: But they have no true idea of what is greatness. They may desire that their children should become great scholars, get big jobs and acquire large wealth. Do

these constitute greatness? No. Man is the one who sees the human in God. But the one who sees God in man is a good (manchi) man. The mark of goodness is to see the divinity in every man.

There is no use in acquiring greatness without goodness. You must seek goodness and not greatness.

Today there are many "great" men in this country. What is the benefit the country has derived from them? Ravana was a great scholar. Rama was equally great as a scholar. But he was much more than that. He was a good man. Ravana performed rigorous penance and mastered a vast deal of knowledge. The result was ignorance arising from indigestion. Unable to control his desires, he brought ruin on his clan and his kingdom. All his studies did not save him from his evil qualities, which brought about his ruin. The only desire all should cherish is to win the grace of God (Daiva priti).

Rama was devoted to truth and righteousness. Hence he became a good man and not a mere great man. After thousands of years, the very name Rama evokes veneration. Rama manifested divinity in the human. That is the sign of goodness. To see humanness in Rama is nothing special. Being human yourself you see the human traits in others. What you must see is the divine in human beings.

You must realise that greatness related to power, position or wealth is transient. It is lost when power and position go. But goodness is respected always. Therefore dedicate your lives to goodness. What is goodness? It is living according to Dharma (the code of right conduct) and justice, to love all and cherish faith in God. To help the needy and raise the lowly-all these constitute goodness.

Young men and women! Today at the inaugural function only the broad pattern of the tasks before you has been presented. In the ensuing days the details of the duties you have come to discharge, the programme of activities you have to take up will be considered. What is basic to all these in the spiritual path is the chanting of the name of the Lord. By this means you can experience God. You must chant the name with love.

Bhagavan concluded His discourse with the bhajan: **"Prema muditha manase kaho: Rama, Rama, Ram!"**

*(Concluding part of Bhagavan's inaugural discourse to the Sai World Youth Conference in Sai Kulwant Mandap on 16-7-97. The earlier part was reported in the July issue.)*

AVATAR VANI:

WORLD YOUTH CONFERENCE

## **Love God, Fear Sin, Guard Human Values**

*If free from arrogance, you are loved  
If free from anger, you are free of sorrow  
If free from desires, you gain wealth*

*If free from greed, you become happy*  
(Sanskrit Verse)

#### *Embodiments of Love,*

So long as a man is puffed up with pride, none, not even his wife and children will love him. One should shed his ego and arrogance, if he wants to be loved by others. One has to suffer grief and misery as long as he is prone to anger. It is only when he gives up anger he can be happy. So long as one goes on multiplying his desires, he will continue to be in want. When he controls his desires, man attains prosperity. Greed makes a man unhappy and miserable. Only when greed and miserliness are given up one can have an enjoyable and peaceful life.

#### **The spirit of sacrifice in ancient times**

The whole world and the objects therein are inter-related by the bond of love. It is love that binds the human race together. The world cannot exist without love. God is love and resides in the heart of every one as embodiment of love. Based on this Truth we pray, that all the people in the world should be happy. (Lokaas-Samasthaas-Sukhino Bhavanthu).

In ancient times, the sages and saints sacrificed everything for the sake of the welfare of humanity. Even the youth of those times followed suit. They are remembered even today because of their spirit of selfless sacrifice. On the contrary, the youth of today are becoming exceedingly greedy and totally selfish and harbouring feelings of hatred and jealousy, while those in the ancient times were leading a life of Tyaga and Yoga (sacrifice and sense control). The present day youth want to lead a life of Bhoga (enjoying worldly and carnal pleasures) which results in Roga (disease).

#### **Make God your friend**

On the journey of earthly life, people take some wealth for expenses and when they finish the journey and reach the goal, they hand over the balance to some trustworthy friend and sleep soundly. Everyone brings the wealth of love from the moment of his birth. In this Karmakshetra (field of activity) that is the world, it is difficult to safeguard the treasure of love (Prema). Therefore, everyone should look for a faithful friend. Today, the only true friend is God. When you hand over the wealth of love to God, it will be easy for you to carry on a life of security and peace.

There is no greater teacher than your heart. Time is a great preacher. The world is a scriptural text. God is the great friend. With full faith in these four entities, one should lead his life on this earth. Prema (Love) is the natural possession of every human being. It is the fruit of the tree of life. There are certain impediments in your enjoyment of the fruit. But, before tasting a fruit, you have to remove the skin and rind covering the pulp inside and also cast off the seed. The fruit of love is covered by the thick skin of ego. You have to peel off this skin of mine and thine. Then only you can taste the sweet juice. That is why the Vedas describe God as the 'Essence or Juice' (Raso vai Saha).

By pure love, you should establish unity with the Divine. The path of Prema (Love) is the straightforward road to realise the Divine. The human life is a journey from 'I' to 'We'. It is also progressing from 'Svam' to 'Soham' (from individual self to the state of merger with the divine)

### **Three types of 'Prema'**

This means that every one of your actions must be done as an offering to God. But, nowadays people start their journey from 'I' and come back to the same 'I'. This is selfishness. The day you give up selfishness you are on the right path. You experience love in three ways: Svartha Prema (Self-oriented love), Parartha Prema (love towards all fellow beings) and Anyonya Prema (mutual give and take type of love).

"I should be happy. I should enjoy all pleasures and be comfortable. I do not care for others." This is the attitude of Svartha Prema (selfish love). Anyonya Prema represents the feeling that not only himself but also his relatives and friends should be comfortable and enjoy a good life. But, Parartha Prema represents the feeling that all should be happy in the entire world. This is the highest type of Prema.

There are three examples to illustrate these three types of love. Svartha or selfish love is comparable to the bulb that illumines just one single small room. This cannot be called love at all. Anyonya Prema is like moonlight. Though it illumines all directions, it is very dim. It does not help one to have a clear perception. You may mistake a rope for a serpent and a stump of wood as human body in moonlight. Similarly, you may mistake a good man to be a wicked one and vice versa due to illusion. But Parartha Prema is like Sunlight which is very bright and will not give room for any doubt. The confused person will be overpowered by delusion. He may believe the words of wicked persons which may appear to be sweet. The words of wise people may appear to be unsavoury but they communicate nectarine Truth. Divine love is like a downpour of rain, although sometimes interspersed with hard-hailstones hurting you. But remember! They melt into the water of love for you. Similarly divinity sometimes may appear to be hurting you. But you should realise it contains nothing but love. God is love. Love is God. Live in Love. You should make an effort to lead such a life.

### **Look for your own defects**

Some persons consider small defects in others as huge mistakes and criticise them while they ignore even great drawbacks in themselves. This is highly improper. The correct method is to magnify your own small mistakes and consider them as big mistakes and the big mistakes of others as small ones of no consequence. That is how you can control the commission of errors. With this attitude, you will be able to realise the Divine. The love of humans is earthly and selfish while Divine Love is spiritual and selfless. It is pure love. The ancients described the Divine as eternal, immortal, pure and unsullied. In order to experience Love of God, you should give up petty minded selfishness and expand your love.

### **Worldly Love Vs Divine Love**

(Bhagavan cited as an example how the love of a newly married man to his spouse decreases as days go by). In the beginning he shows considerable concern when they are walking on the road and come across a thorn. The man shows a lot of concern and pulls the wife aside. In the same situation, a few months later, he retorts "Are you blind? Can you not see the thorn?" Thus the worldly love will become diluted while Divine Love will be constant and steady.

People cannot understand the greatness of Divine Love. They misconstrue this love and even blame God when they do not get their low desires fulfilled. Some want liberation. What is liberation? It is liberation from desires. They want to see God. Should you not have the requisite faith and feeling in your heart for this?

### **Near is not dear**

Even when you live close to God you cannot see God unless you have the faith and devotion, just like a frog in the pond which is ignorant of the honey in the Lotus, though nearer to it. While honey bees from far off places know the existence of honey in the flower and come and taste it, people from distant lands come and experience the sweetness of God's Love, while those nearer are not able to do so.

The proximity to the Divine can elevate human to the level of the divine. But many fail to realise this and waste their lives. Love is in everyone, but, because it is turned to selfish ends, it becomes attachment. You should aspire to experience, Daivi Prema, Divine Love.

### **Morality is of utmost importance**

In the modern world, youth should know the nature of true love. Many from abroad mix with persons of the opposite sex, calling them boy friend and girl friend. If you really love each other you must get married and not continue living as friends.

Swami related an episode which happened a few years back: A foreign youth was sitting under a tree with a crest fallen face. He was just in his late teens, and when questioned by Swami, he said that his second wife had deserted him and he was anxiously thinking of his child she bore. If at this age he had worries, imagine what would happen when he became older? Some young people even before they are twenty years of age get married, divorced and remarry again and get separated from wife and child too and later feel sorry for themselves. They do not realise the value of human life which is both rare and sacred.

According to the Upanishads, human life is sacred and rare. The human being is noble and powerful. He is called Manava, that is, not new at all but eternal. It is the body that changes often, not the Atma (the Inner Being or Self).

### **Harmony in thought, word and deed**

*Young men and women!*

You may be getting a lot of thoughts because of your food and other habits. You should discriminate whether they are good or bad. You should not be carried away by bookish and superficial knowledge. You should have practical knowledge to make your life useful. Achieve co-ordination between your education and behaviour. Perfect harmony in thought, word and deed is the hallmark of a human being. You should have full faith in God with no doubt at all. Divinity is beyond your human comprehension with the physical equipment you have. Your thoughts are only reflections, resound and reaction of the outer world. God has no such reactions. He has only one Sound, that is Truth Absolute.

You should follow the twin ideals “Speak the Truth and do righteous deeds”. God is the changeless Truth but no one understands this. You can do so only when you follow the righteous path of morality and integrity.

Man has become a slave to money. He may forget God but will never forget money. You provide yourself with an air-conditioner, a good bed, fans and other accessories with a view to having a comfortable sleep. But you do not get sleep. Why? You should have mental peace to sleep well. Your body, mind, chitta or will power, ahamkara or ego, being the Inner Instruments, must all be oriented towards peace as well as the external limbs and sense organs. This can be achieved only by developing divine love, which is selfless love and which always gives and never takes, while worldly love is keen on getting and then forgetting.

### **Pray for only those things you do not have: Love and Bliss**

Divine love has no equal. It stands supreme. You pray to God for trivial worldly thing... You should ask for something that you do not have. You are not having selfless love' hence you should only ask for love which the Divine has in plenty. God is the embodiment of bliss. Pray for love, peace and bliss. You should be able to distinguish between earthly happiness and Divine Bliss. Today, people pray for many trifles. God knows what is good for the devotee and gives it. He is a witness to all the thoughts, words and actions. Therefore, surrender whole-heartedly without any reservation whatsoever to God, and lead an ideal life. You are all embodiments of the Divine. So you should love all and never hurt anyone. If you harm anyone, you are harming the Divine.

### **Harming man is harming the Divine**

St. John used to consider all as his brothers. But, on one occasion he punished one brother. Jesus appeared in his dream and questioned him “Do you think you are hurting that man? No, you are hurting Me” You should understand this truth that any harm done to a fellow being is harming the Divine. You should cultivate the spirit of oneness.

Bhajan, meditation, etc. are only exercises for purifying the mind. “Chittasya Shuddhaye karmane” Develop love which is your life breath. When a tree is full of green leaves, branches and fruits, you are attracted by it. When it becomes dry, you destroy it because there is no life in it. A person without love is akin to a dead tree only.

### **Realise Divinity Within**

Love is as vital for a human as fire is vital for a lump of coal to sparkle. You should get rid of weakness by concentrating on Divine Love, as Divine Grace confers the greatest strength. All other things may come and go but Divine Grace is ever flowing. Whatever you may or may not be able to do, develop Divine Love. God is the director and all humans are mere actors. Be good performers in God's play. To train you for this role only, this Youth Conference has been convened. In the midst of the world replete with fear, distrust and mutual recrimination, you have to prove yourself to be the messengers of the Divine and embodiments of love, peace and truth. Declare your reality as Divine to the world at large and make them realise the Divinity in every one.

## **Hands in Society and Head in the Forest**

*Embodiments of Love!*

You young men and women should know what is truth, what is love and what is God and what relationship is there between Mind and World. Youth go abroad in quest of money. You are not satisfied with what you can earn here and out of greed you go for earning more. You should have hands in society and head in the forest. This is real rest. Men spend their entire life with attachment to money to such an extent that even while on death bed they cannot think of God. In this conference, you have been told about fear of sin and morality in society. You have to carry these ideals with you and practise them.

You must radiate human values and ensure unity in thought, word, and deed. At present there is chaos and mutual animosity amongst various peoples. You have to spread the message of unity, purity, and divinity.

## **God is the Hero, rest are Zeros**

Vivekananda said: "Give me ten men who are pure and perfect. I can change the whole world." But I say, "I can bring about transformation even with one truly perfect human being. You should have divine as the base number one. Any number of zeros placed alongside the figure of one will carry value; value increases many fold with its additional zeros. But, without the number one, if you put zeros, they carry no value at all. The Divine is ONE. Sun, moon, earth etc.. are all mere zeros. They get value only because of the primary number ONE, which represents the Divine. So God is the hero and the rest are all zeros! Have full faith in God and surrender to God. Do service with a spirit of dedication as an offering to God. Spread the message of the glory of God in every village by chanting the name of God. Then the atmosphere and climate of the world will change for the better and become sacred.

Bhagavaan concluded the Discourse with the Bhajan "*Bhajan bina sukha santhi nahi*"

From Bhagavan's Divine Discourse during the World Youth Conference on 17-7-97 in Sai  
Kulwant Mandap

AVATAR VANI:

GURUPOORNIMA SANDESH:

## **Manifest the Divine within You**

*Truth is the mother; Wisdom is the father;  
Righteousness is the brother; Compassion the friend;  
Peace is the wife; forbearance the son;  
These six are men's true relations.*

(Sanskrit Verse)

In this phenomenal world, the physical body has parents who are physical and impermanent. When this is viewed from the spiritual standpoint, the true relations for the real and permanent human spirit are indicated in the opening verse.



### **Human Values are the true relatives**

"Sathyam mata" (Truth is the mother). Truth is unchanging. It is the same over all the three categories of time—past, present and the future. Such truth is one's real and lasting mother.

"Jnanam pita" (Wisdom is the father). What is this wisdom? Does it pertain to the physical world, the mundane existence, the scriptures or science? No True wisdom is: "Advaita darshanam Jnanam". "Perception of oneness is wisdom". The wisdom that makes one aware of unity alone is true wisdom. Such wisdom is one's true father.

"Dharmo bhrata" (Righteousness is the brother). We have brothers. Between them there are differences of opinion. But righteousness which is unvarying and ever the same is one's true, everlasting brother. Righteousness is Divine. The sages hailed Rama as the very embodiment of Righteousness.

"Daya sakha" (Compassion is divine.) There is no greater quality than compassion. It is compassion which redeems human life. Whether one is a deity or a demon, compassion alone can ennoble him. Hence one's true friend is compassion.

"Santhi-patni" (Peace is the wife). One cannot have a greater wife than peace. Peace is the greatest blessing. Today because there is no peace (in the minds of people) the world is plunged in conflict. Peace verily is Divine.

"Kshama putraha" (Forbearance is the son.) People believe that a son will help them in this world. But it is not a son who redeems a person. God is the only redeemer. Forbearance is a divine quality. Whoever possesses it has a worthy son.

### **All nature, life and Sai too are manifest Brahman**

God is adored as mother, father, kith and kin, friend, wealth and everything else in the world. God is immanent in every atom of the universe. All that you see, the mountains, trees, insects, birds and beasts, the food you eat, the air you breathe are all manifestations of the Divine.

(Swami sang a Telugu song which proclaimed that all is Brahman—the stars, the sun, the moon, heaven, the Lord's abode "Vaikuntha", the mother and father, the words in a speech, the discussions in a debate, life itself, birth, growth and death, the wife, the time that passes, the body, the whole of nature, the love you bear to others all is Brahman—this assemblage is Brahman, this Sai who proclaims this truth is verily Brahman (cheers). What more can I tell you, Oh good people gathered here?)

God is omnipotent. Nature is a reflection of that omnipotence. All the powers present in Nature are present in every human being. Hence it should be recognised that God, Nature and the individual are all equally divine.

God and the individual are not different from each other. The cosmos and the Lord of the cosmos are not separate from each other. "Sarvam Vishnumayam Jagat". The cosmos is permeated by the Divine. Vishnu is the cause. Nature is the effect. The Divine is the embodiment of Cause and Effect.

Hence there is no need to go in quest of God. Man is the repository of all divine potencies. They are all latent in him, remaining incognito like the Pandavas during the last years of their 12-year term of exile. Not realising this truth man considers himself ignorant and weak.

### **Energy is Brahman**

Scientists after long investigations, have discovered that the whole universe is made up of atoms. The Vedantins, on their part, declared that everything is permeated by the Divine. The terms used are different, but the meaning is the same. Energy is Brahman and Brahman is energy (shakti). The cosmos is filled with energy. All that you see, all that you do is energy. You observe an object. You see an individual (Jivi). Both the object and the individual are manifestations of energy.

What the scientists call matter is energy alone. An object appears as matter. But it turns into energy later on. Likewise one may appear to you as a jivi (individual). But even he becomes energy in due course. Hence, all the forms and names you see are all manifestations of energy.

What is this energy? It is something which you cannot see or hear or conceive in the mind. Energy is energy alone. It is Divine. Every physical object has a base. There is electrical energy in man. Likewise, there is radiation energy in man. There must be a basis for all these energies. You see that in the world every object is based on some other object. God is the base for all the energies in the cosmos. The Vedantins called this energy as Transcendental Energy ("Atheetha-Shakti").

Scientists have termed it "Superpower". The names used may vary, but the substance is one and the same.

In every man there are numerous latent potencies of which he is not aware. The scientists have given different names to the different energies such as "psychotronic energy" and "bioplasmic energy". Vedantins have described it by the compendious term, Transcendental Energy". How is the presence of this energy to be recognised? The Vedantins described the process of recognition as involving "will-power" (manasika-shakti), concentration (dharana-shakti), meditation (Jnana-shakti) and samadhi (deep awareness) (cheers). By these four processes, one can experience the power of the spirit (Atma-shakti). This means that in the final analysis every individual, every object, and every form of energy becomes one with the Divine.

### **Eight potencies of Divinity**

In this context one has to understand the implications of oneness with the Divine. One desires to merge in God and achieve liberation (Moksha). How is this to be secured? God is formless. He is the source of all energy. He is effulgent. Eight kinds of potencies have been attributed to God. He is the source of all sound, all motion, all light, all speech, all bliss, all excellence, all illusion (Maya), and all prosperity. How is one to realise such an omnipotent Divinity? Water can integrate with water. Air can combine with air. Fire can merge with fire. As God is formless, to become one with God we have to become formless. What does this imply? It means that we have to get rid of the attachment to the body. This is achieved through "dhyana" (meditation). While

retaining attachment to the body one cannot hope to achieve oneness with God merely by praying for it. You have to become formless to realise the formless Divine.

As God is the embodiment of effulgence, you have to make your life effulgent to experience God. You have to realise that the light of your life has come from that supreme source of all light (Param-Jyoti). This individual flame should merge in the Supreme Divine effulgence from which all other lights have emanated. Meditating on the Supreme Effulgence (Param-Jyoti) the individual has to merge his individual effulgence in the Supreme Effulgence.

### **Move from dualism to oneness with God**

There is one other matter which you should consider in this context. You are performing bhajans, Japa, meditation, yaga, yajna or other spiritual exercises. All these are external forms of worship which do not serve to promote the exploration of the internal spirit (Nivritti-marga). They are good acts in themselves. But they are unrelated to spirituality ('Adhyatmic' discipline) Spirituality implies relationship of spirit to spirit (Atma to Atma). All actions have appropriate consequences. Every act results in its own reward. Good acts yield good results. But they do not contribute to spiritual progress. Hence the good acts should be the stepping stones for the spiritual journey.

You should not remain content with performing rituals and acts of worship (Sat-Karmas). When will you embark on the real spiritual adventure? You should go forward from dualism to non-dualism (from Dvaita to Advaita). You become a Jnani (a knower of the Absolute) only when you have the Advaitic consciousness (the experience of oneness with the Divine).

### **Sai Magnetism**

Man possess within himself the constituents needed for generating electrical energy, radiation, and telecommunication. The whole world is filled with electromagnetic energy. The world is governed by the principle of mutual attraction. Green grass attracts the cow. The child attracts the mother. The law of universal attraction is related to this magnetic power. Rama is the supreme symbol of this power of attraction. "Ramayathe ithi Ramah" "Because of his power to please everyone, he is called Rama." This Rama is not the son of Dasaratha but the spiritual Rama who is the Indweller in every heart (Atma-Rama). The Atma is a universal magnet which attracts everything.

Today if so many people from all over the world have been drawn to this place, it is due to this power of attraction (cheers). When you keep a flower here, bees are attracted from afar. They are drawn to the flower because of the sweet honey in it.

Not a single bee will be attracted by a plastic flower. The sweetness that attracts people is "Prema" (Love). This love may be manifested in many forms, maternal love, filial love, fraternal affection, marital love, friendly love and so on. Love is the basis of all these forms of attraction. It is a powerful magnet. It is present everywhere, including every human being.

Every child bears the imprint of its parents. As all human beings have come from God, they should carry the marks of the creator. Man has taken birth to manifest the Divine in him.

Every being and every object in the world is divine energy. It cannot be destroyed. But it can be changed from one form of energy to another. For instance magnetic energy can be converted to electricity. From electricity you can get light or atomic energy. In this manner energy can be converted to different forms, but it cannot be destroyed. This indestructible character is divine.

Hence there is no place or object in the cosmos which is not permeated by the Divine. There is divinity in every particle and every cell. The sages therefore declared: That which is subtler than the subtlest and vaster than the vastest and which is present everywhere as the eternal witness is the Atma. The Atma is atom and the atom is Atma. All the three terms—Brahman, Atma and atom—represent one and the same thing.

### **Prahlada proclaimed omnipresence of Divinity**

It took the scientists one thousand years to discover that what was present in the whole universe was made up of atoms. But many aeons earlier, in the Krita Yuga itself, this truth was recognised by Prahlada. He told his father that there was no place in the cosmos where the Divine could not be found if the search is made. (Swami recited a poem from the Telugu Bhagavatam) Long ago Prahlada confidently proclaimed that the Divine principle was omnipresent. Because he was aware of this transcendental unity of the Divine in the universe, he could overcome every ordeal, discard the body-consciousness and realise the Divine. Immersed in God consciousness, he fearlessly faced every ordeal and survived all the tortures to which he was subjected. With the name of Narayana on his lips, he came out unscathed when he was pushed over a cliff. Likewise he faced ordeals like trampling by elephants or attacks by snakes. He was utterly free from body consciousness. Ever contemplating on God, he had no fear at all (Swami recited a Telugu poem describing how Prahlada faced cheerfully all the ordeals to which he was subjected by the demonic agents of his father).

The one who is immersed in body consciousness is a prey to all kinds of troubles and worries. It should be realised that the body is only an instrument and is bound to perish some time or other. When death is bound to follow birth, why worry about it?

### **The state of no-mind**

The Gopikas realised that Krishna was beyond the reach of the mind because of His cosmic subtlety and immensity, but they experienced his divinity in their hearts because of their devotion (Swami recited a poem from the Bhagavatam).

There is in every human being this divine energy, which grows when it is properly used. The water in a well rises as more and more of it is drawn. Likewise, the more you share your wealth and your joy, they will multiply. Hence share your endowments with others. Strive to manifest the latent potencies in you.

To realise God practices like repetition of the name of the Lord are of little avail. What is essential is stilling the mind ("Amanaska"). (Swami sang a poem which referred to the illusory nature of the phenomenal world).

The waking state and the dreaming state are two kinds of dream states. The only reality is the consciousness that is present in both the states. This unifying awareness is the reality. To

experience God you have to proceed from meditation to concentration and then to the "amanaska" state where the mind is virtually non-existent and one is free from attachment to the body. In that state one experiences "Samadhi".

"Samadhi" has two meanings. One is equal-mindedness in all situations, whether of pain or pleasure, loss or gain. You should not feel distressed by a calamity or elated by a happy event. This state of mind is conducive to the development of extraordinary powers.

### **The True Guru**

Certain activities have to be carried on in the day-to-day world. But the teachings of some "Gurus" in regard to these activities lead to "dehumanisation". The term "Guru" means one who dispels the darkness of ignorance. "Gu" means one who is beyond attributes (gunas), "Ru" implies one who is beyond forms (rupas). This refers only to God. That is why the "Guru" is hailed as Brahma, Vishnu or Siva. Only God is the true Guru. All others are merely teachers, like the teachers of different subjects in a college. "Guru" is the one who reveals the "Guri" (target) to the disciple. "Guri" here refers to the Atmic Principle.

The true Guru is one who has understood his own Self. (In this connection Swami related the story of emperor Bali who promised to give Vamana—Vishnu who had come in the form of a short Brahmin lad—whatever he wanted. Bali's Guru Shukracharya, warned Bali against honouring his promise on the ground that it would prove disastrous for him. But Bali stood by his promise despite his preceptor's warning and intervention. Bali esteemed God as greater than his preceptor. He declared that there can be no greater sin than breaking one's promise.) A Guru who advises his disciple to go back on his plighted word is no Guru at all.

(Swami related the episode from the Mahabharata in which Dronacharya, the teacher in archery for Arjuna, turned away Ekalavya from being his disciple because he had agreed to teach no one else all the arts he had taught to Arjuna. Ekalavya, however, learnt more than what Arjuna had been taught, by merely worshipping an image of Dronacharya. When Dronacharya came to know about this from Arjuna, he demanded from Ekalavya his right thumb as "Guru Dakshina" so as to incapacitate Ekalavya from making use of his proficiency in archery. Ekalavya readily offered his thumb out of his devotion to Dronacharya, whom he regarded as his preceptor. This conduct on the part of Dronacharya in response to a demand from Arjuna who was envious of Ekalavya's superiority in archery, was unworthy of a true Guru.)

Gurus who are governed by selfish considerations or narrow loyalties cause great harm to the cause of spiritual enlightenment. They are worldly teachers, not spiritual preceptors.

### **Place trust in God who is the true Guru**

You may learn from anyone, but dedicate all your knowledge to God. That is true spirituality. That is real devotion.

Today is celebrated as Vyasa-Poornima—the full moon day dedicated to the Sage Vyasa, who codified the Vedas, and presented them to the world on a full moon day. This is the day when people should seek to make their minds as pure and bright as the full moon. The day should be celebrated by purifying the mind and understanding the mystery of the Universe. (Swami recited

a song of Ramadas in which he describes human life as consisting of seven forts—vices—in the heart of which dwells the Lord, who is very difficult to reach). Place your entire trust in God and not in self-seeking Gurus. Before performing any act utter a prayer offering it to God. Try to understand the sacred teachings in all the Vedic and other scriptures.

*Embodiments of love!*

Realise that God is not separate from you. Strive to strengthen this sense of oneness with the Divine. This was the way Mira experienced the presence of Krishna in her heart when her husband, the Maharana, expelled her from the Krishna temple built by him (Swami recited a song of Mira praying to her mind to seek the Lord).

**Seek the light of the Divine within**

The light of the Divine is within you. Why go seeking for it elsewhere? This is the light of love and of bliss. Never forget God, whatever may happen to you" (Telugu poem). There is no greater form of meditation than constant remembrance of God at all places and on all occasions. God is the indweller in the heart. When you experience this you will lack nothing and will be ever blissful. You will commit no wrong and will fear none. Your conscience will be your guide. Love all.

You can see God only through the eye of wisdom (Jnana-chakshu) Realising that God dwells within you, you must treat God as the universal Guru, as the preceptor for mankind, irrespective of differences in names.

Bhagavan concluded His discourse with the bhajan. "*Hari bhajan bina sukha santhi nahi*"

**—From Bhagavan's discourse in the Sai Kulwant Hall on July 20, 1997**

## Divine Playfulness

*In His discourses on the Krishna Avatar, Bhagavan often goes into raptures over the leelas and miracles of the child Krishna. Prof. Kasturi, in his fascinating autobiography, "loving God", recalls his experiences of Bhagavan's own boyhood leelas and marvellous miracles in his own inimitable humorous style. The following passages are taken from his autobiography starting from the time he decided to settle down after his retirement from service and completing an all-India pilgrimage with his mother and wife:*

We resolved to spend the rest of our life in the hallowed sanctuary, Prasanthi Nilayam. The atmosphere was inviting, vibrant with fraternity; felicity, charity and love, unfolding and enfolding. We were glad we had sailed into its calmness and coolness and we decided to drop anchor there. We were only about fifty residents and at the Bhajan sessions in the mornings and evenings, about twenty visitors joined us. On some days, the headmen of the villages around came, with a few farmers to lay before Baba local conflicts for solution, or seek His blessings for ventures in cultivating commercial crops; they led newly bought bullocks so that His Blessings could endow them long life and sound health.

During those years, Baba came down from His room on the first floor usually about four in the evening. It had become quite an unchanging schedule. There were eight tenements on the right of the building, five on the left and a row of six single rooms at the back. These latter were so close to the Mandir that the kitchen smells were wafted into the Bhajan Hall when the wind turned mischievous.

Baba would stand still for a while on coming down, keeping us wondering whither His steps would turn. But, He made up his mind pretty quick whom to bless first. O! How happy He made us! He would enter every home and spend a few enlivening minutes with the occupants. Every noon, we prepared the house for receiving Him. We swept and scrubbed, washed and dusted. Designs were drawn on the floor, greens were hung across the door. There was a chair for Him in every house, artistic and comfortable, placed on a carpet with a low footstool in position. The metal lamp in the tiny altar occupying a niche on the wall or a corner of the only room, was lit and kept merrily burning. Each family had a pretty little paan-box for Baba's use, while he sat and chatted. Light green pan leaves, softly scented supari and rose flavour lime were procured by us for offering to Him.

Everyone watched without winking for the orange robe and the crown of hair, though He seldom missed a house while on His mercy march, and though one could be certain of His visit to one's place immediately after His leaving the adjacent house. My house was on the right of the Mandir. Baba had facetiously named that row of tenements "Brindavan" with an emphasis on syllable three, which means 'Jungle'. For we had behind our block of houses, a line of thick thorn bushes fencing us off from the road which took the villagers to the river on the east. The row of houses on the left of the Mandir was named by Him as "Gokulam", 'the cluster of cattle', because the most prominent structure there, was a pen for a few cows.

Oftentimes, He played pranks with us, pretending to enter but actually moving on, with a puckish curl of lip, to the neighbour's house, plunging us in laughter and tears. We turned green with

envy when we were by-passed and the persons next door preferred. Often, He exasperated us from there, flavouring His grace with songs and jokes. We heard the bursts of giggle which His impish puns provoked. We condemned ourselves for the misfortune of missing them. All of a sudden, there would descend a thick fog of silence, lasting for a few excruciating seconds-five or even ten! Had he risen from the chair? Is He moving out? Will He come to us? Is He chewing pan? Is He sipping orange juice? Is He walking along the edge of that room looking at the pictures on the walls? But, no! He usually hums a tune when He does that. He must have strayed into their kitchen. Ah! That is the sound, made by the door which opens into the backyard! Is he looking at the cosy little grass-thatch hut where father Venkappa resides? Is He about to descend the three stone slab steps and walk across the dusty road?

We dare not peep through the slit of our kitchen door. It would be sacrilege. How can our gossamer guesses fathom His infinite potentiality? Ah! That was a knock at our own kitchen door. It is He! He enters our home through that door, with a song designed to sweep our gloom away-a song composed five centuries ago in the Kannada language, so dear to our ears, by Saint Purandaradasa. It began, "Do not doubt the Lord." The assurance was an admonition.

Another day, Baba ventured into the backyard of the very first tenement of 'Brindavan' and while we were peering into the northern distance to spot him the moment He emerged from the front door of that house and get busy ourselves, he managed to get through their backdoor and walk unnoticed along a narrow gap between numbers six and seven, and slide behind poor innocent me from the south end. He closed my eyes with a quick placement of His palms, in order to grant me the sweetest of surprises. When He asked me, "Tell who?" my reply was a cascade of tears. Childish? Blind man's Buff, between a thirty and a sixty? Yes, His form was of the evening of youth; but the content was a child, the Child that has come to chide and change, the Child that has come to reveal the hypocrisy of homosapiens and make mankind aware of the humbug he is hugging firm.

This Divine Child applies the balm of cool benediction, with its soothing palm, on our eyes, reddened by envy and blinded by anger. When He closes these eyes, the Inner Eye loses its blinkers; there is no division thereafter—only the vision of Him, who asks each one, all the time, "Tell who?" This child draws us to itself by spontaneous and spotless Love and by its untarnished authentic wisdom.

The human child sees itself as the centre of the universe and the world as an extension of its Being. This Divine Child knows that is so. The human child arrives without the label of a name; we stick one on its brow. Baba, the Divine Child, has announced, "I have no name; I respond to all names." Baba has declared, "I have no place which I claim as my very own; I belong to all places. I am wherever I am wanted." Children are most concerned with the 'now'. Baba reminds us "The past is past. Do not turn back and look wistfully or wailingly on the road you have traversed already." Children do not see the world as fragmented by walls, Chinese, Berlinese, or erected just to tease. They are involved in everything and with everyone. They represent true innocence, love, forgiveness and fraternity. The child has no conceit or contempt of gender. This Divine Child affirms, "Among men, I am man; among women, I am woman. Among children, I am a child." This statement is echoed in the Upanishads which describe God, "You are woman, you are man, you are girl, you are senile leaning on stick." The human child delights to pour



sand through its fingers. This child, I saw, grasped a handful of Chitravati sand; it became a book, the Bhagavad-Gita. Sand coagulated into beads when Baba jogged gleefully on the white beach at Cape Comorin where three seas lap the shore. This Divine Child sat on the seashore near Dwaraka and played with both hands on the sand. An eighteen inch golden idol of Krishna emerged! This Child inspires us to become children again, so that we may be ever with him.

Awareness of this Truth came into me clearer and clearer as the years went by. It persists even today, when He is in the fifties and I am in the eighties. Playfulness is inherent in the relation of God to man. Baba has written, "I created the world for my pleasure." On another occasion, He declared. "I am directing this puppet show and I am pleased with it." Pricking bubbles, exploding ego balloons, demolishing aerial castles, playing hide and seek these are favourite pastimes of His. "Love my uncertainty" is what this phenomenon advises us. And who can be more uncertain than a child? When distributing sweet laddus, inducing each devotee to catch the gift when He throws one in his direction, once in a while, He throws an empty gesture and laughs at the discomfiture He causes. The next moment, He may give us two, with a pat on the back to soften the impact of disappointment.

I remember one evening in 1959 when He sent some one to bring me to His room at the Mandir. Baba told me that the Editor of a daily newspaper published from Hyderabad had asked for my photograph, for he was announcing me in his paper, alongside a nice write-up as the Editor of the "Sanathana Sarathi." Baba had promised to send him my photograph and He asked me to prepare myself for being shot within minutes by Baba himself, with a brand new camera He had specially selected for the purpose. My joy knew no bounds! I rose to the eighth heaven. I rushed down the eighteen steps to reach home for a quick face-lift.

I returned to the Presence, within minutes, shaved and starched, with a big broad smile on the frontispiece. Baba held me by the shoulders and positioned me at an appropriate distance. He peered through the lens and congratulated me on my 'photogenic face'. I was elated that my picture will catch the eye of at least 30,000 readers all over Andhra Pradesh. My smile swelled into a toothful gulp. He cautioned me with a 'steady', followed immediately by a 'ready'. He clicked...A black hairy blotch with a flashing tail bounced on my neck from inside the camera! With a shrill screech, I hopped into the corner of the room casting away the horrid, hirsute....was it a rat? Was it dead? No it was a cotton mouse....that was cunningly tucked inside the dummy camera, to be released when clicked. Baba had a hearty laugh at my panic. I too laughed to relieve the tension.

He reprimanded me mildly for swallowing the story He had invented to deflate my ego. He reminded me that my being the Editor was not the kind of 'news' which the world was interested in. Lasting fame is to be sought not through newspapers which turn into waste paper the very next morning, but through dedicated service to God and the godly.

I left His room, a leaner and wiser man. Baba mercifully helps us, slowly and subtly, to shed the burden of the ego. He condemns modesty as a mere pose intended to draw attention or admiration to oneself. He advises that we should be just ourselves and not wear masks behind which we hide. "What greater status can you attain than being the medium for packaging and posting My message to thousands of devotees every month?" He asked me.

Baba is too bright a sun for human eyes; we can bask and bathe in sunlight but we cannot gaze at Him. The Sun must itself diminish the splendour and become a beautiful red disc, as it does twice a day, so that man can imbibe the golden grandeur. Baba too gives us frequent glimpses of the Glory that He is.

## **From the Unreal to the Real**

"*Asatho maa Sadgamaya*"—"Lead me from the unreal to the Real"—has been man's prayer to the Almighty since time immemorial. But what is the significance of the prayer? The concept of reality/unreality is enigmatic. For example, what is real in the waking state is unreal in the dream and vice versa. What is real in either in the waking state is unreal in the dream state and vice versa. What is real in either of these two states is non-existent in the deep sleep state. The unreality of the experiences in all the above three states of consciousness becomes evident in the transcendental state of '*Turiya*'. The noumenon alone is real for the non-dualist and idealist; while the phenomenal world is real for the realist and physical scientist. Stranger still is the fact that the "solid matter" which was reality to the physicist of the nineteenth century is nothing but deception according to the twentieth century physicist whose extremely sophisticated instruments reveal that what really exists is not solid matter but vast empty spaces interspersed with dancing 'wavicles' of energy. Interestingly enough, this latest "scientific" view of reality tallies with the Hindu's age old "spiritual" symbol of the cosmic dance of Nataraja.

To get over this conceptual problem inherent in the idea of reality/unreality, and appreciate the significance of the above mentioned prayer, it would be useful to consider the classification of reality as given in the Hindu scriptures.

### **Absolute Reality**

According to the "Sarvasara Upanishad" the first category, viz. Absolute Reality (Sat, or Paramarthika Sathya) is that which satisfies the following six criteria:

- (i) Unaffected by the past, present and future (Trikaalabaadhyam)
- (ii) Pervading the past, present and future (Trikaalanusyuutam)
- (iii) Always existing ( Yadaasti thath Sathyam)
- (iv) One without a second (Ekameva Advitecyam)
- (v) Free from differentiations based on intra-species, and intra-individual variations (Sajaati, Vijasti, Swagata Bheda Rahitam)
- (vi) Basis for all manifestation (Sarva Kalpana Adhishtaanam)

This Absolute Reality designated as Atma or Brahman cannot be perceived by the senses and mind, but can be experienced only in the transcendental state (Turiya).

### **Relative Reality**

The second category, namely, "Relative reality", a combination of Sat and Asat (reality and unreality) is subdivided into two types: (a) "Vyavaharika Sathya", i.e. empirical (or Practical) Reality, and (b) "Pratibhashika Sathya", i.e. Illusory or Imaginary Reality.

(a) Empirical Reality: Empirical reality refers to the phenomenal universe of names and forms, 'Namaroopsatmakam' (consisting of the five elements and their permutations and combinations), which has been projected into manifestation by Primordial Nature (Prakriti or Moola Avidya) according to the will (Sankalpa) of Easwara (the Lord of the Universe).

This empirical or pragmatic reality consisting of personal God, man and the world, is generally perceived by the senses with the help of the mind and intellect during the wakeful state. The following six sub-categories belong to this category of reality.

(i) Common examples of such empirical reality are: the three-dimensional objects with substance', both animate and inanimate, moving and stationary. This subcategory includes the subtle, inner world of mind intellect and ego. Special examples are: (ii) shades, shadows and reflections, having no substance; (iii) sun-rise and sun-set (although the sun actually does not rise or set); similarly, waxing and waning of the moon, (iv) flowing reality (Pravahika Sathya) as in the case of a river, our bodies or the world itself for that matter (appearing to be the same, though constantly changing); (v) temporary reality (Thathakalika Sathya) as in the case of a crow on a roof; and (vi) inferential reality (Anumana Sathya) as in the case of seeing smoke and inferring fire; or seeing the moving branches and inferring the presence of wind.

(b) Illusory Reality: Illusory reality (Pratibhashika Sathya) is that which is created and experienced by the Jiva (individual soul), as a result of what is called "toola Avidya" (individual nescience). Examples of such reality are: dream, a creation of the mind phenomena created by the senses together with the mind, such as a mirage mistaken for water, a rope mistaken for a snake, or a stump mistaken for a man, or a post seen as a ghost, because of inadequate light plus imagination.

It is important to note, in this context, that the three entities of God, man and the world are posited by almost all religions. These three, according to Vedanta as well as Bhagavan Baba, belong to the realm of relative reality, since they are but the reflections of the one and the only Absolute Reality (Parabrahman, or Impersonal God without attributes) in the three-fold mirror or Maya (cosmic illusion). God, meaning Personal God designated in Hindu religious texts as Saguna Brahman or Easwara, having form and or other attributes, is the reflection of Nirguna Brahman in the Satwic aspect of the mirror of Maya; while man and the world are reflections respectively in the Rajasic and Tamasic aspects of the mirror or Maya, which is the inscrutable power of Parabrahman.

Absolute Unreality: The third category, namely, "Asath" (absolute unreality) illustrated by the classical examples like "Vandhya Putra" (son of a barren woman), "Gagana Kusumam" (sky-

born flower) and Sasi Vishanam (rabbit's horn) is merely of academic interest due to its non-existence. Such empty words or terms are generally used as figures of speech only to indicate things which do not exist at all.

### **Practical Implication of the Prayer**

Viewed in the light of the above classification of reality, the prayer to lead us from the unreal to the real, virtually amounts to a supplication for being lifted from the domain of relative or empirical reality to that of Absolute Reality. There are two approaches to the fulfillment of this prayer. The ostensibly short approach is altogether to deny the manifested universe as unreal by following the so-called "Neti, Neti" process, in an attempt directly to reach the Absolute Reality. However, according to the testimony of the Gita (12th Canto Verse 5), this direct approach to the Absolute Unmanifest Reality is fraught with insuperable difficulties for an embodied being. In fact, for the vast majority of spiritual aspirants with body-consciousness, this path of wishful negation of the world amounts to an exercise in futility and self-deception. For, unless one has attained purity of heart as well as annihilation of the ego and mind, one cannot hope to reach the transcendental (Turiya) state to experience the Absolute Reality.

For the large majority of aspirants, therefore, the path commended by scriptures like the Gita, and especially by the Great Masters of modern times like Sri Ramakrishna and Bhagavan Baba, is to deify the world and not to defy, much less to deny it. After all, without the substratum of Brahman (the Absolute Reality), the world cannot exist independently. Therefore, the world would become unreal, if considered as something apart from God (Brahman), but real when seen as a part or as a manifestation of God.

In this context, we would do well to remember the most profound, albeit paradoxical truth declared by Sri Krishna as follows in Verse 13 of Chapter XIII of the Gita which is acknowledged as the quintessence of all the Upanishads:

"I hereby declare that which has to be known'—knowing which one attains to immortality—the beginningless Supreme Brahman, called neither being (sat) nor nonbeing (asat)."

It means, according to Sankara, that "Brahman cannot be considered as existent (sat) as It belongs to no genus, nor does It possess any perceivable or conceivable qualities. At the same time, It cannot be considered as asat or non-existent, since It is manifesting Itself through all living and nonliving beings."

The same paradoxical truth is enunciated by Bhagavan Baba in the modern idiom as: "Everything is nothing; and nothing is everything." Here, everything' means the phenomenal world of names and forms. 'Nothing' denotes Sat-Chit-Ananda or Brahman, which is not a thing that can be perceived by the senses, nor conceived by the mind, as It transcends the senses and the mind as well. Therefore, Swami's above statement declares that everything (world) is Brahman; and Brahman is everything (world). Again, Baba's dictum is valid from the view point of the doctrine of Maya also. For, Maya, by definition, is that which does not exist (Yama Sa Maya). Accordingly, Baba's pronouncement amounts to saying that everything is Maya, and Maya is everything. And Maya, in turn, is equated with Brahman in the sense that it is considered as the inherent, inalienable and inscrutable power of Brahman.

Hence, Swami's exhortation: "Drishtim Jnaanamayam Thadaiva Prema-mayam Kritvaa Pasyeth Brahma-mayam Jagat" which means, "Let your vision be filled with wisdom and self-less love and then you will find the world verily filled with Brahman." Needless to say, this requires the prolonged and unremitting practice of looking upon everything as God and God as everything, as well as conducting oneself accordingly in day-to-day life.

### **Sat-Chit-Ananda**

So when we chant the prayer, "Lead me from the unreal to the real", etc. Let us remember that according to the divine scheme of things, we have to reach the nameless and formless through name and form; or in Baba's words: "Love and serve the Lokeshwara (Lord) through loving and serving the Loka (world). Deify the world by seeing the unity underlying the diversity; and by treating duty as God and work as worship. More specifically, in your dealings with the world, practise the five virtues of truth, righteousness, peace, love and nonviolence, both at the moral and spiritual levels, as well as the three maxims of love of God, fear of sin and morality in society." This is the way to reach the real 'from and through the unreal'.

When we thus reach the 'real' from the 'unreal', we would automatically be reaching the 'Jyoti' (light) from and through 'tamas' ; (darkness), and 'amritam' (immortality) from and through 'mrityu' (death). For, the words Sat, Jyoti and Amritam in the universal Upanishadic prayer under discussion, stand respectively for Sat, Chit and Ananda (Being-Awareness and Bliss) which are but three inseparable aspects of the One Reality, as often explained by Bhagavan Baba. In the final reckoning, therefore, this prayer means that we should give up our undue obsession with the diversity which is characterised by unreality (asat), darkness (tamas) and death (mritya), in order to perceive and experience the underlying unity consisting of Sat-Chit-Ananda or Absolute Being-Awareness-Bliss. This, indeed, is the spiritual significance of Swami's unique play on His name SAI BABA, as an acronym standing for: "See Always Inside, Being Awareness Bliss Atman." It means that if we develop the inner vision, we can see the Sat-Chit-Ananda Atman in everything, everywhere, ever. May we always remember this Saptakshari (seven lettered) Divine Mantra.

—Dr. A. Adivi Reddy

## **Indian Ideal of Education**

Two things our students need, knowledge and feeling. Knowledge of India and a feeling for India. And by feeling I mean aspiration to serve her and, if need be, suffer for her. India needs Indian education.

The Indian ideal of education may be expressed in the few simple words: Education is fellowship!

The forms of fellowship are indicated in Aryan books. One is fellowship with the Guru. And by "guru" is meant not "an infallible superman" but an elder brother,—a soul who can help in

drawing out the powers of the pupil. The guru was the great purifier: his presence purified the pupil. The guru was not a taskmaster: he was an elder brother in the school—family named the ashrama. The emphasis in Indian systems of culture was not on textbooks or building s or school functions, but on fellowship, between the teacher and the pupil. The truth was recognised that every student was a soul: and the teacher—the guru was one who, by his life rather than his teachings, drew out the soul of the pupil.

Education is a problem in consciousness. It is a problem in soul culture. This aspect, training of the soul, the atman, is much neglected in many of the modern schools! India has, through the ages, recognised the truth that every student is a soul, that beyond everyone lie experiences of many lives, that a teacher must be a man of moral power and spiritual intuitions in order to be able to help the student to evolve by disciplining his vehicles (koshas).

These "vehicles", "koshas" are five. There is annamaya kosha, the kosha of matter, the physical vehicle. There is the pranamaya kosha, the kosha of prana, the "vital" vehicle. There is manomaya kosha, the kosha of manas—the mental vehicle. There is the vijnana-maya kosha, the kosha of vijnana—the vehicle of Higher Reason. There is the anandamaya kosha, the kosha of anand (joy). And when that vehicle is well developed there is that self-realisation which involves emotional experience of Unity with All.

Emotion for India, for humanity, is what the current system has not developed. This emotion will not come until the students have fellowship with some great teachers. Such a fellowship will draw out the pupil's personality. In the old culture-centres called ashramas, the guru sat on the ground and students sat with him and he, drawing out their hidden powers, impressed on them the truth recorded in the Vedas, the Upanishads and the Gita—the truths of life! The bond between the teacher and the pupil was not that of textbooks: it was the closer bond of mind and heart.

Many "national" schools and colleges were started in different parts of the country. Gujarat, in recent years even started a "national university." Have they solved the problem of education? Money, buildings, external equipment will not solve the problem. The problem will not be solved until you get teachers of the guru-type. Fellowship with the guru, the Teacher, was the centre-point of Indian education in the past. In the knowledge, which the students had through such a fellowship there was the beautiful humility which we miss in the current system. There is pride of knowledge today: how many have the humility of true culture?

A feature of Indian education in the ancient ashramas was a beautiful blend of discipline and emotion. What nobler discipline than brahmacharya? And discipline flowered into emotion. In the current system of education there is little room for culture of emotion of the ideal. In our schools and colleges students receive information but not much training of their emotions. The sense of the beautiful, the wonder-sense is not much developed. Yes, wisdom grows out of wonder-sense. Our students receive "knowledge" but do not have opportunities to rejoice in Truth!

So many of our schools and colleges are situated in localities dominated by crowd-vibrations. The ancient ashramas were situated in places blessed by nature's beauty. Indeed there is no

culture of the soul without this fellowship. To commune with Nature is to grow not simply in physical but, also, in moral health. It is to grow in beauty and to know intimately; the true moral sense is connected with a sense of beauty. To be pure is to be beautiful. Discipline gave form and nature's communion gave colour to the student's life in ancient India. Therefore did that life become truly beautiful?

Out of this feeling for Nature grows that love for the country which is the very heart of true patriotism. To love India is to love her hills and rills. The very dust of the Motherland becomes sacred to him who has fellowship with Nature.

And to him the records and traditions of his country's past have a meaning which makes his daily life rich and strong. What a thrill comes upon me as I read in the records of the long ago, that Emperors of China sent ambassadors to India, from time to time! India was, then, the Holy Land of the East, the place of Buddha's birth and the Mahabodhi tree and the Dharma! And mine eyes are touched with tears as I read that Huen Tsiang—that Prince of Pilgrims—came to India "to pay worship to the Bodhi-Tree" where the Buddha had attained to Nirvana, that he returned to China with 657 volumes of Indian Culture and later translated some of them into Chinese, thus carrying Indian culture to his people! India was then a teacher of the Nations.

—Sadhu Vaswani

### **Fate**

*'The sacred Scriptures of this land loudly proclaim that the individual is the architect of his own fate; high or low status in society, luxury or poverty, liberty or bondage. Whatever form the person craves for now while alive in this world, that form he attains after death. Therefore, it is clear that karma decides birth and that the luxury or poverty, the character and attitude, the level of intelligence, the joys and griefs of this life are the earnings gathered during the previous life. The inference, therefore, is inevitable that the next life of the individual will be in consonance with the activities prompted by the level of Karma in this life.'*

—Baba

### **Misuse of Lord's Name: A Warning**

Emphasising the need on the part of Sai devotees to protect Bhagavan's name from being misused by unscrupulous persons for private benefit, Dr. Michael Goldstein has issued the following appeal and warning:

As I sat before Swami less than two weeks ago and sought His guidance on troubling matters regarding misuse and abuse of His Name, Swami said, "The greatest devotion is protection of the Name."

Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba is here on earth to restore awareness of man's inherent divinity. If we demean His Name, we denigrate His Teachings. If we denigrate His Teachings, we decrease

the love and goodness in the world that results from the practice of His Teachings. Therefore, let us all be constantly aware of the sacredness of His Name.

We must protect the Name from the actions of the ignorant, the ignoble, and from our own failure to live up to Swami's Teachings. In these regards, there are several recurrent and unfortunate themes and schemes.

### **Unauthorised Appeals for Money Using Swami's Name**

Swami says, "Where money is asked and received, I have no place." All appeals for money using Swami's Name are unauthorized. Swami has never and will never permit us to use His Name in the conduct of business for financial profit.

To those people who have used His Name falsely for their own profit, we appeal to them to cease and desist, and to reflect on the significance of their actions. Henceforth, the Sai Organisation will actively and vigorously pursue all measures to stop these illicit activities.

To all Sai devotees and people of goodwill, we appeal not to give credence to those who come to you with open hands to collect money in Swami's Name. The Lord teaches us with His words and His Actions. His Words and His Actions are always clear and consistent regarding money. He gives to uplift the needy. He gives to accomplish noble objectives that uplift mankind. He does not ever take anything for Himself.

Swami gives free education in the Sai School System. Swami gives free medical care in the Sai Hospital. Swami gives free water to the multitudes of people who are suffering for lack of water in many areas in India. Most importantly, Swami gives us hope and love. He instructs us. He inspires us. He asks only for our love and that we should be true to ourselves.

Swami inspires and guides us. Then, He stands apart and does not participate in the worldly execution of these humanitarian programmes. Swami takes part only to correct us when we mistakenly transgress and violate spiritual principles in our exuberance to accomplish the task at hand.

Swami has never permitted anybody to ask for anything in His Name. And He never will!

**False Claims:** *People who claim to be spiritual gurus and people who claim to have special powers using swami's name*

Again and again, in public discourses and private interviews, Swami has reiterated that there can be no intermediaries between a devotee and the Lord. Swami tells us that our conscience is our guru and, that through our conscience, we have a "heart to heart" connection with Him.

Swami has not conferred upon anyone special powers to lead us, to heal us, or to solve our problems. Swami has not given anyone special authority to intervene in our lives. Swami has not appointed anyone to be an intermediary in our "heart to heart" relationship with Him. Let us not be gullible in accepting such false claims.



**False Predictions:** *Dire predictions of world catastrophes associated with swami's name*

From time to time, reports are circulated that Swami has predicted some great world catastrophes. These reports are false! Swami has said that he will never make predictions of this kind.

There are unscrupulous people who thrive on the fear and panic that are caused by these reports of impending calamities. These people generate or encourage these false rumours and then offer a panacea that treats the terror that they have created through their deceit and /or irresponsibility.

These predictions of imminent dangers and disasters do not come from Swami! Let us replace this nonsense with common sense and faith in Bhagavan.

**Live His Message**

Perhaps the greatest detraction from the Divine Name, Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba comes from those of us who love Him and acknowledge His Divinity. We love Him, but sometimes we do not follow Him. We acknowledge His Divinity, but sometimes we do not earnestly incorporate His teachings into our lives. The world looks at us and judges Him.

Swami has said that our lives should embody and represent His Message. To the extent that we fall short of embracing and exemplifying the universal human values, we are detracting from His Name.

*"God is the guardian and as a guardian, He has to warn and punish to wean people away from harmful habits. If it is necessary, the guardian will resort to the infliction of pain too, as a curative and corrective treatment."*

—Baba

**Sai the Sadguru**

**SAI**

How can anyone doubt You?  
As a young Man You talked of Truth  
Down by the Chitravati  
You performed miracles that only God can do  
    Years passed  
    You continued to show Your compassion  
    Your patience with we mere mortals  
        We strived but were waylaid by the world's calling  
        You remained the same  
        Ever giving, ever awaiting a true devotee to God  
            You grew in man's years  
            Created schools, hospitals

Improved villages, offered clean water  
And all the time You opened our hearts  
Through Divinity's Truth  
Through discourses, through writings  
Through interviews  
Through a glance at Darshan  
Even through what we thought of as aloofness  
As not acknowledging us  
Your miracles went on  
As You spoke of Truth  
For those whose eyes saw beyond  
Whose ears heard more than human sounds  
You were God calling  
Calling to the everlasting, non-changing Reality  
You were there for us, Sadguru  
But are we there?

—Bea Flaig

*"Bhakti is not a uniform to be worn on Thursday evenings to sing bhajans. It must mean the promotion of an attitude of humility, of revering parents, teachers, elders and others; it is a mental outlook, an attitude that is ever-present."*

*"God is ignored in sunshine; He is wanted only when there is night. Devotion must persist and flourish, unaffected by time, place, or circumstance."*

-Baba

AVATAR VANI:

GANESHA CHATURTHI SANDESH:

## Significance of the Ganesha Principle

*Embodiments of Love!*

The meaning of the sloka (with which Swami began His discourse) is that the one who recognises his identity with the Divine is a real Jnani (the knower of the Absolute).

All Bharatiya festivals are sacred and invested with deep spiritual significance. They are not to be celebrated as mechanical rituals.

Bharatiyas hail Vighneshwara as: "Oh son of Parvati! Master of the Ganas (Gana adhipati)."  
Who is this Parvati? What is the relationship between Parvati and Ganapati? People do not

normally enquire into these matters. Usually Parvati is considered as the mother of Ganapati and no one recognises the underlying unity between the two.

Where are Parvati and Ganapati to be located? Are they in the external world or are they immanent in every human being? The truth is both of them are all-pervading and convey the message of spiritual oneness (Ekatma bhavam).

### **Parvati and Ganapati**

What is the meaning of the name Ganapati? Where are the Ganas? What is their form? When you investigate this, you find that the five organs of perception and the five organs of action (Jnanindriyas and Karmandriyas) are the Ganas. The mind is the master over these ten organs. Buddhi (or intellect) is the discriminating faculty above the mind. The ten senses, the mind and the intellect together constitute the Ganas.

In the word "Gana", "Ga" stands for Buddhi (intellect). "Na" means "Vijnana" (the higher knowledge or wisdom). Ganapati is the Lord of the intellect and the higher knowledge. The question may be asked: Are the intellect and the higher knowledge present in the external world or are they to be found within man? The answer is that he is present within each human being. There is no need to seek for him in the outside world. Ganapati dwells in every human being in the form of intellect and wisdom.

When Ganapati is described as "Parvati tanaya", who is this Parvati? Parvati signifies "Prithvi", Mother Earth. Everyone is a child of Mother Earth.

The meaning of "Parvati tanaya" (son of Parvati) is that Ganapati, who is the Lord of the Ganas, is the son of Parvati, who symbolises Shakti (the Divine Energy).

The adoration of Parvati and Ganapati is not of recent origin. Ganapati is lauded at several places in the Rig Veda. This clearly shows that Ganapati is as ancient as the Vedas.

In several places Ganapati is mentioned both in the Vedas and the Upanishads. There are many prayers addressed to Ganapati in the Narayan-upanishad. There are prayers to him in the Taittiriya Upanishad also. The Ganapati Gayatri Mantra also figures in the Upanishad.

Ganapati has the appellation Vinayaka because there is no master above him. He is all powerful and independent. Without recognising the esoteric significance of the Vinayaka Principle, people look only at the external form and offer worship in mundane terms.

### **Awareness and life**

In what form does Vinayaka—the one who has no master—exist within a human being? It is in the form of the Atma. The Atma has no master. The mind is the master of the senses (Indriyas). Indra is the master of the Indriyas. People conceive of Indra as presiding over his own celestial realm. But as the Lord of the mind (Manas), he resides in everyone. The Buddhi (intellect) which is the master of the mind, is the very embodiment of Jnana (Wisdom or Awareness). What kind of awareness is this Jnana? It is Constant integrated Awareness. It remains unchanged, neither growing nor diminishing. It is called "Vijnana." Unfortunately, nowadays "Vijnana" is equated

with science. Science is not Vijnana. Science is phenomenal knowledge. It is based on demonstrability.

Students today worship Ganesha for success in academic studies and for developing into good scholars. As a matter of fact, all that is learnt by these studies may be termed education (or learning) but cannot be called "Vidya" (true knowledge or wisdom). To apply the term Vidya, which has a profound inner significance, to modern academic education is a misuse of language. Vidya is awareness of the power that animates every cell in one's being. It is through this awareness that man learns all about the meaning of events in one's life from birth to death. "Vidya" in this sense is "a way of life." Everything you do is part of Vidya. It is total awareness of life. It comprehends everything in its totality. It is for this kind of total knowledge that you should pray to Vinayaka. The acquisition of degrees does not constitute Vidya. To know up to the last moment how you should give up the ghost is Vidya. The entire life of a man should be regarded as one continuous process of learning. A true student is one who pursues knowledge in this spirit. The student is called "Vidyarthi" (Vidya + arthi—seeker of knowledge). The knowledge to be sought is not book knowledge or knowledge of the phenomenal world. It is spiritual knowledge Atma jnana) that should be sought. Knowledge of the Self is the highest knowledge. The Gita declares: "Aadhyatma Vidya Vidyanaam" ("Among all forms of knowledge I am the knowledge of the Self"). The true aim of life is to acquire this knowledge. Vinayaka is the preceptor for this knowledge. That preceptor is within you. The Vinayaka Principle is in everyone.

### **Offerings to Vinayaka**

There is a practice among Hindus when they go to Gaya to give up what they relish most among vegetables and fruits. In modern times this practice has been perverted in such a way that what are given up are the vegetable and fruit they do not like. In this connection there is a mythological story which reveals how the practice of offering fresh green grass to Ganapati during the Vinayaka Chaturthi festival originated.

Once, the story goes, Parvati and Parameshwara were playing a game of dice with Nandishwara (Parameshwara's vehicle, the bull) as the umpire. Although Easwara lost the game, Nandi declared Him as the winner.

Enraged at this unfair decision Parvati cursed Nandi that he would be afflicted with an incurable disease. Nandi, seeking Parvati's forgiveness, explained that he gave the verdict in Parameshwara's favour because the latter was his master and his duty as a servant was to serve him. Parvati relented and said that Nandi would be freed from the curse if he offered to her son Ganapati what was most relished by Nandi. Nandi pondered for a moment and declared that what he loved most as a bull was fresh green grass. He would offer that to Ganapati. That was how the practice of including fresh green grass among the offerings made to Ganapati during festival occasions came into vogue.

Ganapati many things which men consider useless and trivial. One of the names of Vinayaka is "Arkadronapriya" (one who loves thummi and jilledi flowers—flowers which are usually not valued by people). Other offerings to Vinayaka include a special kind of grass. There is a story relating to this.

### **Gajaasura and Siva**

Once upon a time there was an Asura (demon) named Gajaasura. He performed a penance. Easwara, pleased with his penance, offered him as a boon whatever he desired. Easwara is a deity who is easily propitiated. Hence he is known as Bhola-Sankara. When he is pleased with a devotee, He gives the devotee whatever he asks. Sometimes He gets into a difficult situation, as in the case of Bhasmasura who was granted by Siva the boon to turn into ashes anyone on whose head he placed his palm. Immediately after getting the boon he wanted to test his power by trying to place his hand on Siva's head itself!

What was the boon Siva gave to Gajaasura? The demon desired that fire should go forth from him continuously so that no one dare approach him. Siva granted him the boon. Gajaasura continued to do penance and Siva used to appear before him off and on. Once Siva asked him what he wanted. The demon said: "I want you to dwell in my stomach." Siva granted the boon and lodged himself in the demon's stomach. Siva's consort Parvati, searched for Siva everywhere and could not find Him. As a last resort, she went to her brother, Vishnu, and appealed to Him to trace the whereabouts of her husband. The all-knowing Lord assured her: "Don't worry, dear Sister. Your husband is Bhola-Sankara. He grants readily whatever boon his devotee prays for, without considering the consequences. I suspect that he must have got into some trouble. I shall find out what has happened."

Vishnu, who is the director of the cosmic play, staged a minor drama. He converted Nandi (Siva's bull) into a dancing—bull and led it before Gajaasura, while himself assuming the role of a piper playing music on the pipe while the bull did the dancing. Gajaasura was in ecstasy over the dancing performance of the bull: He asked the piper (Vishnu) what he wanted. The piper replied: "Can you give what I ask?" "What do you take me for? I shall readily give you whatever you ask." The piper said: "If that is so, release from your stomach Siva who is dwelling there." Gajaasura then realised that the piper was none other than Vishnu Himself, who alone could know the secret of Siva's presence inside his stomach. He fell at the feet of Vishnu, released Siva from his stomach and prayed to Him for a boon. He said: "I have been blessed by many boons from you. My last request is that all should cherish my memory by worshipping my head after I pass away." Siva thereupon brought his son and placed Gajaasura's head on him.

Ever since, the tradition has prevailed in Bharat that every auspicious function of any kind commences with worship of Ganapati. It was the result of Siva's boon to Gajaasura.

### **The elephant symbol**

What is the inner significance of worshipping the elephant-faced deity? The elephant is a symbol of might and magnitude. The elephant's foot is larger than that of any other animal. The elephant can make its way through the densest jungle. In this way, it signifies the quality of a leader who shows the way for others. The elephant is highly intelligent. The elephant is also known for its fidelity and gratitude. In any circumstance it will not forget its master. Even in its last moments, if it hears the voice of its master it will open its eyes and look for him. It will sacrifice its life for its master. These are the lessons man should learn from the elephant. Intelligence without gratitude is valueless. Every man should be grateful to those who have helped him.

### **Steam-cooked offerings**

There are some inner secrets that should be noted in the worship of Ganesha. Bharatiyas make some special offerings to Ganesha as food offerings. These preparations are made entirely by using steam instead of heat from a burning stove. Combining rice flour with jaggery and til seeds, balls are prepared which are cooked in steam. In Ayurveda this edible is accorded a high place for its curative properties. The jaggery in the edible is a remedy for various ailments. The til seeds serve to purify the arteries. It also helps to improve the vision. The inner meaning of all this is that the food offerings to Ganesha have health giving properties. It should be noted that edibles cooked in steam are easy to digest. In the Super Speciality Hospital, steam-cooked idlies are offered to heart patients the very next day after surgery. Oily preparations are not given. Idlies are given because they are easily digested.

The Vinayaka Principle, in short, symbolises health, bliss, peace, wisdom, prosperity and many other things. Unfortunately this truth is not recognised by most people. People are content to offer some kind of mechanical worship to any odd figure made of clay and add to the pollution around them.

What should be offered to God are things which will please Him. This is what Parvati enjoined on Nandishwara. She told him: "Offer to my son what will please him and what is most pleasing to you."

The Vinayaka festival is designed to celebrate the offer of such pleasing things to Ganesha.

### **SYMBOLISM OF THE MOUSE**

Another notable fact about Vinayaka is his vehicle, the mouse (mushika). What does the mouse represent? It represents darkness, which is the symbol of ignorance. The mouse moves about in the dark. Ganapati is regarded as controlling the darkness of ignorance.

The mouse is also known for its strong sense of smell (vasana). Based on the smell emanating from an object, the mouse finds its way to it. The inner significance of "vasana" in relation to humanity is the heritage of "vasanas" which they bring from their previous lives. These vasanas (inherited tendencies) account for the actions of human beings in their present lives. They also signify desires. Without recognising this underlying significance of Vinayaka's mastery over ignorance and desires, people merely wonder how a large being like Vinayaka could ride on a tiny creature like a mouse.

Vinayaka signifies the triumph of wisdom over ignorance and of egolessness over desires.

Once there was a contest between Vinayaka and his younger brother, Subrahmanya, as to which of them would go round the world first. Vinayaka was highly intelligent and had extra-ordinary discriminating power. Above all, he was totally free from self-interest of any kind. This is the supreme attribute of the Divine. There is no trace of self-interest in what the Divine does. Few people can understand the true nature of God's love. Men tend to compare their own love with that of God. They do not realise that their love is based on attachment to what they like or what they are accustomed to enjoy. The attraction or otherwise is not inherent in the objects themselves but in the "vasanas" or tendencies of the individuals concerned.

### **Vivekananda's discovery**

Vivekananda discovered this truth by observing the reactions of different persons to the same situation. Seeing a man who had fallen on the wayside after taking intoxicating drinks, two thieves, who were themselves drunk, remarked that the man must be a thief like themselves who had got drunk after a thieving expedition in the night. A man subject to epileptic fits thought that the man must have fallen in a fit. A sadhu seeing the unconscious state of the man, thought that he might be a yogi in a state of "Nirvikalpa Samadhi" and started massaging his legs reverentially. These varied reactions showed that men judge things not as they really are, but on the basis of their own feelings and experiences. Vivekananda then realised that his doubts regarding the spiritual eminence of Swami Ramakrishna were the result of his own misguided thinking and had no relation to the Paramahansa's qualities.

He realised that there was no blemish in Ramakrishna and the fault lay with his own feelings. He regretted having come away from Ramakrishna and confessed to his mother his grievous mistake. He appealed to his mother to permit him to go back to Ramakrishna. She allowed him to act according to his inclinations.

Vivekananda realised that man's wayward thoughts accounted for his doubts and confusion regarding the Divine. The Divine is beyond blemish and deficiencies. Hence God is described as perfect, free from any taint, formless and attributeless.

Ganapati has been described as "aprimeya", transcendent and all encompassing. Hence he can be worshipped in any manner.

### **Prayers and tests**

Chittibabu (in his speech earlier) appealed to Swami "to give us good qualities, good thoughts and the strength to lead a good life." He went on speaking about receiving favours from Swami, but said nothing about what he was offering to Swami. God is ready to offer anything you want. But you must be eligible to receive it, like a depositor who can withdraw money up to the amount of his deposit. The same rule applies to what one can receive from God. It depends on the size of his deposit with the Divine. Then the cheque of his prayer will be duly honoured.

To enable your prayers to reach God you have to affix the stamp of faith and address it with love. If you have faith and love, your prayers will reach God regardless of distance.

You must see that your love for God is pure and unsullied. You must be prepared to subject yourself to God's tests. The sooner you pass these tests, the nearer you will get to God.

There can be no spiritual advance without going through these tests. Students should be aware that for going to a higher class they have to pass the prescribed tests.

In life, you are tested as to how much you are attached to the ephemeral things of the world and how much you yearn for the Divine. If your love for God is a tiny fraction of your love for mundane things, how do you expect God to shower His grace on you? (Swami sang a song of Jayadeva in which he exhorts men to devote at least a fraction of the time they spend on their

possessions and family to contemplation of God, who will come to their rescue at the time of death.)

### **God and the world**

How much more sacred it would be if men thought about God even for a few moments out of the many hours they waste on thinking about worldly things? People should develop their faith in this truth. Whatever faith they have in themselves that faith they should have in God. That is the mark of greatness. One who has no faith in himself, how can he have faith in God? Turn your faith away from the temporal and the transient to the unchanging eternal reality.

### **Power of faith**

The power of faith is illustrated in an incident from the life of Christ. Once a blind man approached Jesus and prayed: "Lord! Restore my sight." Jesus asked him: "Do you believe that I can restore your sight?" The blind man replied unhesitatingly: "Yes, Lord!" "If that is so, then open your eyes and see", said Jesus. The blind man opened his eyes and got his sight. Likewise, people pray to Swami to give something or other. Do you believe that I have the power to give you what you seek? My response is dependent on your faith.

Even a person like Vivekananda had doubts about Swami Ramakrishna Paramahansa's saintliness. There have always been doubting Thomases. To test Ramakrishna's aversion to wealth and possessions, Vivekananda once kept some gold coins under the pillow of Ramakrishna. The moment he reclined on his bed Ramakrishna felt as if he was lying on a bed of thorns. Immediately, Vivekananda realised how baseless were his doubts. He felt that to rise to the heights of the great souls he himself should elevate his soul. Men today are like a man on the ground who wishes to see the pilot of a plane moving in the sky. The only way he can know the pilot is to get into the plane himself. To experience God you have to aspire for a vision of God. That is the way to lead an ideal and blissful life.

Ganapati should be worshipped for this purpose because he is the master of the senses and only the mastery of the senses can make man turn his mind God-ward.

If you want to lead a life of happiness, free from troubles and difficulties, you have to pray to Ganapati, the remover of all obstacles. There is no need to go to any temple. Vighneshwara dwells in each one of you as your Buddhi (intelligence) and Vijnana (wisdom). When you make proper use of your inherent intelligence and wisdom, you will be successful in life.

People must realise the inextricable union of Nature and Purusha (the Supreme Divine) and base their life on this sense of oneness.

Humanness is a combination of the body and consciousness. Man has to embark on self-scrutiny as the first step in spirituality. Only then the reality can be comprehended.

No one undertakes self-examination, though everyone is ready to condemn others. Only the person who is prepared to examine and punish himself for his lapses is competent to judge others.



Students! Realise that you have a conscience that is your guide and consciousness which represents your divinity. Ganapati, who presides over the senses, should be your guide in acquiring mastery over the senses. There is an inner meaning in worshipping Ganapati for ten days. The idea is that each day should be dedicated to acquiring control over one of the sense organs (indriyas).

Students and devotees should realise that control of the senses is quite simple. What is necessary is not to encourage negative feelings when they arise, but to adopt positive attitudes. For instance, Buddha confronted the anger of a demon with his love and transformed him.

Many students today are subject to depression and are confused in mind. The reason for this is their weakness owing to lack of self-confidence. When there is total faith in God there will be no room for depression.

Students! There is need for observing festivals like Vinayaka Chaturthi for external satisfaction, but what is more important is to realise the inner significance of Vinayaka worship which is likely to have lasting effect. The worship of inanimate idols should lead to contemplation on the subtle spiritual entity represented by the idol. This is the process by which realisation of the Self (Atma) takes place.

Realise and act on the basis that the living Divinity is within you. Ganapati represents the ideal person who is guided by intelligence and wisdom. Engage yourself in acts which will please the Divine such as moderation in speech, giving up ill-will and hatred, eschewing all bad thoughts, and restraint on desires. Combining spiritual practices with academic studies make your life fruitful.

Bhagavan concluded His discourse with the Bhajan "*Bhajan bina sukha santhi nahi*"

—From Bhagavan's discourse in Sai Kulwant Hall on September 7, 1997

### **Singing in the Silence**

Out there? No" here. In here.  
"Why fear when I am near?  
He said.  
My waking and my sleeping  
Lord Sai are in your keeping.  
A little cell, a shrine to you  
Tells me that it's really true  
Within my heart we're not apart.

So hear! Yes, hear-  
The Cosmic Sound is all around.  
Listen to the singing in the silence

The silence so profound is full of sound,  
Holy sound.  
And we by chains of song are bound  
About the feet of God.

—Nita McCallum

*VIDYAGIRI SAMACHAR:*

## **The Ideal Manager**

Ever since the Master's course in Business Management (MBA) was inaugurated in the Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning more than a decade ago, Bhagavan has been offering to the students new insights in to different aspects of Management and Finance very different from the conventional academic programmes. Swami has sought to infuse the whole concept of Business Management with spiritual and ethical imperatives. This makes the students of the Sri Sathya Sai Institute look upon an MBA degree not solely as a passport to a lucrative career in the competitive world of modern business enterprises, but more as a personally rewarding experience in serving the community through production, marketing, finance and other areas by combining professional competence with ethical ideals and spiritual aspirations.

How well students and staff of the Business School have imbibed the sublime concepts of Bhagavan—who is the, Chancellor of the Institute—was evident from a play staged by the students in the Institute Auditorium on August 21, on the occasion of the eleventh anniversary of the MBA course.

The play was well conceived to bring out the various facets of a manager's functions as expounded by Bhagavan on an acronym of the word MANAGER. In one of His earliest talks to the MBA students, Bhagavan elaborated the significance of each of the seven letters as follows:

M stands for "Mind of Man" A for "Awareness of Atma" N for "Nature of the Nation" A for "Aspects of Environment" G for "Guidelines of Goodness" E for "Enquiry into Ethos" R for "Role of Rules"

The play opened with two management trainees approaching the General Manager of a business firm for some advice in order to cope with a few problems in the Organisation. The General Manager begins to explain the role of a manager in an Organisation through the qualities he has to possess.

The consequences one must face if he follows the mind, and the good results that accrue when he follows the conscience, were depicted in a scene that portrays the destructive consequences of following the vagaries of the monkey mind.

The next aspect of "Awareness of Atma" was portrayed using a work place situation. Two managers, one who is insensitive to the workers' needs, and the other who is kind-hearted and deals with all the workers in a humane way are depicted. One of the workers due to overwork

under the former manager suffers a breakdown. The second manager quickly sends him to the hospital in his own car and counsels the: former that not profit alone but the welfare of the workers who enable the firm to earn the profit are also important for the organisation. The manager who realises that the same self exists in all beings will spontaneously treat every one with concern and care.

The next episode on "Nature of Nation" was designed to bring out the fact that each Nation has its own distinctive characteristics. Values are universal but the mores that are a part of a particular Nation cannot be applied elsewhere. Nature is the best teacher and the Nation is the student. This episode shows how business men who are convinced about making proper use of the Nation's resources would not permit external adventures to exploit their nation for their own benefit.

The scene on "Aspects of Environment" dealt with the various types of environment a manager is exposed to in real life i.e. economic, social, political and individual environments. The scene brought out the fact that the individual environment is the basis for the development of personality. Individual environment deals with how a man is shaped by his thoughts. One must welcome good thoughts and eschew bad thoughts. This was conveyed through an illuminating dialogue between a father (a successful business magnate) and his son.

"Guidelines of Goodness" were explained through a manager's dilemma. An organisation plans to launch a food product containing a chemical that might have harmful effects in the long term. One member on the board raises a vehement opposition, but succeeds only in postponing the launch decision. Only when the grandson of the CEO suffers from food poisoning as a result of the same chemical, the company decides to abandon the launching and to carry out further research on the product. The conscience of managers was depicted as the guiding force which compelled the business to become socially responsible.

"Enquiry into Ethos" was the next aspect that was enacted through a modern manager who is submerged in insurmountable problems. Turning back the pages of time and looking into the lives of great men, he applies guidelines given by ancient seers to the modern situations for solving his current business problem.

What happens when rules are broken for the sake of profits and quality is sacrificed for quantity was demonstrated in the last scene involving a soap factory that experiences an increased demand for its products. In order to expand production immediately the company reduces the solidification time of the soap. The company realises its mistake when the customers refuse to buy the soap and the sales and profit decline abruptly. Adhering to norms in quality is important and cannot be violated with impunity.

The General Manager states that his understanding of the role of the manager is based on the guidance he has received from Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba. He then shows the bible a book titled "Man Management" which is a compilation of Bhagavan Baba's discourses on Management and related topics delivered on various occasions to the staff and students of Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning. The play concluded with all the actors coming on the

stage and offering their love and gratitude to Bhagavan through a song which had the refrain:  
"Sai! We are yours for ever."

—"S. B."

AVATAR VANI:

KRISHNASHTAMI SANDESH:

## **The Spark and the Source**

Like oil in the til-seed, like ghee present in subtle form in milk, like fragrance in a flower, like the sweet juice in a fruit, like fire latent in firewood, the divine is immanent as a witness in the entire cosmos of living and inanimate objects. This Divinity is beyond description in any way (Sanskrit Sloka).

The Lord of the Universe remains unseen like the thread that holds the gems in a necklace. He is the Cosmic Consciousness, the Supreme Spirit (A man) that pervades the entire universe.

Embodiments of Love! What is the meaning of human life? What is its goal? What is its purpose?

Wherein lies its uniqueness? Very few human beings strive earnestly to seek answers to these questions. Imagining that food and sleep and sensual pleasures are the only important things in life, man is forgetting his inherent divinity. This is totally wrong. To recognise his divinity, to convey this experience to others in society constitute man's duty in life.

For everything in life, the inner feeling is most important. The inner feeling is at the root of all action. Even when one wishes to write a simple letter, one thinks in advance about the person to whom it is to be written, the message one wants to convey and only then one embarks on writing. The idea comes first and action follows.

### **Humanness and divinity**

Hence, at the very outset one should try to understand what is humanness. One has to ponder over the idea of divinity. The Vedanta proclaims that the knower of Brahman becomes Brahman himself.

This is illustrated by the example of Ratnakara, who was a highwayman who became the sage Valmiki by reciting the name of Rama on the advice of the Sages. While chanting the name of Rama he was also meditating on the form of Rama. Ratnakara experienced the feeling of oneness with Rama and acquired the effulgence of Rama.

Likewise the child Prahlada, because he was constantly chanting the name of Narayana, reflected in his face the effulgence of Narayana.

The great scientist, Darwin, similarly acquired as a student the traits of his teacher, Henslow, because he was constantly admiring his teacher and wished to be great like him.

These examples show that whatever the object on which we set our hearts and go on thinking about it, it becomes part of us. Hence, it is only when you concentrate your thoughts on what is good, engage yourself in good deeds and be good always you will manifest your true humanness.

### **Spark of the Divine**

This truth is expressed in profound terms by Vedanta when it declares that every being is a fragment of God on earth. "Mamaivaamso Jivaloke Jivabhuthas Sanaathanah" (Every living being is a fragment of my eternal Self.) The Divine has clearly declared: "Oh man! You are not a mere creature of the five elements. You are a spark of myself. You are divinity itself." The Divine therefore calls upon every human being to conduct himself in a godly way because he is a spark of the Divine.

Many good persons who recognise this truth nevertheless suffer from various troubles and ailments and lament over their experiences. To entertain such feelings is a repudiation of their divine essence. The Divine knows no trouble or sorrow. He is free from all worries. When a man grieves over troubles and difficulties he is denying his godly quality. What is the nature of such people? They are victims of either animal or demonic tendencies or are subject to vacillations and hence are immersed in difficulties.

How many recognise their inherent divinity? Very few indeed. It is the bounden duty of every human being to recognise his divine origin and act accordingly.

Only those who recognise their divine essence are true human beings. The question may be asked: What about the others who are also leading their lives? It is true they are living, but what kind of life are they leading? Those who do not think of God are living like animals. They behave like animals. They think like animals and lead an animal existence.

The one who leads a godly life experiences divine bliss. He is ever blissful. He enjoys real happiness. Hence every man should realise the truth that he is a spark of the Divine.

### **Anusmarana**

This means that everyone should seek to experience God as the indweller in the heart. (Swami related an incident in which Arjuna was troubled in mind over the state of things around him and asked Krishna why this should happen to him when he had such faith in Krishna. Krishna then explained to him that it was not enough to remember God occasionally when one felt the need to remember him). This kind of remembrance is a matter of convenience and expediency. What is required is "Anusmarana", constant remembrance. Only that will relieve the devotee of his troubles and worries. "Anusmarana" calls for remembrance at all times, in all situations. Krishna told Arjuna that he is thinking of God only on some occasions and for some specific purposes. This is not the proper way. "If you remember me at all times, I am always with you" said Krishna. Krishna's injunction to Arjuna was: "Remember me at all times and carry on the fight. That alone will help you. It will confer success on you."

### **Gifts of God**

In human life, there are two attitudes to the objects with which one has to deal. There are things for which one is only a temporary guardian by virtue of one's position in relation to them. There

are things which belong to one and which one can take along with him and use as he pleases. The first type of relationship is called "marakam." The second type is called "Tharakam." Men should cultivate the attitude of "marakam", namely, that nothing belongs to them and that everything comes from God. All are gifts of God. You must treat all possessions in that spirit. You must take good care of them as long as you have the responsibility for their proper use and maintenance. That is your duty.

As long as you live in the world, you have the responsibility to take care of your wife, children and possessions. But you must regard this as an obligation imposed by God. You must not get attached to them as your possessions.

Most people in the world, however, are deeply attached to kinsfolk and properties. How lasting are these possessions? You can never know when you may have to leave all of them behind. Hence, the proper attitude for men is to recognise one's duty towards others and consider everything as a gift from God.

### **Krishna's miracles**

(Bhagavan went on to describe how Arjuna was made to realise the divinity of Krishna by recalling the boyhood miracles performed by Krishna in lifting the Govardhanagiri to protect the people of Gokulam from a terrible downpour, and how He revealed to His mother Yashoda the entire Cosmos in His little mouth to assure her that He had not eaten dust as complained by His elder brother, Balaram. Bhagavan gave a vivid description of the two episodes and recited poems from the Bhagavatam to enliven the narration. What Balaram did was only to make his mother realise the divinity of Krishna. When Yashoda saw all the worlds in the mouth of Krishna she wondered whether it was all a dream or the Maya of the Lord or some inexplicable phenomenon. It was because of her maternal attachment to Krishna that she could not readily recognise His divinity).

Men suffer from doubts about divinity as long as they have attachment to the physical body. The body should be recognised as a temple of God. Based on this feeling, men should worship the Divine.

### **Devotion of gopikas**

Not all can experience this kind of feeling. Only the Gopikas of Brindavan could experience the Divine in every being and in every object. When Krishna sent Uddhava to the Gopikas with a message, they bluntly told him that their hearts were already filled with love for Krishna and that there was no room in them for any message. Their minds, their eyes and everything else were concentrated on Krishna. Krishna had totally captured the hearts of the Gopikas. When they missed Krishna for a time, they appealed to every plant and flower to disclose the whereabouts of Krishna. (Swami sang a poem in which the Gopikas described Krishna's beauty and asked the jasmine flowers to reveal his hiding place to them).

The hearts of the Gopikas were soft, sweet and blissful like butter. Hence, Krishna relished their pure love even more than the delicacies his mother offered out of maternal affection. (Swami recited poems to describe the purity and intensity of the Gopikas' devotion to Krishna).

It is because men lack this kind of total love for the Divine that they are a prey to all kinds of troubles. When they recognise their inherent divinity as fragments of the Divine, there will be no room for bodily attachments and the troubles arising from them.

God is the embodiment of wholeness and perfection. Whatever is offered to him should be total and perfect. This was demonstrated by the Italian violin-maker Anthony (Stradivarius) who took one year to make one violin, but made it to perfection as an offering to God.

Whatever is said, done or given, it should be perfect. To please God who is perfect, whatever is offered should be perfect. Anthony declared that he was making perfect violins only to please God.

### **Pray for peace and bliss**

When people pray to God they should not seek any favours. You should not even pray for the curing of any illness, because the world is full of disease. You must feel that what is ailing numerous others is also ailing you. The world is full of wealth, houses and many other things. You must seek from God what is not readily available in the world. You do not have peace. You must pray for peace. Only the Divine has peace. The Divine has been described as the very embodiment of peace in the prayer addressed to the Lord beginning with the word "Santhakaram". Nobody else except God can give you real peace.

The second thing for which you must pray is "Sukham" (happiness). Real happiness cannot be had from others. They may give momentary worldly pleasure. But only God has enduring happiness, permanent bliss. You must pray for that bliss. God alone can give it. He is the Lord of Bliss. You must pray to God for enduring peace and bliss and not for any earthly gifts.

Thyagaraja once passed through a period of doubt in Rama's capacity to relieve him of his distress. But on further reflection he realised that if there was any deficiency, it should be in himself rather than in Rama's powers. He sang a song praising the great prowess of Rama, which could attract the adoration of Lakshmi, the goddess of wealth, Lakshmana the mighty warrior, Bharata who was endowed with supreme intelligence, and which endowed Hanuman with the capacity to leap over the ocean. (Bhagavan sang the song with all sweetness).

### **Firm faith in God**

Devotees are subject occasionally to doubts. Many declare their resolve to act according to the Divine will. But sometime or other they go back on their resolves. Those who are steadfast in their devotion to God at all times are very few indeed. You should strive to develop steadfast faith in God. Only then, can the nature of the Divine be properly understood.

Krishna demonstrated in His life not only many miraculous powers but also many profound truths. Krishna's divinity is omnipresent, but it is experienced by devotees according to their spiritual condition. Persons who go to the Ganges for bringing the holy water can take with them only as much as their containers can hold.

Hence, It is essential to broaden the spiritual container in you, namely, your heart. Divinity cannot be realised by various forms of worship. They are good acts in themselves and give their

appropriate rewards. But they do not promote spirituality, which consists in establishing association with the Atma (the cosmic spirit). The Atma is the only eternal reality. You can achieve oneness with it only by concentrating on the realisation of that oneness. The Divine has no birth or death and pervades every being as the witness.

What is required is a transformation of the heart. All bad thoughts and feelings should be expelled from the heart. Even in the performance of bhajans there should be whole-hearted participation in them. It should not be a mechanical ritual. Once your heart is filled with sacred thoughts and feelings, they will be reflected in your bhajan-singing. Through your singing you should give joy to all the participants.

### **Power of love**

Devotees should realise that what matters most is the intensity of feelings. Kabirdas declared that he could not attain God by spiritual exercises of any kind. But he said that there was one most powerful weapon with him to realise God. That was his love for God. With that love he said he could bind God. God submits only to the power of the devotee's love. Without love all forms of worship are of no use. That was why the Gopikas appealed to Krishna to fill their parched hearts with the love flowing from His flute so that saplings of love could sprout in their hearts.

Devotees entertain sacred thoughts on festival days (like Krishnashtami). But these are forgotten soon after. They should make every moment holy. Only by this means can the Divine be realised.

God is omnipresent, but you are unable to see Him. You see a person. God is the indweller in him. You see his external form and not the Divine in him. But without the power Divine how can he exist? You cannot deny the existence of the air all around you, though you cannot see it or grasp it. Likewise God is everywhere but is subtle and invisible. You will experience Him in your heart, when you make it absolutely pure.

You must see the Divine in everyone. This is the true trait of a "sadhu." The wearing of the ochre robe does not make a man a "sadhu." He must possess the qualities of a "sadhu." He must be pure-hearted. Transformation of the heart is what is called for. All that you do should lead you nearer to God. When you act in this way nothing bad will touch you.

### **Triple attributes of Krishna**

Krishna is omnipresent. The word has three meanings. "**Krishithi-ithi Krishna.**" (The man who ploughs is Krishna). The heart is the symbol of a field. The heart should be cleared of weeds (evil qualities). It should be filled with love. The seeds of the Lord's name should be sown in it. Krishna encourages the devotee to do all this.

"**Karshathi-ithi Krishna.**" (Because he attracts, he is Krishna). Krishna has the supreme power of attraction. By his words, his sport, his music and all his actions he attracts all people. This power of attraction is present in everyone. Hence everyone is potentially Krishna.

"**Krushyathi-ithi Krishnah.**" (Because he imparts bliss, he is called Krishna). Everyone seeks happiness. The Divine, who is the embodiment of happiness, is in you. God wants you to be



happy, but you do not realise it. Try to recognise the source of bliss within you. It is not the true nature of man to be unhappy. When anyone is otherwise, persons around him are concerned about him. You should always be happy because you are the embodiment of the Atma. Never give way to worry.

As a spark of the Divine, you have to behave like the Divine. Do not give room for grief. What use is there in turning over the beads of the rosary while your mind is thinking of mundane matters? First of all, purify your mind. Dedicate all actions to God. Free yourself from all attachments. Treat all things as gifts from God for which you are the guardian and not the owner.

### **Role of avatars**

Embodiments of Love! God is love pure and simple. His greatest gift is His love. The Gopikas realised this truth and declared: "Oh Lord! We are offering to you the love which you gave us. What else can we offer at your feet?"

Do not calculate what you have offered to God in terms of money or otherwise. Whatever you offer, consider only the feeling with which you offered it. Even a small Tulsi leaf offered with love becomes a great offering to the Lord. Offer anything with a full and loving heart. By offering with love, you become the embodiment of love. That was the case with Prahlada, Narada and others. Identify yourself with the name and form of the Divine of your choice. You may carry on all your normal daily duties, but keep in mind always the name of the Lord. That is the injunction of Krishna: "**Maam anusmara.**"

Do not allow any evil thoughts to enter your mind. Then the good thoughts in you will find expression in good deeds.

Develop firm faith in God. In daily life you base all your actions on faith in your dhobi, your barber and many others. Why then don't you place your faith in God? God is the indweller. Lack of faith in God really means you have no faith in your own self. Faith in yourself leads to faith in God. This is the secret of greatness.

Faith in God alone will help you. All others are time-servers. The lives of all great believers in God show how they were protected by their faith in God through all their difficulties.

Ramadas, who was imprisoned by the Thaneesha for diverting government revenues to build a temple for Rama and to make jewels for the idols, felt at one time bitter about his sufferings and even blamed Rama for his plight. Later he repented and sought Rama's forgiveness.

Devotees should not grieve over their troubles, which are only "passing clouds." Some devotees, like Jaya and Vijaya, were born as opponents of God as a result of a curse, but they were so anxious to return to God that they preferred the role of enemies of God so that they could meet with their death at the hands of God. Avatars appear for various reasons to save devotees.

Avatars teach mankind lessons about how to realise God. Humanity needs Divine teachers to redeem it from its troubles. This is the purpose of Avatars, who come down to show mankind the ways of realising the Divine. You must recognise this truth. The Divine does not make the

descent as an Avatar without a purpose. The purpose is to enable Nature to fulfill its role. To be born as human beings is a rare blessing. The Avatar instructs humanity how to redeem human existence.

Festivals like Ramanavami and Krishna Janmashtami are designed to remind people about the purpose of human life. Devotees who participate in such festivals should learn a lesson from the cows. Absorb as much of the teachings as you can during your stay. Ruminant over them when you go back, like the cows chewing the cud they have eaten. Do not forget what has been taught here. After ruminanting over what you have heard, try to put into practice what has been taught. Always contemplating on God, make your lives meaningful.

Bhagavan concluded His discourse with the Bhajan! "*Govinda Krishna Jai! Gopala Krishna Jai!*"

**—From Bhagavan's discourse in Sai Kulwant Mandap on August 25, 1997**

## **Dedication of Historic Drinking Water Project**

A stirring call to the people of Bharat to develop the qualities of self-reliance and mutual co-operation for meeting their basic needs, with faith in God, was given by Bhagavan Baba on October 11th, when He dedicated the stupendous drinking water project to the people of Anantapur district, in the presence of a vast gathering of devotees in Sai Kulwant Hall, Prasanthi Nilayam. The function was held to transfer the project to the Government of Andhra Pradesh. The Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh Sri Chandrababu Naidu, who presided over the function, thanked Bhagavan and the Sri Sathya Sai Central Trust for their unique gift, which is a model for the whole country in meeting a vital need of the people.

Mr. Justice Bhagavathi, former Chief Justice of India and a member of the Sri Sathya Sai Central Trust, handed over to the Chief Minister a project completion report which served as a symbolic transfer of the Sri Sathya Sai Water Supply Project to the Government of Andhra Pradesh for future maintenance. The Secretary of the Sri Sathya Sai Central Trust, Mr. K. Chakravarthy, who had been associated with the execution of Bhagavan's project from its inception, gave an account of how the work was done under Bhagavan's continuous guidance. Designed to serve 731 villages and seven municipalities in the district, the cost of the project came to Rs. 300 crores. In order to stand by the commitments Bhagavan had made about the speedy completion of the project, the Trust had taken a loan of Rs. 100 crores from Canara Bank, and accordingly completed the project in a record time, overcoming many engineering problems. The Union Minister for Rural Areas and Employment and the Speaker of the Karnataka Legislative Assembly spoke on the occasion.

Sri Kondal Rao, technical consultant, Government of Andhra Pradesh for Sri Sathya Sai Water Supply Project, read out the technical report. Sri A. Ramakrishna, Director of Larsen and Toubro and Group President, spoke about the nature of technical problems in the project and the ways by which they were met effectively.

Bhagavan Baba, in His discourse, which was conspicuous by the absence of the usual translation in English, was frequently cheered when He affirmed His determination to do everything in His power to promote the welfare of the people. "I am prepared", He said, "even to give up Prasanthi Nilayam to meet the needs of the people. Every cell in my body yearns to render service to the people in all possible ways. There are numerous things which I want to do. I shall do them without talking about them."

Appealing to the people to rely on themselves for getting their basic requirements without seeking government help, Bhagavan said: "The Chief Minister spoke about 'shramdaan.'" Why should you want others to do what is needed for you? You should say, "We shall do ourselves what is good for us." Swami declared: "I have no distinctions of religion, caste or region. I am ready to help whoever seeks it." There are many affluent persons amongst us. What are they doing for society?

Bhagavan Baba advised the Ministers to carry on the good work they wished to do for the people without caring for the adverse criticism. "Good work will speak for itself." Bhagavan concluded

His address with an appeal to one and all to develop the Spirit of sacrifice and place love of the nation above selfish interest.

The function concluded with the singing of the National Anthem by the entire gathering.

## **Ecstatic Devotees Hail Chariot Festival**

A five-day festival of supreme sanctity, glory and divinity was celebrated in Prasanthi Nilayam from the twentieth of September to the twenty-fourth, the memory of which will be lingering long in the minds of the thousands of devotees that were singularly fortunate to witness the rare spectacle.

The Sai Paduka Trust of Madurai, headed by Shri Subramaniam Chettiar, with the Grace of Bhagavan had arranged for the installation of a marble idol of Lord Subramanya, offering of a magnificent golden chariot to Bhagavan and worship of 2016 Sai Padukas by as many couples in the gracious presence of Bhagavan.

This memorable festival commenced on 20th September with elaborate puja consisting of Ganapati, Navagraha, Sudarshana and other Homams in a shed. There were two sessions of Homam both forenoon and afternoon and the final Homam was on 21st morning. Special Puja was done for Subrahmanya and the golden chariot which had been brought a few days earlier from Madurai by road with heavy police escort. The chariot itself was made by specially skilled artisans who are reputed as the best in their respective fields being engaged in the job hereditarily for five generations and more. The chariot attracted the attention of all the devotees even as they were being given the final touches of gold plating with seven layers of gold foils of cent percent purity and hand polishing with special polishing stones. The chariot christened "Swarna Aditya Paduka Ratha" bore the gleaming disc as the backdrop of the Sun God with rays of dazzling effulgence being driven by the four headed Brahma, the Creator holding the reins of the seven horses in accordance with the scriptural description. A finely carved throne in the shape of lions supporting the seat of the Lord (Simhasana) was provided for Bhagavan to sit on velvetted cushion seat. The base of the chariot was mounted on wheels fitted with superior rubber tyres. Since the exquisitely designed base was more than 10ft high, special ladder with velvetted steps was provided for Bhagavan to ascend. A beautiful golden umbrella at the top of the seat added beauty to the exceedingly attractive chariot.

On 21st exactly the day fixed by the oracle thousands of years ago in 'Suka Naadi' (palm leaf prophecy of Sage Suka, son of Sage Vyasa) the installation ceremony of Subrahmanya Idol was done by Bhagavan in the shrine put up for the purpose adjoining the existing Ganesha Temple. The Suka Naadi and Agastya Naadi have not only indicated the time and date of this event as per the Hindu calendar but also mentioned about the chariot festival to be held on the next day. The ceremonial installation was done by Divine Hands at 9:00 a.m. amidst Bhajan, mangala vadyam and Veda chanting after the preliminary pujas. Bhagavan placed the long javelin (vel) and flagpole of Subrahmanya in their respective positions and broke coconuts to sanctify the ceremony. After arati the function concluded.

On 21st evening there was a music concert in Sai Kulwant Hall by the renowned saxophone artist Kadri Gopalnath who enthralled the audience by his inspiring and mellifluous exposition of Thyagaraja Kirtanams like Nagumomu and Bhajan songs like Prema muditha Manase Kaho. This was followed by a stunning display of "Karagam" folk dance of Tamil Nadu by a talented youth who exhibited fine muscle control while dancing vigorously balancing the pot on his head all the time. He even bent down and picked up a pin with his nose all the time keeping the pot stable on his head. After arati the evening programme concluded.

The long awaited and most important day dawned on 22nd when eager crowds of devotees from more than 40 countries all over the world assembled in the Kulwant Hall as well as on both sides of the path on which Bhagavan was scheduled to ride on the golden chariot (Swarna Aditya Paduka Ratham) from the western side of the Poornachandra Auditorium to Sai Kulwant Hall. As prophesied in the Suka Naadi and ordained by His Will Bhagavan ascended the chariot exactly at 7:05 a.m. amidst thunderous cheers from the milling crowds who had occupied all vantage positions even outside the Mandir premises on top of buildings around. The chariot was pulled by students and members of Trust nominated for the purpose. Accompanied by Nadaswaram Music, Bhajan and Vedic chants the procession proceeded slowly while Bhagavan sat majestically on the throne and waved to the cheering crowds with Abhaya Hastha.

As the chariot approached the entrance gate of Sai Kulwant Hall, the huge multitude of devotees greeted Bhagavan's arrival with deafening cheers which continued unabated till the cosmic chariot came inside when Bhagavan stood up and blessed the entire gathering waving His benedictory hands. Bhagavan then got down from the chariot and went round the rows of devotees in the Sai Kulwant Hall. The Paduka Trust group sang a special song composed for the occasion in chorus and then Bhajan followed and prasadam was distributed. With mangala arati one of the most glorious functions ever witnessed in Prasanthi Nilayam came to a conclusion.

In the afternoon Bhagavan came to the Sai Kulwant Hall well before the scheduled time and gave darshan to all the devotees. At 3:55 p.m. Veda Chanting heralded the commencement of the meeting.

Sri Srinivas, son of Sri Subramaniam Chettiar and member of the Sai Paduka Trust in his welcome address detailed the genesis of Paduka festival as one that inspired his father when Bhagavan blessed a Paduka he placed at the Lotus Feet of Bhagavan on his 80th Birthday in 1991. His father thought that all devotees should enjoy the wonderful experience that he had from worshipping Padukas. The first Paduka festival was celebrated in 1993 with 108 Padukas. This became an annual event by the Grace of Bhagavan and every year the number went on increasing by leaps and bounds with the result that in this fifth year of celebration the number has multiplied to 2016.

He cited examples of how people worshipping Padukas at home enjoyed several miraculous manifestations of Divine Grace by way of curing of sickness, delayed marriages being consummated and so on.

He mentioned how the two great events that they had planned to celebrate with the Divine Grace of Bhagavan had been foretold 5000 years ago by the great Sage Suka, son of Vyasa, in the Suka Naadi. This Naadi had chronicled the event of installation of the idol of Subrahmanya offered by a person with the same name (Subramanya Chettiar) on that auspicious day of Bahula Panchami in Bhadrapada month of the year Iswara and the procession of the Divine incarnation in the golden chariot of Aditya the very next day. Even the time was mentioned in the Naadi which coincided identically with that fixed by Bhagavan. "True to the prophecy of the scriptures Bhagavan gave us the greatest and most sacred opportunity of witnessing the grand spectacle of His procession in the golden chariot that morning." He was sure that the other point in the prophecy that those who witness or partake in this rare event will achieve liberation, will also come true by the Grace of God.

He expressed the gratitude of the Sai Paduka Trust to Bhagavan for His benign mercy and grace in permitting the Trust to arrange for the celebration of both these events along with the worship of 2016 Padukas and prayed to Bhagavan for His Divine Message.

Maj. Gen. S. P. Mahadevan, the co-ordinator of Sathya Sai Organisations for the southern region then spoke about his own experiences of Bhagavan's merciful intervention when he faced moments of perilous crises in his army career and a miraculous cure of his heart attack.

Bhagavan then delivered His Divine Discourse (Details published separately). Later in the evening there was a music concert.

On 23rd morning all the 2016 Paduka holders assembled in the early hours and settled down in neatly arranged rows with the full equipment of puja materials provided by the Sai Paduka Trust ready for the abhishekam and puja. Bhagavan came to Sai Kulwant Hall at 6.45 a.m. and inaugurated the commencement of Paduka Puja. The pandits started the puja with the chanting of Sai Gayatri, followed by Vedic chanting and invocation of Ganapati. The pandits were giving directions to the Paduka holders at every step in English, Hindi and Tamil so that people from different nations could follow the mantras clearly. After invocation, the abhishekam (holy bath) for the Paduka with nine different holy items like milk, honey, curd, sandal paste, panchamrutam, vibhuti etc. was done in accordance with the scriptural tradition. While the abhishekam was going on, Bhagavan went round the entire group of devotees again and again and blessed them. At the end, when arati was given to Bhagavan all the 2016 couples did arati together which presented a glorious spectacle filling the entire area of the huge Kulwant Hall with the fragrance of incense and camphor. Bhagavan showered on all the worshippers the sacred yellow rice.

Though there was no announcement in the morning session, Bhagavan ordained a second meeting to be held in the afternoon. Bhagavan came at 3.30 and went round the lines of devotees blessing them.

After Veda chanting, Dr. Ghadia (a practising physician from U.K. and member of Sai Paduka Trust) spoke about the astonishing effects of the Paduka worship experienced by devotees in U.K. and prayed to Bhagavan to bless them with His physical presence in U.K. at the Paduka festival proposed to be held in 1998. Dr. Sandeepan Chatterjee, member of faculty of the Sathya

Sai Institute of Higher Learning, spoke about the significance of the Lotus Feet of the Lord and experiences of the motherly love of Bhagavan by the students. He prayed to Bhagavan to give His Divine Message. (Bhagavan's discourse appears elsewhere.)

On 24th morning, the Paduka holders numbering more than 3000 couples marched in procession from the shed No. 24 to the Sai Kulwant Hall accompanied by Vedic Pandits carrying Poorna Kumbham (filled with holy water) and Vedic chanting and mangalvadyam (nadaswaram music) and bhajan songs reached Kulwant Hall at 7:30 a.m. and Bhagavan greeted them and bade the pandits to go round the mandir while the Paduka holders settled down in an orderly manner, filling a large portion of Sai Kulwant Hall. It took nearly an hour for them, to be in position. They sang a song in chorus specially composed for the occasion followed by bhajans. Sri Chettiar and his family did Puja at the Lotus Feet of Bhagavan with flowers and gold and silver medallions. They dedicated the chariot to Bhagavan. Special prasadam was distributed to the entire gathering while the pandits chanted Vedic Hymns. Bhagavan honoured the pandits and nadaswaram players with clothes.

After arati the function came to a close. As that was the birthday of Sri Subrahmanya Chettiar, at the bidding of Bhagavan, Sri V. K. Narasimhan spoke about the single-minded devotion of Chettiar and the great service he and his family and the Paduka Trust members were doing to foster love of Bhagavan among devotees through Likhita Japa and worship of Padukas. He made special mention of the Ratham festival in the morning and the devotion which had inspired Sri Subramaniam Chettiar to undertake such a stupendous event as homage to Bhagavan.

Sri Srinivas, son of Sri Subramaniam Chettiar, expressed gratitude to Bhagavan on behalf of the Paduka Trust and devotees for the successful conclusion of the unique festival.

### **Forms of Worship**

*"There are four kinds of worship. The first kind of worship is undertaken whenever one is in trouble or distress, then God is forgotten after relief is obtained. The second kind of worship is carried on by the worshipper seeking the good things of life from the deity he worships without depending on others. The third type of worshipper offers worship for the sake of others, praying for the welfare of all and holding to the belief that his welfare is bound up with the welfare of all. The fourth kind, which is the highest form of worship, is worship done in a spirit of complete surrender to the Divine and dedicating all actions to the service of the Divine. This is also known as Ananya Bhakti."*

**—Baba**

*"Take everything as it comes; cultivate contentment; do not multiply your wants and foster greed and despair. You take off your warm clothing when you start feeling warm. So too, the coat of desire has to be taken off when the warmth of bhakti increases. Strive to secure Grace; do not strive to secure any lesser fruit."*

**—Baba**

AVATAR VANI:

## **Foster Firm Faith in God**

*Who destroys conceit becomes endearing  
By subduing hatred one is freed from grief  
By overcoming desires one becomes selfless  
By destroying greed, one achieves happiness*

### *Embodiments of Love!*

As long as a man remains arrogant (full of Ahamkara, self-conceit) no one will love him. However wealthy one may be, whatever position he may hold, however intelligent he may be if he is arrogant, even his wife and children will not love him. The day he sheds his egoistic pride, all will begin to love him. If one desires to earn the love of the world, he has to get rid of his egoistic pride. (Ahamkar-I-am-the-doer). Only the egoless person deserves the world's love.

"Krodham hitwa na sochathi." (Destroying anger, one is free from grief.) As long as one is filled with anger or hatred (Krodha), one cannot be happy. In this world people undertake all kinds of sadhanas to get rid of grief or unhappiness. But whatever penances, japas or sacrifices they do, they are unable to get rid of unhappiness. The reason is they have not been able to get rid of their hatred. Ravana was a valorous person, with many talents and accomplishments. But because he was filled with hatred he could have no happiness. By harbouring hatred, man renders his life miserable. "The angry man fails in every one of his enterprises." (Telugu saying) Anger brings in its train all kinds of ill-fame. Haunted by infamy, he can have no happiness.

### **Conquer desires and greed**

"Kaamam hithwa nisswarthavan bhavanthi" (By conquering desire, one becomes unselfish). As long as one is overwhelmed by desires, one cannot be contented. He loses control over his senses. He is intoxicated with insatiable desires. No doubt man cannot avoid desires. But there should be a limit to them. Limitless desires can result only in ruin. Prosperity will elude him. The moment man is able to control his desires, all things will come to him of their own accord.

"Lobham hithwa sukhee Bhavathi" (Conquering greed, man realises happiness). Greed is another cause of human misery. Greed makes a man distant from every kind of happiness—material, intellectual or spiritual. Greed accounts for the failure of Duryodhana and Dussasana to feel happy despite all their wealth and power. Hence people must banish greed from their hearts. How is this to be done? When they foster the spirit of sacrifice (tyaga), greed will vanish. With greed-filled hearts there is no room for joy. You cannot fill a tumbler full of water with milk. First empty the tumbler and then fill it with milk. Likewise, get rid of greed and fill your heart with tyaga. "A mind full of evil thoughts has no room for good thoughts." (Telugu saying)

Embodiments of love! Take note of the fact that the rapid passage of time is consuming man's life span at a rapid pace like the melting of an iceberg. The end comes even before man realises his role in life. It would be a shame if human life is wasted in this manner.



### **The one and the many**

Man suffers from numerous ills because he has not understood the purpose of life. The first thing he has to realise is that God is one, by whatever name and in whatever form the Divine is worshipped. The One chose to become the many. "God is one. The wise hail Him by many names." (Vedic pronouncement) It is the imagination of the observers which accounts for the apparent multiplicity of the one Divine. The sun is only one, but his reflections appear in myriad vessels. Likewise God is present in the hearts of different beings in varied forms and natures.

For the individual self, the body is like a chariot (or a temple). The different parts of the body have different functions as the different parts of a car. The four aims of life—Dharma (Righteousness), Artha (material wealth), Kama (desires) and Moksha (Liberation)—are like the four wheels. The wheels have to be filled with the air of faith (Vishvasam) without which they cannot run. The wheels can move only when they are properly steered. The steering is done by the mind in the human body. To get the mind working the switch of Buddhi has to be turned on. The stomach is the engine for the human chariot. The food you consume is the petrol.

The Divine is the charioteer in the body. It is the Atma. When this is understood, one can reach the destination of human existence.

### **The powers in man**

All the potencies present in the external world are present in man. The material substances constituting the human body have together very small value. But realise how valuable the human body itself is. To animate the physical body a vibrant power is needed. That vibration power is derived from the Life-Force (Prana). All the activities of the body are rendered possible by this Life-Force. The Life-Force itself derives its vibrancy (or vitality) from a higher source—the spiritual power of radiation. (Swami explained that it is these three potencies that are symbolised by the terms Bhur, Bhuvaha and Suvaha in the Gayatri Mantra). Ignoring these profound truths men are wasting their energies and lives in meaningless pursuits.

People should establish the right relationship with God. This means that spiritual exercises like chanting the names of the Lord or meditation on God should not be verbal or mechanical but should come from the heart. Ravana was a worshipper of Siva. But it was all formal. His heart was not in it. So, he remained a rakshasa. Those today who do the chanting of the Lord's name without their heart in it must be said to belong to the Ravana brood.

### **How to pray**

People must pray to God with love for God and not for petty favours or material benefits. People must seek the Divine internally not in external objects.

Devotees should strive for transformation in their hearts and minds so that they totally give up their attachment to worldly objects and get immersed in God. God values your feelings and not your physical performances. Make the Lord's name the goad for controlling the mind (which tends to behave like an elephant in rut.)

Men should seek to lead ideal lives in the service of society. Above all, they should act according to the dictates of their conscience. There should be harmony in thought, word and deed at all times.

When the Padukas are worshipped, the thoughts should be concentrated on the Feet of the Lord. Bharata is the supreme example of one who worshipped Rama's Padukas with such devotion. Settling himself in a hermitage outside Ayodhya, he worshipped Rama's Padukas with such concentration for 14 years that his mind merged in the Lotus Feet of Rama. He identified himself totally with Rama and dedicated every moment to Rama.

### **One pointed devotion**

Devotees should develop that kind of one-pointed concentration. There is no need to go in search of God who is omnipresent. If devotees develop "a loving vision" (Prema netra) they can have the vision of the Divine within themselves.

Just as no seeds can sprout without rain and without seeds no rain can produce a crop, the devotee must sow the seeds of "Namasmaraṇa" (chanting the Lord's name) and develop devotion with the help of the shower of grace from the Divine. This was the prayer of the Gopikas to Krishna that he should water their parched hearts by the flow of love from his flute. The Gopikas prayed to Krishna to play on his flute in such a way that the essence of the Vedas flowed out of it as melodious music. (Bhagavan sang the Gopikas' song melodiously). Everyone should try to convert the body into a flute for the Divine to make His music flow through it. The body should be made a fit instrument for such music. Then it becomes a means of service to others. The best way to love God is to love all, serve all. You must learn even to love your enemy. A kind word even to an enemy may eliminate his hatred. It is through love that man should refine his nature.

Every prayer, every name used in japa or worship should come from the depths of the heart. All names and mantras should be recited with a full understanding of the meaning of each word. (Swami referred in this connection to how a famous violinist mispronounced the Telugu words in a Thyagaraja Kirtana which completely distorted its meaning.) At the Paduka festival banners have been put up misspelling the Sanskrit word "Paduka" as "Baduga." This sort of mispronunciation and misspelling of Sanskrit words should be avoided.

Thyagaraja used to address Rama in all his Kirtanas in the singular. In the famous Kirtana "Raara maa intidaaka", he invites Rama in familiar terms to come to his house (after he had recovered the image of Rama from the Cauvery River.) The familiarity is an expression of his friendly devotion to Rama.

### **God as friend**

You must look upon God as an "Old friend". There is no greater friend in the world than God. God only looks at the purity of your loving devotion. Treat the universe as your text-book and your heart as your teacher. There will be no need to seek God elsewhere. All that devotees need to do is to use all their limbs and organs of perception to experience the Divine. Tulsidas used to lament that as long as he did not use his limbs to experience God he was a useless cripple.

No devotee should allow his faith in God to weaken in any circumstance. You will achieve victory by facing any adverse circumstance with faith in God.

Embodiments of love! Foster intensely faith in God. All other beliefs are of no avail.

Bhagavan concluded His discourse with the bhajan: "*Govinda Krishna Jail Gopala Krishna Jai!*"

**From Bhagavan's discourse in Sai Kulwant Hall on September 23, 1997**

### **From Prayer to Merger**

The word 'Prayer' comes from the Latin *precarius*, which means "obtained by begging." It means "to ask"—to implore or beseech earnestly. It is understood to mean asking God for something. There is a simple story in which a parish priest asked a little boy whether he said his prayers every night. The boy replied: "No, some nights I do not wish for anything." This is not just a child's concept of prayer in which God is considered a great boon-giver. Asking God is an expression of faith in a higher power, something or someone on whom we know we can rely forever. Most of us indeed pray in order to obtain the desire that we most cherish within our hearts. But the true purpose or meaning of prayer goes beyond just "asking for things" or "getting things" from God.

A story from Swami Vivekananda's life illustrates this. When his father died, Vivekananda was an adolescent who was left with the task of supporting his mother and several siblings and relations. In utter distress he approached his master Ramakrishna and requested him to pray for him. The master then told him that he himself should go to the Divine Mother and pray to her. When Vivekananda prayed in front of her Divine splendour, he completely forgot about his family and the world. Only when he returned to his Master did he remember that he had forgotten to pray for his family. He was sent back to pray several times but each time he could only ask the Divine Mother for knowledge and devotion. Finally, knowing that Vivekananda was not destined to seek worldly happiness, the Master himself blessed him and his family that they should be well taken care of. This reinforces what Christ said: "Seek Ye first the Kingdom of God, all the rest will be added."

Understanding the role of prayer involves examining man's relationship to God in the light of both the Western and Eastern religious traditions and their respective psychologies. While all great spiritual traditions prescribe ways to awaken our inner divinity and stress the importance of faith and morality for salvation, it is only the Advaitic philosophy of non-dualism which emphasises that *direct intuitive experience of the Supreme Spirit is essential for one's spiritual liberation which is also the ultimate goal of man's life.*

Western psychology has, in general considered the human mind as being essentially linked with the ego and the existential levels of this analysis was recognised by some great western savants. Including Sir John Eccles, the Nobel neuropsychologist who said that the local theories of the mind were not only incomplete but also "destructive", telling us that we are "limited and mortal

creatures locked inside our bodies and drifting inexorably toward the end of time.” Carl Jung, the great psychologist of this century established the link between consciousness and the soul through his own experiences and dreams by concluding that: "The soul is assuredly not small but the radiant Godhead itself." He also recognised the commonality between Eastern religious practice and western mysticism in saying: "The goal of Eastern religious practice is the same as that of western mysticism. The shifting of the center of gravity from the ego to the Self, from man to God. This means that the ego disappears in the Self, and man in God."

Despite the clear demarcation between man and God in Western Religious Faiths in which man is the "lost soul" whose redemption lies in the mercy of the Almighty God who is a divine entity, in the Gospel according to St. John, Jesus had unequivocally declared his identity with the Father in saying: "I and my Father are one." Many Christian seers who had visions of this unity of man and God through earnest prayer and highest contemplation faced persecution by the Church. One example is Meister Eckhart, the Father of German mysticism in the thirteenth century who said: "Some simple folk fondly imagine they are going to see God as if it were standing there and they here. Not so. God and I are one in the act of my perceiving him...." Furthermore, he said: "So thoroughly does the soul become the same being that God is, no less, and this is as true as God is God."

Irrespective of doctrinal differences as between one religion and another, most people worship God as separate from themselves and send their prayers "upward" to God. While there is a fundamental need for devotion towards a source of power greater than ourselves, there is also a sense of kinship with Him who has bestowed on us a Nature similar to His own. St. Augustine, the great 4th century theologian and mystic, said: "What is that which gleams through me and smites my heart without wounding it? I am both a-shudder, and a-glow. A-shudder in so far as I am unlike it; a-glow in so far as I am like it."

Even the highest contemplatives who realised their oneness with God felt the need to bring Him down to a personal level of worship. Sankara, who was an absolute non-dualist, showed his devotion to a personal God when he offered the following prayers to Vishwanatha in Kashi with utmost love and humility: "Forgive me Lord Siva, my three great sins. I came on a pilgrimage to Kashi forgetting that you are omnipresent; in thinking about you I forgot that you are beyond thought; in praying to you I forgot that you are beyond words."

Worship or 'Upasana' is thus a gradual spiritual evolution beginning with physical images and transcending to mental images including the repetition of Divine names and finally culminating in the highest state of prayer which is the union of the soul with the Supreme Spirit. Spiritual evolution takes place when Cosmic energy enters the human body through seven energy centres or chakras located along the spine where they meet and influence one another. Selfish and animal thoughts influence the lower centres while higher thoughts and emotions react on the higher centres. False identification with the self results in the constant shifting of the centre of our consciousness. The seventh chakra of dimension of life, leading to the union of body, mind and soul.

According to Swami, Namasmara, or repetition of the Divine Name is the most beneficial of spiritual practices for removing the ego taints of "I" and 'mine' and thus illuminating the

devotee's Consciousness. The simultaneous toning of the Divine Name and its form over a period of time awakens the energies within whereby one's own "capacities and capabilities get eclipsed in the Divine, and one abandons his own existence for that of his Beloved Lord," invoking deep within him the Divine form itself. The Divine name itself becomes a mantra which is a symbol of the Primal Source of power. The word 'Mantram' comes from Manas which means intelligence or consciousness and 'Tram' meaning a protectorate that surrounds us with safety and helps us move safely through the journey of spiritual evolution. The singing of devotional songs or bhajans also awakens one's spiritual centers and confers a feeling of oneness in the devotee.

Prayers that have been offered by devotees through the ages have the power to spiritually energize and sanctify places of worship, thus enabling the devotee to nurture an intimacy with Divinity. This all-pervasive sense of the Divine can be felt by devotees in Puttaparthi during the time of Swami's darshan. For many, the intense devotion or love for Him enables them to break through the shackles of their ego-bound conscious mind and connect with the unconscious Eternal Self, resulting in the release of fears and negative traits. Swami says, "Always find a quiet corner after my darshan, where you may enter the stillness and perceive the completion of my blessing. My energy goes out from me as I pass by you. If you proceed to talk with others immediately, this precious energy is dissipated and returns to me, unused by you."

Our Beloved Swami says: "My walking among you is a gift yearned for by the gods of the highest heaven.... and here you are daily receiving this grace." But He cautions us that: The outer darshan is insufficient and purposely so, so that you crave for and accomplish the inner darshan, which is eternal." In other words, He wants us to go even beyond His form to reach the Absolute Atma.

Prayer enables us to discipline the mind to cultivate stable attention and be centred on the Divinity within, for the benefit of not only our contemplative life but also for performing our worldly duties.

In the Gita, Lord Krishna urges Arjuna to action by saying: "One who sees inaction in action and action in inaction has understanding and is disciplined in all action he performs." (418). In other words, He praises both the man who participates in an activity through a sense of devotion and dedication and the one who may be physically inactive but mentally in an intense state of creativity which requires quietude and silence. Both are involved in a spirit of total surrender, sacrifice and non-attachment as 'observers' of their activities who are in reality aligned with the Self. Dr. Lorrey Dossey, in his book 'Prayer is good Medicine' says: "During surgery I feel totally immersed in what is happening. The more difficult the surgery, the more intense the feeling. Sometimes I feel as if the scalpel, the patient, and I are completely connected as a whole. This is often associated with a sense of reverence...For me this entire experience is prayer-not something I do or say, but something I feel." This is a state of prayerfulness in which Karma, Jnana and Bhakti have harmonised to allow inner worship to go on even in the midst of all our duties.

An outstanding example, in this century, of selflessness and identity with the Divine is Mother Teresa, who sacrificed her entire life to helping humanity's under-privileged. Her tremendous

outpouring energy of love and compassion allowed her to achieve the union of her True Self with that of the downtrodden through selfless service.

Nothing brings us faster to prayer than human suffering and illness and the first question we tend to ask is: "Why me?" This reflects our attachment to the body and our disunity with and separation from the Divine to which we need to be anchored at all times. During a serious illness when Einstein was asked if he was afraid of death he replied: "I feel such a sense of solidarity with all living that it does not matter for me where the individual begins and ends." Research in Western medicine and psychology is showing that earnest prayer has the capacity to put man in touch with his spirit enabling his consciousness to extend beyond the body, to a level where healing can take place. This happens also in deep sleep, dreams and inter-cessory prayers which we send out to others out of love and a feeling of oneness for them.

In prayer, it is humility, combined with a child-like simplicity of devotion, that reflects our true nature and affinity with God. Tolstoy's story of the three hermits illustrates this point. These three hermits who lived on an island had a simple prayer: "We are three; you are three; have mercy on us, Amen." When they prayed in this manner, miracles sometimes happened. When the parish bishop heard about them he decided to instruct them on the 'proper' method of praying. He visited their island and having instructed them, set sail for the mainland. Suddenly, watching from his ship, he saw a ball of light moving across the waters in his direction. As it got closer he saw the three hermits running on top of the water. When they got closer he saw the three hermits running on top of the water. When they got on board they implored the bishop: "We are sorry. But we have forgotten the prayer you had taught us. Can you please teach it to us again?" The bishop was truly humbled by this and said: "Please forget what I have taught you and continue with your own prayer."

In 'The Soul of Prayer', P. T. Forsythe has said: "When we speak to God it is really the God who lives in us speaking through us to himself... The dialogue of grace is really the monologue of the divine nature in self-communing love." Prayer provides this channel through which we realize our oneness with God. It has been said that when prayer becomes perfect, he who prays remembers not that he is praying; he has merged into the Oneness of Divine Soliloquy. In the words of the Avaduta Gita: "How shall I salute the formless Being, indivisible, auspicious and immutable, who fills the self with the Self?" This is the ultimate destination of man's journey, which Swami says is really "a journey from God to God. God and man are one."

—Indira Pradhan, Ohio, U.S.A.

## **Hearing the Inner Voice**

Charles, my husband, and I were invited to participate in the recent Conference on Selfless Service for our North East Region by sharing in a workshop our seva (service) experiences with the elderly. After initial hesitation we joyfully and gratefully accepted the task and prepared for it. The Conference was a great success and our workshop did not fare too badly.

However, what induced me to write this article was neither the Conference nor our workshop, but a little question that was asked at the end of our presentation by Kevin Nelson, our Regional Service Co-ordinator

While sharing some of our experiences with our audience both Charles and I mentioned a number of times that Swami was telling us within, or guiding us, to do specific things, and that we were frequently communicating with Swami on the inner level. So, quite understandably, as soon as we finished our talk Kevin inquired, "How do you know that it was Swami who talked with you?"

It was not a question I would have anticipated at that point. But it was a very familiar question, one I have been asked many times. Even Charles used to press me on this subject often in the past, until eventually he, too, began hearing Swami's voice within himself.

At this particular moment, due to the fact that we were running out of time, I could only explain that I had always heard the voice within me and gradually learned to live by its guidance. Later, in interviews with Swami, He repeatedly confirmed to me that He was indeed that voice. It has happened on several occasions that Swami told me something very meaningful in my heart and then repeated it verbatim to Charles and me a day or two later during private interview.

Charles related from his own experience that he asked Swami in interview one day, "Swami, during the past year I have been asking you many questions on the inner level and I feel that I received clear answers from You. Is that just my imagination or is that really You, Swami?" Swami replied most assuringly, "No, no, not imagination. I am in you (His finger pointing directly at Charles' spiritual heart located in the center of his chest). I am your conscience. I answered all your questions."

Charles also mentioned that during our last interview with Swami in January of this year Swami manifested a beautiful lingam for us which we regard as additional confirmations as well as encouragement to continue fostering our inner contact with Him.

At that point, the time allowed for the workshop had run out and we left it at that.

Kevin's question, however, kept at the periphery of my mind for days afterwards. I began to see how confusing it must be for many people to hear someone say, "O, Swami told me so and so....." How often do we hear Swami's name or the word "conscience" misused as a justification for blatantly ignorant or selfish behaviour! How often, for example, do we base our criticism of small defects in others on our "conscience" which seems unwilling to accept those flaws, while we appear totally blind to far greater problems in ourselves.

I recall from my own experience the rigorous examination I went through endlessly—and still do—in the indispensable process of making certain again and again that I was accurately discriminating between the voice of God within my heart and the wily suggestions of my crafty ego.

Ego, the personification of body consciousness, is the employer of all our lower emotions such as resentment, envy, jealousy, pride, dislike and anger. But, of course, it is smart enough when we have become aware of the undesirableness of such negative qualities to be expressed by us. It therefore brings into play all its capabilities to ensnare us and works with admirable subtlety and willfulness to masquerade as the voice of God for the purpose of achieving its selfish ends.

It requires the purity of selfless motives as we persistently practise the difficult art of discrimination. Unless we are sincere in our endeavour to control our restless mind and senses and become still within, success in our efforts to reach this goal is by no means assured.

Well, then, how do we know when Swami is talking in our hearts as our conscience, and when it is our ever-manipulative ego? What criteria should we use to distinguish the former from the latter?

Most of all, it is very important to understand that Swami is not just that beautiful form we see in India. For true Sai devotees Swami is God, Universal Consciousness, permeating all that is. He is the divine spark in each one of us, which, under His loving guidance, may blaze into a flame able to spread light all around, in proportion to the size of the flame, its brightness, and its steadfastness. Action based on the voice of God in our hearts will always manifest itself as selfless and pure love, beneficial to everything and everyone around us. It will demonstrate unity, harmony and oneness.

### **The voice of Divine love**

The voice of the Lord, whom we have the privilege of knowing in the form of Bhagavan Sathya Sai Baba, our Beloved Swami, is the voice of Divine Love ever teaching and inspiring us to "help ever, hurt never", no matter what the circumstances. Even if we feel that some situation for which we may have responsibility needs correction, the voice of God within, Swami, as our conscience, will counsel us to patiently wait for ways to accomplish this in a manner that will not cause unnecessary heartache to anyone and destroy the underlying unity and harmony which form the essential base of operation for the achievement of any worthy goals or projects.

When we feel very emotional, perhaps even resentful or angry, about an issue or a situation confronting us, we can be certain that as long as we are willing to entertain these emotions, we will be unable to hear Swami's voice, our conscience. We must, at that point, make the effort of calmly and honestly analysing our feeling and the voice, or voices, we seem to hear. We must hold what we seem to hear against the light of Swami's teachings and, if it still looks right, we must then view it with the lens of foresight to recognize its consequences. If the consequences spell discord and divisiveness, we must be willing to accept the likelihood that we are being fooled by the craftiness of our ego.

It is essential to understand that whenever we, even ignorantly, allow the ego to misrepresent itself as our conscience, we permit it to govern our action in the name of Swami and thus to get away with whatever ignoble or selfish behaviour it may momentarily be obsessed with. When discord and unhappiness begin to sprout up all around us as a result of our failure to identify the ego trickster, we should then, at least, be humble enough to acknowledge our mistake and do all we can to correct it.



Whenever we use Swami's name as the motivator of our action but fail to properly distinguish between His voice and that of our ego, and unity and harmony have been turned into ruin and chaos, we are making Swami responsible for our actions and their consequences. Every time we misuse Swami's name as our conscience without repeated examination of the truth we are undermining His public reputation and thus His mission.

Swami is constantly at work to help each one of us become sufficiently still within, that we may hear Him. Once we have learned to distinguish His voice from all other chatter in and around us, He can teach and guide us from within our own hearts. But until we have become skilled at making that distinction correctly, we should voluntarily desist from employing Swami's name in any way that would make Him appear responsible for our personal problems and misdeeds.

Swami has said, "The lights have to be switched on in the heart of man, rather than in the house where the image of the Lord is installed and worshipped."

—**Edith M. Gregory, New Hampshire, U.S.A.**

*AVATAR VANI:*

### **Offer Only Your Unsullied Love**

September 22 will long be remembered as one of the greatest moments in their lives by the thousands of devotees in Sai Kulwant Hall when precisely at 7:25 a.m. Bhagavan Baba entered the hall seated on a magnificent gleaming Golden Chariot, showering His blessings on the devotees as He came in procession from the Poornachandra Auditorium.

The entire gathering was thrilled and ecstatic as Swami shone in all His glory and with raised palms showered His loving benediction on one and all.

The "Rathotsavam" was the main function in the five-day festival organised by the Sai Paduka Trust, Madurai, under the dedicated guidance of Sri Subramaniam Chettiar, who has been a steadfast devotee of Bhagavan for over fifty years.

The Golden Chariot, which was a masterpiece of superb craftsmanship by a band of dedicated goldsmiths, who had derived their skills over many generations, was an exquisite work of art, which conformed to all the traditional requirements. With a large circular golden "Surya Prabha" as a backdrop, the chariot was driven by the four-headed Brahma, holding the reins of seven glittering golden horses. The inclusion of Parvati and Parameshwara made the Chariot an adorable object of worship of the Hindu Trinity—Vishnu (Bhagavan Baba), Siva and Brahma.

No wonder that the vast gathering of devotees greeted Bhagavan's arrival on the Chariot with rapturous applause.

After alighting from the Chariot, Bhagavan went round the gathering and then sat for a time for the bhajans. With the offer of arati and the distribution of prasadam the morning function came to a close.

In the afternoon, when Bhagavan delivered his discourse, towards the end, Swami made a pointed reference to the morning's festival and made it clear that what he wanted from the devotees was their unsullied love and not expensive offerings like gold ornaments and chariots.

While paying a tribute to Sri Subramaniam Chettiar's devotion Bhagavan said:

Over many years Subramaniam Chettiar has been engaged in promoting "Paduka Seva". It is not easy for one at his advanced age to carry a burden of this magnitude. I am aware of the good service he has done so far. Hereafter he should take rest and devote himself to his personal sadhana. It is true that service to others is a form of service to God. But he is no longer in a position to do this.

Moreover, you have to be told about today's car festival. Whether you believe or not, I have no liking for such functions (cheers). What should be offered to Bhagavan is unsullied love. That love is God. Live in love. Offer that love to the Divine.

Why should I be burdened with this immense burden of a Golden Chariot? I do not at anytime desire such things. Instead of this, you may spend any amount of money on social service activities.

Here or anywhere else, what you have to offer to Bhagavan is pure love. Do not make such offerings as Golden Chariot anywhere. Anyone who desires such offerings cannot be Divine. When the Divine is immanent in everything, what is it that you can offer to the Divine? How are you eligible to make any offering at all? Everything belongs to God. Henceforth devotees should not bring here any gold ornaments or ornamental chariots or golden chariots. It is better to sell such objects and use the money for providing drinking water to the people (cheers).

From the outset I had resolved on three things in the Bharatiya tradition. From ancient times Bharat has been providing three things freely to the people. One is "Vidya", education. Next comes free medical aid (Vaidya). Vidya (education) relates to the head. Health is related to the heart (Vaidya). For this reason, I have been providing free education. (cheers). Nowhere in the world is such free education offered (cheers). Today elsewhere heavy donations have to be given for admission even to the first standard. As I feel that every child belongs to me, I see nothing special in offering free education to my children. All are mine and hence I offer these things to them (cheers). What I give and what I accept is love. It is a relationship of love to love, heart to heart.

Therefore, whatever Subramaniam Chettiar may feel, if somebody is ready to bid for this Chariot I shall be glad to give it away and use the money for providing drinking water to more villages.

He brought the Chariot here out of his immense love. He had one overwhelming desire in his life. He was keen to celebrate this "Rathotsavam" (festival of Golden Chariot) in his life time.

He did not worry about what happens to him thereafter. It was to please him that I mounted this Chariot. Otherwise I would not have gone near it at all.

I have no desires of this nature. Nor should you entertain such intentions. The relationship between God and the devotee is from heart to heart and has nothing to do with external paraphernalia. You must cultivate this internal quality. Promote purity of the heart. Engage yourselves in selfless service.

You have to cherish three cardinal principles: Fear of sin, Love of God and Moral life in society. That you will foster your devotion in this manner, I bless you all.

Bhagavan concluded His discourse with the bhajan, "*Hari Bhajan Bina Sukha Shanti nahi*", in which the vast gathering joined in chorus.

### **Our Deepest Fear**

Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate.  
Our deepest fear is what we are powerful beyond measure.  
It is our light, our darkness, that most frightens us.  
We ask ourselves,  
"Who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented and fabulous?"  
Actually, who are you not to be?

You are a child of God.  
Your playing small doesn't serve the world.  
There is nothing enlightened about shrinking so that  
other people won't feel insecure around you.  
We are born to make manifest the glory of God that is within us.

It's not just in some of us; it's in everyone.  
And as we let our own light shine, we unconsciously  
give other people permission to do the same.  
As we are liberated from our own fear,  
our presence automatically liberates others.

**—Nelson Mandela**

(A South African devotee has sent this significant poem which was included in President Nelson Mandela's speech in 1994. It will remind devotees of what Bhagavan has told them repeatedly.—Ed)

*"Sanathana Dharma is the only religion that; declares that there is no religion that can be labeled 'one and only'. It declares that; all religions are but facets of the One truth, that all*

*names are names of one God, that all forms are but His forms. No religion can claim to represent fully the Universal Eternal Truth.*

—Baba

### **Purity, Patience, Perseverance**

Unity in thought, word and deed  
Is the true reflection of our Purity;  
A sure way to awaken Divinity,  
Paving the path to Eternity.

Implicit faith in God's wisdom  
Instills the value of Patience.  
"Let go, Let in God" is Surrender.  
Not I but He is the Doer

Grit and determination kindle Hope;  
Sustained effort leads to Perseverance  
Giving up half-way is no devotion  
That will help to cross life's ocean.

Purity, Patience and Perseverance  
Sai's threefold path to deliverance.  
Every 'P' takes us to His Lotus Feet  
For one and all a Divine Retreat.

—Miss Rama Sampath, Bal Vikas Guru, Mumbai

AVATAR VANI:

### **Recover the Spirit of Sacrifice**

*Bhakti alone confers the supreme good;  
Bhakti alone destroys the disease of worldly existence;  
Bhakti alone fosters yearning for the Supreme;  
Bhakti alone leads to final liberation*

*Embodiments of Love!*

For the realisation of the Supreme, devotion (Bhakti) is the royal road. The Lord's name has been offered to man to escape from the cycle of birth and death and the diseases incidental to human life.

From ancient times Bharat has been propagating divine teachings to all mankind. The true aim of spirituality is to foster among the people devotion as the essence of Bharatiya Culture.

It is not arms or political institutions that protect a nation. It is love of the country, the spirit of sacrifice and faith in the Divine which serve to protect the nation. Every man and woman should be filled with the spirit of sacrifice, devotion and the spiritual urge to protect the nation.

From age to age Bharat has been the spiritual leader for all nations. It has welcomed people of different cultures with open arms despite the vicissitudes of history. This is the unique stamp of Bharatiya culture.

Culture determines the daily conduct of the people. It is their way of life. Bharatiya culture helped to promote mutual good will and harmony among the people. But unfortunately people have gone astray and are subject to unrest and disorder today.

The nation can recover true freedom and peace only when it returns to spirituality. Love of the Divine should take root in the heart.

The world has lost peace because people have no fear of sin and no love of God and are no longer human in their behaviour. The spirit of sacrifice has vanished.

### **Heroism of Karna**

Mankind needs rulers inspired by the spirit of sacrifice and people filled with love of God. The history of Bharat is full of stories of sacred lives. One such is the story of Karna, a hero of the Mahabharata war: When Karna lay wounded on the battlefield, Krishna was grief-stricken, although the Pandavas had reason to rejoice over his fall. Krishna told Arjuna that the passing of Karna would be a great loss for Bharat. No one could excel him in giving gifts. Bharat has always given the first place to the quality of sacrifice. (Swami related a story about how Krishna assumed the role of a Brahmin to prove to Arjuna the readiness of Karna to make the highest sacrifice even while he was bleeding on the battlefield. Karna knocked out one of his gold-filled teeth to offer to the Brahmin "the gold he wanted for making the "mangalsutra" at his son's wedding. When the "Brahmin" refused to accept it as it was taken from his mouth, Karna cleansed it by producing pure water from the earth by aiming an arrow at the ground. Arjuna felt humbled by this demonstration of Karna's unrivalled magnanimity and prowess. Krishna extolled Karna's devotion and large-hearted generosity and revealed His divine form to Karna. He told Krishna that having seen the Divine form he had no other boon to ask before he passed away.)

Every Bharatiya should develop the spirit of sacrifice which has been the hallmark of Bharatiya civilisation. God can only be realised through sacrifice. All the scriptures and epics have extolled the supremacy of sacrifice. All religious practices without sacrifice are artificial rituals alone. God examines your feelings and not your external observances. Divinity can be experienced only when worship of God is done with pure heart and all one's activities are godly.

Whatever form of worship one may adopt, it has to be done whole-heartedly. There must be complete harmony between thought, word and deed. True humanness consists in the combination of three H's—Heart, Head and Hand.

Embodiments of Love! Think for a moment how people in Bharat are misusing their power of discrimination. When people build big mansions they allot a small corner for the worship of God. God says: "Oh fool! What sort of room is it for me? Your heart is my abode" (cheers). Mirabai also declared: "Krishna! My heart is your temple." Treat the heart as the temple and consider the entire mansion as His. You may use it as you like, but realise that God is everywhere. Have the faith that God is omnipresent.

(Bhagavan then adverted to the Rathotsava in the morning and Subramaniam Chettiar's desire to see Swami coming in a procession on a Golden Chariot. This part of Bhagavan's discourse is given separately).

—From Bhagavan's discourse in Sai Kulwant Hall on 22-9-1997

*"Darkness and light cannot exist at the same time and in the same place; they cannot continue together; Dhan [riches] and Daiva [God] cannot be joint ideals. When riches are sought God cannot be achieved. If both are sought by man what he will achieve will be neither Dhan nor Daiva but the Devil."*

—Baba

### **The Home-Coming**

In pursuit of Thy physical form  
I have crossed the plains and valleys  
Climbed the mountains of India

At last  
Thou hast touched me  
Spoken unto me  
Thy words of wisdom

The time has come  
And I must depart  
But in my heart  
It is there Thou shalt reside  
For all time to come

Only then shall I know  
Thy true form

—Bea Flaig

**HELP EVER HURT NEVER**

**LOVE ALL SERVE ALL**

## **To The One Who Cares**

When I feel, there is no one to love me  
I see Your eyes full of compassion and love looking at me;  
When I feel I am all alone and there is no one to help me,  
I find your hands everywhere ready to hold me and uplift me.  
When I feel lonely and dejected, my Lord!  
I look into Your eyes and know there is Someone Who cares for me  
Just a lone cry from my heart, a prayer from my very being!  
Dearest Lord, never ever leave me.

—Usha Nanda, Prasanthi Nilayam

"DEVELOP LOVE,  
SCATTER LOVE,  
REAP LOVE.  
THERE IS NO RELIGION HIGHER THAN THAT." —BABA

## **Warriors of the Spirit**

A new breed, a new awareness, Baba has decreed,  
Whose dedicated lives will shine through every word and deed  
Springing not from scholarship, skills or the speaker's art  
These youths are Bhagavan's Warriors of the Heart

They will light Dharma's Torch of Practice for all to see  
And with the broom of action cleanse the preacher's debris  
They will not wait for others to show them the way  
But start alone and with Sai they cannot go astray

Tired of technical superiority  
Sapped by spiritual superficiality  
They hear and see His Name, His Form - everywhere  
And glow with the exaltation to which they are heir

Modest and discreet, not distrustful and weak,  
But sweet-tempered always in the words they speak  
Serving the sick and the unwanted without cease  
Their optimism and patience will radiate Peace

Love is both the course and the goal they well know

It is not love, if to selfless service it does not flow  
The lonely and the hungry need reason to rejoice  
They long for the caring call of a human voice

A noble and valorous life is their destiny  
Serving all of humanity as their family  
With sense control armed and with faith's unfailing sword  
They can submit their will to the Will of the Lord

Cloaked in the protective shield of humility  
Freed from desire for pelf or publicity  
Their bliss will arise from inner sacrificial fire  
That shall surely all the world inspire

Aware that present evil and future good  
Are linked by a Divine Design not understood  
They weave golden threads of events in the cosmic tapestry  
That the Lord alone comprehends as His decree

With single-minded dedication, this new breed  
Shall serve together as One that His Mission succeed,  
Bhagavan's Call to Commitment is strong and sublime  
O Warriors of the Spirit! Herald NOW His Golden Time

—HAL HONIG

*People today are totally immersed in self-interest. Multiplying desires without limit, they are becoming demonic beings. They are not content with having what they need for essential purposes. They wish to accumulate enormously for the future. They are filled with worries and discontent. Thereby they forfeit their happiness here and in the hereafter. Birds and beasts are content to live on what they can get. Man alone is afflicted with insatiable desires. Birds and animals have no desires to hoard or to exploit others. But man is a prey to these vices. He forgets his natural qualities and behaves worse than animals. When these tendencies are given up, the inherent divinity in man will manifest itself.*

—Baba

AVATAR VANI:

ONAM SANDESH

### Welcome God's Tests

*What can Kali-purusha do  
To one whose heart is filled with compassion,  
Whose speech is adorned by Truth  
Whose body is dedicated to the welfare of others?*



### *Embodiments of Love!*

Only that person can be said to lead a full human existence whose heart is filled with compassion, whose speech is adorned by Truth and whose body is dedicated to the service of others. Fullness in life is marked by the harmony of thought, word and deed.

The heart should be filled with compassion. Every speech of a human being should be adorned by Truth. Everyone should note the purpose of human life. The ancient adage declares: "The body is given for service to others." The body should be used not only for one's own purposes but also for the benefit of others.

In every human being Divinity is present in a subtle form. But man is deluded by this unmanifested presence of the Divine into believing that God does not exist. The innumerable waves on the vast ocean contain the same water as the ocean regardless of their forms. Likewise, although human beings have myriads of names and forms, each is a wave on the ocean of Sat-Chit-Ananda (Being-Awareness-Bliss).

Every human being is invested with immortality. He is the embodiment of love.

Unfortunately he fails to share this love with others in society. The root cause of this condition is the fact that man is consumed by selfishness and self-interest. All his words, thoughts and actions are inspired by self-interest. He has become a puppet in the hands of self-interest.

Only when this self-interest is eradicated man will be able to manifest his inner divinity. Every individual is an incarnation of the Divine. But few attempt to understand this. Developing attachment to the body, forgetting his Divine essence, man leads a meaningless existence.

To get rid of selfishness, man has to engage himself in disinterested service and chanting the name of God.

Man leads his life on earth, depending on the mutually inter-related five elements: ether, air, fire, water and earth. Every object in the world, whether it is a bird or a sheep or anything else, has a value of its own. Man alone has lost his value because of his involvement in mundane pursuits. Man has no gratitude to the five elements which confer on him gratis innumerable precious benefits like light, heat, air and water. Man has to pay a price for so many small amenities like electricity and running water. But what price does he pay for the light of the sun who illumines the world? This light is a gift of the Divine. What price do you pay for a soft breeze or a heavy downpour of rain? God is providing freely such precious benefits to man. What gratitude does man show to God for all these? The only way to show one's gratitude to the five elements is to chant the Lord's name incessantly ("Smarana"). For so many trivial services in life we express thanks, but what thanks do we offer to God who is the provider of the most precious benefits in life?

### **Chant the name**

In expressing your gratitude to God by chanting His name, you should do the chanting from the depth of your heart and not as a musical performance. Ravana, for instance, used to repeat the

five syllabled Siva Mantra (Nama Sivaya) constantly, but did not give up any of his demonic qualities because the recitation was done mechanically. On the other hand, Prahlada, though he was the son of a Rakshasa, repeated the Narayana mantra ("Om namo Narayanaya") continually with all his heart and soul. This served to save him from all the terrible ordeals to which his father, Hiranyakashipu, subjected him. His father cast him from a precipice, had him trodden over by elephants, got him bitten by venomous reptiles, pushed him into the sea, but he came out unscathed from all these ordeals by chanting the Lord's name from his heart. Every instrument of torture turned into the Lord's form.

It must be noted that reciting the Lord's name with one's whole heart is true "Smarana." The chanting of the name should not be done to earn the approbation of others or for show. It is enough if one is able to please the Lord. In the process one becomes united with the Divine.

### **Love of God**

Man, who should manifest his inherent loving nature, has become stony-hearted. To accomplish his desires man should cultivate forbearance, love and compassion and not resort to sinful means. Your desires will not be fulfilled by causing harm to others. You cannot please God if you are full of envy, pride and ostentation. God will respond only to unsullied love and not to wealth or position.

Chaitanya appealed to Krishna to show him the path to realise God, as he was not acquainted with spiritual practices of any kind. He said the only means at his command was his pure love for God.

Many people speak about getting a vision of God. This is a naive desire. They do not realise that the Divine is present in everything they see. The Vedas declared that man fails to see the Divine though the Divine is manifest in everything that he sees. The Vedas declared such a person a complete fool. Everything in the universe is permeated by the Divine. Everyone should seek to realise his/her divinity and recognise the divinity in all beings.

### **Bali's supreme offering**

This profound truth is expounded in all the scriptures of Bharat. Men are used to making all kinds of gifts—land, wealth, property etc. But the greatest gift of them all is to offer one's self, as Emperor Bali did. Even his preceptor Shukracharya, warned him against making such a gift and tried to prevent it.

Emperor Bali had a heart filled with compassion, was a firm adherent of Truth and was dedicated to the welfare of his people. Because of these three qualities, the Lord showered His grace on Bali. Bali firmly told his preceptor that there could be no greater sin than going back on one's plighted word. "Whatever troubles may happen to me I will not go back on my promise", declared Bali. Emperor Bali was always concerned to promote the people's well being and happiness.

### **Play your part well**

Everyone should act according to the role allotted to him in life. (Swami illustrated this by a story from the life of King Bhoja in which an actor, first appearing as a renunciant in the King's

court, declined his offer of a plate of gold coins, and on the second, appearing as a dancer, declared that the gold coins offered to him as a dancer were inadequate). Today persons don the ochre (kashayam) robe, but their hearts are polluted. People do not live up to the roles they assume.

When you are given the human form, you should play your part as a human being. As a student, or as a householder or as a renunciant, you should play your specific role well.

### **Recognise: your divinity**

The mere form of a human being is not significant. What is essential is the observance of human values. Men exhibit external changes, but there is no mental transformation. Many people come repeatedly to Puttaparthi. Physically they have changed, but there is no change in their mental outlook. Without such transformation man ceases to be human. Qualities (gunas) should change, not the raiment (guddalu).

The Divinity in each human being will become manifest the day each one recognises the Divinity in every being. You must all realise the supreme sacredness of human birth. The qualities of forbearance, love and broad mindedness should germinate in every human being.

### **The king and his people**

In ancient days everyone developed self-reliance and did not depend on the services of others. During the reign of King Bhoja, the Queen used to take care of all the needs of the king, including cooking and other domestic chores. Today people are lazy and depend on others for many things which they can do themselves. The ancient rulers used to teach these lessons in self-reliance to their subjects.

When the Queen was attending on King Bhoja, she discovered signs of the greying of his hair owing to old age. She felt sad about the onset of old age, but the King told her that these were the first signs which showed that he should prepare for his final end. There were four signs from providence about what was in store for man. The first warning comes from grey hair. If this is ignored, then cataract appears dimming the sight. The third message from providence is the appearance of wrinkles. The fourth warning comes when the hands and feet begin to tremble. If all these are ignored the final end comes at the appointed time.

Taking heed of the first warning the king summoned his Chief Minister and told him that he was repairing to the forest for penance, leaving the affairs of the kingdom in the ministers charge. The moment the subjects heard about the king's decision, they declared that they would leave for the forest to do penance for securing long life for the king as there was no use their staying in the kingdom without their loving and lovable king. The people offered penance and the Lord appeared before them and asked what they wanted. They said the Lord should bless their king with long life. "So be it", said the Lord. The people announced with joy the Lord's boon to the king that he would live for a hundred years. The moment she heard this, the Queen sought the king's permission to go to the forest for doing penance. While the people wondered what had prompted the Queen to go to the forest the Lord appeared before the Queen and asked what she wanted. The Queen said that long life for the king with no such longevity for the people distressed her. She prayed that the people also should be blessed with equal longevity. Pleased

with her high-minded prayer, the Lord said that not only the people but the Queen also would be blessed with long life.

In those sacred days, the people and the rulers were equally broad minded and noble. The rulers and the people matched each other in their goodness. The adage declares: "As is the king, so are the subjects." Today it is rare to find such rulers or such citizens. Each one is wallowing in one's own selfishness.

### **Greatness or goodness**

It is essential that everyone should cultivate a broad outlook. Everyone should recognise that God is the indweller in every heart. Then alone humanness will become meaningful and redemptive.

This day is the sacred day when the Lord as Vamana Avatar conferred liberation on Emperor Bali: Bali was a great person. But he had one weakness. He suffered from a slight sense of ego. Who is a great man? One who sees the human even in Narayana (God). But a good man is one who sees God even in man. Hence it is more important for people to be good rather than being great. Most parents these days desire that their children should become great in various ways: in scholarship, wealth and position. This is totally misconceived. They should really desire that their children should be good. Greatness signifies quantity. Goodness is an index of quality.

Because of the undesirable quality of ego in Emperor Bali, Vamana incarnated to eradicate it. Bali was known for his love of his subjects. Poverty was unknown in his realm. He looked after the welfare of his people with equal eye. He felt proud about his kingdom and his people. Vamana wanted to remove even this pride and redeem Bali.

Before leaving for the nether-world Bali gave a promise to his people whom he loved. He said he would come back to them every year on Onam day and bless them.

Onam is celebrated as the day of advent of Vamana and Bali. It marks the beginning of a new life. That is why it is celebrated by wearing new clothes and resolving to lead a new life.

### **God's tests in life**

Even now, despite the vicissitudes of history and the occasional manifestation of atheistic tendencies, the Kerala people have remained pious and God-loving. You see devotees everywhere. When you watch the people going in and coming out of Padmanabha Swami Temple, you see the depth of their devotion. The existence of opposing qualities is part of the nature of life. For instance, pleasure and pain go together. Pain is often the means by which God tests human beings. They should welcome such tests, because they serve to promote one's spiritual development. Students should welcome examinations because they are preliminary to promotions to a higher standard. Devotees at the present day do not relish 'tests'. They forget that without overcoming tests they will remain where they are. Even students unfortunately are averse to examinations. This is foolish. Only through tests they can progress in life. You should welcome tests and difficulties. By overcoming them your divinity is revealed. The Pandavas realised their Divinity only when they faced many ordeals during their exile.

Embodiments of Love! Your foremost aim today should be to recognise the power of love. God, dwells in everyone's heart as love incarnate. The goal of life is to recognise this truth and share your love with those around you.

Every human being should deem self-realisation as the main purpose of life and dedicate all his activities to the service of his fellow-beings, with constant remembrance of God as the indweller in all. This is the way to redeem one's life.

Renunciation is a very much misunderstood term. It is not mere giving up of family and possessions. It is the total giving up of possessive feelings of any kind, whether they relate to family or other parochial attachments. (Swami illustrated this truth by references to incidents from the life of Swami Ramathirtha and a renunciant who could not forget his regional vasanas even after settling down in Rishikesh). Real renunciation means giving up all ideas of attachment to anything. Love can emerge only when there is such total detachment. Consider everything as a manifestation of God.

Bhagavan concluded His discourse with the Bhajan: "*Bhajan bina sukha shanti nahi.*"

**—From Bhagavan's Discourse in Sai Kulwant Hall on 14-9-1997**

## **Develop Self Reliance and Faith in God**

From ancient times Bharat has been conveying the message of peace and prosperity to the world by its adherence to spirituality. The people have always prayed for the welfare of all nations. The greatness of Bharatiya culture can be appreciated only by those who have experienced its magnificence. It is a culture that has survived the vicissitudes of history and stood the test of time. The greatness of that culture is reflected in Sanathana Dharma (The perennial philosophy of Life). Righteousness is the external manifestation of this philosophy. It is this righteousness that sustains human life.

It is only when this righteousness governs human life that ideals like equality, fraternity and liberty will be realised in practice.

### **Duties and rights**

Conflict and discord in the world will cease when men learn to practise sense-control. Bharatiyas today are ignoring the profound truths of Indian Culture. This is because they are forgetting their inherent divinity in the pursuit of self-interest and the sway of selfishness.

The natural tendencies of man to be kind and considerate to others should be properly fostered. Today men are not doing this.

### **Man and nature**

There is no basic conflict between Man and Nature. Man is entitled to enjoy the fruits of nature even as a child is entitled to the mother's milk or a bee to suck the honey in a flower. The creation is greater than mankind. It is humanity's privilege to understand the secrets of creation. Man should also seek to know the relationship between creation and the Creator.

The human body consists of different organs like the eyes, the nose, the hands, the legs etc. Human beings are limbs of society, Human societies are limbs of humanity. Humanity is a limb of Nature (Prakriti). Nature is a limb of the Cosmic Self (Paramatma). If you consider this chain of relationship, you can see that man is related to the Supreme embodiment of Bliss.

But, why is this Bliss eluding man? Because he has not recognised the Divinity within him. Man is considering nature as entirely a creation of Providence for his enjoyment. This is a mistake. Nature exists for enjoyment by man according to certain limits.

Scientists today are exploring the powers of nature with a view to enjoying them without limit. They want to bring all those powers under human control for their unrestricted enjoyment. This is responsible for so many of the natural disasters which we witness today,

### **Misuse of nature**

What is the cause of droughts and floods which occur in the world? Man seeks to enjoy the benefits of Nature without any restraint or regulation. The result is imbalance in Nature which has grave consequences. Here you have a globe. If you hit it one way, its balance is disturbed.

We should always see to it that in the utilisation of natural resources a proper balance is kept. Excessive use in any one direction will result in harm in another direction.

In the exploitation of natural resources, people are observing no limits in the name of their right (hakku) to act as they please. I do not understand wherefrom this "right" is derived. In reality, there is no such thing as a "right", In fact, what they have is "responsibility". If one's responsibilities are properly discharged, some rights may emerge from them. If responsibilities (duties) are ignored, what can be the outcome? Only disorder and lack of peace. When rain falls, there will be water in the channels. How can you hope for water when there is no rain? Hence, you have to pray at the outset for rain. Only then you can enjoy the flow of water in the rivers. Similarly, you have at the outset to discharge your duties, then you will secure your rights.

### **People's duty**

Today everyone talks only about rights. This appears utterly meaningless. Consider for a moment how everyone is spending his day. From the moment he wakes up to the time of going to bed everyone is filled with worries of one kind or another. Time is sacred. Actions are even more sacred. Duties are most sacred. Accomplishment of something by an activity is not enough. Till the very end of one's life success has to be achieved in every undertaking. As the Chief Minister (Sri Chandrababu Naidu) observed in his speech, people must do all their actions in an ideal manner. Mere mechanical existence does no credit to one's humanness. Human birth is immensely precious. Three things have to be observed as a mark of real humanness: Fear of sin, love of God and morality in society. People should refrain from sinful acts. The Sanskrit saying declares: "Men desire the fruits of meritorious acts, but do not perform such acts. They do not desire the fruits of sinful deeds, but indulge in sinful acts." When people develop purity in thought, word and deed, they will reap the fruits of good actions.

### **Self-reliance**

Human life is filled with worries of all kinds from birth to death. The only way to get rid of all these worries is to turn your mind towards God and think of Him at all times.

Moreover, people should develop self-reliance. They should not look to others or to the Government to do what they can do for themselves. You must do as much as possible to help yourself and enjoy the fruits of your labours.

Most people today have neither confidence in themselves nor the determination to accomplish what they desire. They want to get quick results, without the necessary effort on their part. How can this happen? It is not proper to cast the responsibility on God or government. God no doubt can help but He expects you to use the strength and talents given to you before seeking Divine help. To rely on God without using to the utmost your God-given abilities is misconceived,

People must try to purify the environment in which they are living. There is no peace or harmony anywhere. Devotees should try to purify and sanctify this atmosphere by developing love and practising human values. They may meet with opposition or discouragement from some quarters. They should overcome these obstacles, These critics are like the pests which can destroy extremely valuable things.

### **Ignore the critics**

Those engaged in welfare activities should not bother about these critics but carry on their good work according to the dictates of their conscience. This point has also been made by the Chief Minister. When you are convinced that you are doing what is good for the people, why bother about the criticism of small minded men? Develop self-confidence.

Today in Bharat millions of people suffer from shortage of drinking water. This problem to some extent is due to the conduct of the people themselves. How far are the people acting in the right way? There are three types of behaviour among human beings: the Divine, the human and the animal. What we are witnessing is the growth of animality and decline of humanness. The reason for this trend is the limitless growth of desires and the steady disappearance of ideals ("aasayaalu"). Selfishness is growing, selflessness is declining. Trickery is spreading, Integrity is vanishing, Attachment to the body is waxing, and love for the country is waning. The result is that the character of the people is getting degraded.

### **Lesson from the past**

How different was the state of things in the good old times of our ancients. They rejoiced in the company of good devotees, they welcomed the arrival of the poor and needy to their homes, they loved to hear the hymns in praise of God. They considered only such days as sacred days. (Swami sang a sweet song in this connection). Life can be redeemed only by such virtuous living.

The ancient Bharatiyas placed the quality of sacrifice on a high pedestal, adored justice, esteemed righteousness as the supreme virtue and welcomed truth as a valuable friend. Today the state of things is at variance with all these.

Renunciation is the real secret of happiness. Everyone should share with others to the extent of his capacity his income and possessions and contribute to the well being of others. There are so many people who are destitute and suffering in various ways. It is the duty of those who are better off to go to the help of these unfortunates.

### **Live up to your words**

Embodiments of Love! Today you have listened to the speeches of many leaders. They have spoken from their hearts and given expression to their concern for the welfare of the people. If these words are translated into purposeful action, the country is bound to make good progress. It is a welcome sign that such leaders have come forward to give assurances of this kind on occasions like this. They are bound to generate enthusiasm and confidence among the people. The Chief Minister, the Speaker (of the Karnataka Assembly) and the Union Minister have all spoken with conviction and enthusiasm. This should get implanted in the hearts of the people. The assurances should be translated into action (cheers).

Bharat as well as the rest of the world, is racked by a myriad problems. What is the remedy? There has to be a radical transformation in the minds of men. People should recognise the inherent divinity of man.



When this mental transformation and recognition of divinity come together, there will be the divinisation of mankind.

### **An auspicious day**

Embodiments of Love! Today the Yajna which began on the 5th has come to a close. It is Vijayadasami day. It is an auspicious sign that the drinking water project is being transferred on this day to the Andhra government and the Chief Minister has accepted the responsibility for the proper maintenance of the project. There are many more similar welfare schemes which have to be carried out for the good of the people. My entire being, from head to toe, is dedicated to the service of the people (cheers). I wish to do many things for the good of the people. I do not wish to talk about them. Action must speak for itself (cheers). The Speaker mentioned that the drinking water problem was acute in his district also. Unlike some other districts, the Kolar district has no rivers. Everyone should resolve to see that he contributes his mite to the solution of such problems. Everyone should realise his obligations to society because of what all that he owes to society. Wherever necessary people should come together to solve their problems by their own co-operative action.

### **Mobilise the youth**

There are many young people who are idling away their time at homes. Their energies should be mobilised for constructive welfare work. The Chief Minister referred to the scheme of said, water is a primary need all over the country. Pure drinking water should be made available to the entire people. That is my resolve.

From my earliest years I have been concerned about providing three primary requisites for our people: Free education, free medical aid and free basic amenities like drinking water. Education is for the head. Medical care is for the heart and pure water for the body. These three cover the main requirements of life. To provide these three gives the greatest gratification (cheers).

### **Task before leaders**

Try to provide free education wherever you can, provide free medicines and treatment for the poor. Co-operate among yourselves as far as possible to provide drinking water. In Rayalseema people suffer from the ill-effects of fluorosis. Please see that at least the future generation is saved from these ailments. I bless you all and assure you of my grace in all your beneficent activities. I desire that all the authorities concerned should act in concert to carry out welfare programmes (cheers).

The Chief Minister, who had been yearning to come here for a long time, is fortunate in being present here on this auspicious and memorable occasion. I am confident that he will carry out his programme well. I am happy that he has accepted the responsibility for the future maintenance of the scheme. He is no outsider. In fact, all are spiritually one, though in names and forms they may be different. By his acceptance, we have been relieved of an onerous responsibility, I may have to take on new burdens in the future. I am well prepared for that. This is not the end of the story. I assure the people of Kolar that I shall see to the fulfillment of their needs in the near future (cheers). By the 72nd Birthday, the drinking water needs of the Kolar people will be met and people in every village will be well served. Even in Anantapur district, some areas remain to be served. I assure them that all that remains to be done will be completed. If any area is not

covered I shall get the work done if I am informed about it. I am yours and you are mine. Our relationship is a spiritual one. You are entitled to approach me and I am bound to respond to your wishes. Do not entertain any doubts on this score. I bless you all (Prolonged cheers).

(The function concluded with the singing of the National Anthem)

—From Bhagavan's discourse in Sai Kulwant Hall on 11-10-97

*"All should be members of the group doing social service. Human life is meant for service to others. You should not be satisfied with just undertaking service. You should also request friends and relatives to join in".*

—Baba

AVATAR VANI:

DASARA DISCOURSES:

### Discovering the Atma

*There is no penance equal to peace;  
There is no happiness greater than contentment;  
There is no worse disease than desire;  
There is no righteousness equal to compassion.*

#### *Embodiments of Love!*

No penance can be equal to peace. Real penance consists in not leading the life of an ascetic in a forest but in worshipping God in thought, word and deed. Where is the need for any penance to acquire peace if that peace is already present in the heart? Peace can be got when one's vision is turned inward.

"Na santhoshathparam sukham" There is no happiness greater than contentment (santosham). How many miserable people are there in the world who have all the comforts they need! Dhritarashtra had all regal comforts and had a hundred sons but could find no peace. Creature comforts cannot be equated with peace. Contentment, it is said, confers the greatest happiness. It follows that true happiness resides in the heart and everyone should seek it there.

Excessive desires are the source of all ills. There is momentary satisfaction from the fulfillment of some desires. But when desires are not realised, man becomes sick in many ways. There is no more dreadful disease in the world than insatiable desire.

"Na cha Dharmo Daya samah" There is no Dharma (right conduct) equal to compassion for the simple reason that a compassionate heart is the abode of the Divine. Where there is compassion there is no need for other acts of charity.

The Indian sages from ancient times have given the highest place of honour and esteem to one word Atma. This is also known as "Eruka" (Awareness or Consciousness). This awareness finds

expression in the term "Aham" ("I"). When this "Aham" identifies itself with a bodily form, it becomes "Ahamkara" (the ego). This ego is not the natural state of "Aham". It is by relating itself to a particular form that it becomes "Ahamkara". It is pure and unsullied consciousness.

It is the mind that comes in the way of the proper understanding of "Aham". Just as the clouds that arise out of the vapours produced by the sun may hide the sun for a time, the mind veils the "Aham" by its thoughts and desires, though the mind arises from the Atma.

The role of the mind in relation to the Atmic Principle has to be properly understood. It operates as an obstacle to the awareness of the Atma.

The term "I" ("nenu" in Telugu) originated in the Atma. The "I" is the form of "Aham". Terms like "Aham", God, Awareness and Atma are all synonymous. When the "I" (Aham) is rightly understood one becomes a knower of the Self (Atma-Jnani).

There is a fundamental principle to which the "I" is related. The "I" has no basis in the body. It has to recognise its link with its primary source.

Every object in the world has its origin in a primary source. This cannot be created by anyone. There is a primordial source which is responsible for all creation. Very few care to enquire into the nature of this source.

From the worldly point of view, we have a doer (Karta), the duty (Karma) and the deed (Kriya). But from the spiritual point of view all three are one and the same - the doer, the duty and the deed. This Atmic Principle is one and one only.

It is said that Sat-Chit-Ananda (Being-Awareness-Bliss) are the attributes of the Atma (Self). In my view these three are not three distinct entities. They are not three different states. Chit (Awareness) and Ananda (Bliss) are present in Sat like sugar which is dissolved in water and becomes one with it as syrup.

There is an illustration which explains why it is difficult to recognise the Atmic Principle. There is a cup containing fruit juice. The cup is not aware of the nature of the juice. A man uses a straw to suck the juice. The straw does not know anything about the juice. The Buddhi recognises the taste of the juice. It does not enjoy it. The juice is sent down to the stomach, where it gets converted to three parts-the gross, which is excreted, the subtle which becomes blood and helps to sustain life and the subtler goes to the Prajna-Shakti (Constant Integrated Awareness), which is synonymous with the Self. In this analogy, the cup is the body, the straw represents the senses. Prajnana is the Atma.

Prajnana, Awareness, the "I", Atma, Ananda, Brahman are all synonymous terms. Worldly persons may see differences in these words, but in spiritual parlance they mean the same thing.

The "I"(Aham) is of two kinds. One which is associated with attachment to the body; and the other that dissociates it from the body. Both are "I" ("nenu" in Telugu). But the "I" that is identified with the body becomes the ego. (Ahamkara) The ego carries a form wherever it goes.

But the formless “I” not identified with a body, is the Atma. The formless Atma has no attributes. But when it is associated with a form it has all attributes. Today people experience only the “I” (Aham) that is identified with the body. They cannot conceive of an “I” (Aham) that is not identified with the body. They cannot conceive of an “I” without a body. But, by treating the body as the basis, if the vision is turned inward, the Atma can be experienced in due course. This is called "Direct Perception of the Self" ("Atma sakshatkara). This means tracking the “I” to its source. A man walking with his back to the sun will be treading his own shadow. Only when he reverses his direction will he be able to leave his shadow behind. The same process applies to the realisation of the Self. The journey must be directed towards the Self within and away from the external world.

What is needed today in the world is the diverting of the mind from preoccupation with the external world of Nature to the Divinity within. This is the sadhana you have to do. In this way you see the Divine in everything instead of seeing Nature as a physical phenomenon. When you see the external world as a manifestation of God, you will not notice the phenomenal aspect of Nature (Prakriti). View Nature as a manifestation of God.

How is this to be experienced in real life with its joys and sorrows? This can be understood from an example. When you sleep, you have dreams in which you experience joys and sorrows. They seem real as long as your sleep. On awaking, you realise that they were all unreal and mere dreams. In the waking state you have other experiences. What is the relationship between these two categories of experiences? What you experience in the waking state is also a dream, a waking dream. The reality is that in both the states—the sleeping and the waking—you are present as the dreamer.

The difference between a dream in sleep and what happens in the waking state relates mainly to the time factor. In a dream in sleep, a person may go through the entire experiences of his life from childhood to old age in a few minutes. The dream compresses the experiences of many years within so many minutes. Likewise what happens over many years in the waking state may appear as a few moments in spiritual experience.

Our conception of reality is related to the time factor. Time causes great difference between what is directly perceived (pratyaksham) and what is indirectly experienced (paroksham). The Atma is the unchanging entity that is able to recognise the changes brought about by time.

The awareness of the unchanging reality underlying the phenomenal world of change is the Atmic Principle called "eruka". It is present in every one as the "Aham" (the "I"). But each one views the world from one's particular circumstance, background and experience. The Atmic Principle is explained or described in different ways. There is no connection between its reality and the way it is experienced. The analogies used for explaining the Atmic Principle have their inherent limitations.

God is declared to be omnipresent. How do you decide this omnipresence? There is a practical means of deciding this. We are aware of the five basic elements—earth, water, fire, air and space (Aakasa)—with five qualities—smell, fluidity, illumination, touch and sound. The earth has all the five qualities, including primarily "gandha" (or smell). Water has "rasa" or fluidity. It is

lighter than earth and is mobile. It has four qualities. Fire has three qualities of which "rupa" or form is most prominent. It is lighter than water. Then you have air, which is lighter than fire and has two qualities: touch (sparsha) and vibrant movement (shabda). Last comes "aakasa" (ether or space) which is the subtlest of the five elements and is all pervading. Transcending space is God, who is omnipresent (cheers).

When you pursue your enquiry in this manner you find that the different qualities account for feelings and reactions. These qualities have to be brought under control. Simultaneously one has to reduce the burdens of mundane existence and the desires that fill the mind. Man today is weighed down by the overwhelming burden of desires. Spiritual progress is directly related to the reduction of desires. God's grace goes with human effort.

Earlier two teachers spoke about their experiences and extolled the power of the Divine (Daiva-shakti). But this Divine power does not operate independently of human effort. In fact, every individual has this Divine power. They are invoking Divine power as an auxiliary to their own power, which comes from the Divine. Failing to recognise their inherent divine power, they attribute it to someone other than themselves.

Some devotees tend to blame Baba if their desires are not fulfilled. When devotees pray with pure hearts, their purity itself helps to bring them relief. But they are thankful to Baba for saving them. Baba is not involved in either of these results. They are the fruits of the devotees' efforts and attitudes. In our college, there is a placard which carries the saying: "Dharma protects its protector. It destroys its destroyer." Likewise, when your faith in the Divine is total, that faith will help you. Develop that confidence in the Self. The Self is not visible even as the foundations of a big mansion are not visible. But without the foundations the edifice cannot stand. Likewise self-confidence is the base for self-satisfaction. The roof of mansion is self-sacrifice. Then you have self-realisation.

Men must develop strong faith. That will confer all spiritual experiences. The Upanishads declare: Arise from the slumber of ignorance and go forward towards awareness of the Self.

Embodiments of Love! Whatever other beliefs you may cherish or not, have firm faith in God. All things in the world are liable to perish. The Self alone is eternal and changeless.

It is unfortunate that the vast majority of mankind lead mundane lives forgetting God. Make God the foundation of your life. Carry on your normal duties. Duty is God. Work is worship. Spiritualise all your actions and treat whatever happens as actions for your good. Learn to experience perennial bliss by seeking union with God. Never forget God. Do not go after the things of the world. Have no fear of death. When your life is rooted in these three maxims, you will realise the Atman.

Bhagavan concluded His discourse with the Bhajan "*Prema muditha manase kaho: Rama! Rama! Ram!*"

**—From Bhagavan's discourse in Sai Kulwant Hall on 9-10-97**

## From the Corporeal to the Divine

### *Embodiments of Love!*

The body, the sense organs, the mind and the intellect are the instruments for a human being. Only the person who understands the secret of these instruments will be able to comprehend the Atmic Principle. If a man cannot understand the vesture he is wearing, how can he understand the mystery of the Infinite Indwelling Spirit?

First comes the body. It is called "deha" because its ultimate destiny is cremation. The body is burnt after life goes out of it. The body may be judged by its form. But it is in fact a receptacle for all kinds of garbage and is subject to numerous ills of the flesh. Recognising its impermanence, man should turn his mind towards the feet of the Divine. (Swami sang a Telugu poem).

The body has also another name ' "Sarira", which means that which is subject to decay.

The body at the beginning is a lump of flesh (as foetus). Then it acquires an attractive form. Youth confers on it special charm. In old age it develops deformities.

The body is consumed by the fire of worry when a man is alive or is burnt on the funeral pyre when he is dead.

The Scriptures declare that man is endowed with a body primarily to lead a righteous life. The Bhagavad Gita describes the body as "Kshetra". One meaning of this term is that it is the abode of the Divine. Places of pilgrimage are called Kshetras. Another meaning of the term "Kshetra" is "a field". If you want to grow a crop on a field, you have to prepare it suitably for the purpose. Ploughing, sowing and watering have to be done for the crop to grow. As is the seed so is the crop. Likewise, the actions of the body determines the nature of one's life. Everyone should resolve to perform good deeds to enjoy good results.

The body as "Kshetra" is a temple in which the Divine dwells as "Kshetrajna"—the knower of the Kshetra. The Kshetrajna is the Atma (the Self). The Gita declares that both the body and the Atma are divine.

However great a scholar may be, however profound his knowledge of the scriptures, he has to learn all about the body because it brings with it the consequences of the previous lives of the individual. The body is the basic instrument for all actions in this life and for the acquisition of all knowledge and skills. Everyone at the time of birth brings with him a necklace from the Creator made up of the results of his good and bad actions in past lives.

Everyone can reap only the fruits of what he sows. Only good actions can produce good results. Your happiness or sorrow is related to the nature of your actions. In a sense, all actions of man

can be regarded as "Yajnas". To cross the ocean of "samsara" (the cycle of birth and death) all that is necessary is service to good people and no other religious observance. By such service, one receives the grace of the Divine. All actions have to be done as an offering to God to secure this grace. They then become "Yajnas".

One should think of God and offer prayers at least four times a day—at dawn, at noon, at sunset and before going to bed—as food for the soul.

The body should be regarded primarily as an instrument for the realisation of the Divine through the nine forms of devotion. Attachment to the body for physical pleasures should be given up. It is essentially sacred and precious as the abode of the Atma and should be used only for sacred purposes. God is one, whatever the name or form in which He is worshipped. God blesses a devotee according to the depth of his devotion, without regard to the name or form used for worship.

Today, before the commencement of the Yajna the ritwiks rubbed two sticks against each other to produce fire for the homam. What is the significance of this procedure? It indicates that for a Yajna the fire should be started in a natural way and not by any artificial means. Two sticks are used for the purpose. Similarly the body and the mind should be rubbed against each other to generate the fire of wisdom (Jnana-agni). It should also be realised that there is a divine energy latent in man—like fire in the wood—which enables the eyes to see, the ears to hear, the mind to think and the body to move about. All organs are able to function because of this divine energy. Man feels proud that he is the doer of all things. There is no basis for this pride. Such egoism is a fatal disease. Egoism is accompanied by another dire disease called envy (Asooya). There are cures for all kinds of diseases in the world. But there are no remedies for egoism and envy. Total ruin is the only cure for these two diseases.

Man should realise that there should be no excessive indulgence in any desire, whether it be food or other necessities. This is the lesson we have to learn from our ancients, who practised self-restraint in every aspect of life. In the ancient days you did not have the kind of education that is imparted today. They did not secure high degrees. But they led a life of purity and integrity with the name of "Narayana" on their lips.

Today people should develop pure hearts and unwavering minds to secure peace. Not all the wealth of the world or the great advances in space technology confers peace on people who have not found it within them. When at the end of a bhajan, we say "Santhi" three times the prayer is for peace of the body, the mind and the Spirit. Without this triune peace man cannot have real peace. And this threefold peace can be conferred only by God. This means that spirituality is essential for the health of the body, the peace of the mind and the bliss of the Spirit.

The Cosmic Spirit is one only, though it may be called by many names and worshipped in varied forms. You should see the Divine in everyone, including those whom you may regard as aliens or enemies. True spirituality consists in this sense of spiritual oneness. It can arise only when the attachment to the body is given up. People imagine that it is difficult to give up this attachment. It is not so. When you develop the conviction that you are the Atma (the Self), then it will be easy to give up attachment to the body. When people in general develop this feeling there will be

a great transformation in the life of mankind. Peace should spread from the individual to the family, to society, the nation and the world and not vice-versa.

Embodiments of Love! Today the Veda Purusha Jnana Saptah Yajna has been inaugurated for promoting the welfare of the universe. Every individual has to play a part in this endeavour for world peace and prosperity. Whether you understand the meaning of the mantras or not, the vibrations emanating from the chanting of the Vedas will have a spiritualising effect on the listeners. There is bliss in the vibrations of the Vedic hymns. The Cosmic Self (Brahmam) is described as the embodiment of cosmic vibrations which permeate the universe, fill it with effulgence, wisdom and bliss. Make use of the opportunity provided by the Yajna to purify your life and raise yourself from the human to the Divine.

**—From Bhagavan's Divine Discourse in Sai Kulwant Mandap on 5th October 1997**

### **Gujarati New Year Day in Prasanthi Nilayam**

November 1, this year was a memorable day for thousands of Gujarati devotees who gathered to celebrate their New Year in the Divine presence. All of them (1100 men, 1500 ladies and 230 Bal Vikas children) got special seating in the Sai Kulwant Hall before Bhagavan arrived for the morning darshan. The Hall was beautifully decorated overnight. The numerous glittering brass vessels on either side of the aisle made it look like a celestial durbar. The Bal Vikas children, wearing traditional Gujarati costumes, including two girls dressed up like Goddesses Lakshmi and Saraswati, welcomed Bhagavan with "Kalasas" and "Coconuts". Bhagavan gave Padanamaskar to all of them. They also received Prasadam and Swami's photos.

The celebration concluded in the evening with the Bal Vikas students presenting a cultural programme in the Poornachandra auditorium, starting with a prayer, "Ai, Malik Tere Bunde Hum" followed by two dramas, "Kshama" and "Dudhame Sakkar". One was an episode from the life of Buddha, who converted an arrogant king into his disciple. The other depicted the plight of Parsees who fled from Iran to seek refuge in Gujarat and how they had to satisfy the king about their ability to integrate with Indian Culture. Folk dances included "Dandiya Raas", "Divadano Garbo". Befitting the 50th anniversary of Indian Independence, "Nrithya Natika" by the tiny tots depicted the Unity in Diversity of Bharat. Two Bal Vikas students made impressive speeches on how the Bal Vikas programme had moulded them to meet contemporary challenges.

**- S. P.**

### **Memorable Dasara Celebrations**

This year's Dasara celebrations in Prasanthi Nilayam after a break of three years came not only as a fresh spiritual breeze blessed by Bhagavan for the exaltation of thousands of devotees, but was a veritable "feast for the soul" in the nectarine discourses delivered for seven days.



The celebrations began on October 2 with "Kalasa-sthapanam" in the Mandir. On October 5th Bhagavan inaugurated the Veda Purusha Saptah Jnana Yajna in the Poornachandra Auditorium, which was filled to capacity. Thousands of devotees watched the proceedings from outside.

Bhagavan presided over the Yajna as Veda Purusha while the ritwiks lighted the sacred homam by rubbing two sticks in the prescribed manner. The homam was carried on by pundits chanting Vedic mantras and making offerings of ghee to the sacred fire.

Besides the homam, there were pundits engaged in performing Suryanamaskar, reading the Ramayana and the Bhagavata, worshipping thousand lingas of Siva, puja to Ganesha and the Hindu Trinity and other rituals related to the Yajna.

While these rituals were carried on daily for a week, Bhagavan delivered illuminating discourses for six days in which He covered the whole gamut of man's quest for the Self. Vijayadashami day, on October 11th, became doubly memorable as it marked not only the completion of the Yajna with Poornahuti and Bhagavan sprinkling the water sanctified by the Yajna mantras on all devotees, but also the formal dedication of the stupendous drinking water project to the people of Anantapur district at a significant function in the afternoon attended by the Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh and others. (Report of this function has appeared in our October issue.)

The lakhs of devotees who had gathered from all parts of the globe had one of the most blissful experiences of their lives in the seven-day celebrations

### **Deepavali and Akhanda Bhajan in Prasanthi Nilayam**

While the major events in November relate to the Convocation of the Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning and Bhagavan's Birthday on November 23, we are glad to report that the Deepavali Celebrations on 1st November and the Global Akhanda Bhajan from 6:00 p.m. of November 8 to 6:00 p.m. of November 9th went off well with Bhagavan's Blessings. After the offer of arati to Bhagavan, prasadam was distributed to the devotees.

*Through activity man attains purity of consciousness. In fact man has to welcome activity with this end in view. And why strive for a pure consciousness? Imagine a well with polluted and muddy water so that the bottom of the well cannot be seen. Similarly within man's heart, deep down in his consciousness, we have the Atman. But it can be cognised only when the consciousness is clarified. Your imaginings, your inferences, your judgements and prejudices, your passions, emotions and egoistic desires, muddy the consciousness and make it opaque. How, then, can you become aware of the Atman that is at the very base? Through seva rendered without any desire to placate one's ego and with only the well-being of others in view is it possible to cleanse the consciousness and have the Atman revealed.*

—Baba

## Sacred Use of Indriyas

In the pursuit of sensory pleasures man forgets his Divine origin. Man can redeem his life only when he understands where from he has come, what is his role in life and what is his destination.

The first thing man has to learn is the role of the sense organs (indriyas). The sense organs are termed "matras", meaning measuring instruments. For instance, the tongue measures the taste of what it eats. The eye evaluates the form of what it sees. It will notice that a man with a fair face has a snub nose. The senses recognise the differences among various objects in terms of size, quality etc. The senses have also another function to discharge. They indicate to man the limits to which sensory objects should be used or enjoyed. As the senses are God-given gifts, abuse of the senses by excesses will not only mean transgressing the divinely ordained limits, but will also lead to many harmful consequences. Hence everyone has to adhere to the appropriate limits prescribed for the use of the senses. For instance, take the case of nostrils. They are to be used for breathing purposes and for smelling fragrant objects and discarding foul-smelling objects. The respiratory process conveys a significant spiritual message when air is inhaled and exhaled. The message is contained in the mantra "So-Ham", which is also known as Hamsa Gayatri (Swami demonstrated how during inhalation the sound "So " is produced and how "Ham" is produced when air is exhaled.) "So Ham" conveys the message of identity between God ("So") and the individual ("Aham"). This mantra contains the essence of Advaita. What happens when the nose that is to be used for such sacred purposes is used for taking snuff? It is not merely abuse of the nose, but is the cause of various respiratory diseases. Most ailments are the result of misuse of the sense organs for improper purposes.

Jayadeva rebuked men for not using the God given tongue for chanting the sweet and sacred name of the Lord. The tongue should be engaged only in speaking the truth, in speaking sweetly and in consuming what is pleasant and wholesome for the body. Man degrades himself by consuming intoxicating drinks and non-vegetarian food and by indulging in smoking. These noxious habits affect the brain also.

Saint Surdas lamented on the behaviour of people who would not listen to the hymns of praise of God with their God given ears or gaze on the beautiful form of the Lord in their God given sight. Persons going on the road should concentrate on the road and not allow their eyes to stray on the wall posters and shop windows.

It is necessary that everyone should recognise the proper role of the sense organs and use them properly.

In this context it may be noted that different animals are victims to different kinds of sensory experiences. Deer are a prey to sound—the roar of a lion or other wild animal. The elephant is afraid of the touch of the mahout's goad. Insects are attracted by light or a flame and lose their lives. Fish are lured by the taste of the worm attached to the angler's hook. It is a pity that man who possesses all the five senses of perception (sound, touch, sight, taste and smell) is a bond-slave to all of them. Thereby he forfeits his freedom.

How, then, can man experience real happiness? Only by turning his senses towards God. Man has five senses of perception and five senses of action. The master for all these ten senses is the mind. The ten senses are like ten wives pulling the mind in different directions. It is difficult for the mind to control the senses.

Man should realise that all pleasures derived from submission to the senses are momentary and leave a trail of suffering behind. He should realise that the senses are to be utilised for sacred purposes and the practice of human values. Only then he will understand the true purpose of human existence. The senses are gifted by God for humans to lead ideal lives. See good, think good thoughts, speak sweet words and listen to what is good. Be good and do good.

A young student who spoke earlier referred to Swami's advice to all of them to "speak less and work more". The ancient Indian Sages practised silence as a spiritual discipline because they realised the myriad benefits derived from silence (mounam). Swami Vivekananda learnt a valuable lesson when he found that after ten days of endless talk he had forgotten all the slokas he had learnt by heart. By practising complete silence for a fortnight he got back his memory powers.

People should realise that God's grace is secured by the sacred use of the senses endowed on man by the Divine.

Man is enveloped by five-sheaths (kosas)—food, life-breath, mentation, awareness and bliss. (Annamaya, Pranamaya, Manomaya, Vijnanamaya and Anandamaya). Modern man has been able to progress only up to the Manomaya stage. He must strive to go beyond the mind up to the state of Bliss.

**—From Bhagavan's Discourse in Sai Kulwant Mandap on 6-10-1997**

*"You must have freedom not only from fear, but from hope and expectation. Trust in My wisdom. I do not make mistakes. Love My uncertainty, for it is not a mistake. It is My intent and will".*

**—Baba**

### **The Unfailing Lord**

When everything is going wrong  
When you don't know whom to turn to  
When you don't know if things are the way they used to be  
When the world seems empty  
And there's no one you can rely on  
When darkness surrounds you  
With no glimpse of the light  
When you are filled with hatred

And you know it's wrong  
When your world becomes claustrophobic  
And you have, no breathing space  
The most of all when you're lonely and sad

Then, we turn to the Almighty  
The only bright ray, in his orange robe  
With oceans of love  
With floods of grace spilling over

So when you're feeling down and out  
And you think you're by your lonesome self  
Don't despair  
There is someone you can count on  
Who won't leave your side  
No matter how unworthy you think you are  
Or how disappointed others are with you  
Our Swami is the only one  
Who will accept you with all your flaws  
And love you no less

—A devotee

*AVATAR VANI:*

*DASARA DISCOURSES:*

### **Transcending the Mind to Realise God**

Only the one who is aware that the individual self is the Cosmic Self (Siva) and that Siva is the individual self (Jiva) is a complete Jnani (knower of Absolute Truth). The reason is the cosmos is one Supreme Absolute ("Vibhuti"). To understand this monistic principle (Non-dualism) is the supreme wisdom.

However, the Divine principle is associated with the qualities of the individual self through the mind. The characteristic of the mind is to entertain thoughts and counter-thoughts endlessly. Sometimes man is unable to keep pace with the speed of the thoughts and is swept off his feet. Man sometimes gets intoxicated by his thoughts, which are influenced by the aberrations of the Kali Age.

The mind, the goal (gati), the status (sthithi) and the prosperity (sampati) are inter-related. The one who misuses these four turns into a demon.

Today there are many incurable diseases, but these relate not to the body but the mind. In a sense, all diseases get into the body through the mind. Even ordinary ailments like a headache or a stomachache have their origin in the mind.

Whatever influences the mind affects also the body. But unaware of this profound truth, man attributes all ills to the body and not the mind. Most ailments are really mental and not physical. Because of this we witness a wide prevalence of psychic disorders. We find that mental illnesses are on the increase all over the world. The reason is that there is too much of mental tension and worry.

The mind is subject to varying moods—sorrow or joy, anger or fear, love or hate. For all the diseases arising from the mind the basic causes are two: attachment and aversion (raga and dwesha). The mind is filled with these twofold feelings. Consequently, it tends to forget its basic human nature. The mind in this state considers the six basic enemies of man - lust, hatred, delusion, greed, envy and pride—as virtues. These six vices can poison a person's entire being. He then forgets his inherent divinity and ceases to be human. He is a victim of infamy. But a person filled with good feelings enjoys peace and happiness.

The ancient Indian Sages practised self-control, entertained good thoughts and led a blissful life. When a man's inner self is filled with love, his life becomes full of bliss and he is always hale and hearty. Today man suffers from numerous ailments the root cause of which is a diseased mind.

There is no death for the mind, though when the body is facing death the mind thinks it is dying. The mind, it has been said, is the cause of one's bondage or liberation. Bad thoughts beget bondage. Good thoughts lead to liberation. Hence, everyone should develop good thoughts and perform good deeds. Such good feelings can arise only out of love.

Today all man's actions are governed by mundane desires. To achieve liberation man has to go beyond the vagaries of the mind. He should follow the Inner Voice (Antahkarana).

### **Buddha's lesson to Ananda**

Buddha, before he attained Nirvana, summoned his step-brother Ananda to his side to impart his last message. Ananda was in tears. Buddha told him: "Ananda! It was for realising this blissful state that I had striven all these years. Why do you shed tears at this moment? How many are able to secure such bliss? Few at all. You are looking only at my earthly body. You cannot know the internal bliss I am experiencing at this moment. I suffered a great deal over the past thirty years because of the aberrations of my mind. It was the mind that stood between me and Self-Realisation. Today I am free from the hold of my mind. That is the cause of my bliss. When the mind is absent there is bliss."

This was the lesson Buddha taught to Ananda. Ananda prayed to Buddha to confer on him a similar mind-less state.

Any happiness experienced through the mind is not spiritual bliss. It is transient physical pleasure. Not recognising this truth many pursue so-called spiritual exercises with the mind. The mind should be ignored. It is concerned only with thoughts of one kind or another. The Atmic Principle cannot be understood by such thought processes. Divert your attention towards the

Atma and dismiss all thoughts. If you cannot get rid of thoughts, then cultivate good thoughts. Turn your thoughts towards the Supreme Lord.

I have often compared the heart to a lock. If you turn the key leftward, it gets closed. Turn the key to the right and the lock opens. Turn your heart God-ward

To control the mind the ancients resorted to various disciplines including food control. They fasted on full moon day and gradually increased their intake up to new moon day. From the next day they gradually reduced their intake till full moon day. Students need not resort to this discipline now, but they should avoid eating excessive food.

By their spiritual discipline and regulated eating and other habits, the ancients led long and healthy lives. Bhishma, who was Commander-in-Chief of the Kaurava forces in the Mahabharata war, was 126 years old at the time. He lived a pure celibate life, making a great sacrifice for the sake of his father.

Bhishma took a vow of life-long celibacy to enable his father to marry the woman whom he desired, whose father insisted that the son born to her should be the heir to the throne. Bhishma not only renounced his title to the throne but also took the vow of celibacy to ensure that he would leave no progeny to claim the right. After he fell in the battle he lay on a bed of arrows for 56 days for the auspicious moment of the northward motion of the sun to give up his life. He had such will power that he could bear any amount of personal suffering. He spent his last days imparting the highest wisdom to the Pandavas.

The history of Bharat is full of stories of such heroic and noble souls. Unfortunately young people today, ignoring the examples of such great figures, lead purposeless lives.

They get prematurely old because of their ways of living. Students must lead righteous lives, acquire courage and manliness and realise the Divine. They have to recognise the supreme importance of keeping the mind under control. To get close to God you have to go beyond the mind. To have control over the mind is the mark of wisdom (Jnana). To seek to achieve proximity to God you have to develop devotion. Millions of people all over the world are seeking God-Realisation. But all their efforts are at the mental level. They have to go beyond the mind to realise the Divine, who is the embodiment of Truth-Wisdom-Omnipotence.

**Bhagavan concluded His discourse on 7th Oct '97 with the Bhajan "*Sathyam Jnanam Anantam Brahma*"**

## **Universality and Sai Spiritual Culture**

In a recent postgraduate management course which I teach - Managing In a Culturally Diverse environment—one of my students of African American heritage disputed my admittedly radical, yet deeply considered conclusion that there is no such thing as a singular Black culture. Recalling Swami's teachings regarding "The One" and trusting that I had overridden all

arguments to the contrary, I brushed past her objections and began to summarize the evening's lecture. Slightly disturbed, she stayed after class to confer about our apparent disagreement.

During our exchange, I found that she had actually agreed with my contention, but felt it was too high a point for her non-African American classmates to absorb and wanted them to take more time to process the understanding. I had explained that colour, caste, and culture are all temporary, learned, and attributed, based on climate and circumstances and deeper according to the degree of one's understanding of nature (Prakriti) and her ways. We had agreed that America's peculiar and punitive history of "radical" segregation was largely, but not exclusively, responsible for the preponderance of differences ascribed to *Black, or any other categorical* culture. Having shared a common history of mild to medium to sometimes-severe racial discrimination, we both smiled knowingly and then proceeded to our respective homes to renew our strength for the rest of the term!

### **The unitive principle**

Especially mindful of the language and the examples I would use, my thesis had begun with a discussion of the Unitive Principle—that is, the point of view deeply rooted in religion, philosophy, and science that there is one interconnected energy which underlines and intra-penetrates the entirety of creation.

Of course Swami's divine teachings on this topic—especially in **His Summer Showers at Brindavan Series**—and indeed on any and all other topics is absolutely complete! Yet in higher education we are duty-bound to enlist the ideas and theories of others. So, I mention eminent scientists such as Max Planck, Niels Bohr and Albert Einstein—to name the more recognizable—who helped in bringing this unitive principle to a more palatable place for the typically bifurcated western mind. Yet while doing so, I remind them that this principle has been fundamental in eastern philosophy and within each and every indigenous and enduring mystical tradition the world over. In his classical **Crest Jewel of Discrimination**, Sankaracharya refers to this understanding as **non-dualism**. Seattle, a renowned American Indian Chief, called it the interwoven web of life. And all are well aware that Chinese and Ayurvedic approach to health and wellness have long been based on this principle.

### **Describing human beings**

For those who rely on what they consider to be "objective science," I often complement such discussion with a *left-brain* story told by Sai devotee Dr. Art Jumsai, a physicist from Thailand who played a key role in the United States' efforts to land on the earth's moon. Speaking to an audience of educators in London, Dr. Jumsai asked each person to describe the person sitting next to him. Using the medium of visible light, they described what they saw. He then asked that they describe the person again, but this time they were to look through x-rays. Naturally their ability to describe and compare differences changed rather dramatically. Finally, he asked that they again change their medium and now view the other person through radio waves. After "changing the medium" this time, they reported that they would be unable to see the person at all, since radio waves pass through what we call "solid objects."

Thus we might ask, what is the truth about human beings if they change and even disappear based solely on the medium through which one views them? Is it not so simple to see, as the

**Brahmananda** instructs, that we are Being-Awareness-Bliss and that we merely possess that which appears to be diverse; we are possessors of mind-bodies.

### **System thinking**

For many management students especially, it is useful to discuss also this concept in terms of "system thinking". Here, one can easily proceed from a discussion of engineering, management, and communication systems to human systems. Human "systems", as we all already know, are comprised of a wide range of interconnected subsystems which include, for example, the nervous, circulatory, muscular, skeletal, immune systems on one level, the indriyas (the senses) on another level, and the components of the mind on yet another.

As human beings, we are considered "open systems" since our boundaries are permeable, and we exchange energy with our environment. To see, our brains construct visual patterns from the lights and shadows received into our systems; to hear, we integrate and translate a series of sound waves, and so on. Thus, the central idea associated with systems thinking is that it represents what I like to refer to as ***The Sai World View***, that is, a way of perceiving all of creation as interconnected and inseparable from its one central source. I remind students that we live within a socialized time and space continuum, which represents a continuity of personal experience for each and everyone of us. And since this experience has essentially occurred within some social context, it is largely defined through the lens of the more dominant culture in which that experience is acquired.

To convince my students of the efficacy of this kind of thinking as the basic framework for all other considerations, I carefully select their readings and then benevolently conspire to weave Swami's universal human values throughout the lectures and assignments, while providing the appropriate content specific to whatever course is being conducted.

### **One race of humanity**

As we all know, "race" has played a major role in both differentiating and confining educational and other experience. Yet race is merely a "social construction" of stratified categories designed to serve ego and ethnocentric purposes. Culture has validity, yet race and color do not. Yet, to deny the often devastating impact that these broadly accepted categories have had on thought, word and deed is to deny the typical level of existence and expression at which most live their daily lives. Swami reminds us again and again that, in truth, there is only one race, the race of humanity! Sadly, too much of humanity today has yet to attain the critical awareness of the underlying unity of all the so called races. In modern times especially, race has been used as a tool of selfish leadership to suppress and divide people and accomplish a variety of economic and political goals. Reflecting Sai's master plan, I believe, even our great scientists and researchers have amassed more than enough evidence to lend their "objective" support to this point.

### **Cultural diversity and unity**

Because of its nature, culture defies precise definition, for it, too, is related to the Unitive Principle. Yet we can say that it is comprised of a wide range of elements which include values, morals, norms, beliefs, religion, language, music, art, food, symbols, and more, culture refers to capabilities and behaviours acquired through one's experience in this illusory world. These



elements, or parts, *comprise a systematic or unitary whole*. Thus, it is certainly clear in this post modern world of satellite television in the Kalahari Desert and e-mail in the Amazon jungle that cultures are much less distinct than they used to be and that they all overlap considerably. Thus, the question of whether we share culture or not, is a moot one. We do, in fact! The answer, however, might vary in degree for some—depending upon emphasis, accentuation... and personal clarity.

Thus, shall we emphasize eating practices, languages and tools of play? Or shall we stress the purpose of life, the role of the family, and the universal values of truth, right action, peace, love, and non-violence? Shall we give false credence to the different bodily appearances and concentrations of melanin-color chemistry,—which have evolved over time? Or do we first establish common around? Learned differences and differences and diverse modes of expression abound. That is the nature of Nature! Yet, happiness, contentment, and freedom from fear are all desires of the self-same humanity. So shall we place our focus on the ebb and flow—the becoming-of the waves, or shall we wisely seek the gravity and the stillness—the being—of the ocean of Truth from which each wave only temporarily arises?

### **Adaptation and transformation**

When it comes to education, Swami emphasizes the central importance of the quality of the teacher. He instructs us that all true leaders must first BE, then DO, and only then TELL. He reminds us that followers more often do as leaders do. Yet any educator's doing and telling can only result from his being. This is why consistent practice of Swami's first two universal human values of Truth and Right Action—that is, first theory, then practice— is truly placing first things first!

Unfortunately, it has become our tendency to define and assess "others" by their differences and not their similarities. We need not be reminded—but why not?—that the purpose of culture is not and never has been exclusivity, comparative advantage, or profiteering, as is the case with the sweeping globalization of United States culture in the form of artifacts, symbols, and commodities Mac Donald's, Disney, and the Marlboro Man. The purpose of culture is harmonious adaptation and spiritual transformation through magnanimous, open-ended investigation and shared expression. This requires careful and consistent vigilance, and mental discrimination in the highest sense, where reason, patience, intellectual humility, and an open heart hold sway against all other forces.

### **Culture, a part of spirituality**

Beginning with our heartfelt intention to love all and serve all, we Sai educators are enjoined to engage ourselves, and then our students, in a variety of experiences and activities which are consistent with this understanding and which are designed to confirm that elusive sense of human unity. We must learn to see things inside out, upside down, and backward and forwards in our efforts to bring this message of the Unitive Principle and its positive practice to light.

In Summer Showers 1990, Swami says: *"You hear people talk about "Culture" and "Spirituality" as if they are two different things. In My view, Culture is only the essence derived from spirituality. Just as sugar is common to all the varieties of sweets which are seemingly different from one another, spirituality is common to the seemingly different cultures of all lands*

*and nations. In short, you should recognize that culture is a part of the all-inclusive spirituality. You must cultivate and develop this all inclusive unitary vision".*

Using Swami's synthesizing philosophy and the universal principles which are infused throughout His education in Human Values Program, we educators must design and refine curricula which will serve to promote substantive educational interactions based on respect for all the apparent differences and heartfelt appreciation for the Fatherhood of God and Family of Humankind. For all are embodiments of the Atmic Principle and every student we teach contains The Omniscient and Omnipresent God fully within their hearts, no matter how deeply hidden He appears to be.

So as we approach this next millennium, let us strive to gain increasing clarity regarding the term "unity in diversity" and follow the Master more faithfully. Let us see the futility of categorical or separative thinking and use our Swami-given genius and creativity to educate all to the heights of their human potential by modelling and promoting the glorious ideal of a loving and unified Sai World Culture!

—Hymon Johnson, Santa Barbara, California

AVATAR VANI:

DASARA DISCOURSES:

### **Vital Role of the Buddhi**

#### *Embodiments of Love!*

Does one need a lamp to see the light from another lamp? And yet, man who has the light of wisdom in his heart goes in search of wisdom elsewhere. This search, born of ignorance, leads him to seek gurus. To acquire knowledge of the Self (Atma-Jnana) man needs no guru (preceptor). No preceptor can give this knowledge because Mother Nature (Prakriti) has herself conferred on her children the keys to this knowledge for their protection.

Every man is a son of Mother Earth (Bhudevi). As a mother, Bhudevi is teaching many lessons to her children. She calls on her children to learn everything from herself instead of going after other preceptors. "Scholars and intellectuals are cutting me to pieces to acquire knowledge and conduct their experiments", laments Mother Earth. "They are subjecting me to great suffering by their diggings and blastings. But I am not worried about all this. Learn this spirit of forbearance from me. Whatever abuse or attack others may level at you, bear them with fortitude. Treat praise or blame, good or bad with equanimity. This is the highest knowledge."

Another vital element in Nature is water, which is also one of the manifestations of the Divine. The lesson that water teaches is: "Son! by nature I am pure, sweet and cool. Purity, patience and perseverance are three good qualities you have to cultivate."

Fire (Agni) is another of Nature's preceptors. It tells man: "My son! I make no difference between good and bad. I do not gain by burning one thing or lose by not burning something. I treat all alike whatever comes into my orbit. Learn to see the Divine in all things. This is the way to gain knowledge of the Self".

### **Nature as teacher**

I have often said that Nature is the best textbook for one and all. Many valuable things can be learnt from the behaviour of wind, which sustains life by respiratory process and is all pervading.

To exercise the power of discrimination, man is endowed with Buddhi (the intellect). The intellect has to be unwavering and steady. Man fails to use this discriminating power properly and fully because of his qualities of attachment and aversion (Raga and dwesha), his obliviousness to his inherent divinity and his preoccupation with mundane desires. If these tendencies are removed, the intellect will come into its own as an instrument of discrimination.

The intellect is the highest among man's endowments starting with the body. Above the body are the senses. Subtler than the senses is the mind. The intellect is subtler than the mind. Above the intellect and much more subtle is the Self (Atma). Because of its proximity to the Atma, the Buddhi is very subtle.

In the Taittiriya Upanishad the Buddhi is compared to a bird. The seat of the intellect is said to be the head. The right wing is described as "ritam" and the left wing as "Truth". The tail is called "Mahat-tattwa". The body is described as "Yoga". The Buddhi is said to be composed of these five constituents each of which represents a power like discrimination, truth etc. Most people tend to accord a higher place to intelligence (medha shakti) than to intellect. Intelligence that lacks interest and steadiness which characterise the intellect is inferior to the intellect. This was declared by King Vikramaditya at an assembly of scholars who could not decide the issue. It is the combination of interest and firm faith which serves to divinise man.

"Ritam" signifies the harmony in thought, word and deed. Truth is the expression in speech of "Ritam". Homage is paid to Ritam and Sathya before one takes food as a prescribed ritual.

(Swami related the story of how Ubhayabharathi, the wife of Mandana Misra, after taking to sanyasa following her husband's defeat in a philosophical debate with Adi Sankaracharya, taught a lesson in detachment and giving up of anger to an ascetic who described himself as a "Brahma-Jnani".) No one can call himself a knower of the Absolute as long as he has attachment and aversion. This episode shows how in ancient days men and women equally pursued the quest for the knowledge of the Self (Atma-Jnana).

To acquire this Self-knowledge, purity of the intellect is essential. The intellect should be unwavering and to tally free from attachment.

### **Role of the intellect**

The mind is subject to unsteadiness because of desires. Desires are roused by the impressions received by the senses from outside. The only way to avoid these external impressions is to turn the senses inwards. To effect this change in the use of the senses, the power of discrimination derived from the intellect should be employed. The intellect should be used to determine what impressions should be kept out and which should be let in. The intellect should determine what kind of company we should keep, what kind of food we should eat and what are desirable

practices and what are undesirable. It is by the right use of their intellectual judgement that the ancient sages achieved spiritual eminence.

### **The body and the heart**

People should understand that the Self (Atma) is one only. There are so many in this hall. Each one of you may consider that everyone has a separate and distinct Atma. This is totally wrong. Like the reflection of the Sun in a myriad different vessels filled with water, the same Cosmic Self is dwelling in everyone. The reflection is one and the same, though the vessels might be different. Names and forms may be different but the indwelling Atma is one. How is this oneness to be recognised? For this purpose, the difference between the body and the heart should be examined. The Vedanta taught as follows: "Son! Birth and death are common to all. Hunger and thirst are equally common. Joy and sorrow are common to all." If you go deep into these three statements, you will realise that whether one is a millionaire or a pauper both are born from their mothers' wombs. Though a rich man and poor man may eat different kinds of food, the object of eating is to appease hunger, which is common to both. The same applies to thirst. If in this manner people examine what is common to all mankind, they will realise the unity that underlies the diversity in mankind. This will reveal the divinity that makes humanity one spiritually. There is no need to pursue difficult spiritual exercises to experience the Divine. Many of the physical postures recommended by some "gurus" for spiritual exercise are anything but comfortable. The real need is to have a heart filled with compassion and meditate on God. Physical postures are not so important. It is in making one aware of the difference between the physical body and a compassionate love-filled heart that the Buddhi plays its vital role.

### **The source of bliss**

The source of bliss is within man, not in the external world. God is omnipresent and is not separate from you. This is the main teaching of Sai.(cheers). The description of the cosmic form of God (as Vishwa-Viraat Swaroopa) means that He is present in every minute particle in the universe.

Students! The world today is moving in a direction opposed to spirituality. This is utterly wrong. To forget God is to forget your own divine essence. Ramana Maharshi always told the devotees who came to him: "Know who you are." "Know thyself" does not mean knowing facts about your body, mind or senses. It is to know the one who claims ownership of the body, the mind etc... You have to find the answer to the question: "Who am I"? The body, the senses, the mind and the intellect are all your instruments. You are their master. Master the mind and be a Master. For a human being the Atma (Self) is the Master. It is the power of the Atma (Self) which enables the senses to perform their different functions like seeing, hearing etc. You have, therefore, to realise that you are the Atma and not the body.

### **The passing of Karunyananda**

You may all know what happened today. Karunyananda had been with Swami for forty years. He was a centenarian. Today his body merged in the five elements. For the passing of any person the time, the place and the circumstances have to come together. Here in this hall the recitation of the Vedas is going on. The Jnana Yajna is being performed. He was listening to all these sacred things. He went to sleep at night and passed away in his sleep. He came to me a week ago. Swami asked him. "Karunyananda! What is it you want?" He replied: "I need nothing. I only

want to merge in your Lotus Feet. There is no purpose in my continuing." I asked him why he was speaking in this manner: "What more is there for me to enjoy in life? I have experienced everything. I have stayed and moved with Swami for forty years." He came with me to Kashmir and Shimla, Gaya and Prayag. He came with me to all places, wherever I went. Staying with me, he passed away with a sense of fulfillment.

This kind of contentment should come to everyone in life. One should not end up with a feeling of frustration.

Ask yourself the question: Who is the richest man in the world? It is not men like Tata or Birla who are truly the richest men. He who has greatest satisfaction in life is the richest man. He who has much desires is the poorest man. To be free from all desires is the mark of greatness.

All kinds of things are all the time happening in the world. Births and deaths are like jokes for me, though you may not know it. When someone comes to me and wails: "My husband has passed away", I remark: "Santosham" ("well"). She may remark: "How can you be happy if my husband has passed away?" All events are the same to me, I am always happy. One lady comes to me and says that she is suffering from an unbearable stomachache. I observe: "Very happy" ("chaala santhosham").

Padmanabha Sastri (the Mandir Priest) came to me forty years ago. He is known to all of you when he performs the pooja in the Mandir every morning. He performs abhishekam for the idols. He is engaged in this puja morning and evening. He also passed away today.

Both Karunyananda and Padmanabha Sastri had been with me for forty years. They passed away when their end came.

### **Be ready for the end**

Bodies come and go in this manner. They are transient like passing clouds. No physical body is permanent. In human existence you must be prepared for the end at any time. It is like remaining "steady" when a photographer wants to take a picture of a person or group. If you are not steady, the picture will be blurred. The photographer may give you a warning signal, but so far as death is concerned, you cannot know when the end may come according to divine will. Be always ready. You cannot know when the call will come.

Unfortunately, in the world today few care to listen to the voice of God. They are guided by the promptings of their ego. This is the mark of the Kali Age. All are victims of egoism. So much so, they have doubts about every word of the Divine. They don't listen even to good counsel and therefore suffer evil consequences.

During the past three months I had been advising Padmanabha Sastri to realise that he is a diabetic patient. "The wound in your leg is getting worse. Ultimately amputation may be unavoidable. You are neglecting your leg. Heed my words". I was repeatedly warning him. But ignoring Swami's warning, he was consuming sweet things like payasam and laddus. Today his blood sugar rose to 400 and he had a severe heart attack. You can see what happens when Swami's warning is ignored. If they acted up to my advice, it would be good for them and their

families and I would be happy. From time to time I have been singing a song about the consequences of not listening to my words but behaving foolishly. The result is they come to grief.

This is not proper. You have to heed the words of advice and follow them. My advice is not for my sake but for your good. I shall soon be reaching my 72nd year. In all these years I have never entertained a single selfish thought (cheers). Whatever I tell you is only for your good and not for my benefit. Whatever I do is always for your good. Not recognising this, many are deluding themselves. What is the use in feeling regret at the end? You must be on your guard from the beginning.

Chant the Lord's name at all times. Understand the role of the intellect. Tomorrow I shall speak about the Atmic Principle: I expect that some at least will derive benefit from this series of discourses.

Bhagavan concluded His discourse with the ballad song: "*Rama, Kodanda Rama!*" The entire gathering joined Him in singing the song.

**—From Bhagavan's discourse in Sai Kulwant Hall on 8-10-97**

*God is ignored in sunshine; he is wanted only when there is night. Devotion must persist and flourish, unaffected by time place or circumstance.*

**—Baba**

## **Bhagavan Extols Women's Role as Mothers**

The Ladies Day programme for this year on November 19, started with a soothing Suprabhatam recited by Smt. P. Susheela in the Prasanthi Mandir at 5:15 a.m. which was followed by a special Nagarsankirtan.

### **Morning Programme**

At about 7 A.M. Bhagavan was ceremoniously ushered into the Sai Kulwant Hall by a Ladies' procession led by the Scottish Band of Sri Sathya Sai Primary School, followed by the Poorna Kumbha component consisting of Veda-chanting Primary School girls. At the end of the procession came a group of Greek lady devotees dressed as Greek Goddesses who paid their obeisance to Bhagavan after He was seated on the exquisitely decorated stage.

Then followed a display of graceful traditional group dancing by Greek lady devotees and the Lambadi Gypsy Dance beautifully performed by tribal lady dancers from Nalagonda District of Andhra Pradesh. This was a very special occasion for these tribal dancers as they were getting a chance to present their art in Swami's presence for the first time. The next troupe to perform was the Chindula Bhagavatham dance-cum-song folk artists from some interior villages of Nizamabad District of Andhra Pradesh. Bhagavan blessed all the tribal artistes with gifts of sarees and created a gold chain for the seventy-five year old Chindula Yellamma, who has been making great efforts to keep the Chindula Bhagavatham dance form alive.

The morning programme came to a befitting close with the rendition of melodious bhajans by Smt. P. Susheela accompanied by P. Sandhya, and a vocal concert by Smt. Sudha Raghunathan, well known Carnatic musician.

### **Afternoon Meeting**

The afternoon meeting, organised in Sai Kulwant Hall at 4 p.m.' started with a multi-lingual bouquet of songs by overseas lady devotees. The opening line of the first song, which was rendered in English, Russian, German, Italian, Dutch and Spanish was: "In my heart a lotus grows—a gift of Love that Sai bestows." After the opening songs, three eminent ladies spoke on their Sai experiences, before Bhagavan gave His special Ladies Day Message.

The first speaker was Smt. Amala Shankar, who, in her brief and emotional talk, said that she saw Lord Buddha also Bhagavan Baba and thanked her destiny for having brought her to the Lotus Feet of Swami—a rare blessing which she could not have even imagined a few months back.

The next speaker, Dr. Geetha Reddy, General Secretary of the Andhra Pradesh Congress Party and the former State Minister for Tourism, Culture, Sports and Youth Affairs, narrated an incident when Swami had saved her and her family in a serious car accident. She stated that Bhagavan Baba is not only the Mother, the Father and the closest Relative to her, but is also her best Friend.

The third speaker was Ms Hellen Sotiriou, a well known active social worker from Greece. She narrated two thrilling episodes wherein Swami had revealed His omnipresence in Bosnia among the distressed and needy refugees and also extended His protection to save the speaker and others from a house set on fire by gun-toting militants, whose stony hearts too melted after hearing a Sai Bhajan.

### **Role of the Mother**

In His special discourse on the occasion of the Ladies Day, Bhagavan described Gayatri as the mother of Vedas, and also of all creation. He further sub-divided the Gayatri Principle into the following four components.

(a) **Sathyavati:** The all-pervasive Truth which pervades the entire creation just as butter is present in every drop of milk.

(b) **Angavati:** Every person is made up of the five elements. Differences are only in the outer forms. Divinity behind the five elements is the same in all.

(c) **Anyavati:** Different forms of the Divine are indicated by corresponding symbols—Rama by the bow, Krishna by the flute or the peacock feather, Saraswati by the Veena, Siva by the damaru (hand-held drum) and Vishnu by Shankha (Conch), Chakra (Wheel), Gada (Mace): and Padma (the Lotus Flower). Divine forms have various characteristic symbols but Divinity is the same in all.

(d) **Nidhanavati:** Nidhanavati is represented by the nine paths of devotion, namely—listening, singing, chanting the name of the Lord, service, seva to the Lord's Feet, adoration, prayer, friendship with God and surrender to God.

Describing the mother as the first teacher, Swami said that as compared to male teachers, the teachings of women teachers are better assimilated by students because the latter teach from the heart with love.

A married lady has many great titles like 'Dharma Patni' (Righteous wife), 'Griha-Lakshmi' (Goddess of the house), 'Illalu' (Lady of the house) and 'Ardhangi' (equal partner of the husband). These titles have more value than socially recognised titles like 'Padma Bhushan' and 'Padma Vibhushan' (given by the Government). A lady must look after the home first and then work outside, if necessary. A house without a mother is like an empty choultry. A lady should be an ideal to her children, look after her husband and then do outside work. She can study, get degrees, enter politics or do any other work but she should not neglect the home, which is the very foundation of her life. Husband and wife are both equally responsible for establishing harmony in the home. But times have changed. Womanly ideals are not being practised and there are no ideal men and women today. That is why the world is in such a sorry state.

Parents must aspire to make their children good persons (those who see God in man) and not great persons (those who see man in God). Though Sri Rama and Ravana were very learned persons, Sri Rama set an example of a good person by his deeds, while on account of his excessive ego and desire, Ravana became an evil person though he was great in his own way.



Swami explained that the acronym MAN stands for Maya, Atma and Nirvana. The teaching contained in this term (MAN) is firstly 'Get over Maya', secondly 'See the Atma', and thirdly 'Attain Nirvana'. It is well known that a great person has no peace and is always worried while a good person is peaceful wherever he goes. So, not even in a dream should a person aspire to be a great man. A person becomes good when he is respected as such in society. Swami mentioned that goodness is a natural quality of a woman while greatness is that of a man.

Bhagavan, quoting Dr. Geetha Reddy, said that God is one's greatest and closest Friend. He is interested in one's real welfare while worldly friends are influenced by one's position and wealth, only as long as these last. Explaining further, Swami added that Nature is the best teacher, Heart is the real Guru and God is the only Friend. As the Greek lady Ms Hellen Sotiriou had sung (at the end of her talk), the relationship with God should be based on Love. Love for God alone leads to Bliss. Spiritual vibration comes out of a heart full of Love for God. Such Love makes one rejoice always and under all circumstances.

### **Evening Programme**

The Ladies' Day celebration came to an apt close with the presentation of an excellent dance-drama entitled

'Mahamanav' by Smt. Amala Shankar (Wife of late Sri Uday Shankar) in Bhagavan's presence in Poornachandra Auditorium, in the evening.

The dance drama, which was presented predominantly in the form of a shadow play, dealt with the life of Lord Buddha, right from his birth till the attainment of Nirvana by Him. The cast comprised of young students of Smt. Amala Shankar and the main role of Buddha was excellently played by the 77 year old doyen of dancing, Smt. Amala Shankar herself. The other highlights of the dance-drama were the imaginative lighting and exquisite background music arranged by Sri Chandra Ghosh and Pandit Deepak Choudhary, respectively.

## **Esoteric Significance of the Veda Purusha Jnana Yajna**

For many years since 1962 Bhagavan Baba has been conducting a Veda Purusha Jnana Yajna for seven days during Dasara for promoting the material and spiritual well being of mankind. After a break of about three years, the performance of this yajna was resumed in October this year in the Poornachandra Auditorium.

Yajna is the means for securing awareness of the Divine. Yajna is governed by mantras, sacrifice and divinity. Hence by performing the yajna for seven days one secures the twofold well-being ("shreyas") and the awareness of the Divine ("Jnana"). It may be asked why the yajna should be performed for seven days. The number seven has a special esoteric significance in relation to creation. For instance, there are said to be Seven Worlds (sapta lokas), the Seven Sages, the Seven Seas, the Seven Sacred Mountains, the Seven Swaras (of music), the Seven Colours of the Sun's ray and so on. If these are worshipped as symbols of the Divine, awareness of the Divine

arises. By the performance of the yajna for seven days according to Vedic injunctions, man can acquire the ability to get rid of the seven veils of ignorance, ascend the seven stages of spiritual knowledge and achieve liberation ("Moksha").

Before the commencement of the yajna, the Vedic Pandits take the prescribed vow to perform the yajna after chanting the mantras for sanctifying the place of yajna.

All the Vedic pandits taking part in the yajna, wearing the sacred orange robes, arrive in a procession from the Mandir to the Poornachandra Auditorium to the accompaniment of auspicious nadaswaram music and the chanting of Vedic hymns by students.

The yajna begins with the lighting of the sacred sacrificial fire. The fire is started by the rapid rubbing of two sacred wooden sticks by the priests. The sacrificial fire starts burning by the natural emergence of fire in the latent sticks, symbolic of the latent presence of the Divine in every object in creation. Bhagavan has often declared that if one turns the vision inward he would be able to experience the light Divine effulgent in one's heart.

In this yajna, seven principal deities are worshipped. Ganesha, Surya (the Sun God), Devi (The Divine Mother), Brahma, Vishnu, Siva and Agni Shakti. Vedic chants are recited to adore the four-faced Brahma who is the propagator of Vedas. The Fire God (Agni) the transmitter of devotional fire offerings to the Devas, is also propitiated by the offerings to the sacrificial fire. Altogether seven Divine potencies are worshipped. Bhagavan has declared that all these potencies are in man.

Before worship is done to any particular deity the help of Vighneshwara is invoked for the prevention of any obstacles to the worship. Ganapati is worshipped as primary deity who is the embodiment of Pranava (the sacred mantra "Om"). He is the bestower of knowledge and powers of various kinds.

The worship of the Sun God is an important part of this yajna. The priest engaged in this Sun worship repeats the sacred mantras relating to the Sun while offering prostrations (Surya-namaskar) to the Sun God. The Sun is the bestower of health and is the Lord of all planets in the solar system. The worship is offered not to the physical sun but to the presiding deity, Suryanarayana.

Another important feature of the yajna is the worship of Devi. She is Parameswari, Chittawarupini and Mayaswarupini. She represents Nature, the Mother of the Universe and is the supreme embodiment of Love. She represents seven material forms of the Divine. In the yajna, Devi is worshipped by the recitation of Lalita Sahasranama and the reading of the Devi Bhagavatam.

Vishnu is worshipped in this yajna by the recitation of Bhagavatam and Purusha Sukta. Vishnu is hailed as the all-pervading Lord of the Cosmos in the Purusha Sukta. The Sage Suka told King Parikshit that by listening to the glories of Vishnu in the seven days given to him before his end, he could attain salvation.

The reading of Valmiki's Ramayana is another significant item in this yajna. The regular reading of the Ramayana has great value for the spiritual aspirant. In this context, Swami has often stressed the special importance of Sundarakanda in which Valmiki extols the exploits of Hanuman, the Supreme devotee of Rama.

The most important aspect of this yajna is the worship of Siva. This worship is done by the pooja offered to one thousand lingas of Siva and by the offerings to Siva in the sacrificial fire on all the seven days of the yajna with the chanting of "Rudram." On the final day of the yajna, Bhagavan materialises various precious objects and offers them to the sacrificial fire. Bhagavan has declared that what everyone should offer in the sacrificial fire are his bad qualities. Swami has explained that the sacred smoke rising from the sacrificial fire, fully charged with the power of the sacred Vedic mantras, enters the clouds and purifies the rain falling from them. The smoke of the sacrificial fire thus purifies the pollution in the atmosphere and on earth.

Brahma as Creator is propitiated in this yajna by the chanting of the Vedas by the Ritwiks. The Vedas are eternal and are the basis for all Dharma. Bharat is esteemed as the soul of the Vedas and the land that gave the Vedas to the world. Bhagavan has proclaimed the glory of the Vedas in many of His discourses.

Pandits who have mastered the Rig and Yajur Vedas had a prominent part in the yajna. Bhagavan has often emphasised the purifying and sacrificial power of the Vedic mantras.

Bhagavan's discourses during the seven days of the yajna are veritable spiritual feasts for the devotees. Bhagavan explains in the simplest language profoundest Vedantic Truths so that everyone understands the message of the Advaitic doctrine and the oneness of the individual self and the Supreme Self. This, indeed, is the real purpose of the "Jnana Yajna."

Baba generously honours all the Ritwiks and others participating in the yajna with gifts of clothes and other things.

This year's Veda Purusha Yajna has become one of the most memorable in the annals of Prasanthi Nilayam.

**—G. V. Subba Rao**

*If you do not feel the call at the sight of human distress, disease or deviation from the right, how can you muster the determination and dedication necessary to serve the unseen, inscrutable, mysterious God? When you do not love man your heart will not love God. Despising brother-man, you cannot, at the same time, worship God; if you do, God will not accept that hypocrisy. God is resident in every heart; so, if you serve any one, that service reaches the God within him: it brings to you the Grace of God.*

## **Greeks Win Laurels in Birthday Celebrations**

November is the great month in the Sai Calendar to which devotees from all over the world look forward with eager expectation of the festivities connected with Bhagavan's birthday. This year the presence of a large number of Greek devotees, who presented two superb dramas made the celebrations especially memorable.

### **Rathotsavam**

The week-long celebrations of the 72nd Birthday of Bhagavan started with the Annual Rathotsavam ceremony on the morning of 18th November. Idols of Sri Rama, Sita Devi, Lakshmana, Hanuman and of Venugopala Swami were carried from the Mandir in a chariot ceremoniously to the old Krishna Temple in Puttaparthi village. Sai Geetha (specially decorated for the ceremony), followed by Veda-chanting and bhajan-singing students, led the Rathotsavam procession to the village and back. The whole ceremony was blessed by Swami personally.

### **Narayana Seva**

This year the Narayana Seva was organised in the ground behind Sri Sathya Sai Higher Secondary and Primary Schools. Bhagavan arrived at the grounds at 9:40 a.m. on 18th November, and both 'Anna-Danam' (distribution of food) and 'Vastra-Danam' (distribution of clothes) were carried out in Bhagavan's presence, for over 20,000 men and women.

### **EHV Teachers' Training Workshop**

A three-day workshop (18th to 20th November) of EHV training for faculty members and teachers was organised in Prasanthi Nilayam by the International Institute of Sathya Sai Education, Thailand. Various aspects of planning and conduct of Sri Sathya Sai EHV programme were successfully deliberated upon during the workshop.

### **Tamil Nadu Bal Vikas Children's Programme**

An engrossing musical drama on the theme of five types of exalted devotion, namely, Anuraga Bhakti, Vatsalya Bhakti, Madhura Bhakti, Santha Bhakti and Sakhya Bhakti, was beautifully enacted by the Bal Vikas girl students of Tamil Nadu in the Poornachandra Auditorium on the evening of 18th November in the presence of Bhagavan, who blessed all the participants with gifts of saris.

### **Ladies Day**

Proceedings of the Annual Ladies' Day and important points from Bhagavan's message appear separately in this issue.

### **Drama by Greek Ladies**

A short drama entitled 'The Story of Persephone' was enacted by Greek lady devotees on the evening of 20th November in Bhagavan's presence in Poornachandra Auditorium. The story depicted the temptation and fall of Persephone, daughter of the gods, from her elevated spiritual state to a low material plane in the Nether Regions—Hades Palace.

Persephone is once again reminded of her true identity and she returns to lackchos, Greek for Atma. The drama artists made use of beautiful costumes and innovative sets.

### **Peace Exhibition**

An exhibition on the theme of Peace was organised on the first floor of North Indian Canteen Building from 21st to 25th of November by Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organisation of Bombay, keeping in mind the fact that 1998 has been declared as the year of Peace.

This exhibition was very nicely put up, making judicious use of Bhagavan's adorable pictures and several apt quotations of Swami on Peace. The exhibition was visited by a large number of devotees who were seen busy taking down the quotes displayed.

### **Santoor Recital**

A scintillating Santoor recital was presented by Pandit Shiv Kumar Sharma on a specially made dais in Sai Kulwant Hall at 6 p.m. on 21st November, in the presence of Bhagavan and a large number of devotees. Before the recital, Pandit Sharma gave a small interesting talk on the history and development of the instrument and about his contact with Swami for the last 28 years.

Pandit Sharma was accompanied on the Santoor by his son Rahul Sharma (who was making his debut in front of Swami), on the tabla by Ustad Shafaat Ahmed Khan and on the Tamboora by Smt. Manorama Sharma.

After Aalap, Jod and Jhala(which included innovative muting of strings by hand also), three compositions (one in Matta Taal in medium tempo and two in Teen Taal in fast tempo) were played in Raga Malkauns (an evening raga corresponding to raga 'Hindolam' in Carnatic Music).

The hour-long recital was thoroughly enjoyed by all present.

### **XVI Convocation of Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning**

Report on Convocation proceedings and details of Bhagavan's Benedictory Discourse are given separately.

### **72nd Birthday of Bhagavan**

A poet seems to have written the line "Sweet day, so cool, so calm, so bright", specially for 23rd November, '97—which brought sweetness, coolness, calm and light into the lives of thousands of Sai devotees gathered in Sai Kulwant Hall from the early hours of that blessed morning.

At about 7 a.m. Bhagavan, wearing a golden-yellow robe, was led into Sai Kulwant Hall by the Band of Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning. While coming into the Hall and on the Portico, Swami cut a few Birthday cakes, accompanied by thunderous clapping by all present in the Hall. Every eye in the audience was radiant with joy when Bhagavan took His seat in the silver and blue chair on the tastefully decorated dais. All the Sai devotees present broke into another round of spontaneous joyous applause.

Sri K. Krishna Kant, Vice-President of India and Sri S. B. Chavan, the former Home Minister of India made brief speeches before Bhagavan delivered His Birthday message.

The Vice-President, Sri Krishna Kant said that it was not only Bhagavan's Birthday, that we all were celebrating but also Rama's Birthday, Krishna's birthday and Buddha's birthday. He stated that the world and our country were passing through great difficulties and character and purity were on the decline everywhere.

The Vice-President invoked Swami's blessings so that Bharat could fulfill her aspirations and the effulgence and spread of divinity could be experienced by all.

Sri S. B. Chavan started his short speech by drawing our attention to the ordeal through which the country and entire humanity is passing. He said that the end use of Science and Technology was veering towards annihilation of humanity instead of the good of all. Harmony and human values were badly threatened. He prayed to Bhagavan to bless not only our Country but all mankind so that all could live in harmony as equals. Sri Chavan concluded his talk by addressing Swami as Creator of everything and by praying to Him to bless the entire country to come out of its present difficulties successfully.

After these two talks, Bhagavan blessed all the devotees present with His Birthday Message, highlighting the glory of the Atmic Principle, present in every living being as 'I'. (Bhagavan's discourse appears separately).

After Bhagavan's discourse, Mangalarati was offered to Him and laddu prasadam was distributed to all devotees present in Sai Kulwant Hall.

During the afternoon, Bhagavan blessed all devotees with His Darshan at about 4 p.m. Bhagavan gave Ananda to each and every person who had come for His darshan from far or near.

A musical offering was made to Swami by 30 youth artistes in Poornachandra Auditorium on the evening of His 72nd Birthday, in Bhagavan's presence. Pandit Deepak Choudhury conducted the orchestra which included, among others, Sri Nishikant Barodekar (grandson of late Smt. Hirabai Barodekar). All the compositions presented were of very high musical quality. As a part of the musical offering, two melodious bhajans were also presented by Sri Suresh Wadkar, a well known playback singer and a devotee of Swami.

### **Greek Drama**

The last cultural programme was the drama entitled 'The Path of Bhagavata', enacted by a group of Greek young men on the evening of 24th November in Poornachandra Auditorium in Bhagavan's presence.

The drama depicted a few important episodes from Srimad Bhagavatam, the sweet story of Lord Krishna's life and the lives of His devotees.

The drama showed the great yearning which King Parikshit had for listening to the stories of Sri Krishna's Divine Leelas, particularly those that involved Him and the fortunate Pandavas—and

their delineation first by Sage Vyasa and later by Sage Suka, who had taken it upon himself to make Parikshit spend the last seven days of his life listening to the glories of Lord Krishna and thereby attain mergence in Him at the end of his life.

All the nineteen Greek devotees acted their parts well. The costumes, sets and dialogue-delivery were all of a very high standard-thus providing a grand finale to the week-long 72nd Birthday celebrations in a befitting manner. After the performance all the participants received safari-lengths from Bhagavan's Hands as a token of His Love.

### **Memorable Chanukah in Brindavan**

In the year 168 B.C., Antiochus Epiphanes IV, king of a foreign land, returning from his military expedition against Egypt, ransacked Jerusalem, and plundered the most sacred sanctuary of worship for the Jewish people, the Temple of Jerusalem. The subsequent desecration of this Holy House of Worship and persecution of the Jewish people by this despot continued for three long years.

The Temple was recaptured by the Maccabees under the leadership of Judah, also known amongst all Jews of the era as "Hammer." The sacred altar was purified, and on the 25th day of the month of Kislev (December) in the year 165 B.C., The Holy Temple was re-consecrated to the One God in All, whom the Jewish people worship and adore. The sacred lamps of the menorah were rekindled and incense was offered to God on the Temple's golden altar.

During the re-consecration of the Temple, the priests searched for oil to light the eternal flame of the menorah. However, they found only one unprofaned vessel of oil, enough to last for just one day. The priests had to find and prepare new sacred oil, but it would take many days. They prayed to God for help. During the following eight days, the eternal flame of the menorah remained lit until the new oil was ready. God's miracle of Love and Light, in which only enough oil for one day continued to light the sacred lamp of the Temple for eight days, is the miracle of Chanukah.

Today, every year in the month of December, Jewish people throughout the world celebrate God's gift of the re-consecration of the Holy Temple in Jerusalem by the Maccabees almost 2200 years ago and the miracle of the menorah which stayed lit for eight sacred days. The holiday is the eight days of Chanukah.

In December, 1980, at Brindavan, our beloved Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba graced the devotees with a celebration of Chanukah. During evening darshan Jewish devotees from all over the world gathered around an ancient menorah, owned by a Jewish family who had lived for many generations in Bangalore. While traditional Hebrew songs in praise of God were sung, Bhagavan Baba approached from a distance and acceded to the devotees' prayers. As the sacred traditional Chanukah prayers were sung in Hebrew, Bhagavan lit the Chanukah candles. "Blessed art Thou, oh Lord, Our God, King of the Universe, who sanctifies us with Holy Blessings, kindling in us the eternal Light of Love on this sacred night of Chanukah," was the prayer of every Jewish

devotee present. That day we were filled with Love and Bliss beyond compare. What a holy evening of Chanukah it was with God!

In an interview for Jewish devotees on the preceding day, Swami was asked, "Is Sai the Messiah of the Jews?"

Our Beloved Bhagavan replied, "That is not for Sai to say. That must be determined by you. The real Messiah is the totality of good. Sai is not any particular thing. He is everything."

May all people throughout the world receive the holy blessings of Chanukah. By God's Grace, may our hearts be lit with the sacred Light of Love, and may our thoughts, words and deeds be a holy testament to all people everywhere, of God's Love on Earth.

Happy Chanukah to everyone! Jai Sai Ram!

**Al Levy, USA**

*XVI CONVOCATION OF S.S.I.H.L:*

**Mr. Krishna Kant's call to Sai Students**

"The very presence of Sri Sathya Sai Baba ensures the Institute's unique place, which will remain unparalleled. It is under His guiding hand that the students of this Institute are preparing for life, not merely with the tools of academic excellence, but with reserves of morality and values which will mark them out as future leaders of society", stated Sri K. Krishna Kant, Vice-President of India, while delivering his Convocation Address at the Sixteenth Convocation of Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning on 22nd November, '97.

This year also the Convocation was held in the Poornachandra Auditorium, fully bedecked with beautiful floral decorations done by staff and students of Sri Sathya Sai Loka Seva Educational Institutions, Muddenahalli.

By 3 p.m., the Auditorium was fully packed with invitees, staff and students and Sai devotees. Exactly at that hour, the academic procession started from the Mandir with the Chancellor, Bhagavan Baba, the Chief Guest, Sri Krishna Kant and the Vice-Chancellor, Dr. G. Venkataraman, leading the procession. They were followed by members of the Institute Trust, members of Governing Body, Deans of the various faculties and members of the Academic Council. The procession was led into Poornachandra Auditorium by the Institute Band and the Registrar, Dr. A. V. Lakshminarasimham holding the Institute Mace, and with two MBA students, A. Arun and N. Niranjana, carrying the Emblem of the Institute on either side. The Band, smartly led by Dibyajyoti Das of M. Sc, Maths., played melodious tunes while marching into the Auditorium.

When the Chancellor, Bhagavan Baba, the Chief Guest and all others had taken their appointed places on the dais, the proceedings started with Veda-chanting by a group of students. The Vice



Chancellor requested Bhagavan to formally declare the Convocation open. Swami did so by saying: "I declare the Convocation open."

### **Vice-chancellor's address**

After extending a warm and cordial welcome to the Chancellor, the Chief Guest, other distinguished guests, graduands of the year, and all others present, the Vice-Chancellor Dr. G. Venkataraman stated that "In this fiftieth year of our Independence, our Institute takes great pride in offering graduates, who have been nursed in basic human values, especially in Sathya and Dharma, to our Motherland in her service." He stated that Sathya and Dharma are both badly needed in our society today, more than ever before.

Introducing the Chief Guest, Sri Krishna Kant, the Vice-Chancellor said that Sri Krishna Kant had taken active part in the freedom struggle including the Quit India Movement in 1942 and had been arrested along with various members of his family. Later, as a Rajya Sabha and Lok Sabha member, he took active interest in diverse matters at the national level. He was appointed the Governor of Andhra Pradesh in 1990 and held the post till he was recently elected as the Vice-President.

### **Uniqueness of the Institute**

Instead of referring to the customary accomplishments of the Institute, the Vice-Chancellor decided to talk about some of the unique features of the Institute.

He stated that during the last few months people have come to discuss the Sai System of Education from such far off places as Brazil, Argentina and Spain. He said, "In fact one gentleman was so keen about our methods that he wanted to open a branch of the Institute in California!"

### **Quality and Relevance**

Regarding the welcome shift in the emphasis of the University Grants Commission on giving primary importance to the quality and relevance of education, instead of mere academic excellence, Dr. Venkataraman said: "Quality and relevance have been our principal targets from day one, thanks to the constant inspiration provided by our Revered Chancellor. Guided by Him, we have adopted Devotion, Discipline and Duty as our watchwords." He further added: "In practical terms, we aim at promoting- harmony in thought, word and deed, or Trikarana shuddhi, which, our Revered Chancellor constantly reminds us, is the basis of all human values." Expatiating further, the Vice-Chancellor said while quality of education relates to its efficacy in shaping the character of the student, relevance means preparing the student for service to Society.

### **Performance of Sai Students in the Outside World**

The Vice-Chancellor cited two examples to elucidate the performance of Sai students in the outside world after they leave the Institute on completion of their studies.

In the first example, he referred to the favourable impression made by some of the women graduates of the Anantapur Campus, who were employed in a computer company in a big city, by their discipline, devotion to duty, punctuality and utilisation of time. He added that though the

Institute does not run a placement service as a matter of deliberate policy, many Directors and Managing Directors approach the Institute for getting graduating Sai Students.

In the second example, Dr. Venkataraman highlighted the service done by some women Alumni - collecting and distributing clothes and food worth several lakhs of rupees for relief work among the people of coastal Andhra Pradesh, when they were reeling under the ravages of cyclone and floods sometime ago. He also drew the attention of the audience towards the participatory method employed by ex-students in Mysore in training youth of a village in useful skills like masonry, plumbing, pump repair etc., and making sixty potter families self-supporting through technology intervention and simple marketing strategies.

### **Visit of Parliamentary Standing Committee for Human Resource Development**

The Vice-Chancellor recalled that a few months ago the Parliamentary Standing Committee, headed by Sri S. B. Chavan had paid a special visit to Prasanthi Nilayam to study the methods adopted by our Institute in imparting education and in moulding character and had conducted lengthy discussions regarding the Sai System of education. Dr. G. Venkataraman added, "Some months later, speaking at the public meeting in Bangalore, Sri Chavan strongly commended our approach to education, holding it as a model for the entire nation."

Dilating upon the unique and intimate relationship that Swami has with all the students and staff and the time He spends for them, the Vice-Chancellor said that Bhagavan is the very soul of the Institute and also its driving spirit. He added that whatever excellence has been achieved by students and staff, individually or collectively, is entirely due to Bhagavan.

The Vice-Chancellor concluded his talk by drawing the attention of all the graduating students to Swami's advice that students must actively adhere to Sathya and Dharma. Once these two are safeguarded, they would automatically protect the individual and the country. Dr. Venkataraman stated that once the graduates stepped into the world outside, the eyes of the whole world would be focussed on them and victory can be theirs if they decide to uphold Sathya and Dharma at all costs. This ancient teaching is very much valid even now.

After the Vice-Chancellor's address, Prof. U.S. Rao presented the candidates for the various degrees to the Chancellor, who conferred His benediction on all of them.

The Vice-Chancellor then administered the Convocation Pledge to the candidates.

### **Winners of gold medals**

The Chancellor presented gold medals to the students who had achieved distinction in various fields of study. As their names were called, the award winning candidates went upto the Chancellor and received their gold medals from Him.

The following is the list of the gold medalists with their respective distinction details.

Boys: Saliyan Satyajit Umesh (All Rounder Gold Medal); S. Sriram (B.Sc. Hons. in Maths.); N. Sundaran (B.Sc. Hons. in Physics); Ritesh Kumar Patnaik (B.Sc. Hons. in Chemistry); Vidya Shankar K. S. (M. Sc. Maths); N. Hari (M. Sc. Physics); Kishore A. V. S. (M. Sc. Chemistry);

Keshav Kumar Ray (M. Sc. Bio-Sciences); N. Rajagopal (M.B.A.); D. Rajesh (M.F.M.); Gunaranjan C. (M. Tech. Computer Science); Prasanth Kumar Pattnaik (M. Tech. Applied Optics).

Girls: Kum. Nidhi Sharma (B.A.); Kum. Indu Singh (B. Sc. Hons.in Botany); Kum. Lavanya Prlyya (B. Sc. Hons. in Zoology); Kum. Rajalakshmi K.S. (B. Ed.); Kum. D. Nalini (M. Sc. Home Science).

Ph.D. Dr. (Miss) K. P. Sai Leela, Dept. of English, Anantapur Campus, for her thesis on "The Religious and Mystical Elements in the Poetry of G. M. Hopkins and Rabindranath Tagore: A Comparative Study."

### **Vice-president glorifies dharma**

The Vice-President began his scholarly Convocation Address by stating that each individual has a strong and powerful role in shaping his own destiny and the destiny of humanity. Correct use of free will, which, when exercised in the interest of larger goals and purposes, releases forces that shape the collective destiny of all humanity. In this regard, the concept of Upanishads, 'Aham Brahmasmi' (I am God) is relevant. Thus, a person functions at both individual and cosmic levels.

### **Concept of Avatarhood**

Sri Krishna Kant stated that Gita reminds us that the Divine waits for the right moment to incarnate and uphold Dharma and save those who are wedded to it. It is remarkable that such divine interventions in the affairs of humanity are never disjointed, though they may be separated by hundreds and thousands of years.

### **Dharma Vis-à-Vis Religion**

The Vice-President said that Dharma is being equated, quite unfairly, with organised religion, which in fact has been one of the most potent divisive forces in all history. On the other hand Dharma is the very foundation of life and regulates every relationship, between individuals, between individuals and the society, and between individual and Nature. At the metaphysical level, it defines the relationship between man and God and provides direction, meaning and substance to human spiritual quest.

Defining Dharma as the product of intellect and inner experience, Sri Krishna Kant said: "The Vedas, Vedanta, Puranas, Smritis as well as literature, dance, drama and music resulted from such experience. It was at the bottom of every sublime human creativity. But at another level, it was the intuitive resource of India both at the collective and at the individual level. Through our oral tradition, the concept of Dharma entered the lives and beings of our people and guided their actions and conduct throughout their journey of life. Saints and poets gave some shape to aspects of this resource. Dharma became one with the very existence of the people. It became an inextricable aspect of their consciousness—or rather was, and is, the Indian people's consciousness itself."

### **Influence of Western Education**

The Vice-President opined that the western education system forced us to think in western ways. We attempted to fit ourselves into the straitjacket of western ideas and concepts. This resulted in conflicts, chaos and divisions in Indian Society. On the other hand the Sanathana Dharma (called Hinduism by some) did not insist on fierce loyalties to any particular dogma. It means ever renewing, ever fresh Dharma. Therefore, the salvation of India may lie in rediscovering itself through that immense and unlimited treasure called Dharma.

### **Cultural Heritage of India**

According to the Vice-President, Swami Vivekananda understood and very clearly enunciated the essence of India as Dharma.

Gandhiji had said that in Hinduism i.e. in Bharatiya or Sanathana Dharma, there is enough place for Christ, Mohammed, Zoroaster and Moses.

Even Jawaharlal Nehru, a modern rationalist with a scientific temper and eager to take India into the arena of modernity, had to acknowledge that without its cultural heritage, there could never be an India.

Sri Krishna Kant added that in this respect, the golden teachings of Bhagavan and the symbols we see in Prasanthi Nilayam reverberate with this all-encompassing spirit of Bharatiya Dharma, the Universal Dharma—the Bharatiya message to the world today.

### **Advice to Students**

The Vice-President concluded his thought-provoking speech with this advice to the new graduates: "You are now going to live in different parts of India, may be even the world. The atmosphere outside is nowhere near as pristine and pure as you have seen and breathed here. But I am sure, if you spread just some of the fragrance, love, purity and nobility that has been showered on you by Bhagavan here, you shall be contributing towards the creation of a more noble, a more pure and more harmonious world."

### **Drama by institute students**

A drama entitled 'Unity in Divinity' was presented by the Institute Students in the evening, in the presence of Bhagavan and all others, already seated in Poornachandra Auditorium.

The story revolves around three Sai devotees of Shantinagar. The first is the Municipal Chairman of the town (Sudhir Ranjan), the second, the Asst. Sales Manager of a business firm (Ujjwal Kumar) and the third a college lecturer (Santosh Verma). These three inspired young men, following Swami's teachings with characteristic zeal, wish to clean and renovate the temples and mosque of the town Shantinagar with active participation of the people of the town. It is their belief that in doing so they will not only uphold the cultural heritage of their town but will also become instrumental in raising the spiritual consciousness of all the residents.

Obstacles (expected and unexpected) crop up both in official and social spheres but the three devotees continue resolutely in the face of all difficulties, relying only on Bhagavan's Grace and Blessings.

The play comes to a dramatic end wherein all the people of the town have to take shelter in an old Krishna temple atop a hill to save themselves from a raging fire which threatens to engulf the whole town. They are saved (and brought closer) by praying together, when the fire stops just short of the Krishna Temple.

The sets, lighting, costumes, dialogue-delivery and acting by all the students, were of a very high standard. A qawwali, in which fine words were set to lilting tunes and which was sung well by all the participants was a highlight of the drama.

Bhagavan blessed all the participating students and was photographed with them at the end.

AVATAR VANI:

JANMA DINA SANDESH:

### **Recognise Your Divine Identity**

*Neither merit nor sin, neither joy nor sorrow;  
Neither mantras nor pilgrimages;  
Neither charity nor yajna;  
Neither eating, nor food, nor consumer of food;  
I am none of these.  
I am the Eternal Bliss Divine,  
The One Absolute. I am Siva.*

#### *Embodiments of Love!*

You are neither endowed with merit nor with sin. You are not creatures of happiness or sorrow. You are not creatures of mantras (sacred chants). Nor the products of manual or mechanical skills. You are not renunciants or hedonists. Who, then, are you? Your real form is the Eternal Bliss Divine, ("Sadananda Roopam"), the Divine form of Auspiciousness (Siva).

But, because of the differences in external physical forms, you are victims of the ignorance of your true selves. From a pauper to a millionaire, from an ignoramus to a great scholar, irrespective of whether one is a male or a female, young or old, anyone, when describing one's self, uses the term "I" ("Nenu"). The principle of "I" is the Atmic Principle. The scriptures have described it as "Atma" or "Hridaya."

"Hridaya" means that which enshrines kindness. Hence all of you are embodiments of kindness. It is only when everyone recognises this quality of kindness that world peace will be realised. People pronounce the prayer: "Lokas Samasthas-sukhino Bhavanthu!" ("May all the people in all the worlds be happy"). But few practise that kindness which will make the people happy.

#### **The "I" Principle**

No individual can introduce himself (or herself) to the outside world without using the term "I" ("Nenu"). Even birds and beasts are not using the term "I" because they do not know human speech. Otherwise, each of them would declare: "I am a cow", "I am an eagle", "I am a dog" and so on. All beings in the world proclaim their existence by using the term "I".

The "I" is present in all beings. The all-pervading Brahmic Principle is also the "I". Without properly understanding the nature of the "I", man identifies himself with the body and is immersed in the delusion caused by this mistaken identification.

The whole cosmos is associated with plurality (duality or "dvaitam") based on the distinction between "I" and "this" (the other). "This" refers to what is perceived ("drishyamu"). "I" refers to the seer ("drashta"). Without the seer, the seen cannot exist. Swami held up his handkerchief and said: This is a cloth. The reference to the cloth cannot be made without using the term "this." Pointing to a tumbler Swami said: This is a glass. Here, again we cannot refer to the tumbler without using the term "this." The term "this" has to be used to refer to a specific object. When I say, "this is a hall", the statement points to a specific object that is perceived.

All names and forms are associated with objects of perception. It is the seer (drashta) who testifies to the existence of what is perceived.

### **The seer and the seen**

You see the bulbs shedding light in the hall. What is shedding the light is not the bulb but the current in the bulb. The bulb is a vesture ("Upadhi").

If you ask a young boy when he came to Prasanthi Nilayam, he will answer: "I came on the 20th, Swami." If he is asked! "Why did you come?" he will answer: "I came for the Convocation." Who is it that came? The body (of the boy). Identifying himself with the body, he replies that "he" came on the 20th. Yesterday, he slipped and sustained a fracture in the leg. Today, he comes to me and says: "Swami! My leg has sustained a fracture." Does not this mean that his leg is different from him? At one moment you identify yourself with your body. At another moment you distinguish yourself as separate from your body. That means that all that you perceive belongs to the realm of the seen ("drishyam"). The perceiver who enters into the perception of all things is the Reality. He is unchanging and remains changeless through all the categories of time-past, present and future. The Shrutis called that unchanging entity as "I" ("Nenu"). That "I" represents the Atma. The Atma becomes "Hridaya", the seat of compassion ("Karuna"). All terms like "I", "Karuna", "Atma", "Hridaya" or "God" are all synonymous. They are all different names given to the same entity in common parlance. The name Rama or Krishna by which one may be called is a name conferred on a person and is not born with him.

The first name given to anyone at birth is "I". Even for God the first original name is "I".

The Upanishads declare: "Aham Brahmasmi." ("I am Brahman"). In this declaration "Aham" ("I") comes first and "Brahman" comes thereafter. Hence, the "I" is the primal basis for everything. Very few make any attempt to recognise the nature of this "I".

Many persons are engaged in different kinds of spiritual exercises. For whose sake are these exercises done? The usual answer is: "I am doing the sadhanas to seek God." Where is the need to search for God, when He is omnipresent? It is a ludicrous exercise. When you are yourself Divine, where is the need for a quest? A man who goes enquiring about where he is will be deemed crazy.

## **Role of the Mind**

Man today has failed to recognise his Divine identity. This situation has to be changed. How is it to be done? A bent branch may be straightened, a rock may be softened, but can a perverted mind be reformed? (Telugu Poem) It is the incorrigible perverted mind that accounts for man going astray.

The mind is the root cause of man's happiness or sorrow, health or disease, his goodness or wickedness. What, then, is the meaning of man's search? It is the desire to experience a vision of the Self (Atma).

The different forms of devotional exercises in which people engage themselves are not really for experiencing God but for some kind of mental satisfaction.

If you want to go on with these spiritual exercises, you must do so with only one aim in view, namely, to get rid of the "anatma-bhava" (forgetting the Atma and identifying one's self with the body). You will then realise that the Atma is the only reality. The "anatma-bhava" is like the darkness in a room. It has no existence of its own. The moment a light is brought, the darkness disappears.

You may ask: "How am I to declare I am the Brahman? (Aham Brahmasmi)." Yes, you can do so. But, first of all you must understand the "Aham", the "I". The "I" principle is the Divine. Vedanta declares: "Ekam eva advithiyam Brahma." The Absolute is one only without a second. In the work-a-day world, men are used to worshipping the Absolute with different names and forms. But the Supreme Reality is only one. Different names are used in the context of different functions. It is like calling the same person by different epithets according to the particular function he is discharging at any moment. God has no form or name. All names and forms are creations of the human mind. The Sruti has declared that the Lord is the attributeless eternal Reality.

In this context, there is no point in people going after gurus and preceptors. You are your own preceptor. You must subdue your mind. Only then you can develop good qualities. Man is losing peace because of giving a free rein to the mind.

The Divine nature of the "I" (Aham) must be properly understood. That I is the master of the body, the senses and the intellect. It is the power that permeates the entire cosmos. To worship such an omnipresent power in a small shrine is hardly appropriate. To confine the infinite Divine to the limits of a small photograph for worship is hardly befitting. What is the need to have a number of photographs? It is demeaning the Divine to adore Him in a multiplicity of pictures. (Swami sang a song in Telugu which dilated on the futility of trying to erect temples, light lamps or confer names on the infinite cosmic Lord who is boundless, infinitely effulgent, is the indweller in every being and contains within Himself the entire universe. How can such a God be offered food or adored in any way?)

All the forms in which God is worshipped are products of the human imagination. The proper way to experience God is to feel with all your inner being that you are the Divine itself. That

experience will make you feel the presence of the Divine in all beings and in all things. With that experience there will be no room for hatred towards anyone. Such a one will not do evil deeds.

What is the reason for the ubiquitous existence all over the world of violence, discord and disorder? It is the absence of the feeling of the spiritual oneness of all beings. The same Divine Indweller is present in all beings, like the current which illumines all bulbs. All are manifestations of the Divine, as declared in the Gita. (Swami sang a song to describe how the Gopikas found it impossible to realise the true nature of Krishna, whose divinity was manifested in the subtlest particle and in the infinite vastness of the cosmos.)

### **The transformation process**

When men begin to recognise the omnipresence of God they will be transformed. All their thoughts and actions will get divinised. It may be asked: "Who is responsible for the evil in the world?" The persons indulging in the evil deeds are responsible. God is only a witness. The rewards or punishments people receive in life are fruits of their own actions and not conferred by God.

When all actions are done in a spirit of dedication to the Divine and with a recognition of one's own divinity, all actions become sanctified. Identification of the "I" with the body is the cause of all troubles. It turns the "I" into the ego (Ahamkara). The ego is at the root of all troubles. There is nothing wrong in looking after the body, but life should not be based on attachment to the body.

As I was coming to the Hall, many devotees greeted me with the words, "Happy Birthday!" They should wish for "happy birthdays" for those who are not happy (cheers). I do not need your birthday greetings. The Divine is perennially in bliss (Nityanandam). "The Divine is ever blissful, confers supreme happiness on others, is the very embodiment of the highest wisdom, has transcended the opposites, is vast as space, cloud-like in complexion, with perfect features." (Sanskrit Sloka) Like the lightning in the heart of a cloud, wisdom should illumine your hearts. That wisdom will reveal the Divine in you.

Embodiments of Love! You have all come here at great expense and trouble. Make the utmost effort to understand the spiritual basis of the "I" principle. When you regard the "I" as the Self (Atma), you will be free from all suffering. In case troubles come, they will vanish like the snow on a mountain. Why should you bother about these passing clouds? When you have realised Self-awareness ("Atmajnana") there will be no need for you to worry about anything.

All troubles arise because obsessed with the mind, man forgets the Atma. When your life is illumined by the effulgence of the Atma, the mind will be put in the shade.

When you ignore the body and the mind, you will understand your true nature-the Atmic Principle in you. When you have realised this basic truth, you can carry on all your daily activities and do your duties in a spirit of dedication.

Today there is no peace anywhere in the world. What is the reason? People have forgotten the reality of the Spirit (Atma-tattwa). They have lost faith in the Spirit and have developed



attachment to worldly things. People look at the phenomenal world. But they do not see it as a manifestation of the Divine. Herein lies their foolishness. All that is perceived by the eyes is divine. The perceiver is also divine. Spirituality points out the Divinity that is present in both the seer and the seen. When this basic spiritual oneness is realised, the division between man and nature disappears.

Have the conviction that God is with you always. A mother may forget her child, but God will never forget you. He is closer to you than any mother. Never forget God.

Are all those who are coming to Prasanthi Nilayam experiencing "Prasanthi"? No. They are engaged in too much talking, moving about from one place to another. What for have you come? For whose abode have you come? Why should you wander about restlessly? Make use of this golden opportunity to acquire peace of mind. Gather as much spiritual experience as you can while you are here and ruminate over it when you go back like a cow chewing the cud.

You have come here to strengthen your relationship with the Divine. Hold on to it firmly. Put into practice at least one of the things you learn here. Of what avail is a mountain of book knowledge without a modicum of practice.

It is not enough to chant the names of God. God must be installed in the heart. Make your conscience your guide and preceptor. That will promote true devotion. All external paraphernalia have no use.

There are four mottos which all devotees should follow: Avoid bad company. Welcome association with good persons. Remember always the distinction between the transient and the permanent. Ceaselessly engage yourself in meritorious acts. It is by these means that you become good. Remember the message of Vyasa epitomised in the dictum: "Help ever; hurt never." If these basic rules are followed, all countries will be happy and peaceful. Each country is a part of the mansion of planet earth. Bharat is a part of this mansion. When we have this broad vision, humanity will be one in spirit.

Swami does not rejoice in the celebration of birthdays. Since all of you have come for this celebration I am obliged to give you satisfaction. I have no wants. Whatever I do is for your sake. Recognise this truth. I have no dislike for anyone and no one dislikes me. All are mine and I belong to all. My benediction is: "may all be happy." Everyone should adhere to the path of righteousness. All should manifest their spiritual essence and experience spiritual bliss. Till you realise that spiritual oneness, you have to perform devotional acts like bhajans, japas and prayers.

### **Advice to Devotees**

Bhagavan then sang His favourite bhajan, "Bhajan bina sukha santhi nahi", and concluded His discourse with words of practical advice to the devotees. He said:

You must install in your hearts the essence of today's message to all of you. I want you to exercise control over five vital things in life. The first is to realise that "**Misuse of money is evil.**" **Don't waste money.** If you wish to keep a photo (of Bhagavan), have only one. Why do you waste money on buying too many photos? Do not go on buying photos.

Second: "**Misuse of food.**" Realise that "**Food is God.**" Your body is the product of the food taken by your parents. **Do not waste food. Waste of food is waste of God.**

Third: **Do not waste Time. Time is God.** The scriptures have extolled in many ways God as the Master of Time. **Time wasted is life wasted.**

Fourth: **Do not waste Energy.** Energy enters into every one of our actions. When you see, speak, hear, act or think energy is expended. In every one of these activities you should see that you do not waste your energies unnecessarily.

Fifth: **Every moment do not forget God whatever you may be doing.** God is present wherever you may go. He is with you, beside you and around you always. Hence there is no need for you to go to some temple to pray to God. Your heart is your temple. Turn your vision inward. Thereby understand the Atmic Principle.

In your journey to Prasanthi Nilayam you must have undergone many inconveniences. In future avoid unnecessary journeys. You may do so when you need it for your contentment.

Hence, **do not waste time.** Do not give room for useless thoughts.

**Do not waste your love.** Love is life itself. Without love one is as good as dead. Install love in your hearts.

### **Avoid bad company**

Avoid unnecessary and excessive association with all and sundry. Many of you have come here away from your kith and kin. People have come from America or Japan, Germany or Russia, leaving their parents or other relatives. Why, then, should they cultivate new relationships with others here? Keep yourself to yourself as far as possible. Keep your mind Pure. There is no need to indulge in talk with people in all sorts of places. Talk less, think more. Cultivate this habit. Unnecessary association with strangers may have unexpected consequences of a serious nature. You might have noticed in the play staged by the students how one person got into trouble because of his association with some undesirable persons. Ultimately he recognised his mistake and felt that his mind had been poisoned by association with bad persons. Others should not be blamed. The mistake was his in not keeping his association confined to good persons. He cried over his folly in joining bad company. To join bad company and come to grief is a self-wrought calamity. Keep your association with anyone to the barest minimum. Genuine spiritual aspirants should be particularly careful in eschewing bad company. They should create an environment conducive to their spiritual progress and mental peace. That is the only thing Swami wants. Having come to Prasanthi Nilayam, all of you must become exemplary devotees. Outsiders must feel spontaneously how exemplary is the behaviour of Sai students and Sai devotees. That reaction will do you more good than satisfying me (cheers).

### **The devotee of devotees**

I have no devotees. You may describe yourselves as Sathya Sai devotees. I am myself a devotee. Whose devotee? A devotee of those who claim to be my devotees. My duty is to fulfil their

desires. I belong to you and you belong to me. Understand and strengthen this relationship. This is my sole desire.

I do not relish the celebration of my birthday or pompous decorations for the purpose. Such ostentation is not good for anyone. Adopt a practical attitude towards the spiritual life.

With the holy thoughts in you on this auspicious day, you must go out into the world and spread your sacred feelings among others. Do not confine your feelings to yourselves or retain them only during your stay here. Spread them wherever you go.

Swami is above all distinctions of caste, religion or language, The caste of humanity, the religion of love and the language of the heart - these are what I stand for. Experience this truth and share your joy with others (cheers)

**(From Bhagavan's Discourse in Sai Kulwant Hall on the morning of November 23, 1997)**

### **"Sai Inner Views and Insights" An apology by Leela Press**

Leela Press on behalf of author, Howard Murphet, wishes to apologize to Maharani Prithwi Bir Kaur of Jind for incorrectly stating that she was divorced. In addition they regret inaccurately reporting her story in the chapter Living Stones, in the book Sai Inner Views and Insights.

**GURUDEVA VANI:**

**XVI CONVOCATION OF S.S.S. INSTITUTE**

## **The Educational Crisis and the Way out**

*Wealth has been apotheosised;  
Arrogance has become a creed;  
Peace has become remote from man;  
Egoistic boast is fashionable  
Property has become an adornment;  
Selfishness is installed in the heart  
Sense of self-respect has declined  
Hypocrisy has become the hall-mark.  
Love and affection have become sickly;  
The heart is divorced from righteousness  
Life has become a burden;  
People have lost their moorings.  
What does the future hold?  
Make education value-based  
And ensure a future for Bharat!*

*Students! Embodiments of love! Educationists!*

Bharat, which has been the treasure house of spirituality, is steadily going down in righteousness (Dharma). Injustice, dishonesty, immorality and other demonic qualities are having free play in

the country. In this situation, students alone—both men and women—will be able to deal with these evil forces and establish peace.

Students! If your parents will feel unhappy if you are backward in your studies, how much more unhappy will Mother Bharat be feeling over the decline of moral values! Students must take a resolve at the outset to serve their mothers and the Motherland. They must strive for restoration of peace and order in the country.

A country does not mean a piece of earth. It is the people who make the country.

What is the meaning of transformation of people? Transformation is not one specific object. It is the entire process of refinement by which people get rid of their bad thoughts and actions and cultivate good thoughts and do good acts in daily life.

What is the meaning of education (Vidya)? What is the kind of education suitable for young people today? What are the norms of right education? What kind of education will promote the elevation of man? What is the use of the present system of education? The one who examines and finds the right answers to these five questions will be a wise adviser for the nation. The value of a person is not derived from education alone. The cultural refinement of his life-style is also essential.

### **Value of Culture**

What is meant by culture? It is the realisation of the inherent divinity in man and making it manifest in one's way of life. A life without culture is like a house without light. A dark house is a home for foul—smelling bats and not for fragrant objects. A person without culture is like a stringless kite, which is tossed hither and thither. An education bereft of culture is worthless like a counterfeit coin.

Hence culture is most important, especially in relation to one's character. In the sphere of education many revolutionary changes are needed. Since the attainment of freedom 50 years ago, many committees have been set up by the government to go into the problem of educational reform. These committees have recommended many reforms. There has been no implementation of these reforms.

Even now, no one is trying to restore the ancient ideals of education. As a result the country is riddled with violence and disorder. Educational institutions have become centres of disorder.

"Vidya" means acquisition of knowledge. In the English language this is called "Education." The term education is derived from the Latin term educare, which means "drawing out". The idea is to draw out what is latent. This is a worldly change. But what has to be is the divine feeling present in the human heart. One refers to living and the other to life itself. In addition to earning a living one has to understand the purpose of life. Both these aspects are as essential as the two eyes for a person.

Today there is too much concentration on one aspect: how to earn a living. Even here, there is a steady decline in moral standards.

### **The Divinity in Man**

No one makes a serious attempt to realise the divinity in man. No attempt is made to understand one's true nature. That is the real purpose of life. True education means trying to manifest the inner divinity in man. How is this manifestation to be brought about?

Education is that which illumines the physical, the mental and the social environment of man. It is not confined to one specific sphere. Education should illumine every aspect of life - the economic, the political, the moral, the spiritual and other spheres of life.

Students consider book knowledge as education. This gives them only superficial knowledge. They need practical knowledge. This knowledge should enable them to lead righteous lives.

### **Decline in Values**

Today people are worshipping wealth as divine. This is totally wrong. Wealth can never give peace of mind. It may provide physical comforts not mental peace. Without understanding this, people and the government imagine that there is great progress in education. "What is this progress? Justice and morality are confined to books. The hearts have become the abode of all that is foul. Hands have become instruments of selfishness. This is the progress achieved by education today." (Telugu Poem)

### **Aims of Education**

Is this the mark of true education? No. Efforts must be made to eliminate such feelings. Moreover, all that is learnt must be utilised for promoting the well being of society. All should work for the welfare of society.

"Sarve loka hithe rathah" (Let all rejoice in the well-being of all people in the world) "Sarve jnana Sampannah" (the wealth of all knowledge). "Sarve Samhita gunaihi" (Let all be endowed with good qualities). These are three main pronouncements (regarding the educated persons). This implies that every student, after completing his studies, should dedicate himself (or herself) to serving society. For this service, one should acquire all the necessary knowledge. Students should have all good qualities. A good student should promote a calm atmosphere wherever he stays. He should be ever prepared to help others. These are the marks of a good student. Unfortunately students today are not having any of these qualities. Who is to blame? Not the students. Not the teachers. All in society are responsible. Students do not possess the requisite abilities to pursue the right path. Teachers also lack these abilities. They do not take up the task of moulding the character of students from an early age. To do so they have to train themselves to be ideal teachers. When the teachers lead an exemplary life, the students will follow their example. There is no scrutiny of how teachers teach or how students study.

The Government is spending over Rs. 2,000 crores a year on education. No one knows what the outcome of all this expenditure is. What transformation is taking place in the students? What is their future? No one seems to enquire into all this. Only money is spent endlessly.

### **Politics and Education**

Nor is that all. Politicians are invading the educational field and ruining the students. Students have, of course, to study political science. But the educational field should not be politicalised. Today students are entering the political field and not only spoiling their studies but ruining their entire future. Hence students should resolve to pursue their studies with devotion.

Parents also should encourage their children to pursue education in the right spirit. They should not desire so much that their children should secure high ranks. It is not greatness that matters but goodness. They should wish that their children should earn a good name rather than achieve purely academic excellence.

### **Education and Society**

Make proper use of your education for the good of society. Be men of good character. That will make you shine before the public. True education will make you divine. Education is not mere knowledge of words. It should broaden the mind. The mere acquisition of degrees is valueless. Character is more important and it can be developed only by taking to the spiritual path. Of what use is an education that does not promote good qualities?

### **Need for Humility**

Students! Boys and Girls! Together with academic education you have to acquire wisdom and a sense of right and wrong. Knowledge without wisdom, scholarship without determination, music without melody, learning without humility, a society without discipline, friendship without gratitude, speech without truth all these are utterly useless. Hence everyone should seek to follow the correct path.

There is no sense of respect for people in society. Gratitude is absent. Scholars are without discretion. The educated lack humility.

Humility is the hall-mark of true education. Humility does not mean moving about with a bowed head. It calls for respect to humanness. It is beastly to go about causing fear in others. Humans should be free from fear. Both fear and frightening are animal qualities. Men must be fearless. Today fear haunts every place. How does fear arise? When one is full of bad thoughts and bad feelings.

### **Free Education in ancient India**

Educational institutions today are full of disorder and indiscipline. How different were the ancient abodes of learning! In ancient times education used to be offered free. In those days, the preceptors used to send the students to the forests. The students used to be examined periodically about their studies. For instance, the students would be asked: "What tree did you find useless in the forest you visited?" The replies of the students varied, each one saying that one particular tree was useless. The preceptor did not accept their answers. He told them that all trees were useful, each in its own way. Every tree had something or other which had medicinal properties. If a tree did nothing else, it served to take in the carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and release the life-giving oxygen for the benefit of man. Every tree serves a useful purpose. Equally every human being is valuable.

Today education has become very expensive. Education should be made free. Then there would be no room for corrupt practices over seats.

### **Sai Education**

In the Sai Educational System, there are no problems of student unrest because education is free. Our students are happy. All of us are also happy (cheers).

Because of free education the students' behaviour is exemplary. All the students feel spontaneously: "Here we are getting free education. We must conduct ourselves well to show our gratitude to all concerned." Opportunities must be provided for students to develop such an attitude towards their alma mater. In our Institute no fees are charged for anything.

We must strive to revive the ancient system of free education. Today such a sacred approach to education is lacking among students, parents, teachers and the authorities. The change must come at the governmental level. Then the public at large will also change.

There must be a change in the moral climate of the educational system. Only then the educational institutions can turn out young men and women of character.

### **Tribute to Sai Students**

The first thing students have to learn today is moderation in speech. Talk less and study more. Although I do not speak about it often, I am immensely happy over the character of our students (cheers). They are inspired by high ideals. Some of the students even go to the extent of reforming their parents. With due humility and reverence they tell their parents to change their ways of living. Whenever I hear reports of such conduct by our students I rejoice in the fact that we have such students.

I do not expect anything from the students. All that I desire is that they should earn a good name when they go out. Their behaviour should be beyond cavil. Ill-educated students are worse than illiterates.

Scepticism seems to grow with more and more education. The more intelligent the students are, the more doubts develop in them. Lacking self-confidence, ultimately they fail to reach Self-realisation.

Our Institute students are always happy. This happiness lends beauty to their lives. It is not physical beauty, but the spiritual beauty derived from good character.

### **Decline of Dharma**

Our Vice-President (in his Convocation address) dwelt at length on Dharma. Today Sathya and Dharma are not very much in evidence. Dharma seems to be fleeing from the people. Sathya and Dharma are declining among the people. The ancient sacred Vedic teachings are disappearing. It is essential to revive them.

Students should not be obsessed with earning money ("dhanam"). They must be keen on acquiring good qualities ("gunas"). Education without ethics is no education at all. Education must teach men to be sincere in thought, word and deed as the mark of humanness.

The state of Indian education is such that it breeds all sorts of bad tendencies in the students. It encourages deception and dishonesty.

Education should result in the purification of the heart. Students need not be over-anxious to score high marks. It is more important to cultivate a good heart. Revere your parents. Promote social improvement. Co-operate with your fellow-men. These are the things you should learn.

### **Nature as Teacher**

Make Nature your teacher, instead of relying too much on books. The vast universe has many lessons to teach. Make your heart your preceptor. Esteem God as your best friend. He will never fail you, unlike most fair-weather friends in the world.

I prefer to hear that you have earned a good name for your behaviour than praise for your scholarship. Do not calculate what money you can earn from your degrees.

You must ask yourselves: "What good can I do to my family? What help can I render to my fellowmen?" Education is not for securing a job. It is for acquiring knowledge and wisdom. It is unfortunate that education has been linked to jobs and earning money.

You must move among the people in a friendly and comradely spirit. Do not hate anyone. Follow the principle: "Help ever; hurt never."

### **Salaries and service**

Today many occupy high positions and earn fabulous salaries. How many of them do work that can justify the salaries they are paid? Men who receive Rs. 20,000 a month do not do even Rs. 20 worth of honest work. This is treachery to the nation. An educated person must give proper return for the salary he receives. Students must bear this in mind when they enter service. They must give adequate return for the salary they receive. That will give you job satisfaction and soothe your conscience.

Our students are behaving in an exemplary manner. Whatever their background before joining the Institute, within a month the new students are transformed into ideal students. They develop commendable qualities.

Boy and girl students! Wherever you may go and whatever institutions in which you may work, bring a good name to the Institute and earn a good name for yourselves. Girl students who may get married should serve their in-laws in such a way that the good name of the Institute is vindicated. The mother-in-law should be proud of a well-educated daughter-in-law coming from the Sai Institute (cheers).

The good name you earn will rejoice me. Do your duty wherever you may go.



Earn the esteem of your employers. That will please me. This is my message to you. (cheers).

### **Student's devotion to Swami**

Students! Many of you have secured high ranks in the examinations. This year 150 students of the Sathya Sai Higher Secondary School appeared for the public examinations held by the Central Board. All of them passed in 1<sup>st</sup> class. In many States when one or two candidates get Ist class, they give publicity to it. I asked our students why they do not get their photos published in the papers when they have secured a 1<sup>st</sup> class. "We studied for the sake of Swami and not to get our photos published in the papers", they replied (cheers). Those words delighted me immensely. That such high sentiments are present among young children is known to very few. The children are full of fine qualities. They have the ability to develop the whole world. But they do not try to utilise it. Students should realise the integral relationship between them and the world. Hence they should not hesitate to serve the world. With determination they can achieve anything they want to.

Students possess immense power, more than anybody else. My students are my property (cheers). Earn a good name wherever you go—from the home to the nation. That will please me more than anything else. When you earn a good name, your human birth is redeemed. Sankaracharya has warned youth against being proud of wealth, progeny or youth-hood. All these are transient. What are enduring are truth and fame ("Sathyam and Keerti"). Never bother about success or defeat, loss or gain, happiness or sorrow. They are incidental to life in the world.

With the conviction that very soon our students will go out into the world, set an example to everyone in whatever institutions they may work and usher in a new era, I bless one and all.

One more thing. I do not mind whether you achieve high ranks or not. But do not get any "remarks" against you. I am aware that nearly all of you are behaving well. But one or two may go astray. I desire that everyone should be exemplary. This is my benediction (cheers).

After the conclusion of Bhagavan's discourse, the convocation ended with the singing of the National Anthem.

**(From Bhagavan's Address to the XVI Convocation of the Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning on November 22, 1997, in the Poornachandra Auditorium)**

### **Unique Cricket Stadium in Prasanthi Nilayam**

Over the last four months a unique cricket stadium of international standards has come up in Prasanthi Nilayam. New stands have been constructed on the Eastern side of Sri Sathya Sai Hill View Stadium, while the statues of Hanuman, Krishna, Siva, Buddha, Zoroaster, and Jesus continue to adorn the Western side, as before. Another new addition is the two-winged pavilion with the same traditional architectural look and artwork as the existing Santhi Vedika.

A fore-runner friendly 30-overs match was played on the lush green grass between Prasanna XI and Viswanath XI on 7th December, to check the bounce of the wicket and the movement of the ball in the outfield, in the presence of Bhagavan (who watched the match for over half an hour), a few guests, staff and students of Sri Sathya Sai institutions and the public. The match was won by Prasanna XI by 19 runs.

The main Sathya Sai Unity Cup Match between India XI and World XI is scheduled to be played on 30th December, '97.