

A Christmas Feast

Christmas in America is usually a Day of decorations, feasting, drinking, and costly gift-giving. The spiritual significance of the birth of Christ is often lost under the deluge of festivity and excitement. But, for 85 Westerners who were at Prasanthi Nilayam for the Christmas of 1975, it will be a time they will never forget. Not only were they able to spend the holy day in the Holiest Place on Earth, the 'Bethlehem' of the 20th century, and certainly of the next 20 centuries, but, they spent the Day in the Presence of the Living Embodiment of Christ-Love, Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba. And, He graciously arranged a Christmas program that we can never forget.

On the afternoon of the 25th the devotees gathered at Prasanthi Mandiram, in the presence of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba. Mr. Kasturi spoke on the 'peace on earth' and 'goodwill among men' that Jesus was born to establish and reminded the gathering that the same task of establishing Shanti and Prema in this fear-torn world is being done by Bhagavan. Jesus was called so, since he saved his People from Sin; and, Sri Kasturi quoted from the Gita to illustrate that Sri Krishna too saved His people (those that dedicated all thoughts words and deeds to Him and conquered the prompting of their ego) from sin. He also elaborated on some 'signs and wonders' of both Jesus and Baba, especially the healing of lepers and from the significant similarities of the incidents, drew the inference that faith surrender and obedience by the entire personality, are the surest means of winning Grace.

Dr. John Hislop who spoke next, described the Sivaratri Day on which Baba gave him the unique gift of the 'created-from-thin-air' Christ-on-Cross icon, the authentic portrait of the Son of God suffering for the sins of man. He also revealed that Baba had discoursed about the early origins of the cult of Christ and of Namasmara being a major Sadhana of the religious school that influenced it.

Baba then gave the devotees His Christmas Message. He directed all, to follow the example of Christ in their own lives, progressing on the spiritual path from the Dvaita stage of separateness, 'I am the Messenger of God', through the Visishta-advaita stage of 'I am the Son of God' into the Advaitic stage, 'I and my Father are ONE', when you are fully aware of your innate Divinity: He said that, like Jesus, man should be detached from unreasonable affection towards the body, for the physical ever leads to wrong and evil. He emphasised the ideals of brotherhood, service to the distressed, inner purity, sincerity and humility that Jesus demonstrated in every act of his.

He declared that the essential teaching of the Christian Faith, as of all religions is Love, free, full and with no desire for any recompense. He said that when elders who are the guardians of social mores lose themselves in the tangle of ritual and ceremonial, the outer shell rather than the inner kernel, they are undermining youth's Faith, which is the most precious possession of man. People lose faith in God when they find the so-called orthodox believers live empty lives, devoid of truth and peace. Jesus condemned those who stuck to empty formalities; he insisted on the inner yearning and the inner thirst and rejected the accretions of formal codes and injunctions. He taught people the validity and value of sacrifice, even the sacrifice of life, for upholding high spiritual ideals. He preached that the heart that is saturated in compassion is the veritable temple

of God and that man must fill himself with joy, by loving and serving those who are pining for want of these two vital needs.

After the Discourse, Swami led the bhajans, and then asked the foreigners to sing a Christmas Carol. It was a "Silent Night, Holy Night," for all of us. Later in the evening, there was a candle-light procession around the Prasanthi Mandir, with us singing a variety of Christmas Carols.

In America, there is Feast on Christmas Day, and the family eats 'left-overs' the next day. But, Swami saved the Feast for the morning of the 26th, when He met for over an hour with the Westerners in the Mandir. Words cannot describe the Love and Joy that He showered on us in that meeting. His words of advice, guidance and instruction will always be with us, leading our hearts and minds to the eternal Sai-Christ within.

—*Richard Bayer*

Laurels to Sri Sathya Sai College (Brindavan)

"In the wake of the splendid successes of the students of the Sri Sathya Sai Arts & Science College, Whitefield, in the Bangalore University Examinations of April/May 1975, the College has won further laurels in the academic field by winning the prestigious Commerce Graduates Association of Bangalore Rolling Cup for the best results in Final B. Com for the Second year in succession. The cup was given away by the Governor of Karnataka at a function on 6-12-1975. C. Srinivas, V. Jayaram and Murli Krishna were awarded gold medals for securing ranks in the Final B. Com. examination.

The credit for scoring the highest marks in Sanskrit in the Bachelor's degree examination under Part I, went to Sri Anoop Jhalani, a student of the College. In recognition of this, the Andhra Saraswatha Sanga of Bangalore awarded a Gold Medal to the above student on 28-12-1975."

—*Ed.*

Sadhana

Take God to be Father or Mother and worship Him; but, this has to be just a step, towards the Awareness of God as your Reality. No one sticks to the slate for long. You must soon feel that something more lasting than a flower, or the fragrance of incense should be offered to One who is Father, Mother, Guide, Guru, of all humanity. You have to purify your minds that He may be reflected therein and cleanse your hearts that He may reside therein. Worship is only a means of educating the emotions and controlling and charnelising the impulses that lead man into desert wastes in search of water in mirages. The age-long urges and instincts have to be trained and transmuted into higher ideals, powers and achievements. This is the purpose of Sadhana.

—**Baba**

A Letter From a Parent

Dear dear loved one,

You ask, "How will you know when *I am near you?*"

When on a sultry night
Everything is hot and still
The first cool breeze
Brushes your cheeks
I am caressing you
THINK OF ME

When the pangs of hunger are satisfied
And loneliness is pierced by happiness
THINK OF ME

When your mouth is parched
And you can hardly speak
The first sip of cool water
I am soothing you
THINK OF ME

When the cloud of death disappears
First are the opening of a baby's smiling
eyes
THINK OF ME

When I sprinkle your face with rain
And wash the earth, the dry brown leaves
The first clean smell of rain
I am cleansing you
THINK OF ME

When pain dissolves
And tears disappear
THINK OF ME

When steadfast eyes are horrified
By the cruelties of life
The first glance
Of the silent setting sun
I am comforting you
THINK OF ME

Then you ask, "How will you know

when *you* are near *Me?*"

When the burning sun
Has scorched you and the earth
The sand and dust fill your eyes
Not a sliver of shade about
AND YOU LOVE ME

When loneliness is accompanied
by hunger and not one can be satisfied
AND YOU LOVE ME

When your lips are cracked
Your tongue feels like clay
Your throat seals up
There is no water about—
Not even a mirage in sight
AND YOU LOVE ME

When you hold a crying child
With pleading eyes dying
AND YOU LOVE ME

When I stir the ocean
To a crescent
You flounder in its depth
Like a leaf
AND YOU LOVE ME

When pain becomes unbearable
You smile
AND YOU LOVE ME

When I take from you
Your most cherished possession
On the first loss of your sight
Darkness envelops you
AND YOU LOVE ME

For everything that you see, hear, smell, taste or touch belongs to Me. So, how can you give to Me what I already own—EXCEPT YOUR LOVE. And that, I gave to you before time began, as your soul possession. When you return it to Me, then I will know you are truly mine and I will dissolve your happiness and sorrow into one. That one, being Me I will place you in bliss forever. For I love and think of you constantly.

From your most loving Father.

P. S. Never, Never forget—I am patiently waiting to hear from you.

Recorded by Joel, the Rainbow-man

In September!

When Sri Prabhakar, Ex-President of the Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Seva Samiti, Dharmasala, (Kangra District, Himachal Pradesh, India) invited Baba to this remote town among the hills of the North, when he was at Prasanthi Nilayam for Shivaratri 1975, Baba graciously replied, "I will come next time." Prabhakarji insisted, "But, Baba, when will that be?" And, Baba answered, with a smile, "In September."

On 29th August 1975, which was the sacred day of Janmashtami, when the people of Dharmasala were celebrating the Advent in the Dwaparayuga of the Krishnavatar, Baba came! During bhajan, particles of sindhur started showering from more than one picture of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba, placed in the shrine of the house of the Sub-Divisional Officer! What was at first a small tilak on the forehead of Baba soon turned into a steady trickle and later, into a profuse shower. It continued in the same manner until within two days, the portrait of Baba was thickly covered with the red Vermillion. Later, Vibhuti too emanated, Vibhuti of various colours—red, ochre, pink, grey, white. Fresh layers are appearing ever since. The room exhales exquisite fragrance from this Divine Gift of Grace.

Every one is happy, since Baba has kept His Promise of visiting this place. He gives Darshan as Sundararupa, embodiment of Beauty, wearing a multi-coloured crown of Vibhuti. Hundreds are filled with ecstasy while experiencing the bliss of Bhajan, sitting in peace before that picture, wherein Baba is alive. For the people of Kangra Valley, Dharmasala has become a vitalising place of pilgrimage, re-inforcing their faith in God and in Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba as the Avatar of God.

—K. L. Nagpal

Namasmarana

One often hears 'Kaliyuga' being described as a bad and inauspicious period. What a thorough misconception it is! Whatever other defects Kaliyuga may have it offers to mankind, more than ever before, the most precious opportunity of getting God-realisation through the facile and safe path of Namasmarana.

In the twelfth book (Skandha) of Srimad Bhagavata Purana we find a vivid description of the appalling conditions of moral, cultural and social depravity that will afflict mankind during the Kaliyuga, leading to the progressive decline of Dharma and the predominance of the qualities of Tamas like hatred, greed, pride, jealousy, hypocrisy, fear etc. But after elaborately enumerating all the evil aspects of the Kaliyuga, Sree Suka tells Raja Parikshit that there is however, one great redeeming feature which is peculiar to Kaliyuga

"Kalerdoshanidhe Rajan Asthi Hyeko Mahan Gunah
Keerthanath eva Krishnasya Muktha sangah Param Vrajeth
Krithe yath dhyayatho Vishnum Threthayam Yajatho Makhaieh
Dwapare Paricharyayam Kalau thath Harikeerthanath."

"Oh Rajan, indeed there is one great virtue possessed by the Kali age, the storehouse of all evils. By the mere chanting of the names and glories of Krishna one is freed from all attachments and reaches the Supreme. What is attained in the Kritayuga by contemplating on Lord Vishnu, in Tretayuga by propitiating the Lord through sacrifices (Yagas) and in Dwaparayuga through worship of the Lord, is attained in the Kaliyuga merely by chanting the names and singing the praises of Sri Hari."

When, in spite of this categorical declaration made by Lord Narayana Himself through the sacred words of Bhagavan Vyasa the human race in this last quarter of the Kaliyuga foolishly paid little heed to it and, began to get itself more and more deeply entangled in the poisonous cobwebs of degenerate materialism, the all merciful Lord sent divine messengers, one after another, to awaken man from the state of toxic coma caused by "Bhavaroga" and put him on the sure road to complete cure and immortality by administering once again the life-saving Injection of Namasmarana. Thus came Adi Sankaracharya who, after having ascended the pinnacle of illustrious glory and honour as the greatest Vedantin and Jnani, finally proclaimed that "The Divine name of Lord Hari and that alone is my support and refuge; there is no other effective path for attaining salvation in Kaliyuga." In order to foster Bhakti in the hearts of men He composed and gave unto the world many devotional hymns including the famous "Bhaja Govindam."

Then followed other illustrious and venerable personages like Surdas, Meerabai, Tukaram, Gouranga (Chaitanya Deva), Thyagaraja, Poonthanam, Namdev, Ramdas, Pothanna, Kurur Amma and many others who dedicated their sacred lives for spreading the glory of the Divine name in the various parts of this country. But, probably due to the adverse influences of the unfavourable traits attributed to the Kaliyuga period, humanity, blinded by ego, refused to see light and instead of taking the sacred, safe and easy road to everlasting Bliss shown to it by these

great masters it obstinately persisted in treading the dark and dangerous path of ignorance and sin, which would lead only to total destruction. The Lord who is so full of love and compassion will not however let the ignorant children proceed like this towards their doom. Since the divine emissaries had not fully succeeded in their mission of setting right the erring human race which was heading for moral annihilation, the Lord in His Supreme Prema decided that the time had arrived for Him to act directly, as that alone could save humanity. Hence, true to the promise held out in the Bhagavad-Gita, the Divine has again incarnated in human form, more resplendent than ever before, as Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai, in order to restore and re-establish 'Dharma' in this world.

Are we not the most fortunate amongst the entire human race that has existed since the beginning of time, to have been born during this period of Kali age and to have been blessed with the unique and precious opportunity of having the Lord's Darshan, Sparshan and Sambhashan? Unlike during the time of the earlier Avatars we are also being mercifully given the great privilege of participation in His Divine Mission of Dharma Samsthapana. This holy year marks the fiftieth anniversary of the advent of this Avatar. Let us while offering our most respectful and grateful Pranams at His Lotus Feet, resolve on this solemn occasion to fruitfully utilise to the fullest possible extent the great opportunity and rare privilege given to us to be on this earth as the contemporaries of a Paripoorna Avatar.

Bhagavan Baba has in many of His Divine discourses very kindly explained to us the value of Namasmarana and given detailed directions as to how the said sadhana should be performed. We need only earnestly devote ourselves to a strict observance of those Divine directions. If our endeavours are sincere, He will certainly bless and guide us in our journey to His Lotus Feet.

Justice V. Balakrishna Eradi

O, Dance for Joy

Respected students of the Sathya Sai College of Arts and Science, here assembled on this delightful occasion...

First of all, I would like to say how much I have been impressed over the past week or so, by your extemporaneous speeches, in which you describe your lives and also your relationships with Bhagavan: These speeches reveal the depth and strength of character of each student speaker.

You have said that you were ordinary boys when you came to Brindavan to this College and that within a few days of your arrival here, your hearts opened as the petals of a flower in the morning and that the fragrance of love for God now permeates every aspect of your life. You say that the typical distractions of youth such as cinemas, drinking, smoking, roaming in the streets have all fallen away from you and that now you live only for the Love of Bhagavan and for your studies. You say that wherever Bhagavan places you in the world after your graduation from studies, there you will work with all your strength, energy, and devotion for the welfare of the world.

The word "student" implies that you are in the position of not having knowledge and that you have the gaining of knowledge as your goal. But, to my idea, the 'ignorant' person is he who does not know God, whereas you young men are in the position of knowing God in a most extraordinary way. You say that when you speak, Bhagavan speaks for you and that your words come from His within-prompting. Bhagavan tells me that what is indeed true is—that He, from within our hearts gives confidence and with self-confidence the words flow.

With you, it is not that 'I' am here and 'God' is there. With you, God is your direct personal inner experience. Therefore, I salute you, not as 'boys', not 'students', but as men of true knowledge.

The other day, I was talking with Bhagavan and I started to say, "In the thousands of years since Krishna...." Swami interrupted and exclaimed, "Time since Krishna? I am Krishna! Where is Time?"

With folded hands, I saluted Bhagavan, because once upon a time, when we were driving in the car, He revealed Himself to my eyes and I saw Krishna.

I then continued the conversation by saying that what I meant was that in the thousands of years from the Avatar of Krishna to the Sai Avatar, there had been no opportunity to take God Himself as one's direct Guru. Swami corrected me, saying that until the Shirdi body there had been no such opportunity.

I said, "Well, Swami. This is the best of all times to be born." Sai replied, "Yes. The most fortunate of all times. Even more fortunate to be born now, than in the time of the Krishna Avatar."

This is your position, students. Not only are you born in the most fortunate of all times, but, you even spend your days in the Presence of the Divine Avatar, Sathya Sai, seeing Him, listening to Him, experiencing Him, speaking with Him. I feel sure that you are taking full advantage of this unprecedented opportunity; but, I would like to point out two great potential values that are clearly evident and of which one should be aware while in the Divine Presence of Bhagavan.

The first great potential value of being in the Presence of Bhagavan relates directly to yourselves. You say that you put aside worldly distractions and that you give your mind and heart to God. Because of this, the heart becomes soft, and from its depths there wells up a strong current of love for Bhagavan. Thereupon, the bliss of a loving heart is your own intense personal experience.

The second great potential value of being in Bhagavan's Presence relates to His Grace. He has said that for each step we take towards Him, He will take ten steps towards us. "Towards us" means "towards the consummation of our lives." And, Bhagavan informs us that the consummation of human life is the realization that only God exists and that we are not separate from Him.

Thus, to experience the quality of the heart overflowing with devotion to God is one potential value of each day spent in Bhagavan's Presence. And, the second potential value is that one may experience God's Grace. For, surely, the possibility is here that Grace may flash with Divine brilliance into the purified heart of a devotee destroying ignorance and bondage for ever and ever.

Bhagavan is like the greatest of forest fires, irresistible in burning everything capable of being burned. If we disregard our petty personalities and fix our attention on Bhagavan, the intense flame of His purity will burn away the impurities of our mind and heart. Then, purity merges into purity light merges into light, and ego and worldly attachment are destroyed forever by Divine Grace.

Therefore, in His auspicious Presence, let us, Bhagavan's devotees turn away from transient personalities and the transient Nature and hold to God only, both inwardly and outwardly.

Outwardly, we fix our eyes on the Grace and power of Bhagavan's Form. Outwardly, our ears are tuned only to His voice and His words of wisdom, for, verily, He is the shining Lord of Wisdom. Inwardly, let all faculties be concentrated on Him. The thinking of our mind may be changed to thinking only about Him. Our intelligence may be contemplating the glory and majesty of His Divinity and know thereby that He is the centre and that the stars and the atoms, the infinitely great and the infinitely subtle, all revolve around Him. Our consciousness may be filled with His blissful Presence. And, our heart may submerge itself in the limitless Ocean of His Love and Mercy.

With the attention of both inward and outward faculties contemplating Bhagavan, let us joyfully appreciate that He has stepped forth from the mystery of our hearts into our sight in response to our prayers, so that we may know that He exists and so that we may worship Him to our heart's content.

Bhagavan has stepped forth from our hearts, for He tells us that He is the subtle and innermost self in each of us and that our heart is His dwelling place.

O Dance for Joy, Students! O Dance for Joy, Devotees! Worship the Lord, the Truth, the Way, the Pilgrim, and the Witness, all are He.

In this transient world where everything disintegrates and passes away, in this transient world wherefrom even the powerful and durable form of the Avatar will pass away, in this transient world, the One unchanging, permanent eternal Reality is God. Bhagavan's song is

Love is My Form;
Truth is My Breath;
Bliss is My Food;
My Life is My Message.
Expansion is My Life;
No reason for Love, no season for Love
No Birth; no Death.

This is the Lord's Song. It says that His Being is that of Sat, Chit, Ananda. This is the Lord's description of His eternal Nature. This is the eternal Reality that every devotee may become aware of, through deep and quiet contemplation on the Avatar.

At times, devotees ask Bhagavan for a mantra, a series of powerful Sanskrit words that the devotee may adopt and use. But, Bhagavan says the mantra given by the Avatar is His Command. Thus, obedience to the Command of the Avatar is the mantra for the devotee.

We all know the basic range of Bhagavan's commands to His devotees: "Be good. See good. Do good." "All life is one; be alike to every one." "Start the day with Love; Spend the day with Love. Fill the day with Love. End the day with Love."

The Avatar's commands, if we but choose to obey Him, are as the flame of a lantern that will safely guide us through the dark forest of life. Bhagavan says that to come close to Him we must please Him. Let us obey the commands of the Avatar and thereby come close to His Lotus Feet.

—Hislop

Please, Baba!

Following the Birthday Celebrations, Bhagavan gave some of us, Westerners, the wonderful gift of allowing us to sit outside His door, on the Mandir Verandah, for several days. For me, this was an enormously significant spiritual experience. For a time, I felt waves of happiness sweeping over and through me, and my attention was totally captured by the feelings inside. The state I was in can best be described as a joyful reverie. Without ever having done this before, I found myself repeating 'Om Jai Sairam' 'Om Jai Bhagavan' over and over again. It seemed as if the sound was not being made at all, but was making *itself*, continuously bubbling up, as if from deep wellsprings within. I marvelled at the sweetness of this inner sound and the subtle rhythms and tonal variations which arose quite spontaneously, seemingly directed by the unseen inner source.

I also found myself visualising Baba's face and body in a pose I had not seen before, with His hands outstretched in the attitude of giving. He was so beautiful I could not take my inner eyes off Him. Occasionally, I would hear a stir around me, open my eyes, and there was Bhagavan nearby!

And, then to my great surprise, I found myself choosing to close my eyes again, because, I was too attached to the inner vision, to allow myself to be distracted by even Baba standing very close. Of course I realised this was an unusual blessing Baba had bestowed, to thin out the clouds of Maya sufficiently to permit me to experience the glory of the inner view. I can now understand how this combination of repeating the name and visualising the form can take us to regions of unprecedented peace and Ananda.

Sitting there on the verandah, I would occasionally look out on the world and observe how different it looked from the view one gets sitting for Darshan in front of the Mandir. From the 'Darshan line', we see *into* this beautiful structure, looking with anticipation for a glimpse of Swami even if just for a few seconds as He opens the door and ushers in some lucky one for 'interview'. Even when Swami is not in view, it is very compelling to direct the gaze towards the temple. The feeling is one of looking into a very holy place. It is as if the Mandir is our heart, and, looking at it satisfies some great inner urge, to look inside the heart to see the dwelling place of the Lord, and even occasionally get a direct glimpse of Him within it.

We can never get enough looks. If we see the red robe for a minute, we long to see it for just another minute; if we see it steadily for 15, 30, or 45 minutes, we all come to Baba as beggars; through His Love and Hammer-strokes, He transforms us into Bhaktas. A little maxim flitted through my mind.

When we first come, it is... always, "Please, Baba."
But, He teaches us to.... always please Baba.

Over the last few days, this has become like a noon sign flashing on the inside of my forehead. ALWAYS PLEASE BABA. ALWAYS PLEASE GOD. I find myself examining every thought, every word, every action, to see if it will please Him. To be equal minded and unattached to the objects, beings and concepts of this world but to be attached like an eagle's claws to Him, seeing Him in everything and everybody, motivating all acts, all energies, all forms. And also to be attached to Truth, to loving all beings, as our very own, to be devoted to service, to be attached to all aspects of the Dharmic way of life.

This attitude has a remarkable effect on one's consciousness. Quite rapidly important changes take place and every move during the day becomes remarkably easy, problems solve themselves; decisions decide themselves; every thing becomes suffused with Baba.

He appears everywhere I Hearing the gong being struck repeatedly during the Aarati in the Bhajan Hall becomes Baba hammering us into His instruments to do His work; seeing a little sparrow perching on the window looking at us is an unexpected visit from Bhagavan!..."Sai Ram! Little Baba sparrow!" Getting another room-mate in an already crowded West Prasanthi Room is Baba coming in, in another Form; waiting in a long queue for meals is such a nice opportunity to go 'inside' or look around at any one or any thing outside and *have* 'Baba's Darshan'. The whole world becomes filled with Baba.

We are all so fortunate and blessed to be alive today in the Presence of this beautiful Avatar. Imagine what it must be like for Him who is the in-dweller in all our hearts, who sees all, all the time, who came into this world especially for us His devotees, to be watching us caught up in Adharma I All the time, not just in the Prasanthi Nilayam, or during special times of worship, we must work towards pleasing Him and becoming fit vessels to receive His immortal Amrit. We must become *full-time* devotees.

Let us all strive to give Him this gift, willingly and lovingly, from the depths of our hearts, doing, saying and thinking only what pleases Him. Perhaps, then, we may be able to repay, in some small measure, the boundless treasure of Grace He has given us by His Advent.

—*Alvin Drucker*

Ramakatha Rasavahini
Sri Sathya Sai Baba

72

The Queen Warns

Meanwhile in Lanka, wherever groups of Rakshasas collected, the talk was centred round the calamitous damage inflicted by the messenger of Rama. They wondered, "When the servant is capable of such tremendous heroism, what would be the measure of the onslaught that the Master can inflict!" They pictured Rama as capable of immeasurable heroism, and impregnable attack.

Their fears were communicated by her maids to Mindodari, the Queen of Ravana. Her mind was filled with apprehension and anxiety. She realised that the fear was based on a correct estimate of the happenings. She waited for a propitious moment when Ravana would be in a happy receptive mood, and could be spoken to while alone. Getting such a chance, she said, "Lord! Do not develop enmity with the Omniscient One. You have yourselves expressed the opinion that Rama is not an ordinary person. Your army could not wreak vengeance against him, when your sister Surpanakha was disfigured by the slicing of her nose and ears; it could not harm him a bit or move him from his position.

Now, he has with him millions of redoubtable Vanara heroes. What can our Rakshasa warriors achieve against him now? They could not even bind and punish the messenger who got entry into this kingdom. That is the extent of the misfortune that has beset us. When one servant caused such horror and despair, how much worse would be the calamities that millions like him could bring about? Therefore, pray listen to my appeal. Send Sita back to Rama, in the company of your brother, Vibhishana, or with your Ministers. Sita too is no ordinary woman. She is exemplarily chaste; she is the very embodiment of the spiritual energy that results from the righteous nature. Causing grief to such a person can bring you no good. Accept my pleading. Return Sita to Rama. When that is done, all will be good for you and for our Rakshasa community. Or else, as the serpent swallows frogs, the arrows of Rama will swallow the Rakshasa hordes. Give up your stubborn-ness and your pride. Forsake your tenacity; offer Sita at the feet of Rama." She fell at the feet of Ravana, with this pitiable importunity.

Ravana, the conceited ignoramus, looked at Mandodari, and replied with a loud peal of laughter. He said, "Fie on you! Tender women are scared soon; that is their very nature. Their words rising from fear will turn even fortune into misfortune. When the monkeys arrive at our doors, the Rakshasas would certainly gobble them up. The gods shudder in mortal terror when my name is uttered within hearing; why are you afraid of these tree-dwelling brutes? Fie on your fears! Get thee gone from here." Saying thus, he proudly moved into the Hall, appearing like personified audacity.

As soon as he left, Mandodari bewailed to herself, "Alas! Destiny is devising a mighty tragedy. What has it decided for me? It is terrible even to guess what it is." Burdened with grief, and at a loss to plan with else to do, she resorted to her rooms and rolled on her bed, agitated by a multitude of thoughts.

The Advice He Relishes

At the Audience Hall, Ravana called the ministers together, and invited them to give expression to their estimate of the situation. "You are aware of the calamities that were inflicted by that doota (messenger) of Rama. What has to be done now? What preparations are necessary? What are your suggestions for the future? Tell me quite frankly, without the slightest fear."

The ministers looked at each other; they sneered in repressed laughter; but, no one dared speak. Suddenly, the brother of Ravana, Kumbhakarna who was immersed in sleep for months, and who was therefore unaware of the conflagration at the time of the mischief of Hanuman, emerged out of sleep and rushed into the Audience Hall. He shouted at his elder brother, "Hello! You boasted that there is no hero equal to you in all the three worlds; you challenged the worlds and dared any one to face you. And, now I hear, a tiny little monkey entered the City and burnt it to ashes! Shame! Shame on you! How did you allow it to escape alive?" With these words of jeer, he left the hall, and hastened home.

As this point, Minister Atikaya rose from his seat and addressed the Emperor thus "Master! We shall obey your commands. If only we have the gracious look of your eyes falling on us, we can destroy all men and monkeys and wipe them out of the face of the earth. Why assert more?" He sat down with a grunt of satisfaction. Then, Meghanada, the general endowed with, the power of adopting any form he likes, rose to speak. "Supreme Master!" he said, "Your might and majesty resound all over the world. The gods are your bondsmen. Why should we speak of the fate of men in your Presence? For, who can be stronger than those gods?" His words were soaked in pompous pride. The atheistic sons of Kumbhakarna, the highly egotistic brothers, Kumbha and Nikumbha also spoke in the same strain. Akampana and other warriors also added their tunes, to the same song. Off and on, the irrepressible Mahodara stood up and rapped his thighs as if he was proclaiming his eagerness to join the fray. Of course, every one of them was infected with an inner fear, though they did not exhibit it in their speech and on their countenances. The net result was that Ravana was rendered happy, and their aim to hearten him was realised.

Just at this time, one Rakshasa rose and tried to catch attention. He said, "Emperor! I shall dress myself as a Brahmin, and approach Rama and Lakshmana wherever they are. I shall invite them for lunch and, when they come into my hermitage, I shall bind them hand and foot. If you approve of this stratagem, I shall attempt it."

The Brother as Well-wisher

Ravana was very pleased with his ministers and others. Meanwhile, Vibhishana had entered the Hall. Ravana looked at him, and asked him, "Brother! What is your opinion on this question, these men and monkeys?" Vibhishana replied, "Most compassionate brother! I shall answer as best as I can, without any frills or feints. I only pray that you listen patiently and carefully. Pardon me, O Sovereign Lord! If you desire a good status after death, an unsullied fame while

alive, prosperity and happiness here and hereafter, you must desist from admiring the beauty of women who belong to others. What can one single living being like you do, to harm or obstruct the Ruler of the Fourteen Worlds? Can any one survive after opposing Him? How can such a one prosper? Greed clouds all the virtues of a person. Lust and anger are gateways to the regions of ruin.

Rama is not an ordinary person. He is Death .to the God of Death. He is the regulator of Time. He cannot be affected by illness or want or weakness. He is inborn and so, immortal. Give up your hatred of such a Divine Person, and pray to be accepted as His servant. Return his wife to Him and earn His Grace. I am falling at your Feet and pleading with you with all the force I command.”

Hearing him, Malyavanta, an old and revered Minister nodded in agreement. He stood up and spoke thus: "Master! The words spoken by your brother are just and right. Accepting his suggestions will redound to your renown.”

But, Ravana was greatly incensed at the advice given by them both. He reprimanded them hotly. He said, "Yon are both fools! Do you know what you have been doing so long? You were extolling my enemy. You are not fit to be present in this Hall, while this subject is being considered.” He ordered that they be removed from the Hall. At this, Malyavanta got down from his chair and hurried home. Vibhishana too offered his prostrations to his elder brother and, with folded palms, he expostulated, "O King! The Vedas and Sastras declare that in every person's heart there reside the twin natures of goodness and wickedness. When goodness predominates and is given full authority, the person will posses joy, peace and prosperity of all types. When wickedness predominates and is given full authority, the person will be attacked by all types of adversity.

Now, the vile nature is overwhelming your virtuous nature; so, you condemn as enemies those who offer good advice and try to promote your good. Sita is like the Night of Destruction for the Rakshasas. And, you have no compassion towards her. That is the wicked trait in you. I am praying for this boon from you: Please agree to my request. Return Sita to Rama. I am sure that will endow you with all happiness and auspiciousness.”

The Banishment

At this, Ravana rose suddenly from his throne and exclaimed, "Fool! Death has drawn very near you. You could be alive till this moment only on account of my grace. Now you are counting my enemies as your benefactors. I cannot understand why you have developed so much respect and loyalty to them. Is there a man living on earth who cannot be subdued by the strength of my shoulders? Eating the food I give, living in the house provided by me, residing in my territory, how dare you extol my enemies? Thorny bushes that were grown to protect the fort have become harmful to the fort itself. You have spread too much to be useful. Go, go to some hermitage and teach your lessons on morality and goodness.” Thus saying, he pushed Vibhishana sitting at his feet away from him with a kick. However angrily, he was kicked, Vibhishana persisted long in praying to him, his hands holding the very feet that were kicking him, "O King! Rama resolves on Truth and his resolution can never fall. Your time is running out; so too, the

time of your followers. I am going to take refuge with Rama. I have done my best to save you. I have nothing to repent for; I have not done any wrong.” With these words, he left the Hall.

The Unbreakable vow

Reciting with every breath, Rama Rama, and breathless with joy and excitement, he crossed the sea and landed on the other shore. The Vanaras who noticed him took him to be a messenger from Ravana, and they reported the arrival to their Ruler, Sugriva. Vibhishana was prevented from entering the camp. And, the information was conveyed to the Lord, thus: "O Rama! The brother of Ravana has come to have your Darshan.”

Rama asked Sugriva, who brought him the news, what he thought about the incident. Sugriva replied that it was difficult to understand the plans and purposes of Rakshasas since they assume various forms as and when they like and so are inexplicable in behaviour. We do not know why he has come among us. I guess it is to open a wedge between me and Angada, the son of Vali. I believe it is advisable to bind him and keep him aside, without delay.”

Rama replied, "Friend! Your words are correct. You spoke in accordance with the injunctions in the Sastras about such defections. Yet, listen to my vow. It may be opposed to your advice. My vow is to protect all those who surrender to me. Even if the person surrendering is our enemy, to make an exception in his case is wrong. I shall not give up any being that surrenders to me, even if it involves the sin of slaying a billion Brahmins. Maybe, he has been sent by Ravana in order to sow the seeds of dissension among us. Well, why should we be afraid of him, even if this be true? Or if he has come, frightened by his brother, if he surrenders to me, I shall guard him and foster him as my own life breath. Therefore, bring him in, quickly" he ordered and Sugriva hastened to obey.

The Benediction

Hanuman went fast to him and in an instant, made him stand before Rama. When his eyes fell on the Lotus Face of Rama, Vibhishana shed profuse tears of ecstasy. He could scarce stand erect. "Lord," he gasped and fell flat at the feet of Rama. "Save me, save me. I am your slave," he prayed. "O Protector of the Gods! I took birth in the Rakshasa race; I am the younger brother of Ravana, who rules over the Rakshasas. I am named Vibhishana. My birth as a Rakshasa is the result of the vast quantity of sin I have accumulated. Dullness and ignorance have mastery over me. As the owl craves for night, I realised, only darkness. You foster all those who surrender to you. I have rushed to you yearning for your love and grace. I have none else to whom I can run for rescue." Rama saw him pleading so humbly and so earnestly for being taken into confidence and saved and, he was delighted. He drew him near, and softly fondled him, patting his back in deep love. He spoke sweetly to him, and said, "My dear Vibhishana! Do not worry. The very Darshan you had of me has destroyed the Rakshasa nature in you. You are to me as close as Lakshmana and Sugriva," These words wiped away all fear from the heart of Vibhishana.

Then, Rama said, "O Ruler of Lanka! Are all your followers and companions hale and hearty? How were you passing your days right in the midst of many million Rakshasas? How were you able to maintain your devotion and dedication to God in that environment?" He also enquired of him various matters relating to his activities and righteous behaviour.

At the end, Vibhishana said, "O Lord of the Raghu Dynasty! Lust, anger and the rest of that evil brood will infest the heart until the moment when you enter it, with the bow and arrow in your hand. When your nature and your loveliness are known, then, they flee from the mind. Attachments and hatreds infest the dark hearts that know not the light of wisdom. Lord! I have earned the fruition of my dearest dreams when I could cast my eyes on your Lotus Feet and touch them with my hands and head. My fear and sorrow have been destroyed. I have not done a single good deed any day; but, yet, you embraced me. O, how great is my good fortune!" From Vibhishana's eyes, tears flowed in streams; they were tears of joy and gratitude.

The Consecration

Rama intercepted his words and said, "Vibhishana! You possess all desirable excellences. Or else, you would not have earned this Darshan, this chance to touch me and contact me, and this opportunity to converse with me." At this, Vibhishana was thrilled with unbounded joy. He fell at the Lotus Feet of Rama again and again.

Rama told him, "Go. Have a bath in sacred waters of the sea, and come soon." Accordingly, Vibhishana left for the seashore. Rama asked Hanuman to bring them from the sea a pot of the sacred water. When Vibhishana prostrated at the Feet of Rama, after the bath, Rama took a handful of water from the pot that Hanuman had brought and, sprinkling the drops on Vibhishana's head, he declared, "I am making you by this rite the Ruler of the Kingdom of Lanka."

Vibhishana rose and said, "O Lord! Why do I need a kingdom? I am content if I secure a place by the side of these Lotus Feet." But, Rama said, "No. You cannot escape this duty." Vibhishana replied, "I bow my head to the command I receive from you." He folded his hands in prayerful humility. The Vanaras stood all around, struck by the compassion and grace that Rama bestowed on the person who surrendered his all at His Lotus Feet. Their hearts were filled with Bliss.

The Rama Story: Stream of Sacred Sweetness

(To be continued)

SET ME FREE

SAI BABA! What sweetness there is in your name
After having known you, it's just not been the same
My worldly pursuits, which once gave me pleasure,
Mean far less to me, now, I have the real treasure.
The joy that You have given me, I am unable to define,
Thousands have it; yet, somehow, it's solely mine.

"Come to Me" You say, "Give Me your heart!
Do not hold back, even a little part."
But, not to let the lure of the world enslave me,
I need Your Love, My Lord, to set me free.

So, be my Light; my Friend, Philosopher and Guide.
Teach me to crush my anger, ego and my pride;
Show me Your way of Compassion and Humility,
And make me follow to the best of my ability.

With folded hands, My Lord, I do entreat You,
Help me to live, the way You want me to.

—*K. Panthaky*

The Light of the World

Like gulls upon the wind of your love,
We are carried far far from land,
To drift in the skies of eternity,
To peck at crumbs from your hand.

Storms and sunshine we have seen,
To unknown places we have been;
Now let us nest in your heart,
Lord, imprison us now in your heart.

As the souls of sea-weary sailors
And the tongues of battle-sick men,
We wait for a place to moor our ships
Lest this movie start up once again.

All birds, all ships, all lonely men
Wail and whirl and wail again,
Until the light-house lamp is sighted
And the flame of Love within is lighted.

The Scarf and the Badge

It seems a person once saw a man struggling for very life in the deep waters of a lake; the fellow could not swim and was really helplessly floundering. But, without the least compunction or sympathy, and without making the least effort to save him, the on looker had the audacity to ask him, "Tell me how deep is the lake?" Such is the behaviour of most people, now a days. These persons are sunk in Tamas, they are too wooden and dull, too hard and impervious; it is only when man gets rid of Tamas, that he can rise into Rajas—the sphere of activity, of emotion, of devotion, compassion and service. When he rises higher into the Satwic stage, the activity gets elevated into Sadhana, and the effect is more spiritual.

I find here thousands of young men and women, members of Seva Dal, gathered from all the states of India. This is the third All India Conference of the Sathya Sai Seva Dal; it is time that we decide to assess what has been the achievement so far, whether the basic purpose for which the Dal was planned is being fulfilled. We have had reports from various State Convenors of Seva Dal of many items of work that is being carried out by the units of the Dal. Let me tell you that mere execution of some duties enjoined on the Dal by the rules cannot be recognised as Bhakti, or acts of dedication. Duty done without Love is deplorable; duty done with Love is desirable. But, acts of Love that emanate from a person because it is his nature, and not because it is enjoined on him as a duty he has to fulfill, is really Divine! Let me tell you also another point. Every Convenor repeated the report of every one else; there was more imitation than originality in ideas and programmes. Doing something because it is being done elsewhere is a sign of blind ignorance. The programmes must satisfy a local need, solve a local difficulty. They must arise out of felt needs, and should be adapted to local conditions—whether it is urban or rural, industrial or agricultural; whether the place is a pilgrim centre or civic extension, a developing area or a sinking economy, a tribal settlement or a hill station. The person who borrows some idea from another region and executes it might feel satisfied that he has achieved some concrete programme. But, do the people whom he tried to benefit feel better and happier? That is the test. Do not think of the fame or praise you win; think of the good that people will derive. Do not crave for publicity; crave for the joy that shines in the faces of the people whom you help. Seva brings you nearer to me. The flower that is your heart gets fragrance by means of the Seva you do, and so, it becomes more acceptable. Love is the essence of that fragrance.

Through Seva, you realise that all beings are waves of the Ocean of Divinity. No other Sadhana can bring you into the incessant contemplation of the One-ness of all living beings. You feel another's pain as your own; you enjoy another's success as your own. To see every one else as yourself and yourself in every one, this is the real core of the Sadhana of Seva. Again, Seva makes the ego languish for want of food. It makes you humble before the suffering of others, and, when you rush to render help, you do not calculate how high or low his social status, or economic status is. The hardest heart is slowly softened into the softness of butter by the opportunities that the Seva Dal offers. So, Seva is prescribed as one among the nine steps towards Realisation. You must therefore be earnest about it and welcome all chances to serve the old, the sick, the defective, the diseased and the distressed. Holding a fruit in the hand is just a preliminary step; eating and digesting must follow, so that you may be healthy and happy. So too, wearing a scarf and badge round the neck is but an indication of the joy that is within reach, when you actually serve. Your Seva will be judged with reference to the mental attitude accompanying it. So, whatever work is allotted, do it with fervour, understanding and reverence. Let all your attention and skill be devoted to its successful execution. In Seva, there can be no high and low; for, Sai is in all. Sai receives your Seva, to whomsoever you may offer it. Do not be sad that you have been posted on some duty that keeps you far from Me. Know that I am nearest to him who calls on me and sees me in all beings.

The world today is torn into factions and groups that hate and hack each other; no method is felt to be too cruel, if the aim is to destroy the group you desire to destroy; no one is aware of the innate Unity, the ever-present current of Divinity that animates every single human being on earth. You have the role now, of demonstrating that all is not lost; that there are still people who believe in Truth, Righteousness, Peace and Love; that acts of loving service rendered in a spirit

of humility and reverence are still making people happy; and that the day when the brotherhood of man and the Fatherhood of God will shine bright and beautiful is dawning already.

All efforts are now being concentrated on the production of more food, the building of more houses and the manufacture of more cloth. But, what is most needed today is: a total effort to make the entire humanity manifest more tolerance, more humility, more brotherliness, more compassion, and deeper awareness of the springs of joy and peace that lie within the heart of each one. This country, Bharat, must be in the fore-front of this spiritual adventure.

Love is the solvent for the hardest of hearts. Without Love, free, full and with no desire for anything in return, no spiritual Sadhana can succeed. Without it, Bhajan is waste of breath; Satsang is waste of time; Meditation is self-deceit. Bhajan, Satsang and Meditation done with a mind soaked in Love can confer peace, joy and wisdom. When the raindrop falls in the sea, it gets the name, form and quality of the sea. So too when the individual merges in the vast concourse of humanity and feels one with all, he is endowed with the name form and qualities of Divinity. Whatever you do as service, to whomsoever you offer the act, believe that it reaches God, who is in that person. Easwara sarva bhootanaam. So, it is Easwara-arpanam.

You have joined the Seva Dal at the most important period of your lives; youth is a stage of life when self-control self-examination and self-effort are most needed and least exercised. What a mighty potential for progress is wasted by the empty vagaries of youth today! If only the courage, the optimism, the strength, the imagination of youth is channelised into constructive channels, how much can be cultivated and how soon can the human community attain peace and prosperity! Youth is drawn easily into wild adventures; heroic acts of bravado, and exhibition of group fanaticism. They are subject to sudden changes of passion or emotion. All over the world, youth is being swayed on the waves of anger and anxiety. The destiny of nations hangs on the direction youth will take in these troublous days. Youth should not be led into the paths of hypocrisy or deceit or greed. Youth must act, the way they speak; they must speak the way they think. Think good thoughts; speak good words; do good deeds. That will give inner joy and contentment. That will make you real sons and daughters of this ancient Land.

Within the next few days, you, members of the Seva Dal and of the Volunteer Force, gathered here from all the States of India and even from beyond the seas, have a number of service assignments facing you. You have to shoulder heavy responsibilities and execute various duties, in the spirit of Sadhana, which enjoins you to revere Duty as God and to engage in Work as, not dreary drudgery, but, as Worship of the Lord Himself. You have dedicated your selves to Seva, which has to be saturated in selfless Love. The service that you render must reward you, not with your satisfaction, but, with the satisfaction and relief of those whom you serve. When those whom you serve are not relieved or are not made happy thereby, of what avail is your elation or exultation at the help you have been allowed to offer? You should have the joy of the recipient as your objective; don't sit back and talk of your having done what is expected of you; try to discover whether your act of service has really been worth-while, whether it has been intelligently rendered, with full appreciation of the peculiar circumstances of the individual who needed it. Do not feel that this is an obligation imposed on you by the rules of the Organisation, or by the person nominated as your Leader. Do not feel that the scarf and badge that you wear are impediments to freedom. They are reminders of the high mission to which you have been

initiated, the keys to your realisation of Reality, through the Sadhana of Seva. Even when you do not wear the scarf or parade the badge, you must be eager and alert, to render Seva to fellow-beings who need it.

Man is endowed with the equipment of senses, reason, feelings, passions, and detachment so that he may keep away from the enticements of pleasure and spend the years of his life in helping, serving, sustaining, and saving his fellow-men. He has to live in Seva, not Bhoga. The badge on the chest helps to keep off the ego, to broaden the heart and to focus all attention on the Lord resident in all. It is like the wheeled stand which helps the child to walk. It has to be revered until you transcend it and feel that all mankind is your kin. The badge should not be polluted by your flaying into a rage, or, denying help to the deserving, or, your habits of loitering in places of pollution, or indulging in loose low conversation or deleterious habits like smoking drinking or gambling.

Do not wag or argue, just for the sake of argument. Let your words be few, fair and felicitous. Soft speech adds sweetness to living. Even when you are engaged in discussion among yourselves, be short of speech, and sweet in manners. Some among you have been selected as leaders and guides; carry out their instructions, without demur or diminution. If you feel and doubt regarding the propriety or advisability of those instructions, talk them over with the leaders alone and apart, in a spirit of friendliness. But, do not disregard or modify those instructions, at any cost. The leader has to pay attention to the over all situation, which may not be so clear to you. People from more than 45 countries from all parts of the globe are coming for the World Conference; so, any failing or fault in your faith or in the fulfillment of the duties assigned to you will reflect on this great nation.

Bharat is the land where the triple Sadhana of Discipline, Devotion and Duty, was first laid down, and where it has the largest number of votaries, throughout the ages. So, you have to demonstrate to the visitors that the lesson is still very much honoured and observed in this land now. Not only this. You have to maintain the fair name of the Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organisation. On the one hand, you have the call of the Motherland, and on the other, you have the command of Sai, who is no less than the Mother Herself. Ganesha is reputed to have two Mother—Gowri and Ganga. Gowri is the Daughter of Himalayas, who is merged in the left half of the Body of Siva. Ganga is another Daughter of the Himalayas who has place in the matted hair which forms the Crown of Siva. You too have two Mothers—Bharat Mata and Sai Mata. You must emulate Ganesha, not in the quantity of food eaten, but, in His aspect as Vinayaka, for to become a Vinayaka, a special type of leader, you have to be for long and earnest and enthusiastic servant, engaged in self-less loving service. Service is the best school for training in leadership. You should eliminate in that school all traces of disgust, anger, and impatience. Pride and personal prejudices will try to put spokes in the wheel, as you go on serving the distressed and the diseased. But, during all these trials, you should never give up the hold on faith in the rightness of the path you have chosen. Remind yourself that you are a Sadhaka and that Seva is the spiritual path that you have ventured upon, as the easiest and the best. When you mix with volunteers and others who have no deep faith or no sweet experience in the value of Seva, you may get caught up in conversation that might shake your conviction. Do not allow their superficial judgement to undermine your steadfastness. Keep away from such groups; allow them to test their doubts on the touchstone of their own experience of Seva. Or, dismiss them as

one of several types of men of whom the species is composed. Tolerate them, until they come closer, of their own freewill. When vast congregations gather, and thousands of simple innocent men and women come together, people who have their eye on their purses and pockets only also gather. You must be watching for these expert thieves and vigilant to foil them. Be specially vigilant when the sheds and tents are deserted by their occupants when they move out in the early hours of morning for Nagarsankirtan. Do not try to join the Nagarsankirtan yourselves. Your duty then is to keep watch over the sheds and other shelters. Do not allow any one to move out with a box or bag, during the night hours or the bhajan or Nagarsankirtan hours. When you find some one ill, or fainting or in fits or sick do not crowd around and prevent movement of air. Send for the doctor; keep the patient warm and comforted. We have laid down very rigorous and protracted training for Seva Dal members, just for this reason. But, I find very few among you who have come here as Seva Dal Members have undergone the full course, both spiritual and secular. Do not pride yourselves on having become Seva Dal Members. I want that you should all go through the entire syllabus and curriculum of studies and training within six months from now. Or else, you have no credentials to be in the Seva Dal. We do not encourage numbers; we encourage quality. We do not emphasis show; we care for hard, honest, intelligent work. Discipline entails the strict observance of rules and regulations and directions; the sense of Duty can yield results only when Discipline is observed. And, Devotion to Sai and the Message of Sai is the basis for the sense of Duty which keeps you ever bound to Discipline. Do not be part-time devotees leading one kind of life when you wear the scarf and badge and another kind of life when you have removed them and are safe at home, or in your schools or offices or places of recreation. Be ever Sadhakas and Sevaks, Do not forget, do not modify. In the path of service that you have chosen, there should be no bumps of doubt or jumps of deviation. Move smoothly and bravely on, with your eyes fixed on the Goal the Grace that the Lord bestows. Be intent on the development of the Man-mind, not the Monkey-Mind. Do not hop about from decision to indecision, from doubt to denial. Be men, not dull like beasts or fitful like monkeys. Above all, cultivate Love, express Love, move with other Seva Dal members with Love. Let Love be your very breath. Let the Sun of Love help the Lotus of your Heart to blossom. May you win victory in all your service undertakings. That is My Blessing for each one of you.

—*Bhagavan's Divine Discourse, Poornachandra Auditorium: 14-11-75*

A Love Story

Sri Sunil R. Rajan, Student, I B. Sc. Class, Sri Sathya Sai College of Arts, Science and Commerce was addressing the gathering of College students and Staff, as well as the members of the Central Trust, the Education Foundation, the College Committee and many Western and Indian devotees, in the immediate Presence of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba, soon after Bhagavan laid the Foundation Stone for the College Hostel Buildings, on a plot inside the Brindavan Campus, adjacent to the Bungalow of Bhagavan.

He said, "I shall reveal the story of the transformation, the transportation and the transference of this Stone; it is a Love Story, the story of the love that Bhagavan has for the students!"

"We boarders of the present Hostel were saddened when the new Building was proposed to be constructed by the side of the College Buildings, about two furlongs off. We prayed that we should not be exiled into that remote area, where we will have less and less of the blissful moments with Bhagavan which He is graciously conferring on us here, where we are in His immediate vicinity. His love responded. The plans were changed; the Hostel Building will now be even nearer! The Infinite Love of the Lord has showered this Blessings on our anguish-ridden hearts"

The Principal also referred to this last-minute decision to have the Hostel within the Brindavan Campus. "The pangs of wrench have been mitigated by Bhagavan changing the site" He announced that Bhagavan has afforded fellow-devotees in America the privilege of participating in this service, and that Mrs. Elsie Cowan had donated 12 lakhs of rupees, towards the cost of the Walter Cowan Memorial Hostel, for which the Foundation Stone was laid by Bhagavan.

Sri Kamal Sahani, Student, III Year B. Com., also addressed the gathering. He spoke of the few furlongs that threatened to intervene between the Hostel and Bungalow. "It was a matter of life and death for us, this question of far or near!" he asserted, with tears of gratitude welling from his eyes.

Dr. J. Hislop, Member, World Council of Sathya Sai Organisations, and Convener of its United States Unit, and a participant in the Hostels Project addressing the meeting, giving an exhilarating account of the eventful weeks spent by Walter Cowan in India in 1971, when Bhagavan miraculously resurrected him, after he had 'physically died' so that "he could do my work" (as Bhagavan said).

Walter and Elsie Cowan came to Madras, while the All India Conference of Sathya Sai Organisation was on; when they entered the Hall, some time after it began, Bhagavan went towards them and gave them affectionate greetings. They had been led mysteriously to take refuge in Bhagavan while in America as early as 1968. Walter was not at that time in the best of health; he was affected by many types of ill-ness. The next day, there was a rumour among the delegates that an elderly American had died. Suspecting that it might be Walter, I hurried to the Hotel where they had taken lodgings. Yes. Elsie reported that it was a fact. She was quiet and composed; fortunately Mr. and Mrs. Ratan Lal of Bombay were quiet near in the same Hotel. The body was sent by ambulance to the Hospital and Elsie went to the house where Bhagavan

was staying. After some time Bhagavan visited the same hospital. What transpired at the Hospital where Walter's lifeless body lay, has not been divulged by Bhagavan. But, we knew that Walter was 'returned' to the body he had left, and he was alive. Walter had a very interesting and illuminating story to tell of his experiences during the journey and return. This has already been published and so I shall not repeat it. The happy communication was, Walter had the gift of life, again from Bhagavan.

Within a few days, he faced another crisis. Bhagavan was addressing a meeting at Madras, and I was sitting on the dais with my eyes rivetted on the Face and my ears listening to His discourse, which was one continuous flow of sweetness. At the end of the Discourse, Bhagavan turned to me and said, "Mrs. Cowan called on me, during the Discourse. Walter was very bad. I went to the Hospital, did what was needed to save him and returned!" He gave me some Vibhuti to be applied to his chest and I proceeded to the Hospital, to hear from Elsie how Walter was miraculously pulled himself away from death, soon after she had called on Baba for succour. Bhagavan saved him from another death a few weeks later, but, this time Bhagavan was at Puttaparthi. He sent a telegram to Elsie, in reply to her verbal prayer assuring her that He was ever present with them and that Walter was safe from harm."

Mr. Hislop said that, when Elsie Cowan came to know of the Project for building Hostels for the students of the Sri Sathya Sai College at Brindavan, she offered the sum of 12 lakhs of rupees, to erect the Walter Cowan Memorial Hostel. He announced that this Hostel will provide residential accommodation for about 200 students and that three more Units were contemplated soon. "Before devotees from other nation rush in to share in this Project, we Americans hope to complete it" said Dr. Hislop.

Continuing his speech, Dr. Hislop said, "We hope and pray that western materialism will not overwhelm the ancient and sacred culture of this land. That culture alone can salvage the sacred destiny of man. The main target of that materialism today is the Youth of India; Youth is the treasure of every nation. That treasure should not be squandered frivolously, in crime and violence, revolution and war. The Youth of India has the great task of restoring and re-living purity and glory of ancient Bharat. This is the plan and program of Bhagavan, unfolding in the Colleges He has established.

We observe the far-reaching changes Bhagavan's Grace have wrought in the minds and hearts of these distinguished students. Those residing in the Hostel are receiving His constant guidance and inspiration. He is the resident in each heart; but, here, these students have the unique blessing of moving in the physical Presence and benefitting by direct showers of Love.

Bhagavan has taken avatar in order to establish Truth, Harmony, Justice and Compassion as the sources from which the world can have peace and happiness. He has founded this College and other Colleges as part of this plan. That is the significance and the measure of the majesty of this educational experiment and its increasing success. For ages to come, this will shine as a symbol of Divine Grace, showered by Him on devotees who surrender to Him as the Cowans have done. It will inspire generations of students to make their lives sublime and pure, by the same process of dedication and devotion. Human society is sick. It can be cured only by the constant flow into its veins of streams of pure strong new blood, the vigour of which will restore

Society to its ancient state. Graduates of this College! I call upon you to enter all departments and vocations of this great nation and infuse by both precept and example, into your work and in the work of your companions the ideals held before you here, the ideals of Discipline, Devotion and Duty. Mere words of wisdom are sterile; when that wisdom is the spring of action prompting you from within, it can re-orient your thoughts and deeds and also influence others. May you earn that Wisdom by the Grace of Bhagavan; may you bring peace and happiness to the entire world. That is my prayer."

Bhagavan, in His Divine Discourse, spoke of the responsibilities of those who were endowed with riches, scholarship, authority or even physical strength. Each of these are to be held in trust for the service of society. They should not be frittered away in the pursuit of sensual pleasure or selfish aggrandizement, or attachment. "There were two brothers once," He said, "who lived together in a village. They were very rich, but, their attachment to riches was so great that they did not care to spend any portion for repairing or even cleaning their dwelling house, nor did they use them freely for food or other urgent personal needs. The younger one was named 'Miser' and the elder one 'Super miser'.

They received news one day that a near relative had died in his village. This meant that they had to call on the bereaved family. After long deliberation, it was decided by them that it was enough if one of them went. The elder brother agreed to leave; he woke up from bed at 2-30 at night with the aid of a feeble oil lamp (they denied themselves the use of electric lamps, for, the current had to be paid for;), he filled a bag with a few clothes. Stepping on to the road, he asked his brother, "Bolt the door-fast; and, go to bed."

He had to walk five full miles to reach the house of the relative. He did not like to travel by bus, for, that would mean spending a few paise. He had trudged two miles and a half, when suddenly he remembered that, while taking leave, he had forgotten to ask his brother to put out the lamp! "If that lamp burns, until he wakes and discovers that he had not put out the flame, it would mean the loss of a good quantity of costly oil," he told himself.

So, Mr. Super-miser trudged back the two miles and a half, and knocked at the door of his house, to arouse his brother, Mr. Miser. When at last, the brother made his appearance, he told him, "Brother! I forgot to ask you to put out that lamp. Do so, or else, every moment it consumes oil that we can ill spare. Why do you need a light when you sleep?" The brother laughed and said, "Don't take me to be such a spendthrift. I put it out as soon as you left... But, Brother! You are indeed a spendthrift! See how much you have wasted." Super-miser did not quite understand what his brother meant. He asked him, "Why? What have I done? Tell me frankly." Miser said. "Brother! Just to save a few drops of oil, you have tramped two miles and a half hither and you have to walk back thither the same distance. Have you calculated how much your sandals will wear off, during these five miles?" Super-miser laughed at his brother's criticism. He said, "Don't I know? See, I started walking back on bare-feet; the sandals are safely tucked under my arms!"

This is the wrong way to treat one's riches, or owning riches. They should not be used to inflict pain on one-self or on others. Every chance must be sought to use them in effective ways for the betterment of society. Just consider where America is on the world, and where, in America, is the State of California, and also remind yourselves where Karnataka is. How wide apart are these

two! But, good intentions have brought these together. When two hearts are kin, distance disappears. Your disciplined behaviour and your earnest devotion, have attracted the Cowans and drawn them to use their riches in this manner.

Lives built, upon food do not last long; lives built upon the awareness of Atma live eternally. Food is fraught with death; Atma assures freedom from death. So, do not spend your energies in trying to prolong life; spend them in promoting virtue. Live in the Divine; revel in service; relish the good. Students should concentrate on the ideals of sacrifice, service and generosity. Open the doors of your hearts; let the darkness of egoism and greed be destroyed by the light of Love towards all beings. Let your deeds follow the path laid down by the pure-minded sages of the past for your liberation and progress.

Wealth is a shaky pillar on which to build a stable world. Virtue, Righteousness, Morality, these are the pillars on which the world can stand secure. God and Godliness are solid foundations for a peaceful prosperous world. Wealth does not ensure peace of mind and freedom from fear; the wealthy suffer from physical and mental diseases which drive them to suicide. The world is an arena where joy and grief alternate, to teach man fortitude and equanimity. Unless man knows himself, he will be tossed from one sorrow to another.

And, he can know himself, only when he develops faith in elders who reveal the truth to him. When he knows himself, he will also know God. Then, he will take delight only in activities that can please God and win Divine Grace. Then he will be thrilled by the experience of Divine Beauty in everything he sees around him.

Bliss is the very core of human nature; it is the reflection of the Bliss of the Divine. That is the reason why, when people measure grain they do not start counting one-two-three etc, but, start with Profit-two-three; when they come to seven, they do not say "seven" which means seven and also weep. They say instead "six-plus-one". Man does not desire to draw distress and sorrow upon himself; his nature protests against the sacrilege. And, one gets maximum joy and bliss when one has Love and the eagerness to serve others and share the joy of relieving another's misery.

Be inspired by the love and sacrifice of Elsie Cowan and the sense of surrender that the Cowans reveal. You as students can get many chances to learn by their example. Be grateful to them, not for the quantity of their donation, but, for the exemplary spirit of sacrifice that has prompted it. Resolve to help your brothers in the hostel, whenever any one of them is ill or requires solace and support.

Students must also, serve their parents, and guard themselves against, feelings of ingratitude or hostility towards elders. Do not read the foul books full of poisonous stories that degrade the dignity of man and reduce him to the level of beasts. They pollute your pellucid minds and plant the seeds of vice and crime. When the yaksha challenged Dharmaraja to give him the correct answer to the question, " Who are the saviours of the world from ruin?" he replied immediately, "Youth". Do not lose the great status that is conferred on you, the splendid opportunity that has come to you, by spoiling your effectiveness and degrading your skills. Students of the Sathya Sai College! Each of you must shine forth as a beacon light, for perfection in one desirable attribute.

Hislop talked of Discipline, Devotion and Duty. Discipline and Duty are like A. D. C's accompanying the Governor. They are honoured only when they accompany the Governor. Alone and apart from the Governor, they do not receive special attention. So too, mere Discipline or mere Duty is of no value. They must both be offered to Devotion to God. Faith in God must inspire Discipline and sustain the sense of Duty.

This day is a sacred day, for, the foundation has been laid, not only for the Hostel, but also for the building up of Faith in Sacrifice, Service and Surrender.

Bhagavan then sang three Bhajan songs for the gathering to repeat after Him and the gathering dispersed after receiving fruits from His Gracious Hands.

In the Bhagavad-Gita, you find Sri Krishna asking Arjuna to 'surrender to Me' 'Offer to Me' 'Leave everything to Me' 'rely on Me', 'see all in Me and see Me in all' etc. This 'Me' and the 'I' to which it refers is no other than the i, which is the Sri Krishna in every one! It is that i which makes you declare, i do this, i desire this, i am great, i am small etc. But, it is the reflection of the I that prompts the amoeba as well as the Avatar, it is the I to which you have to surrender and submit, for, it is the He in you.

—Baba

Ask; it shall be Given

I was at Visakhapatnam from 1961 to 1963. There, I observed many people worshipping Shirdi Sai Baba as Sathya Narayana. In 1964, my wife fell seriously ill; she was admitted to the Military Hospital at Poona. One of my friends went to Shirdi and brought a packet of Udhi (ashes). He told me it was a material which could cure and bless for the fire from which it was collected was lit and maintained by Sri Shirdi Baba Himself. My wife had the Udhi applied and she recovered very soon. We have preserved the Udhi unto this day as a precious healing agent. We have realised that whenever His dear ones are in distress, He would manifest His healing power through Udhi. Meanwhile, I heard about Sri Sathya Sai Baba, saw His Picture in the Illustrated Weekly of India and read about Him in the articles published therein. I learnt that He was the Sai Baba of Shirdi come again.

In 1968, I attended for the first time a 'Sai Bhajan'. I was amazed and charmed by the big and attractive portrait of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba, before which devotees sang Bhajans for an hour. I had never heard such melodious Bhajan in an atmosphere of deep silence and strict discipline. Thereafter, all the family became greatly interested in learning and practising Bhajan songs and worshipping Bhagavan in the shrine at home.

One day, in 1969, we visited a house in Calcutta where I was astonished to see Udhi or Vibhuti covering thick, several portraits of Sri Sathya Sai Baba and also of Bhagavan Sri Krishna, Narayana, and other forms of God. I hesitated to believe then that such sprays of Vibhuti so thick and in so many colours could ever be *genuine* manifestations of Grace.

Shortly after, my `dada and didi' went on a pilgrimage to Puttaparthi to seek an opportunity of Baba's Darshan. At home, my family sang Bhajans on the day we knew they would be in Baba's Presence. After Bhajan, the doors of the shrine were closed and we sat for dinner. My daughter suddenly exclaimed with joy, finding a strong unmistakable fragrance of Vibhuti coming out of the shrine room. We were very excited; and, when we looked in, we found the portraits of both Sathya Sai Baba and Sri Krishna, covered with Vibhuti from which the fragrance of sandal-wood mixed with some other fine scent was emanating. The next morning saw more Vibhuti continuously covering the portraits. And, the process went on for five days.

On the fifth day, I was sitting wonderstruck in front of the Vibhuti-covered pictures, when a thought emerged in my mind. I whispered loud, "Baba! You are giving Vibhuti only of one colour; why don't you give some other colours too?" And, in a very short time, to the surprise of every one, a large quantity of red kumkum was dropping from another portrait of Sathya Sai Baba! That convinced as that He is ever present with us, to fulfill our good, virtuous, sincere wishes whenever we call upon Him.

During December, 1971, I was feeling rather distressed as a result of some difficult and harassing problems, that worried me I wrote about them to Bhagavan, praying for Grace to overcome them. I received the Acknowledgement Form signed by Bhagavan Himself; gratefully I preserved the card, carrying it within the purse I have with me wherever I go. A few months later, a friend wanted me to show him the signature of Bhagavan. When I took the card out of the purse, I was astonished and thrilled to find Vibhuti had manifested and accumulated in the fold of the card! The friend as well as others were given the miraculous gift of Vibhuti!

Another proof of His Grace which I could see in a friend's house, is the manifestation, four years ago, of the Foot-Print of Bhagavan on the floor of his shrine-room. Baba has said, "Sometimes, in order to reveal who I am I present you with my visiting cards, which you describe as miracles. Know the marma (mystery) and carry out earnestly and to the best of your ability and skill, the karma (work) I have assigned to you."

His Divine Leela is ever-present, everywhere. He has come to deepen our faith in God, whatever the Name and Form we adopt. There is no difference, He says, between Rama, Krishna, Siva or Baba. I was fortunate to experience an incident when Baba confirmed this assurance. In 1972 a Bhajan was arranged in a friend's house at New Alipore, to celebrate the Birth Anniversary of Guru Nanak. Guru Nanak's portrait was duly installed on the Altar, by the side of the picture of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba. During the Bhajan, we were delighted to find a large quantity of honey-like Nectar flowing from the picture of Guru Nanakdevji! Nothing happened on the portrait of Bhagavan! For, Bhagavan wanted us to know that He is not distinct or different: and that all the adoration that was directed to either of them reached Him who was both.

Has He not said, "Have the Form of the Lord before you, when you sit quietly in a place for meditation, any Form you like most. And, roll on your tongue and mind the Name, any Name that you like most.

If you meditate or do Japam, without the Form, who is to answer? You cannot be talking all the time to yourself. The Rupam (the Form) will hear, and the Rupam will respond?"

—Lt. Col. J. C. Ray

Baba and the Intellectual

The problem that confronts a man of faith is whether he can be fair to those who do not share his faith and even to those who actively resist it. In predicaments of this kind, a great deal of tolerance is necessary. My reason and faith are mine; his reason and faith his. But a good and interesting dialogue is possible between the two if each one is keen on understanding the other man's point of view. If we stoop to violence in facing such situations, as happens sometimes in politics, we will lose whatever nobility there may be in our stance. We have to realise that all wrong developments are ultimately traceable to our own error in the initial stages.

A number of philosophies and ideologies are clashing with each other in the world of today. Existentialism *versus* Essentialism, Rationalism, *versus* Irrationalism; Humanism *versus* Nihilism; Mysticism *versus* Marxism; these and many others hold the field and one has to be wary in treading it.

Coming to Mysticism, one has to remember Paschal's remark that the Heart has its own reasons as Reason has. Goethe said that the heart has its own dialectic. Thus Swami Vivekananda had somehow an intuition that he had to attend the world Congress of religions in Chicago even when he had no invitation and when he hardly knew any details about it.

Faculty psychology speaks of mind, heart intellect, will, memory, imagination and other faculties. But Coleridge has pointed out that it is only when these faculties have been illumined by the soul or intuition that any higher cultural development is possible in the individual.

Science answers questions beginning with *how* but not with *why*. To the question how the element of water comes into being, science points to the formula: H₂O. But it is unable to say *why* the observance of this formula results in the formation of water. The *why* question gives the scientists a rude shock till we come to the big hurdle, the indeterminism of modern physics which gives us the reason why metaphysics holds itself together as a subject.

With the three cardinal principles, *Sat*, *Chit* and *Ananda* (Existence, Consciousness and Delight) science has clearly visualised the first one by resolving all matter into pure Energy. Parapsychology has recognised the second principle. Even a psychologist like Jung speaks of the collective unconscious and W. B. Yeats, the Irish poet, of Earth Memory. It is only the universality of the third principle, that of Delight which remains to be armed by a section at least of vanguard intellectuals.

Then there is the question of the correspondence between the macrocosm and the microcosm. Man contains the entire universe within himself in miniature and the Divine is involved in both. That is why T. S. Eliot says in *The Four Quartets*:

"The dance of lymphs along the arteries
Is figured in the drift of stars."

The One splits itself partly into the Many and the Many are unfolded in the One.

Mysticism underlines the importance of the Guru or spiritual Master. Baba eulogises the Guru saying that the Guru is a creator like Brahma, sowing the seed of Spirit; that he is a sustainer like Vishnu, tending the seed into a sapling; and that he is a destroyer like Maheshwara, removing the weeds in the garden of the disciple's heart. Sri Aurobindo has observed that the Guru promotes, not knowings, but knowledge; not willings but Will; and makes you experience, one may add, not feelings but the Feel of Reality. He gives to his disciple not world-knowledge but soul-knowledge and God knowledge.

An intellectual once asked Baba: Since you are an Avatar, why not liquidate the poverty of the nation at one stroke? Every one will be happy. Baba said; "I will give you the power to do so. But do you have the capacity to accept it and contain it?" The person had no answer to give to this question.

Reality is many sided. Liquidating poverty in a phenomenal way may lead to other dangerous results. A premium has to be put, besides, on human endeavour for, after all, man is here to learn in this vale of soul-making. It is this fact which explains the human aspect of the Avatar. The Avatar is here to teach man how to suffer, strive and achieve.

Baba is not 'learned' or highly 'educated'. He is a non-matriculate playing with undergraduates in the Sathya Sai Colleges! But Colleges have been, and universities will be, named after Him. He who holds the Secret of the Universe in the palm of His hand does not have to worry about the acquisition of university degrees.

Academicians everywhere are baffled by Baba. Because He does not fit into their academic framework, they declare that He, the picture, is non-existent. But He laughs, like the cloud, at His own cenotaph. The physical scientists, with all their elaborate theories, cannot explain the origin of the universe better than He does, for He has known the universe from Alpha to Omega.

The scientist generates power by discovering the laws of steam or electricity and by applying them in certain ways. Baba produces power by defying these laws; He uses water as petrol and turns particles of sand into a beautiful golden image of Krishna. Similarly, sacred ashes, red powder or *kumkum* and turmeric fall in great quantities from within and without photographs (not only His but of various Gods and saints) and very delicious and fragrant honey oozes from them.

This much about the chemists and physicists. Nor can the biologists explain the origin of life better than He does. Even the Bhagavata, the King of Puranas, describes the growth of an

embryo in the womb of the mother so marvellously, that no gynaecologist can improve on it. All Sai devotees know the Kalpataru or wish-fulfilling tree at Puttaparthi. Baba took out all manners of fruit from this and gave them to his devotees to the utter chagrin of the cycle of seasons; apples and custard-apples, berries and mangoes, any fruit that you could ever think of. Shri N. Kasturi has narrated in his biography of Baba how, while discussing the missing link speculated upon by zoologists, Baba filled in the gap by materialising it, and showing what it looked like.

As for the environmental sciences like ecology and meteorology devotees have testified to the fact that Baba can stop or bring rain at any time. As for complex sciences like medicine, engineering and agriculture, the marvellous powers of Baba as a diagnostician and as a curer of incurable diseases are well known. Speaking to agricultural experts some months ago, Baba was pointing out how tube-wells, multiplied indefinitely, lead to water famine.

I may now offer a few comments on Baba in relation to the social sciences. A critic pointed out, a year ago, that the payment of customs duty is evaded under the Law, when Baba materialised gold rings, gold images and so on. This is a good example how one is blinded by the very sciences that one is trying to build. To prove that Baba has brought gold on which duty is to be paid, we will have to measure all the quantity of gold in the Kolar and other gold-mines. Even when we have done this, we shall realise that these materialisations are not economic goods. The devotees who have been given these rings and images will part with their life rather than with them. They are, in that sense, invaluable.

Baba has spelt out His own versions of the social sciences. It is not the socialism of underpayment—going to Ashoka Hotel for coffee and idli and after refreshments, refuse to pay more than fifty paise for coffee and twenty paise for each idli. It is rather an economics based on love—putting the rich man on his guard and making him realise, in his bones, that he is the trustee and not the owner, of his wealth. A trusteeship based on love is the foundation on which the science of economics should be reared. Similarly, the science of sociology should be rooted in co-operation, love and brotherhood and not competition and diplomacy. Anthropology should be so oriented that, in all its analysis, it never loses sight of the one "caste" humanity 'one religion', of love and the 'one language' of the heart. Political science is the science of power. But the political scientist has to realise that the only true power that is there flows from truth and love. As for Law, we should have a humane law-giver like Mann, revised and brought up-to-date, with all the spiritual foundations of Law properly preserved.

Baba never indulges in making hairsplitting metaphysical distinctions though he can do so as well as any pundit, alive or dead, if only he is required to go in for them. He is the saviour of the common man and He has formulated His philosophy for the common man. Its central message is that what the individual requires is, not information, but transformation. He has often said: "My life is my message." We don't have to ask questions about the hereafter but live the life given to us as well as we possibly can. Like the two legs of man, the two-legged creature, we have to reckon with both this world and the next, not merely one of them. His philosophy is a simple and universal formulation based on the psychology of man—the philosophy of Truth, Right Action, Peace, Love and Non-violence. He is a prophet by virtue of this new formulation and an Avatar because he lives it Himself and has the power to persuade the individual and the collectivity to live in the Light of this philosophy.

The intellectual has to realise the enormity of the crisis that confronts India and the world today in order to explore possibilities that can meet the crisis. The scientific and the intellectual approaches are, it is well known by now, unable to meet it by themselves.

In India, on the physical plane, there is such frightful poverty and such an utter lack of discipline after twenty five years of Independence. On the vital plane, adverse forces like greed, jealousy and pride have been let loose so that linguism, casteism and factionalism are tearing our society to pieces. On the mental plane, we find that men with public standing are mostly worshippers of Mammon rather than of the Divine. On the spiritual plane, there has been a drying up of the current of spirituality in society at large. The great religions have been trying to uplift individuals and make men masters of themselves. But religions themselves have become merely formalistic and lost their spirituality. This is the atmosphere in which we live in this great country today.

In the world, of which India is only a part, we are faced by similar obstacles. The world is already in the midst of an electronic civilisation and it has shrunk a great deal. But we are going farther and farther away from each other, the nearer the various parts of the world come together. The strong country brow-beats the weak one. One Power Bloc tries desperately to exploit the other. In the frosty atmosphere of a cold war our hearts are chilled and each big country is struggling to dominate the world. So the planetary civilisation, of which we have been dreaming and which might make all mankind socially and politically one, is as remote from us as ever. In fact, nationwide hostilities based on race, religion or, nationalism are as rampant today in some parts of the world as they were some centuries ago. Both physically and vitally the world is in a very bad shape.

On the mental world-plane, there are a number of ideologies conflicting with each other. As W. B. Yeats said "Things fall apart; the Centre does not hold." The world crisis itself consists in the fact that the centre does not hold the parts together. The weapons of total destruction are piling up on one side and on the other, those reserves in man which enable him to face a crisis are fast shrinking.

What ideology can help us in this predicament? Democracy is a noble ideal, with its respect for the "divine average". But it most often results in a continuous game of setting up and pulling down governments. And it won't help us when the world is in a melting pot. As for the individual, he was confused between Gandhism, and hippism, the East and the West. Nor does socialism help. For it makes the individual a screw in the machine in the interest of the collectivity. We dehumanise man in the interest of building up a socialistic republic. Marxism, with its insistence on anger and class-war is unable to meet the crisis, for no philosophy of hatred can succeed in making the world one.

Under Anarchism, each individual becomes a law unto himself. A truly anarchic society will become possible only when each individual has evolved into a Sri Ramakrishna, Sri Aurobindo or Bhagavan Baba.

Rationalism and humanism, each in its own way, ignores the fundamental basis of spirit. We build on quicksand without it. A humanism, devoid of love flowing from Spirit, cannot heal the many fissures from which Life suffers on this planet. None of these philosophies filled with the intellect, can control those wanton human desires which are driving the world to the edge of a precipice or be a substitute for Spirit. No diplomat can save the world unless he practises the diplomacy of vision and love. A different kind of philosophy and a totally different kind of personality are required to meet the world crisis of today.

Sheer sincerity and innocence: this is what is needed today. There is the great Bhagavatha image of Doomsday. On the waters of the ocean that have submerged the world and brought about a Pralaya or utter dissolution, there is a little Divine Child lying on a banyan leaf in the midst of mounting-waves, forgetful of everything, masterful of everything, sipping the nectar of delight, of immortality, oozing from its own toe. It is this Child that is going to save the world from the Day of Doom by saying, "Let dry land appear."

This Child is the symbol of a divine personality. Statesmen indulge in double-talk, double-think and double-doing. They make life much more complicated than it is in itself. They are pawns in the cosmic game of chess, not chess-players. They continuously speak of equality, liberty and fraternity but do not even observe the elementary decencies of honesty, justice and recognition of merit. Intellectually speaking, the true saviour of the world is going to be one who is unfalteringly and unerringly loyal to Truth. From an ethical point of view, he will never swerve even an inch from right in the continuous swing and movement, towards action. Scrutinised emotionally, it will be seen that he stands unshaken, whatever the fury of the storms and waves around him. He becomes himself the Rock of Ages. Again he is a ceaseless fount of love, the love that makes each one a friend and disarms enemies. It is a personality that stands foursquare to the world. The saviour who answers this description will have infinite patience with things as they are, a clear vision of Truth, the power to implement his visions and universal love.

The Saviour of, our imagination must also have been endowed with the genius of the four great goddesses: Maha Saraswati and her perfection in executive skill; Mahalaxmi and her capacity for establishing love, harmony and beauty; Maha Kali and her power to punish the wicked and trample down the foe mercilessly and Maheshwari and her surpassing wisdom.

The one question that has faced mankind ever since the morning of creation is: when shall right find its appropriate might? I give the question here as AE, the Irish poet worded it. We live in a world where might is right, where the law of the jungle still prevails. When shall we win the world for God so that we can say "Thy Kingdom come"? For achieving this we require a personality endowed with Truth, Right, Peace and Love and all the excellences of Saraswati, Laxmi, Kali and Maheshwari. But for establishing Right and Beauty as Might, you also require Power exemplified by the other divine qualities—omnipresence, omniscience, omnipotence and omnifelicity. We cannot expect Presidents and Prime Ministers to be either omnipresent or omniscient, much less omnipotent. Only the Avatar can be the X, outside brackets, manipulating circumstances and determining the value of the quantities within. This X is not only outside the brackets; it is outside metropolitan cities and cabinets and gives to everything its final worth and value. To crown all, the Avatar brings universal delight, shining on all like the sun.

And yet, while in human form, even the Divine suffers like human beings. Otherwise, how can the human become Divine or be lifted to the level of the Divine unless the Divine descends into the flesh, suffers like us and still is conqueror? The Immortal puts on these garments of mortality to make us feel confident, to realise that we can suffer like mortals and yet be Divine.

Baba said once: "While in the company of men, I am a man. In the company of women, I am a woman. In the midst of children, I am a child. When I am alone, I am God." It would be good if intellectuals try to assimilate these steps in their own daily life.

The rationale of the Avatar consists in the fact that He comes down to teach human beings how to make themselves divine. The democratic ideal animating, the Sai movement demands that the whole of human society should be, as Keats said, a grand democracy of forest-trees: that each tree should be an Oak instead of our having a shrub or briar here and there.

At the same time, SAI should not be regarded as a limiting word. The name or the form of SAI, Baba has warned us, should not blind us to the names and forms of the leaders of other movements. We should have the same respect and love for all of them, for the Divine permeates them all equally. Whenever we utter the name SAI we should be able to utter all the other great names in the world of spirit.

—*Dr. V. K. Gokak*

Humanity's Guide

The development of nationalism in India was on the lines of the ideology of Vedanta. The great leaders of this and the last century were all, more or less, students and followers of the Vedanta ideology. Swami Vivekananda was perhaps the greatest driving force for the regeneration of Bharatiya culture and its liberation from the stranglehold of Western ways of life.

The very conception of India as One nation, and of Bharat as a Goddess or Mother has its origin in Vedic vocabulary. The Nation is conceived in terms of a single organism. It is said that the inhabitants of this land are like the tiny cells of the human body, and when disease-carrying germs attack the healthy cells (when the wicked and the vicious predominate), illness (war) happens. The body attempts to save itself from destruction and decline, as the nation tries to save itself in times of crisis. During crisis, it is said, there is full co-ordination between the body cells. The King represents the strength and unity of the Nation and so the Vedic ritual of Coronation implants in his mind his immense responsibility and unique majesty. In one of the formulae he is asked to repeat, he says, "My back is the Nation; my subjects are my head, my limbs, my shoulders, my neck, my stomach. Thus I am established among my people." This is what the Yajurveda enjoins on him to feel and act upon. Any harm to any section of the people will affect the King too, for that too is a part of his body.

Swami Ramatirtha, the Vedantic Nationalist says, "I am the Continent in full. Bharat-bhoomi is my body. The Kanyakumari is my feet; the Himalayas are my head; the Ganga flows through

my hair; Sindhu and the Brahmaputra fall from my head; the Vindhya mountain is the girdle round my waist; the Coromandal and Kerala are my right and left feet. I am complete Bharat; its East and West are my hands; I stretch them to embrace the whole humanity.”

Since the nationalism of Bharat is based on Vedanta, its ideals and values have universal application. Sri Sathya Sai Baba exhorts all the children of India to study and practise the basic values and ideals of Indian or Sanathana Culture, for, they can save and sustain entire humanity. Baba has described the Desa (Country) as the Deha (Body) of the Lord. He has said that the Delia wears Dharma, and that Dharma is the distinctive apparel that keeps the Body warm and respectable. The Dharma of a people is the measure of their dignity and decency.

This is a peculiar and important interpretation given by Baba to the word, Dharma. Hitherto the word was interpreted on the basis of the meaning of the root, dhr, which was taken to mean, that which sustains, supports. It is true that the word root also means, "to wear". So, Baba says that Dharma is that which is worn. The code of right conduct prescribed by the sages and practised by the people protects them from illness and dis-ease. The ideals of Dharma are there, eternally; if they are worn and maintained, people benefit. But their value and validity are not diminished at all. Those who do not honour them and wear them suffer, that is all. This relation between the Deha, Desa and Dharma is a peculiar one and has been emphasised by Baba alone among modern thinkers.

Baba has not merely given this new meaning to Dharma and expatiated upon it in His Dharmavahini and through His Discourses, but, He has sponsored programs to make the nation and the world accept it. If we observe closely the Bal Vikas classes and the curriculum, we can realise that the values inculcated in those tender minds during that impressionable age are eternal and universal. He is also busy shaping the minds and ideals of the young by emphasis on spiritual ideals and social service performed in an atmosphere of Love, as a basic Sadhana. The Mahila Vibhag of the Seva Samitis attach great importance to programmes that lead to purity and strength of the God-ward urge. He has exhorted all to consider service to the diseased, the distressed, the down-hearted and the defeated as service to God. All the activities are soaked in reverence to Bharatiya Culture and the Vedantic outlook.

Bhagavan says that each religion is a facet of the Truth; they are all complementary to each other. If this is not recognised, there can be no Love between peoples; the world will head on to a crisis. When Sri Sathya Baba directed the erection in Bombay at Dharmakshetra and later, during the Golden Jubilee of the Advent at Prasanthi Nilayam, of the Sarva Dharma Aikya Stupa, He was declaring to the world that all isms and ideologies are to be valued only when they tend to expand Love in the human heart and to inspire men to serve man. We have to learn that there is only one faith—the Faith in One All-loving God, and one message—the message of Unity, in which all mankind is knit by the bond of brotherhood. Reconcile and reconstruct—that is the Task before man. Sri Sathya Sai Baba is guiding us in this stupendous task; we have only to adore His advice and follow His lessons and practise His simple prescriptions.

—V. S. Page

New Guidelines

Objective

The Second World Conference held at Prasanthi Nilayam during the Golden Jubilee Celebrations in November. 1975, clarified the true nature of the Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organisations, viz. to awaken in man the consciousness of Divinity latent in him by the propagation of the principles of Sathya, Dharma, Shanti and Prema, through precept and example. These principles are universal and basic and they transcend all labels, systems of belief and faiths. This Organisation is a spiritual one, and not a religious one, since it does not aim at establishing a cult. The objective of all its varied activities is to remove the obstacles that keep man everywhere from God, his goal.

As a consequence, all Office-bearers and members are urged to cultivate the spiritual quality of detachment, control desires, and be engaged in the Sadhana by which the personality is transformed into an embodiment of Love and all traces of anger, jealousy, hatred and ego are eliminated. They should acquaint themselves fully with the teachings of our Lord, Sri Sathya Sai Baba, by careful study and sincere endeavour to put those teachings into daily practice, especially, love, non-violence, humility, faith, and reverence. The Organisation exists and acts for the betterment of not only the members and Sai devotees but of all humanity. So those who work in the Organisation must be ever vigilant that they project a proper image of the Sai Ideal and that they do not bring discredit to the sacred Organisation to which they have the privilege to belong. Office-bearers must be willing and able to shoulder this great responsibility and to spare sufficient time for the work undertaken by them. They must be ever aware that their thoughts, words and deeds are monitored by Bhagavan.

World Council

The World Conference established as a Supervisory and Guiding Authority for the Organisation, now spread all over the world, *A WORLD COUNCIL* of Sri Sathya Sai Organisations has been formed and this name shall-hereafter be used for the Organisation. The Council is composed of nine members nominated by Bhagavan:

The Rajamatha of Nawanagar
Dr. S. Bhagavantham
Mr. John Hislop
Sri S. Sitaram
Sri Balesingham
Dr. K. C. Pani
Mrs. Natalie Santos
Sri Sohan Lal
Sri Indulal. H. Shah

Sri. Indulal is the Convener of the Council. Its Office is situated at Dharmakshetra, Mahakali Caves Rd, Andheri East, Bombay, 400093. The Convener of the Central Council for USA is Mr. John Hislop. The Central Council for England is having Sri S. Sitaram as its Convenor.

State Presidents

The following State Presidents were nominated by Bhagavan to be in charge of the activities of the Organisation in India.

Andhra Pradesh: Sri, C. Gopinatha Rao
Assam: Dr. Barooah
Bihar: Dr. G. V. L. N. Murthy
Delhi: Sri. Sohan Lal.
Gujarat: Dr. C. G. Patel
Karnataka: Dr. M. B. Sunder Rao
Kerala: Sri. M. Krishna Menon
Madhya Pradesh: Sri. S. P. Shet
Maharashtra: Sri. M. M. Pinge
Orissa: Sri. Brahmananda Panda
Rajasthan: Sri. Adaviappa
Tamil Nadu: Sri. P. G Achuthanandam
Uttar Pradesh: Sri. D. D. Gupta
West Bengal: Sri. R. R. Chatterji

The State Presidents have been directed to nominate Zonal Conveners to help them in guiding the activities of groups of Districts. They have also to nominate a Woman Convener for Mahila Vibhag activities in the entire State and Women Joint Conveners on the State Level for Bal Vikas and Mahila Seva Dal. They have also to nominate a State Convener for Seva Dal.

The World Conference has declared that procedures by which the contribution of every member to the implementation of the program by his participation and attitudes can be assessed have to be laid down. It has prohibited the publication of hand-outs, pamphlets, and books of any kind, form or size by any Unit or member without the written concurrence of the State President. It has laid down that Bhagavan's Portrait shall not be used in any letter-head or note paper by any Unit or Office-bearer. It has ruled that the Emblem of All Faiths be displayed at every Bhajan Sessions and Gatherings under the auspices of every Unit.

It has recommended that Office-bearers of all Units must normally retire after 5 years, except with the specific approval from the State President. The membership of individuals have also to be reviewed by the State President, every 3 years, beginning from 1976.

Bal Vikas

The Sathya Sai Research Institute shall organise a Training Camp for Bal Vikas Gurus to acquaint them with evaluation methods and teaching aids and methods. The State Convener of Mahila Vibhag shall help in the preparation and publication through Regional Publication Boards of books for the use of the Bal Vikas Classes. The Course and Curriculum prescribed for Bal Vikas should not be altered or disturbed. Gurus must prepare themselves for the sacred task by Swadhyaya, Sadhana and Seva.

The family is the Unit, in Bal Vikas work. So, the Guru must endeavour to draw the co-operation and enthusiasm of the parents too. Tests at the Town or Village level for Group I and at the District level for Group II shall be held. While emphasising the need for training, the

World Conference felt that separate training courses and camps be held for Gurus of 'urban' centres and Gurus for 'rural' centers.

Seva Dal

The World Conference laid down important guide lines for Seva Dal also. It has declared that 25 shall be the minimum strength of a Seva Dal Unit. All Units have to complete the full course of training prescribed, by the 23d November 1976. 1976 has been declared as the SEVA DAL YEAR. 25% of the members of each unit must have been trained in First Aid, through formal and practical instruction. A Training Camp for Seva Dal Conveners has been decided upon.

Four types of Service Activities have been laid down for Seva Dal

1. Educational: Book Banks, Coaching Classes, Elocution and Essay Writing Competitions, Exhibitions, Films

2. Health and Hygiene Services: First Aid, Blood Donation, Medicine, Bank, Medical Check-up, Hospital Visits, Vaccination Camps, Eye Treatment Camps, Service to the Handicapped.

3. Rural Service Activities: Health and Hygiene Camps, Cleaning Schools, Temples, Tanks and Streets, Starting Small Scale Industries. The Adoption of Villages for Total Uplift.

4. Information Bureaus: Library and Sales Centres for Sai Literature, Exhibitions (Vocational Guidance, Ideals of Sai Education, the Divine Message, the Universal Truth as found in the various Faiths etc.)

The Mahila Seva Dal Units shall undertake Hospital Visits, conduct Coaching Classes, and classes in Tailoring and Sewing. They shall help in the rehabilitation of handicapped girls and women, and in educating women in health and hygiene.

General

The World Council has also laid down certain rules and regulations, besides valuable suggestions for promoting Moral Education in Society, apart from what can be done by the previous proposals. It has directed all Units to consider one or more of the following programs: Summer Course on Indian Culture and Spirituality for Students, with follow-up programs of Seva etc; Essay Competitions, Reading Rooms, Study Halls, Hostels for College Students, Pre Primary and Primary Schools, Technical Schools for the weaker Sections.

The 6th May of every year will hereafter be celebrated all over the World by the Units as *SRI SATHYA SAI STUDENTS' DAY*.

Ramakatha Rasavahini

Sri Sathya Sai Baba

73

The Sea

Rama saw the Generals of the Vanara hordes, and, he spoke to them thus: "Leaders! Take this Vibhishana with you. Do not consider him as some one apart; but, regard him as your comrade. He is my own." These endearing words greatly heartened Vibhishana. Soon, they moved towards the seashore.

Looking at the sea, Rama questioned how it was proposed to cross it. Many among the Vanaras suggested means and methods. At last Vibhishana rose from his place and addressed Rama thus: "Lord! The Ocean owes its origin to your forefathers, Sagara and his sons. It is the family `preceptor' of your line. If only you resolve that it should be crossed, the Vanaras can easily go across."

The Visitor

Meanwhile, a messenger sent by Ravana was sighted by Vibhishana and he was placed before Rama. Since Rama did not give any reply, the Vanaras bound him and took him to where Sugriva, their Ruler was. Sugriva ordered that his limbs be cut off; when the Vanaras prepared themselves for the execution of that order, the fellow raised a hue and cry. He shouted in his pain, "O Vanaras! I swear by Rama! Do not cut off my nose and ears." His pathetic cry was heard by Lakshmana; he asked that the Rakshasa be brought to his presence; he spoke softly to him, and admonished the Vanaras for torturing a Messenger deputed by Ravana.

He wrote a letter and placed it in his hand, with the words, "Give this missive to Ravana. And, repeat to him the words I now utter: O, Demolisher of the fortunes of your own clan! Change your heart at least this day, and fall at the feet of Rama. Rama will pardon you. Do not decimate and destroy the Rakshasa tribe, in order to prop up your wiles. Know there is no other means available to you to avoid Death that is imminent."

With these hard and heavy warnings, the Messenger was sent back to his master! The fellow was overjoyed that he could escape alive; he shouted "Jai to Lord Ramchandra," and fell at Rama's feet before he hied back home.

At the Court of Ravana, he related the events that had ensued, and started describing with uncontrollable delight the majestic charm of Rama. He gave Ravana the letter Lakshmana had entrusted him with. Ravana enquired about his brother, Vibhishana and asked how he fared. "Fie upon him," he ejaculated, "his days are numbered; death will swallow him soon. He is a pest bred in this granary. He left this Lanka and joined the camp of my foe. Misfortune will haunt him until he dies."

He turned to the fellow and asked him, "Under this pretext, you visited their camp. Did you not tell them of our military might and adamant resolve? Tell me also what you learnt about their resources and capabilities." The messenger, Suka, stood before the throne with folded palms, and said, "Lord! I pray that you extend some grace to me and listen calmly and with forbearance to

what I say. The very moment your brother sealed friendship with Rama, he was crowned Emperor of Lanka by him! Knowing that I reached their camp as your messenger, the Vanaras caught hold of me and tortured me in various ways. I swore in Rama's name and called upon him to save me; therefore, they allowed me to come away unmutilated, with my nose and ears intact.

Had I a thousand tongues, I cannot describe with all of them the might of those Vanara armies. What a galaxy of heroic warriors are they! There are Vanaras of many different colours, of all ages, and all grades of gigantic stature and strength. One shakes in terror when one casts his eyes at them; why, even to picture them in the mind or think about them is a terror striking experience. Imagine the might of that one Vanara who killed your son and reduced this City to ashes! It is all the result of their being reflections and echoes of the invincible might of Rama himself. Even the tiniest brat among the monkeys become, by that token a horrifying monster.

There are monkey warriors with various names, and each of them is endowed with the strength of many herds of elephants. Dwivida, Mainda, Nila, Nala, Angada, Vikata, Dadhimukha, Kesari, Kurnuda, Daja, Gavaksba, Jambavanta—these are the Generalissimos. Every one of them is equal in might and military skill to their Ruler, Sugriva. And, there are hundreds of thousands more among them, who are of equal might. Their number is beyond calculation. Their fury and ferocity can destroy earth, heaven and the nether regions, as if these were but heaps of straw. Lord, I heard that their number is 18 Padmas. And, each Padma has a valiant General at its head. Emperor! I did not find a single Vanara, from the highest to the lowest, who doubted about their victory; nor was there any one who had the least trace of nervousness on the eve of the invasion. They are all tightening their muscles to pound this City; they are only waiting for the signal from Rama. They have not had it so far.

Whether the ocean yields to them and gives the right of way or not, they are determined to build a causeway of stones, and succeed in. their venture. They are baring their teeth and gnashing them, boasting that they would squeeze Ravana out of shape and reduce him into a handful of ash. Fear strikes every one who listens to their exultant roar and challenging call. The very instant they hear the name Ravana uttered within earshot, they get so enraged that they pluck giant trees root and branch, and brandish them in angry demonstration of hate. They are swaying and swinging, surging and shouting, in their eagerness to consume this City.

They have equally redoubtable bears too among them.

And, to crown all, they have Rama as their leader, capable of overwhelming millions of 'death-deities'. Hundreds of thousands of Adishesas, each of which is blessed with a thousand heads and tongues cannot do full justice, if asked to describe the heroism and military skill of Rama. With one arrow shot from his bow, he can even dry up the Ocean. As your brother declared in the past, he is extraordinarily compassionate.”

Heroics

The reaction of Ravana to this report of the spy and messenger was a peal of wild laughter. He said, "Fie on you. Giving ear to the pratings of the monkeys that surround him and of that arch-coward, Vibhishana, who has fallen at his feet, you are extolling that fool so high. It is sheer nonsense to describe the strength and heroism of mere monkeys. Enough. Enough! Can *monkeys*

be ever so strong! I have heard enough long ago of the power and might of this Sugriva; and, what can this coward Vibhishana do who has become his minister now? Can he contribute any wealth, victory or resources to Rama?

The messenger could only pine within himself and bewail the lack of intelligence that Ravana was exhibiting. He folded his palms in obeisance and stood silent. Then Ravana tore the envelop of the missive that Lakshmana had sent, and, after perusing it, handed it over to his minister. He said, "You are like the thithiri bird afraid that the sky will fall upon its young fledglings! Poor thing! It covers the little ones holding its head over them as a cover! Can the sky ever fall and kill the birds? Can these anchorites, these ritual-ridden priests, who try to frighten me by a shower of words, ever succeed?"

Suka, the messenger, watched the heroics of Ravana for some time. Then, he intercepted with the words, "Lord! What I have now said is the full truth. Read well and carefully the contents of that letter and act, without any sense of resentment or pride. Listen; ponder over my words. Give up the hostility you have developed with Rama. He is very tender of heart and compassionate. He is the master of the three worlds. If only you approach him, he will take you under his protection and guard you from harm. He will pardon all your wrongs. Surrender Sita to him. Give heed to my prayer." The envoy pleaded plaintively that Ravana save himself from ruin.

While he was pouring out his pleas Ravana's eyes reddened with anger and shame. He roared in protest, "What? Do you take me to be a criminal? Did I send you, O fool, to go and surrender at the feet of those prattling babies in the forest? Audacity and impertinence cannot go further," and, rising from the throne, he kicked the fellow out of the hall.

The Rakshasa, Suka, fled to the camp of Rama and sought refuge. But, the Vanaras seeing him again amidst them were moved into acts of revenge; they, however, restrained themselves, and awaited the orders of Rama. Sugriva led Suka to the presence of Rama. Suka prostrated before Rama and related in detail his story and fate. He prayed that he might be accepted as Vibhishana was accepted, and that he might be protected by his new Master. Rama as the very embodiment of compassion, called to his presence the leaders of the Vanaras, and directed them to welcome their new brother, Suka. He too was overcome by gratitude and he declared that his life has reached its goal.

Rocks that float

Then, Rama directed Lakshmana to bring him the bow and arrow, and when he brought them, saying, "Haughty persons deserve no kindness; mischievously cruel persons deserve no softness; misers by nature deserve no moral teaching; egotistic persons deserve no advice; greedy persons cannot benefit from insistence on renunciation; persons stricken with anger deserve no counsel on being at peace; lust-crazy victims deserve no scriptural readings; saline fields deserve no seeds of grain. So too this Ocean that does not yield to soft requests deserves no mercy."

So saying, he fitted an arrow to his bow; at this, Lakshmana was afraid what the consequence would be for the Ocean. The Ocean too was rendered hot at the mere preparation to send an arrow into its depths. The denizens of the deep suffered extreme agony. As if terror-stricken, the

waves began screaming. Wave after wave rolled towards the place where Rama stood and, gently lapped his feet, as if they were praying for mercy.

At that time, a Voice was heard as if from the sky, "Lord! There are two generals in the campus, Nala and Nila, who are the targets of a curse pronounced by a sage. That curse can now be used as a blessing. Listen. The story can now be told." Thus the Ocean itself communicated the details of that dire incident to Rama

There were many hermits living on a river-bank in cottages. While young, these two entered these hermitages; the sages were immersed in deep meditation, and seizing the holy icons called saligrams which they worshipped, they used to cast them into the waters of the river. The sages were enraged at this sacrilege and they cast a curse on them, in this manner: "Boys! May all things that you throw on water never sink; may they float, instead. And, may they remain just where you have thrown them, even if the waters flow fast in floods."

Therefore, every rock they throw will float at the very place; have your Name inscribed on every slab and rock. Your Name is light, not heavy at all. Thus, even huge mountain peaks when thrown would float and form a bridge. I shall also contribute my share of help, for, when the search is for Truth, all Nature must serve the seeker."

Rama decided not to let go the arrow he had fitted; but, since, his arrow, once fitted, had to find a target, he aimed it at a forest in the far distance and, as a result, it became a dry desert. Rama then, called together the ministers and directed them to construct the bridge across the Ocean. Hanuman said, "Lord! Your Name is the bridge that can safely transport man across the Ocean of Life. Which bridge can be stronger and safer than that?" Jambavan, the aged General, said, "Lord! Your prowess which is a raging conflagration, can dry up this mass of water; it is sure to be filled to the brim again by the tears of the women widowed in Lanka during the coming battle with Ravana and his armies."

Rama smiled at the simple sincere loyalty and valour of these devotees. Jambavan reminded Nala and Nila of the assurance given by the unseen source, which was no other than the Ocean itself, about the use that can now be made of the curse they had drawn upon themselves while young. He directed them to install Rama in their hearts and throw hills, hillocks, mountains and rocks into the sea.

At this, the Vanara heroes ran in leaps and bounds, in all directions, and brought back entire hills on their heads and shoulders, as if they were as light as balls used for games. They stood in one long line and passed the hills from shoulder to shoulder, all the while repeating aloud the sacred Name of Rama. Off and on, they also uprooted huge trees, and passed them onward to the bridge site, where Nala and Nila were casting the materials into the water, so that they might not sink into the depths.

The whole of that day they worked without rest and with no thought of food or sustenance. They built a length of 14 yojanas in one day. Refreshed by a good night's sleep, they rose before dawn, during the Brahma muhūrta itself, and resumed work. They acclaimed with cheers, "Jai to Sri Ramchandra, our Lord," and hurried to the various corners of the land in search of hills and

mountains. They brought them on to the shore and piled them there for being used by Nala and Nila.

The second day, the bridge was extended by another twenty yojans; the next day, they were able to build it for a further length of twenty one yojans; the fourth day saw the bridge extending over a further twenty two yojanas. And, on the fifth day, by constructing a further twenty three yojanas, yojanas, they completed the 100-yojana bridge in another successful spurt.

Thus, Nala and Nila, unconcerned with the exhaustion or the urgent need to rest awhile, intent on fulfilling the task assigned by Rama for the completion of his mission, were able to announce in the Presence of Rama that the bridge was ready, because his Name and Form were ever before those who toiled for its completion.

The Rama Story: Stream of Sacred Sweetness
(To be continued)

When You Pass By

Beautiful buds dance,
Fair flowers smile
Green gardens bloom.
Wild winds soften,
Rapid streams pause
Dull darkness departs
Angry clouds brighten

Wavering minds stay
Showers of love do drop
Thirsty hearts are quenched;
Lamps are lit in faces
Love pervades all round
When You pass by—My Lord.

—Anon

Ramakatha Rasavahini

Sri Sathya Sai Baba

74

Rama was informed through Sugriva that the hundred yojana bridge, he had resolved upon was finished and ready to be used. Rama and Lakshmana were pleased at the devotion and sense of duty of the Vanaras, who finished the job so soon and so well. Rama directed the Ruler of the Monkeys, Sugriva, to pass along the long line of Vanaras the order that each one should deposit the hill he was transporting at the time, at the very place he stood, and take a little rest before returning to base. Sugriva conveyed the order to those who were engaged in passing from shoulder to shoulder, the boulders and peaks for the bridge. Hanuman was at that moment transporting a huge hill from the far north. When he heard that Rama had ordered that it be deposited, he cast it down, near Brindavan where he was at the time. He was surprised to hear a loud wail from the fallen peak. "Alas," it cried, "I have lost the chance of service to Rama." It could not be consoled or comforted. When Hanuman brought its condition to the notice of Rama, Rama smiled in appreciation. He said, "Ah! Even mountains are yearning anxiously to participate in this task!" He expressed joy at their enthusiasm. He told Hanuman, "Go quick. Console the hill. Tell it not to be sad. During the coming Dwapara Age, I shall hold that hill high on my palm, for seven days and nights. On hearing this, the peak will be happy." That assurance made it the Govardhana Hill, which the Lord held aloft as promised in the Treta Age.

On the fifth day, Rama sat on the seashore, and was delighted when he saw the bridge. "O Vanaras!" he said, "Your devotion and skill in service are beyond description. By your sense of dedication you have won my heart." At that time, Vibhishana came into the presence and said, "Lord! We have to enter Lanka tomorrow; so, I have a prayer to place before you." Rama replied, "What is it? Tell me." Vibhishana continued, "Ravana is a devout worshipper of Siva. He has intense attachment towards that aspect of Godhead. Yet, it is certain he will meet death at your hands. I pray that, to commemorate his devotion to Siva, you may, on the eve of moving towards Lanka and entering it through this bridge, install a Sivalinga here, so that in coming centuries, when people enter Lanka along this route, they can worship the Sivalinga and remember these events. They would indeed be fortunate to have such experience. The Linga would be extolled by them as Rama Lingeshwara, the Idol installed by Rama. And, even when the bridge is eroded and crumbled by time, the spot could be identified by future generations by means of the Idol worshipped here." Rama was happy at the suggestion. He said, "I shall fulfill your wish. You are the future Ruler of Lanka, and in order to please you, I am ready to carry out your wishes, whatever is involved." At this, Sugriva directed the vanaras to get all the requisites for the installation; he procured an impressive Linga sending Hanuman himself for the purpose. Rama performed the ceremonial ablution for the Linga with water from the sea and invoked Vitality and Grace into It. Rama's words had the effect of mantra or sacred formula; so, nothing more was needed to sanctify the Linga. The Vanaras uttered hymns and their ecstatic shouts echoed from the heavens. Amidst the Jai Jai of the hordes standing around, Lakshmana and Sugriva helped Rama to plant the Linga in position and to complete the ceremony of Consecration.

Then, the Vanaras started marching over the bridge in regular formation, with the picture of Rama in their minds and the name of Rama on their tongues. The scene was inexpressibly

sublime. Rama and Lakshmana stood on the bridge and looked at the sea surging on both sides. The presence of Rama, the Ocean of Compassion, raised the spirits of the Ocean below. Waves rose to catch a glimpse of Rama; the denizens of the sea peeped over the waters and frolicked in joy at the sight of Rama. They discarded their natures and stared long and hungrily at the Divine Form of Rama. The Vanaras had prepared a Camp on the Lanka end of the bridge; so, when the vanguard reached the heights, the news spread throughout the island. Very soon, Rama, Lakshmana, Sugriva and Vibhishana, who crossed at a slow pace, also reached the main gate of the fort of Lanka. Accepting the orders of Rama, the Vanaras plucked entire trees, and dancing in joy, they ate the fruits and cast the branches and twigs over the battlements into the City itself. They heaved huge boulders over the wall and dropped them into the streets beyond. They sought out Rakshasas moving about alone outside the fort; they teased and tormented them, threatening to wring their necks. Such pranks of the monkeys could not be restrained.

Very soon, news reached Ravana that the enemy was at the gate. Though possessed of ten throats, Ravana was using only one throat so far to communicate with others; but, now, he roared through *all the ten*, in anger and hate. He did not remember that it was a bad omen to speak through the ten throats! There was a curse laid on him long ago, that when he spoke through all the tens his end would draw near. Within a few seconds of the roar, he recollected the curse and was frightened at the fact. But, however much he attempted to control the other throats, his voice came out of all the ten. The Rakshasas who noted this strange occurrence inferred that his destruction was imminent, now that Rama and his vanara armies had entered Lanka. They sat amidst their wives and children and lamented that their lives would end that day or the next. They decided to use the little time they had at their disposal in merry-making and pleasure. When calamity approaches, discrimination departs, says the proverb.

Even when he knew that the curse was coming true, Ravana dismissed the warning, and told himself that nothing evil would happen to him. He moved into the Queen's apartments, for, he was afraid the Ministers might read from his fallen face that he was overcome by the awareness of the curse. Ravana sank with himself through anxiety and agony. "Will they, as when my sister fell into their hands, slice off the noses and ears of my ten heads? Or, will they slice off the heads themselves?" These fears haunted him.

He saw Mandodari, the Queen, in the apartment. Her eyes discovered that Ravana had become forlorn. She decided to administer wise counsel to him. She held his hands in hers and, in a soft, smooth and sweet voice, she said "Lord! Please listen to me, give up your anger; pay heed to my words. Think over them carefully. Those whom we can win over by reverence and devotion, we should not plan to win over by hatred and opposition. In such circumstances, we have to resort to intelligent reasoning. It will not bring any good, if we oppose such sacred persons. You cannot achieve victory if you encounter Rama; the glow-worm cannot vanquish the Sun. Listen to me. Take Sita, at least this moment, and, while returning her safe, prostrate before him and pray for pardon. Do not ruin your life and destroy Lanka and sacrifice the lives of its women and children. Persisting in your resolve to fight is not in line with the devotion and dedication to God that you are famous for. If you hold fast to this horrid decision, even Siva, whom you have pleased hitherto, is sure to give you up. Good deeds alone can win the grace of God; how can God reward and appreciate such heinous acts?"

Mandodari spoke in this strain for a long time trying to mend his ways and to save him from destruction. "Lord! You are as dear to me as my own life. Pay heed. Rama is no ordinary human prince. He is the very person who destroyed Madhu and Kaitabha come again! He killed Hiranyaksha and Hiranyakasipu. He is the Lord who trampled on the head of Emperor Bali. He demolished the pride of the thousand-armed Karthaviryaarjuna. Then why boast of the prowess of your mere twenty? He is worshipped by the entire world; he is of the most auspicious form. A long time ago, you had yourselves told me that Brahma had told you that God would incarnate as Rama in order to relieve the earth of the burden of cruelty and vice. Do you not remember? Aware of all this, how is it that you do not give up this path, and recognise the truth? Return to Rama the Acme of Chastity, the Diadem of the Virtuous, and the incomparable Jewel of beauty, Sita; then let us crown our son as Emperor of this realm and spend the rest of our days in peace and plentiful joy in the immediate presence of Rama. Ah! How fortunate is your brother! He is moving in the cool shade of Rama's grace. It is not too late: At this very moment, hasten towards Rama who is at the very entrance of Lanka and fall at his feet, praying for pardon."

Mandodari, was in tears when she spoke thus; she rolled at the feet of her lord, appealing to him to be warned in good time and to take immediate measures to rescue himself and his empire, his people and his fame. Ravana raised her to her feet and wiped her eyes. He said, "Dear one! Why are you agitated thus? Wherefrom all this fear, this lack of courage? There is no one more powerful than me in the world. The rulers of the eight directions have been defeated by the might of my arm. Death dare not step near me. Do not yield to fear. You are extolling that weakling Rama in my hearing unaware of the depth and extent of my might." With these words, he left the Queen and entered the Audience Hall, where he promptly sat on the Throne. Mandodari noticed his movements and the trend of his thoughts; she said to herself, "What a fool! This is the inevitable fate of persons who do not give up their false pride. Good counsel cannot enter their minds. When one is suffering from fever, sweet things taste bitter. He is now having the poisonous fever of pride; therefore, nectarine counsel is rejected by him, as if it is poison. What more can I do now?" She pictured in her mind the calamities and sorrows that were in store for Lanka. She felt that, before witnessing and sharing in all that misery and grief, it would be better to end life itself. With a heavy heart and with thoughts of Rama filling her, she went into her room and threw herself on the bed.

Meanwhile, Ravana sent for his ministers and set about making preparations for the battle that was imminent. "Rakshasas!" he accosted, "The Vanaras, the Jambavantas, and the men who are now attacking us are not even a morsel for our maws. Do not lose courage, hesitate or argue." "Plunge into the fight. Get ready," he yelled. But, Prahastha stood up from his seat, and with folded palms, he said, "Rakshasas! Let us not desert the right path. Lord! These ministers of yours speak words that are in line with your desire. But, that will not ensure success. One solitary monkey crossed the ocean and coming into our City performed many a wonderful feat. At that time, these ministers and these armies could not put an end to his destructive antics. You say monkeys are but morsels for our maws. Well, when that monkey was here, where were those maws? Did they have no hunger? When it burnt the City into a heap of ashes, these ministers had evidently no appetite to eat it! Lord! The words that fall from the lips of these ministers might appear very pleasant to you now but they will bring about dire calamities as time moves on. Think about all this in the quiet hours. Rama has struck camp on, our Suneela Mountain; he came over the sea through a bridge they constructed; he has with him an army of uncounted

numbers of Vanaras. Can such a person be a mere man? Give up that surmise if you believe so. Do not prattle as the tongue, that is let loose, talks. Do not welcome into your ears the rhetoric of these ministers. Do not also condemn me as a coward, afraid of battle. Believe in me and in the aptness and urgency of my advice. Take Sita with you now itself and surrender her to him, praying for pardon. That step will save us and save Lanka. We can then claim that we have rescued our tribe from destruction. This is the triumph we can achieve. Or else, face defeat and disaster. Get ready this very moment; your renown will last until the Sun and Moon endure. Do not acquire a name that will be execrated so long as the Sun and Moon endure.”

Ravana replied in dire anger and sheer bravado. He was trembling with rage at the unpalatable advice that Prahastha gave him. Raising his voice to a wild roar, he admonished Prahastha in a torrent of abuse. "Fool! Who taught you this trickery? Whence did you derive such wisdom? They say, sparks originate in bamboo clusters! You are born in my clan." Ravana gnashed his teeth wildly; he shouted harsh and vulgar abuse; and, finally, he kicked Prahastha out of the Hall. But, before going out, Prahastha clarified his stand condemning his father and his overweening pride which had rendered him blind. Ravana, he said, would be the cause of the destruction of the dynasty. He consoled himself that for one who is mortally stricken and is awaiting his last breath, no drug can be of any use. "So my good advice appeared futile to my father," he told himself. He proceeded straight to his mother and related all that happened. Both agreed that there was nothing they could say or do, which would turn him on to the right path. So, they sat together and were lost in the contemplation of Rama and his majesty.

The Vanaras put up a nice camp for Rama and Lakshmana on the Suvela Hill. They prepared soft rests for them, heaping grass leaves and flowers, and made them into nice beds. Rama appeared as soon as they had finished; he sat upon it, to give them joy. A little later, he placed his head on Sugriva's lap and went to sleep. Bows and arrows were kept in readiness on both sides of the bed. The Vanaras were scratching their palms which itched, in anticipation of hitting Ravana and killing him. They were holding back only because Rama had not given them the 'go'. Hanuman, the lucky, and the Crown Prince Angada were reverentially massaging the feet of Rama. Lakshmana was standing at the foot of the bed, ready with his bow and arrow, observing the face of Rama with one-pointed attention. At this moment, Rama looked out towards the East. His eyes fell on the Moon, which was rising above the horizon. "Friends!" he said, "Look at the Moon. There is a dark patch on the Moon. Don't you see it?" he asked. Each one of them answered about the patch the way he felt; but; Hanuman confessed, "Lord! I do not see any dark patch on the Moon. I see it as the reflection of your face. So, I do not see the patch you mentioned, or any other blemish."

The Rama Story: Stream of Sacred Sweetness (To be continued)

You can win the Grace of the Lord by Dharma. Dharma induces the spirit of self-surrender and develop it. Without the training that the practice of Dharma gives to your senses, feelings and emotions, you cannot have steady faith and detachment. The Lord is conceived as a personality. Rama is known as Vighraha-Dharma-Dharma personified. As a first step towards this Viveka or Wisdom and Vairagya or Detachment, enter from now on into a discipline of Namasmarana. the

incessant remembrance of the Name of the Lord. The name must be recited with the feeling of awe, wonder, humility and reverence.

The Nine Steps

Sri Ramchandra responded to the enquiry of Sabari, the simple ardent devotee in the rest, and named the nine steps in the path which will take man to the lord:

"Shravanam Kirtanam Vishnusmaranam
Padasevanam Vandanam Archanam
Dasyam Sneham Atmanivedanam"

These nine steps are as essential today we have to make our pilgrimage to our Reality through the Sadguru Bhagavan ' Sathya Sai Baba, the Avatar of the Age.

The first step in this pilgrimage is *Shravanam* which means the act of hearing. Baba has said that Shravanam means "developing a desire to listen to the glory and grandeur of the handiwork of God and the various awe-inspiring manifestations of Divinity." This is the starting point. It is by hearing about the Lord again and again that we can transform ourselves into Divinity. Our interest in spiritual matters often begins by hearing from a friend or through a book or an article about Baba. We hear about His miraculous powers of materialising various gifts of Grace, and their curative properties. We also read about his incisive Wisdom which can penetrate through the thickest of metal fogs. We are told that a visit to Him will cure most incurable diseases and solve formidable problems! In fact Shravanam continues to be an important step throughout our *Sadhana*; we always like to hear about Him and His leelas; we are never tired of repeating them! The first step of Shravanam usually leads us soon to the second step which is *Kirtanam*, which means "singing oneself about the Lord in praise of His magnificence and manifold exploits." A friend asks us to attend the Thursday Bhajan; we go, hesitatingly, to the group which gathers in his house; we sit rather uncomfortably on the ground along with strangers. Before we realise what is happening, the entire group starts chanting in unison, 'OM' and we suddenly become conscious of the Power of this Primeval Sound we had never heard before! Then the Bhajan begins, and song after song praising the Lord's many names emanate from the devotees, and soon we discover in ourselves hidden talents for singing bhajans. "The tongue is a post. Bhajan of the Name of God is the rope; with that rope, you can bring God Almighty near you and tie him up so that His Grace becomes yours" says Baba. We like the atmosphere, which is quite and disciplined and orderly. Baba stresses the importance of Satsang which "makes you meet with other souls (individuals) of a like nature and creates the contacts that makes manifest the inner Five."

We see pictures of Baba, beautifully decorated and during Bhajan all on a sudden a flower falls and the devotees feel that Baba has responded to their hearts' cry. We see *vibhuti* and *kumkum* in one of His pictures and we start wondering how this is possible; it challenges our scientific mind

and we return home with wonder and doubts, only to be drawn further into enquiry, reading of His books and thinking about Him.

Baba saysthe pure yearning for love for service, for expression, for fulfillment, is soiled by contact with selfish ends, with greed and envy, malice and hatred, lust and pride. It is soiled by one's egoistic reaction to blame or praise, loss or gain. It is best that this yearning is treasured and cultivated alone and in silence, until it is strong enough to meet failure or success, with composure. Namasmarana within the silence and solitude of your own heart, is very beneficial for this purpose Namasmarana can be elaborated also into Nagarsankirtan. This has both individual and social consequences. When you inhale foul air, your health suffers. The air is polluted by unwholesome vibrations when people shout hateful lustful slogans or even talks without love and reverence. To purify the atmosphere vibrations that are holy, healthy, happy have to be circulated, even before the citizens come out into the open with break of day." So we join the Nagarsankirtan; this also helps to reduce the ego; it needs some courage initially to go out into the street and sing!

Our interest in knowing about Baba becomes stronger; the urge to go to Puttaparthi becomes intense. Just then a friend invites us to accompany him and everything seems prearranged and we reach Prasanthi Nilayam. As soon as we reach there, we are told that Baba has just come out of the Mandir. We rush and stand bewildered at this beautiful red-robed Figure who looks more beautiful than any of His pictures! How slowly he moves! What compassion in His eyes! How graceful is His beckoning to the distressed! How bewitching His smile! We feast on His sweetness and charm for the next few days and eventually get the much-coveted interview when He draws us in a shower of Prema and assures, "Why fear when I am here!" "I am with you" "Do not be afraid." Baba says, "Prema is My distinctive mark, not the creation of material objects of health and happiness by sheer exercise of will. You might consider what you call 'miracles' as the most direct sign of Divinity, but the Prema that welcomes you all, that blesses all, that makes Me rush to the presence of the seekers, suffering and the distressed in distant lands or wherever they are, that is the real sign!"

We return home and then starts the next step *smarana*, remembering, recollection. We remember His Kindness when we meet harshness; we shed tears of joy when we think of His *Karuna*. Whenever we are afraid, we remember Him; when we are in trouble we recollect His sweet face, assuring "Don't be afraid." When we slide back' into a bad habit, we remember His gentle admonition and try to give it up. The process of cleansing has started.

We also remember Baba's discourse wherein he had said many wonderful things which were so simple and direct. We remember His bold statement that He is God, and the incredible revelation that we are also Gods!; only He is always conscious of His Divine Nature, but we are not and think we are merely human!

The fourth step is *padasevanam*. How sweet are His feet! He was gracious enough to allow padasevanam when we were in the Interview room. He had slightly lifted His robe and allowed us to touch His lotus sweet saying "Chesko! Do padaseva!" We purchased a picture of His feet and His other pictures and our Shrine room is adorned by His pictures together with those of other Godheads. We begin, "entering upon the worship of the Lord, by concentrating or

honouring the feet or footprints." We also remember His assertion, "My Life is My Message" and try to follow His footsteps. Baba says that we want practical "heroes" and not platform speakers. "If you get angry go and lie down or drink a glass of water," says Baba; when we get angry we remember His advice. We also remember how much keen interest He takes in whatever He does at any particular moment, and we begin to understand that this is Yoga which Lord Krishna has explained as *Karma Sukaushalam*.

We begin to understand the real meaning of worship; we look at the beauty of the flower and its fragrance which we offer Him. The Lord in the Bhagavad-Gita has said that He is in the best of everything. Baba says that all this nature is a manifestation of the Lord; this is the Vishwarupa, Baba reminds us. Baba stresses that Work is Worship; all our activity whether at home or in the Office is to be carried out as worship. "Wherever you are, whatever work you do, do it as an act of worship, and act of dedication, an act for the glorification of God, who is the inspirer, the witness, the Master. Do not divide your activities as 'these are for my sake' and 'these are for the sake of God'.... See all work as one." He gave the talent and the ability and the intelligence and therefore we must offer it to him with all sincerity. "Who granted you the chance, the intelligence, the success? The Lord. You are helpless without Him. He chose. He prompted. He executed. It was His doing. Be humble."

Baba also says that He is in everything! "See Sai in all," he reminds us. "If you hate somebody, it is like hating Me" He said. Worship takes a new meaning and we start learning the true art of worshipping which is to make all activities of Life His Worship. Baba stresses "In every home, however, there are living Gods whom the sages ask you to serve and worship. They are your parents... Be kind, be soft and sweet to them. Do not be rude and raw. Try your best to make them happy. Obey them.... That is the way to worship them." "The aspirant begins to see the favourite Form of God, which he likes to worship, in all beings and all objects, wherever he turns, and so, he develops an attitude of *Vandana*, or reverence towards nature and life."

"This develops into a total propitiation of the Lord, and systematic, ritualistic worship, in which the aspirant gets inner satisfaction and inspiration;" this is *archana*. We recite His one hundred and eight names and dwell on the glory of each name. We also do *sahasranamarchana*, recite His thousand names and do puja to our hearts' content. Baba has recognised this need for *archana* which the devotees delight in, and has transformed this into a meaningful "ritual." He has advised that we may do *archana* with rice and collect this rice and at the end of a month, cook food, and offer it to Him and then distribute it as *prasadam* to *Narayana*. Each rice grain has become sanctified by His name with which we have done *archana*.

Baba also warns that we should not get lost in ritualistic Worship. "God is worshipped only in pictures, images, idols; He is not recognised in all living beings, in beauty, harmony, melody, truth, goodness... Worship such as this, offering of incense, flowers, repetition of hymns of praise and other rites are commendable ways of utilising time; good activity! Unless they cleanse the heart, widen sympathies and deepen faith in one's own divinity, they are unworthy of the name Sadhana." His direction is very clear: "Give up the rosary in its bag, and activate yourselves in relieving distress, that is the true spiritual path. Do not waste all your years in stone images, pictures or idols. Learn to see in every living vital active person, the embodiment of all

energy, all beauty, all beneficence namely God. God is subtler than ether, filling the smallest crevice with His Majesty. Know this and serve His manifestations, wherever you meet them.”

The step that leads us to this stage is *dasyam*. "Established in this bent of mind he becomes the devoted servant of all, with no sense of superiority or inferiority. This is a vital step, which presages great spiritual success,” says Baba. This servant stage is ` the stage of service, which every person calling himself a social worker, or volunteer or sevak has to reach. It is more fruitful than reciting the Name or counting beads, or spending hours in meditation though one's service will be richer and more satisfying if done on the basis of spiritual discipline.” This is in fact the most difficult of the nine steps. We should not only be the servant of the Lord, but must have this attitude to all His manifestations! "The prime purpose is to provide a chance to train ourselves in the attitude of humility, readiness, and reverence that are essential for one's own happiness and for social security.... Service is basically action arising out of the yearning to win the Grace of God.” In fact this is the most important step to erase the ego! And so long as we have not eliminated the ego we cannot attain Divinity. We have to serve all; because we are the All. There is no others but ourselves. "Through Seva alone can man attain Mastery and through Mastery of the service the passion and the predilections, Man can attain Divinity itself.”

"This takes the seeker so near the Lord that he feels himself to be the confidant and comrade, the companion and friend, the sharer of God's power and pity, of God's triumph and achievements, His *Sakha*, in fact, as Arjuna had become.” This is the step *sneham*, friendship. Baba says "My place is among you, with you and wherever work lies. Do not believe that I am at a special seat apart, distant on a pedestal. I am part of you, partner and partaker, inspiring, instructing when you ask Me or need from Me inspiration and instruction.” Baba has said "placing God at a distance from you and praising Him as omniscient, omnipotent, and omnipresent will not please Him. Develop nearness, proximity kinship with God with Him by obedience, loyalty, humility and purity.” As if to demonstrate this, He sits on the floor and not on the Chair specially kept for Him during Bhajans! He wants us to cultivate this attitude of friendship and He is the true friend. "Yearn for and earn good friends who will keep you on an even keel. Have above all, God, as your unfailing Guide and Friend... Friendship is the expression of unshakeable, Love that is noble, pure and free from desire or egoism.” Sai is our best friend. We sing, "*Mata pita bandhu sakha sab hi Sai Ram!*"

"As can be inferred, this is the prelude to the final step of total surrender, or *Atmanivedanam*, yielding fully to the Will of the Lord which the seeker knows through his own purified intuition.” This attitude of surrender is most difficult to cultivate. Baba has often chided us when we use this word loosely. He asks, "What have you got to surrender? You can only surrender that which belongs to you! You have no control over your emotions, your mind. You become a victim of the vagaries of the mind. First control your mind. Then surrender your mind.” This is *atmanivedanam*. Then you have eliminated the limitations of the ego and we have reached the stage of Madhava. Baba has said "Sharanagati, leaving everything to the will is the highest form of *Bhakti*..." *Bhakti* and the attitude of Sharanagati that is its final fruit will give you great courage to meet any emergency, such courage is what is called Vairagya...Sharanagati or unconditional surrender, is the main gate to enter the mansion of Mukti..... Entrust to the Lord, before it is too late, your mind and let him shape it... If liberation means the stoppage of grief and acquisition of joy, then it is easy. What you have to do is to place all your burdens on God; that

makes you care-free, grief-free. Then, when you take every thing as the leela of the Lord you love, you clap your hands in Ananda whatever may happen, for it is His leela and you are as happy as He is, when His plans are going through.” Atmanivedanam also means the final merger of the Atman, the self, with the Brahman, the I with the Universal.

If manava has to become Madhava which is his true nature, he must thus take these nine steps. "If you seek to transform yourself into Madhava, you have to pour the mind melted in the fire of Jnana; the mind can be melted only after it has been hewn into pieces by means of various acts like Sankirtan, Japa, Dhyana, all sharp with the edge of renunciation.” The Avatar has come to guide us to attain our essential Divine nature, and take us step by step to the Goal, and also learn to take the various steps of Sadhana. That is why Baba has come in all His glory. We hear about His Divine Nature, feel attracted towards Him through enquiry, then see Him in His most beautiful physical Form and become conscious of the Immense Power of His Love. His bewitching smile makes us remember Him and His message which we try to emulate. Gradually our ego becomes less assertive; we recognise that all this manifestation is the Lord, and start loving them. We also understand that spirituality is no escape from our duties and obligations to Society; society is a training ground for seeking the Lord latent and hidden in His Creation. Then all work becomes Worship and we cultivate an attitude of friendship with all, because He is in all; there is nothing other than He. When we help our neighbour, we help ourselves. Our enemy is ourselves; he is no other than our own baser nature which we hate! The entire world then becomes friendly, whom to hate when is all ourselves? This leads to elimination of the ego, our petty little idiosyncrasies and each becomes a fully integrated personality. We are no longer small men but have emerged from the chrysalis of the ego and soar into Divinity.

—M. Venkatanarayan

A Mini World

Puttaparthi in the State of Andhra, an almost unknown and insignificant village two decades ago and situated in rather inhospitable hilly and rocky surroundings was all agog with about 1,00,000 people, one third at least of them being women.

And who were they and for what purpose did they gather there for three days, November 21, 22 and 23 of 1975? The largest number was of course from India but the numbers from the U. S. A., the U. K., Mexico, Canada, Germany, Italy, Indonesia, Lanka, Venezuela, Guiana, Malaya, Hong Kong, Japan and some other countries were not quite insignificant. They belonged to all religions and denominations. Hindus were naturally more numerous as they were meeting in the heart of India. So were Andhras more numerous as it was in the Andhra State all met and the Swami was by birth an Andhra with Telugu as his mother tongue.

Among the Hindus, the Jains, the Sikhs, the Adivasis, the Buddhists all commingled with one another. The Muslims, the Christians, the Catholics as well as Protestants and all were one seething mass of humanity, speaking several tongues but with one common devotional heart to

celebrate the Golden Jubilee, the 50th birthday, of one whom they all called Baba (father). Sri Sathya Sai Baba, Sai Ram and Swami are the other names by which he has come to be known to his followers and others.

Once he was but a village urchin, after absconding from school and indulging in Bhajans and Kirtans often of his own composition. Endowed with a wonderfully sweet and sonorous voice he could attract children as well as elders and hold them for long with an enchanting chant of 'god's names' (Devara Nama). Even in earlier years, he had performed some small miracles and healings here and there which were looked upon with some surprise but nothing beyond.

Untaught, untutored, uncared for, that child grew in that little known village and grew from strength to strength, miracle to miracle and today when we assembled from the four quarters of the globe to celebrate his 50th year, what did we find?

A township which has developed overnight, with water and electricity, a few spacious buildings as guest houses for thousands, shades and shamianas for thousands upon thousands, and in the centre of it all, the grand Prasanthi Nilayam and a Poorna Chandra auditorium which could accommodate 20,000 squatters with a decorated and fully equipped modern stage. A big stoopta or a mighty column stands there in the shape of a Deepa-like bud arising out of a lotus whose petals represent several living religions. In fact, the Deepa Stoopta with OM, the mystic symbol of the Paramatma-Sat-Chit-Ananda, is the spiritual message of Prasanthi Nilayam, of which I shall write again.

Forgetting for once all their differences of nationality, religion, language, caste, professions, vocations, titles and status, philosophers and politicians, legislators and educationists, scientists and technologists, government officials and non-officials, the police and the volunteers, skeptics as well as the faithful, the questioners as well as followers, the ignorant as well as the learned, the rich well as the poor, all had assembled in spite of some inconveniences that bound to be there on such occasions, a four-fold purpose—but all in the of Baba, for the glorification of Sathya, the Truth of Life, in the name of service of humanity through love of in every one, with love for the divine a man.

The four-fold purpose was to hold the second World Conference of Sathya Sai Organisations all over the world; to hold the third conference of the Sathya Sai Seva Dal; to hold the third conference of the Sathya Sai Bal Vikas Mandals; and to celebrate the Golden Jubilee of Sri Sathya Sai Baba, his 50th birthday.

One may not call it a miracle; a miracle is a happening which cannot be easily explained by the known laws of science, imperfect and groping as it is today. But is not this a miracle, a wonder that a street urchin, by his sheer inner genius, rises to be the highest inspirer of millions upon millions in the world, and unaided by lineage, learning, temporal power or authority attracts and enraptures the hearts of men and women and children by his simple love and divinity enshrined and manifest in him.

And what did the crowd, which was itself a mini-world, experience on those three days, and during the four functions? How did they feel when Baba, a simple five and odd feet brownish

figure draped in a red silk-gown, crowned with a natural wig of somewhat curly hair go round among them, waving here, smiling there and collecting bits of letters?

All through there was self-imposed discipline, not one stood up or tried to touch his feet or act mobishly. All felt elated, raised and elevated beyond their ordinary level. Much more was the elation and elevation when he addressed the vast crowd of 20,000 assembled in the hall and thousands more waiting outside and round about. The culmination was however reached when Baba burst forth in 'Song Celestial' in his musical devotion. It was enlightened ecstasy and one felt that if the joy of life were there anywhere, it was there, it was there, it was there.

It was not so much the message in words and the intellectual interpretation of it that was a, marvellous experience but it was the marvel of influence itself which made the message sink into the hearts and fill every nook and corners of the brains of persons who thronged the vast auditorium.

He spoke in mellifluous Telugu with a bit of poetry thrown in and it was translated sentence by sentence in eloquent English by Dr. Bhagavantam. One could ask, was not this marvel of an experience itself a miracle of Baba? This Pied Piper of Puttaparthi could draw towards himself the hearts of millions, born and brought up in traditions as diverse as the animists, the idol-worshippers and the idol-breakers, the believers in God and the non-believers such as materialists, the monists and the dualists, the capitalists and the socialists, the orthodox and the heterodox.

If Baba's capacity to weave the complex web of human hearts and minds from various countries and creeds, castes and communities, lineages and languages into a single Sathya Sai spiritual family, is not to be termed a marvel and a living miracle, one would like to know what a marvel and a miracle is like!

There is only one religion and that is the Religion of Man. The symbol which Sri Sathya Sai has adopted and immortalised in the form of a Deepa Stoopu in Puttaparthi on November 23, 1975 consists of a lamp-stand with the flame rising out of lotus petals—the petals represent the major religions of Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, Zoroastrianism, Judaism, and Hinduism. They all seem to merge in OM, the eternal sound symbol of the Supreme Spirit. It is one eternal—Sanathana—religion manifesting itself in many forms, the essence being the same.

Baba in his own person embodies what we call spirituality. For man today there is no salvation and no betterment of life without spirituality—a belief and an experience of a truth beyond the transient body, the tumultuous vital urges and the fickle mind full of confusion. Spirituality is the perception of oneness, of oneness in the many, of the unity in diversity.

Man is spirit embodied and not body ensouled. That spirit is divinity in each man, in each heart, to whatever clime or country he may belong. The consciousness of one's consciousness is the beginning of all religion and of spirituality. That leads to Sat-Chit-Ananda, (Being-Consciousness-Bliss).

But Baba does not stop at abstract spirituality. He translates spirituality into the emotion of pure unselfish love towards all, towards men and life and God. Love expresses itself in Seva—Service, selfless service. For him work is worship, duty is divine and that comes through discipline and devotion.

That is the Sathya Sai path to God-realisation which issues in the form of love and service. Truth which is another name for God, is love raised to the highest.

Sri Sathya Sai Seva Dal, Sathya Sai Bal Vikas, Sri Sathya Sai Education Trust and several Educational and charitable institutions run by these organisations throughout the world mark off the material, moral, ethical and social emanations of the spirituality and spiritual realisations of Sri Sathya Sai Baba and his vivid attainment in concrete service of humanity.

Many are the people who ask me about Baba's miracles, be it materialisation of holy ashes, rings, rudraksha, garland of beads, idols etc. or healing or fulfilling some of the legitimate desires of devotees or saving them from troubles.

I would only say a miracle is a miracle and no science has been able to unravel the mystery so far.

But when Baba himself does not attach any importance to it, why should we do so? He says, it is only his `Visiting Card'. His introduction—Bhajan—is a far greater Gift to the mass of people.

The most sophisticated and the most learned and fashionable people are seen enjoying do rhythmic resonance of Bhajans when it is in tune with the symphony of the heart. the heavens!

Just as his religion is the religion of religions, his philosophy is the theosophy of all philosophies put together; it is not hairsplitting but blending all philosophies into the one inalienable spiritual experience of Oneness. Some people quarrel over the form Bhagavan attached to his name. He has made it clear umpteen times that it is not the body, perishable and transient that can be called Bhagavan. It is the immortal spirit which is Bhagavan.

A rose called by any other name will smell as sweet and bloom as beautifully. And when one transcends the ego, the effulgence of the spirit manifests itself. That is the sathya.

It is only through the rejuvenation of the spiritual heritage of India that India can be saved and it will have the capacity to serve humanity spiritually.

Bhajans and devotion is the simplest way to realise God. Bhajan is not mere prayer. It is not only meditation. It is the blend of all these through the power of devotion, flowing in the form of word and music. It is the Nada Yoga in essence.

But all these must lead to love, loveful selfless service of humanity, so that the divinity in man may manifest itself here on earth and solve the problems of man. Then man may rise higher and realise his divinity.

—Dr., R. R. Diwakar

A Psychiatrist's Note Book

"The world today appears to hover on the brink of insanity. As much as half its population may be starving. We are witness to shooting in the streets, suicides, and terrorist attacks on a daily basis. The most grotesque inhumanities and a virtual rape of the land are practiced by us almost as a way of life. We are caught up in an absurd infatuation with weaponry and war, and a pre-occupation with ourselves. Instead of becoming masters of ourselves so as to create order, and facilitate Humanity's evolution of consciousness, we are becoming slaves to our emotional and mental energies, driven every way in our craving for sensual gratification. Psychiatry, I am convinced, must accept more responsibility for this disturbing situation." Thus says one of the foremost psychiatrists of the United States, Dr. Samuel Sandweiss.

Dr. Desiraj Dhairyam, the famous practising psychiatrist of India says, "Bhagavan has the answer... Prasanthi Nilayam, the abode of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba is a divine psychotherapeutic centre ... Baba knows that the emptiness inherent in the machinist and technological culture of the West, fast spreading into the East, will induce forlorn fear-ridden people into various isms, that promise speedy victory of one type or other. The young as well as the old turn to hippieism, drugs, and to various exhibitionistic esoteric cults. These attract because they provide an escape from the hard realities of life, and its urgent call for shouldering individual and social responsibilities. But the entrants seldom know that these isms end in disillusionment and despair."

Dr. Sandweiss has written a very interesting book on his journey from the consultant's table in San Diego to the "divine psychotherapeutic centre," at Prasanthi Nilayam, and of his discovery while there and his dedication to a more profound and profitable curative system, which he has named, Sai-chiatry.

Born in Detroit, he entered medical school at the University of Michigan in 1958. He was averse to the fascination that held medicine and surgery in thrall to subspecialties and gadgetry. His interest in more abstract questions about the nature of existence and in making deeper contacts with his patients led him towards psychiatry and psychoanalysis. During the two years of military service, he was in charge of psychiatric wards; he has mastered many techniques and methods, like Gestalt therapy, Bioenergetic therapy etc. Later, he joined the University of California, to teach hospital-applied psychiatry and supervise psychiatric residents at the University.

Gradually, as he describes in his book, Dr. Sandweiss became conscious of certain flaws and failings in the theories and practices of psychiatry. The pre-occupation with self-gratification, the basis of pleasure-pain on which theories were built, the overvaluing of the rational mind's ability to know and the neglect of higher realms of reality turned him to Zen and to other Eastern systems of therapy.

Dr. Sandweiss says that "in late 1971, he was looking for some one to teach him Yoga and meditation, and I learned that Indra Devi, a woman with an international reputation in Yoga had a ranch and Yoga retreat in Tecate, Mexico, only fifty miles from San Diego." His meeting with Indra Devi, (the author of a book "Sai Baba and Sai Yoga") and listening to her descriptions of the transformatory miracles that Baba spontaneously effected for the distressed, defeated, diseased, deflated and dispirited minds of hundreds and thousands fascinated him. "It happened very quickly for me. I decided to go to India to see Sai Baba for myself."

The book, "Sai Baba: Holy Man and the Psychiatrist" is the result of many weeks of contact, during each of the five journeys he undertook to undergo the transformation himself. "In Sai Baba's presence, I learned that the deepest and most profound experience of love grows out of devotional attitude towards the divine—a principle which is almost completely absent from modern psychiatric theory and practice ... For psychiatrists believe that human nature is fundamentally animalistic, motivated by the pleasure-pain principle, and the need for some form of self-gratification, Sai Baba's demonstration of self less love is an impressive revelation."

"Here is a teacher—a scientist of consciousness," says Dr. Sandweiss, "who taught that our true nature is not bound by time or space, and is, in fact, infinite, immutable, eternal, who proclaimed that behind all forms and objects, there is a spirit, and that all creation is based upon the will of the spiritual dimension ... that our truest identity is an incorporeal state of pure bliss and love."

Dr. Sandweiss says, "Every one is a *guru*. The bookstores filled with books supposedly showing the way attest to this fact. But nothing seems to work. We are lost in a myriad of ideas, a confounding whirlwind of impressions and experiences, without direction or discipline. It is crucial that we discern truth and find direction."

About his epoch making book, Dr. Sandweiss writes, "In my attempt to integrate what I observed with what I know of psychiatry, I have tried to define areas of limitation in modern psychiatric theory and practice to point out how a growing body of knowledge concerning the dynamics of consciousness and love is revealing an added human dimension which psychiatry needs to consider and investigate seriously." He invites the reader "to join my journey toward this holy man ... to explore an exciting and inspirational realm of human possibility through this enigmatic figure."

Dr. Sandweiss has given the world a book replete with pictures and principles of the Sai method of spiritual strengthening and mental overhaul. One feels overwhelmingly grateful for the destiny that brought the 'holy man' and 'the psychiatrist' together, for, while the psychiatrist and his co-workers, collaborators and comrades can gain greatly in insight by this contact, the millions who revere Sai Baba can learn from this book the lines along which they rely for guidance.

Dr. V. K. Gokak, M. A., D. Litt. who has written the Foreword for the Book says that Dr. Sandweiss has opened up three main avenues of communication: the first, being a fascinating narration of his own experiences with Baba. His intimate and illuminating style of writing brings out the trials and tribulations, the triumphs and tokens of love, which he had to wade through in order to win a glimpse into the mystery and majesty of Baba. He describes the various stages of his soul in transformation, as well as the confirmations received by his brother, wife and

daughters. He relates to detail the 'interviews' he had with Baba, the `surprises' and `neglects', the 'lessons' and 'intimations' that he could gather, during his involvement with Baba.

The second element in the book which Dr. Gokak found worth mentioning is: his probe as a psychiatrist into the roots of psychiatry, and his subsequent discovery that what passes as psychiatry is an incomplete science and that quite essential additions have to be made to it from the field of spiritual awareness, to make it truly effective. This aspect is high-lighted by Dr. Sandweiss thus: "The ultimate goal of psychiatry, I feel is the same as that of religion: to find the God or Atma within, through the experience of love. Reflecting my fervent hope that psychiatry awaken to the reality of Sai Baba, I myself would rather call this still young science "Sai-chiatry," the Sai-chiatry of Atma-consciousness, the Sai-chiatry of love."

The third excellence of the book, as pointed out by Dr. Gokak is: the reproduction, from Baba's writings and speeches, of passages which are regarded by Dr Sandweiss as key passages for an exploration of Baba's teachings. There are 41 pages of such materiality this book of 240 pages and the choice is happily apt and appealing. Some of the most outstanding pronouncements of Baba on His Mission and Message, as well as on the true nature and purpose of the `miracles' that express His miraculousness find place in this book. And, Dr Sandweiss moves from inference to conviction about the fundamentals of fruitful psychiatry with his vision ever guided by the light thrown by quotations from Baba's writings and speeches, as found in books listed in the Appendix on page 234. There are also a large number of portraits of Baba in colour, and a few in black and white, revealing His charm, compassion, and grace, as well as His Power to create articles of lasting spiritual significance to inspire and instruct the cynics and critics, the scholars and Sadhakas.

The book has been produced with great care and artistry, both calligraphically and typographically. A clear and concise translation for all Sanskrit and Telugu words found in the text is given in English in the Glossary.

The publishers, The Birth Day Publishing Company, P.O. Box 7722, San Diego, California, 92107 USA, have done a commendable job, on this remarkable book on the most astounding and the most constructive of our contemporaries, whom Humanity cannot afford to ignore or misinterpret it.

—[Ed].

The Priorities

The contented person is the happiest of all; the happy person is rich in equanimity. Under modern conditions, though there is a surfeit of things and facilities for satisfying urges and desires of all types, people have neither happiness nor equanimity. In all countries, they are beset by anxiety, fear and turmoil of the mind. They can regain contentment and equanimity only when it is realised that life is but a chain of dreams, and starts evaluating it as it deserves. But, when attachment leads to delusion, life is rendered bitter and barren.

When the Mahabharata battle was about to begin on the field of Kurukshetra, Krishna had to administer counsel to Arjuna, the foremost of heroes. For, Arjuna who had prepared himself for that crucial struggle since years, and had equipped himself by the acquisition of special weapons and powerful allies, suddenly lost heart and talked of surrender, renunciation, and the superior value of an ascetic life of beggary which appeared to him more virtuous than destroying the enemies arrayed against him and to winning his rightful share of the Empire. Krishna Himself had some months previous proposed to take steps to prevent the encounter of arms; He had Himself proceeded to the enemy's court in order to win them over into the acceptance of compromise proposals. But, at that time, this same Arjuna had protested, saying, "Yours is a vain attempt; their hearts are too full of poison to yield nectar; you are seeking jasmine flowers from those flames of fire; parleys for peace will not be welcome to them, however much you may cater to their vanity." "We and they," he said, "are as far apart as the North pole and South."

Yet, on the battlefield, when the bugles and conches, the war—drums and trumpets were on, and the fight was about to start, he discarded his bow! Why? "O Bhishma and Drona may die in battle; my Kith and Kin may lose their lives;" Suddenly, he felt that they were his; ego enveloped him; he dreaded the consequences because he felt that he was the doer. That is the delusion, caused by Ignorance of Truth. Ignorance hid from him his real Reality. The owl cannot see during day; the crow cannot see at night; but, the ignorant man cannot see the Reality both night and day. Delusion, blinding fascination, overwhelming desire—these are the offspring of Ignorance.

Man cannot exist apart from the world. Sankaracharya, the great exponent of Monism, declared that the World is a myth and that Brahman alone is real. But, that did not prevent him from establishing for the betterment of the 'world' four Centres of spiritual teaching presided over by his disciples, and arranging for their continuous and efficient working! For, he wanted to inspire men to discover the truth embedded in the myth.

You may wonder how any one can grasp that Truth? It is, a process very much like waking from dream. The dream itself awakens you! When some frightful event happens in the dream world, in which you are busy while asleep, you are aroused into the fact that you are not really in that frightful situation, but, that you are in bed in your own home, safe and secure. So, too, by some flash of intuition or blow of circumstance, or twist of fortune, you are awakened into the recognition that this world too is a half-true, half-false phenomenon called the World. Happiness is not bred by happiness; it is formed in the crucible of hardships.

People have to be told the truth of the World and its components—pleasure and pain, and the other inevitable dualities—early enough in life. They have to know the vagaries of their senses, the vacillating nature of their minds, and even the inefficiencies of their reasoning faculty, so that they may voyage through life with joy and confidence. They must be assured of the beneficent influence that faith in God can exert upon them, and how much courage can be won through the realisation that God is the very core of their existence.

There was a middle-class household in a small town, where the wife was daily pleading with the husband to spend some little time in prayer and reverential worship of God; but, the husband refused to yield, for, as he said, he had no time to spare for such pastimes which are best taken

up during old age, when the process of earning and spending receives a natural setback and there will be ample leisure. The pious lady could not derive any consolation from this reply. She could only wait for some more auspicious opportunity when her advice would fall on receptive ears.

Meanwhile, the husband was affected by serious illness and he was bed-ridden for a few weeks. The doctors advised him to take some tablets thrice a day. The wife accepted the task of administering the tablets and kept them with her; however, she did not give him even one!

The husband was put out by her intransigence; he demanded the tablets, but she was firm in her resolve. She said, in reply to his question, "Are you conspiring to kill me?" "Wait, wait. Why hurry to take medicine so soon? Let the illness become more serious; why all this haste? Go slow, Go slow. There is enough time, as you said when I wanted you to pray and do Namasmarana." The husband realised that his stand was foolish; so, he mended his ways, and cured himself of both types of illness. Life is full of worry, fear, doubt and trouble. Worry is the worst of diseases. But, when once the thought of God enters and fills the heart, all worries vanish. To spend an entire lifetime, trying to unravel the tangled skein of worries and fears is sheer waste of precious time and skill. It is a sin, to fritter away the days of life. And, when you plead that there is no time left for God, it becomes the height of foolishness. Two young men studying in the same college challenged each other—who can eat faster than the other a prescribed number, 20, bananas. They decided upon impartial umpires and stood before the banana baskets.

One young man resolved that if he eats the skins first, the sweet soft fruit inside can be no problem later; the other youth decided that once the soft portions were eaten fast, he would have enough time to chew the skins. But, after finishing the skins the first young man had no stomach to swallow the kernel; he was too full. The other man had to stop as soon as he had finished the soft insides, for he had no more space inside him for the skins. Both failed in the competition; but, what a difference they had in their experiences!

The one had a surfeit of bitter; the other, a surfeit of sweet! People resolve to experience God and Godly company only after going through most of life. They eat skins and have no appetite for the kernel. The first place must be accorded to God; then, joy and peace will be the lot.

This day is celebrated as Vaikuntha Ekadasi. Ekadasi means the 11th day; the inner meaning of the word when used for this Festival is—The Indriyas are ten and the mind is the eleventh. Gather all the senses which wander far and wide, collect them in the 11th, (the mind,) and offer all the eleven to God; then, you will attain Vaikuntha, that is to say, the state of no desire and no disappointment, no disease or distress.

—Discourse : Baba 13-1-76.

Bliss is the nature of Atma, your own innermost reality. That reality is reminding you of its existence with every breath that you take. 'SOHAM' - 'SOHAM' - 'HE' - 'I' - 'HE' - 'I'; the self is repeating that it is not the limited, the prisoner (held by the body). It is a wave of vast ocean named 'HE' and exhalation is 'In'. Inhale the vast; exhale the limited. This has to be observed during the waking stage. When you are in deep sleep, the awareness of the body disappears; there is no awareness of the outside world. There is no 'SO' or 'HAM' - no 'HE' or 'I'. It is all

one—One integral whole. The break then says not `SOHAM' but `OM'. Merge in that 'OM'. Be ever of it ever. That is Vedanta—the Anta (the end) of Veda (knowledge.)

Our Roles

Many of us have had many Birthdays celebrated, we have blown increasing numbers of candles on bigger cakes, while our resolutions and wishes have `gone with the wind'! Year after year we are walking deeper and deeper into the darkness of selfishness, admiring falser and falser images of ourselves.

In Washington, I have been advising, as a practising Doctor, my patients, "Listen! On your Birthday, do one little service to yourselves and to those who count on you! Get your body thoroughly checked up, to find out whether it will stand up to another year of activity. And, if it cannot, be advised to adopt the right way of living thinking and planning."

The Birthday we celebrate at Prasanthi Nilayam is our genuine Birth-day, when we have to subject our bodies, and more than the bodies, our thoughts, emotions, feelings, impulses, attitudes and ideals and assess them on the touchstone of Sai Teachings.

The Golden Jubilee of the Advent of Bhagavan is a golden opportunity to better our lives by rigorous self-examination, self-control and self development.

Bhagavan has graciously given me a Badge, the Badge of a volunteer, to serve those who have come from Western countries, as a Liaison between the streams merging here in the Sai Consciousness. The Badge reminds me that I have to be humble, honest and be aware always of His Presence in me and beside me. He has said often that service to humanity is service to God; that we must revere every one as the embodiment of the Divine, whatever the outer raiment, physical economic or social.

Baba teaches us the Path of Loving Service, so that we might discard our ego and recognise the basic unity of all beings in Him. The service has to be prompted by Love (Prema) which is different from Kama or the low, limited, binding passion, that caters to the ego and senses that are its masters. Prema on the other hand is expansive, elevating, liberating, and self-effacing, besides being free from the degrading demands of the senses. Prema is an urge that emanates from the Divine in us, where as Kama emanates from the animal from which man has risen.

Those who are drawn to the Sai way of progress towards Self-realisation have to cultivate Prema and avoid the contamination of Kama. It will be noticed that Bhagavan insists on the male and the female sections of Satsangs being seated separate, while singing the praise of God and chanting Bhajans, as well as at Gatherings for study and meditation. This is a means of achieving one-pointedness, the orientation of all thoughts and feelings and the vibrations of the entire being towards God. This rule lessens distraction, during the absorption by the mind and the inner instruments of perception of lower or physical or material feelings. This is the traditional seating

pattern in the East, especially in India, and it has the wisdom of centuries of introspection and instruction by the best minds as its justification. At the World Conference Bhagavan directed that this rule be followed by Sathya Sai Centres, everywhere.

The Bhajan Sessions is a special occasion when we reach out and cling to God, dedicating our skills and wills to Him and for exalting His Glory. We should fill ourselves with this high purpose, and render every minute of the hour an offering to Him. This is the reason why Bhagavan discourages any attempt to make the Sessions, however remotely, 'get-togethers' or 'eat-togethers'! On every such sacred occasion, Bhagavan has directed that, the most desirable object, symbolic of God's Grace, that can be shared by all the participants, is Vibhuti, or Sacred Ash, which has vast spiritual potential for the receiver. It is acclaimed as the symbol of the Ultimate, in Vedic Texts, and it is a reminder of the evanescence of the physical sheath that encompasses the vital, mental, intellectual and bliss sheaths of man, and of the Atman that activates all these. "Dust thou art, and unto dust thou returnest" is the lesson the Bible teaches.

Let us yearn to contribute our love, our compassion, our capacity to serve humanity and share in the task of uplift that Bhagavan has incarnated for. The greatest of lessons that Bhagavan is teaching is, "Do Good; see Good; be Good." Let me confess that my daily prayer to Him is, "Lord! Even when t cannot help any one, let no harm happen to any one through me."

—Dr. K. C. Pani. M D. Bethesda, Maryland, USA.

I insist on five points of discipline: (1) Silence. It promotes self-control. It lessens chances of anger, hate, malice, greed and pride. You can hear His Footsteps only when there is silence. (2) Cleanliness. Inner and outer cleanliness are essential, if you desire to install God in your heart. (3) Service. It broadens your vision; widens your awareness; deepens your compassion. (4) Love. Love is God; live in Love. Love does not calculate or weigh the reaction, result, or reward. (5) Hate-lessness. No being is to be looked down upon, as secondary, inferior, unimportant or expendable. Each has its assigned role in the drama designed by the Almighty. He is in every being, and so, your slight becomes sacrilege.

—Baba

Ramakatha Rasavahini

Sri Sathya Sai Baba

75

Angada to Advise

That night Rama spent with the Vanaras until dawn, with delightful talk and in pleasant companionship. When day brightened; he had his bath in the sea and he performed there, on the shore itself, the rituals prescribed. He called together the ministers of Sugriva and other leaders and gave them instructions about the task ahead. Later, they met and agreed unanimously that Angada, the son of Vali and the Heir-apparent of the Vanara Kingdom, be sent as an Envoy to Ravana, before launching the siege of Lanka. Rama called Angada forward and told him, "Son! You are strong and virtuous; you have to go on a Mission from Rama to Ravana and advise Ravana cleverly and cautiously, softly and assuringly, without making him further enraged." He was given directions about the tone and contents of what he had to tell Ravana. He took leave, after prostrating at the feet of Rama. While departing, he said, "Master! Pray bless me with the auspicious look of your eyes. I am indeed fortunate that I am entrusted with this work. Whatever might happen to me while executing it, I am ready to offer my very life to you." Rama's heart melted with compassion when he heard these words of Angada. Rama came forward, clasped Angada to his bosom and placed his palm on his head, showering blessings on him.

Angada then moved into the City, with Rama installed in his heart and his Form ever in his mind. He pushed aside every one who alerted and stopped him on the way and displayed great self-confidence and courage. He encountered the son of Ravana on the way. The Rakshasa Prince accosted him and inquired, "Here, O Monkey! Who are you and wherefrom?" Angada replied, "I am Angada, Envoy of Rama." At this, the Rakshasa raised his foot to kick Angada. But, Angada was too quick for him; he caught him by the foot and raising him aloft twirled his body until he dashed him on the ground! The Rakshasas who witnessed this were struck with terror; they realised that the monkey was of gigantic might and kept discreetly away. News spread that the Monkey that had set Lanka aflame had returned and this created widespread confusion and fear. Angada noticed, wherever he turned, panic-stricken groups of inhabitants were watching his movements. He had no need to ask any group to clear the path; they hurried out as soon as he was sighted!

Do's Won'ts

At last, he fearlessly stepped into the Audience Hall of Ravana himself. One of the guards, carried the news of Angada's arrival in hot haste to Ravana. Ravana directed him to bring the Envoy to his presence and, accordingly, Angada was taken right before the Rakshasa Emperor. Angada saw Ravana as a conscious mountain, black in colour. His twenty hands were as the branches of a giant tree. He walked up to him with no trace of fear in his heart. But, every one present in that hall shuddered in their heart of hearts as they saw him enter, and proceed. They were in a state of stupor. Ravana asked Angada who he was. Angada replied, "I am the Envoy of Rama." At this, Ravana asked him the purpose of his visit. "O Ravana!" Angada began, "you and my father were friends of old. Therefore, with your welfare in view, I have come at the orders of Rama to give you some sound advice." Angada continued softly and persuasively, "You brought away the 'Mother of all the Worlds', 'the Daughter of Janaka'; you were unable to withstand pride or lust and greed. Well, let bygones be bygones. At least today, at this very moment, if you realise the fact of your iniquity and act as I am telling you, Rama will pardon you. Decide to do

as I suggest, without delay. Or else, with your own hand, you will bury in this soil your clan and your kingdom." When Angada spoke thus, Ravana exclaimed, "O vilest of Vanaras! You are indeed a fool. Perhaps you do not know that I am a foe of your 'God.' What is your name? What was the relation between me and your father? Don't be blind to the consequences of your speech."

Angada laughed outright at this outburst. He said, "O Monarch of Rakshasas. My name is Angada; my father's name is Vali. There was friendship between you two." Hearing the words that Angada spoke, Ravana was rendered stiff and silent, But, he overcame the reaction soon and said, "True, true, there was, I remember, a monkey of that name in olden days. O, are you his son? Hello, Angada! You seem to have been born in that clump as a spark of fire in order to destroy it?" Angada laughed aloud at the excited reply from Ravana. He said, "Ravana! Your days have come to an end. You will soon be reaching your old friend Vali. He can tell you there the consequence of opposing Rama. Equipped with twenty eyes, you are nevertheless blind; burdened with twenty appendages called ears, you are deaf. Caught in the thick night of ignorance, you strut about in pride, proclaiming yourself great! The tribe you plan to save will be effaced; that is the plan. Sinner! Vile Barbarian! Villain blinded by pride! Demon!" When Angada gnashed his teeth in anger and poured on his head the stream of abuse, Ravana rose from his throne in a trice and shouted, "You monkey, you destroyer of your own race! Since I know and recognise the rules of political morality, I am bearing in silence your impertinence; beware. There is a limit to my patience." Ravana stared at Angada in fiery anger. But, Angada was not at all affected by that demonstration. He retorted, "O Rakshasa Monarch! I have heard much of your righteousness, your virtues, and your political morality. Consider what wonderful achievements your righteousness has effected. Kidnapping the wife of another person, devouring the messenger duly sent by your elder brother, Kubera; these are the highlights of your political morality! You are boasting of these without a trace of shame. You dare talk of your virtues and your morality! You set fire to the tail of the messenger who came to your kingdom, and yet you proclaim without shame that you are bound by rules. Such is the behaviour of Rakshasas. You have no right at all to utter the word political morality, with your tongue. You are the vilest sinner."

The War of Words

When Angada was replying, without break or hesitation, the courtiers who filled the Audience Hall were aghast with fear, wondering what was in store for them. Ravana resumed his talk. He said, "Listen, monkey! Is there a single hero in your camp who can stand up against me in battle? Your Lord is broken down in sorrow at separation from his wife. He is pining and pining every day. And, his brother is affected and weakened by the sight of the agony. And, Sugriva? He hates you and is opposed to you, since you are the heir to the kingdom. Like a pair of birds fighting on the edge of a river, you will both drop into the flood some day. Both of you have your eyes on the same Kingdom. How then can you fight wholeheartedly and successfully against me? My brother upon whom you seem to rely is a coward. Jambavanta, another of your leaders, is too old to be of any use. Nala and Nila are but engineers, unaware of the art of wielding swords."

Angada interrupted this tirade and cut in with his own. "Ravana! One tiny monkey entered your City and set it on flame. Did any fool believe that it was ever possible? And, now, you who

know it as true deny that the monkey is a valiant fighter. I am not in the least affected by anger when you declare that there is no one in our camp who can defeat you in battle, Yes. The texts on morality lay down that either friendship or enmity has to be only with equals. Will any one praise a lion for destroying a frog? Surely, the attempt by Rama to kill you is too low for his status and dignity. Killing such a mean contemptible foe is something that will reduce his majesty. The rules that lay down the conduct and characteristics of the Kshatriya caste to which he belongs are high and noble. You are a vicious, vile, vulgar sinner, who must meet death at the hands of mere monkeys only.”

Ravana burst into desperate laughter. "Nasty monkey! You dance in glee and jump shamelessly hither and thither, as the person who holds the rope tied round your waist commands. You learn the tricks he teaches and repeat them whenever he orders you, so that he may collect a few coins from the onlookers.” Angada could not put up with these sarcastic remarks. He ejaculated, "You seem to know only about animals; you have not cared to know about the Lord, about God, about Destiny and about Fate. Why, have not monkeys taught you more than you know? They have demolished your parks, they have killed your son, they have reduced your City into a pile of ash. Yes. They have to perform one more feat, yet. They have to administer proper punishment to you. We have allowed you to escape the fate that you must meet. I believed that your heart will be cured by downright advice and harsh truth. But, no. You have no sense of shame. You have no idea of repentance. You have no trace of morality, no habit of rectitude. What a pity! You are still gnashing your teeth in anger at Vibhishana and calling him names, like coward and traitor. You are burdening the earth by the weight of your body; the sooner you are eliminated the better. You are worse than the dogs that infest your streets. They do not have the vices you suffer from. You will soon realise that their lives are better than yours.”

Angada poured abuse on Ravana regardless of convention and manners. Ravana could not digest such fiery admonitions. "Angada! Know that I am the hero, the redoubtable stalwart, who lifted the Kailasa peak by sheer physical power and courage. This Ravana is the person who laid, not flowers but his own heads, plucked by him from his body, as offerings at the Feet of Siva. This is the devotee whose might has been acknowledged by Siva himself; this is the warrior whose name strikes terror in the bravest, whose picture spreads panic; stop your prattle praising yourself and your patrons.”

Four Crowns

But, Angada was in no mood to stop. He continued his onslaught. "O You conceited fool! Don't chatter away like this; use your breath for some good purpose; sing some songs in praise of Rama. Surrender to Him. Or else, the arrow of Rama will make your heads leap like balls from the shoulder where they are now resting. And, the Vanaras will gleefully kick them about, as in a ball game. If happen to be the messenger from Sugriva, our Ruler. I have, unfortunately, no orders from Sri Rama; and, I do not desire to deprive them the chance, or else, I would have put an end to your life in a trice and cast your carcass into the ocean.”

Angada grew into a fierce phenomenon as he uttered this threat. Like the lion, he slapped the ground with his palms. The earth shook so hard at the impact of those blows that the crowns on Ravana's ten heads shook and fell on the floor. Ravana rolled from his throne, but he recovered

balance very soon. Angada collected four of the ten, and threw them with such great force and sure aim that they fell into the camp of Rama, right within the Presence. The Vanaras there were struck with wonder at the strange articles and they described to each other the excellences and beauties of the jewelled crowns. Rama knew what they were; he said that, while coming over, they appeared like Rahu and Ketu, which cause eclipses.

The Fixed Feet

Meanwhile, Ravana commanded, "Bind this monkey; don't allow him to depart; eat him up," and hastily retired to the inner apartments. Angada shouted "Shame on you! Why all this boast of strength and prowess? Go, dip yourself in the depths of the sea and hold your breath until you die. Woman-stealer! Fool! Lust-ridden lout! I shall pluck your tongue out of your mouth on the battle field and throw it as food for crows. Be warned." Angada was gnashing his teeth in hateful anger, when Ravana turned back and called on the Rakshasas in the Hall, "Lift him by the legs and throw him on the floor; splinter his head." At this, Meghanada rose from his seat and holding Angada by his legs pulled him with great force in order to make him fall. Many others rushed forward to help him, but, however many they were, they could not move the feet even a wee bit. They only rolled on the ground, full of humiliation and unable to decide what to do next. Then, Devakantaka tried various holds to make the feet move. He too failed ignominiously. At last, Ravana himself attempted the impossible task. He held Angada by his legs and wanted to lift him and throw him forcibly on the floor. Angada laughed at Ravana's foolishness. He said, "Ravana! No, these are not the feet you have to hold. Place your hands on the Feet of Rama, in the genuine gesture of surrender; that will liberate you from fear and bondage."

With these words, Angada shook his feet in order to loosen the hold; the impact of that gesture was so unexpected and so strong that Ravana hit the floor and lost consciousness; his glory and splendour were destroyed. The sense of shame spread over his faces and he looked like the moon in broad daylight, pale and poor. Angada looked at his plight and felt that he should not continue his dialogue with the coward. Rama, he remembered, had told him only to administer some good advice to Ravana. "This fellow will not yield to good counsel, he will not realise his error and correct himself. He sticks to his vicious nature. War alone can give effective cure." Deciding thus, Angada left for the sacred proximity of the Feet of Rama. Reaching there, he submitted a report of all that had happened.

Ravana entered the apartments of the queens, overwhelmed by shame and fear. Mandodari noted the pallid crest-fallen appearance of Ravana; she said, "At least, now, give up your foolish tenacity. To cultivate enmity towards Rama will bring disaster to the kingdom itself. You could not step across the line drawn by Lakshmana; how then could you hope to defeat them in battle? Your powers and might are but dry leaves before them. Your followers could not overpower the messengers they sent; can you ever hope to overwhelm them when they invade this land in their billions? You could not stir Angada's feet even a hair breadth and yet, you hope to capture and bind billions of such Vanaras! I am pained that, in spite of all experience already available, you are still holding on obstinately to your resolution. Our son was killed. Your city was reduced into a heap of ash. Your parks were uprooted; countless Rakshasas were thrown up like balls and killed by the fall. Where were your strength and skills at that time? Boastful declarations can inflict no harm on these Vanaras."

The Rama Story: Stream of Sacred Sweetness
(To be continued)

I Adore Thee

I adore Thee as my first beginning,
I aspire after Thee as my last end,
I give Thee thanks as my constant Benefactor,
I call unto Thee as my Sovereign Protector.

Vouchsafe, O ! my Baba! to conduct me to Thy Wisdom.

Restrain me by Thy Justice, comfort me by Thy Mercy, defend me by Thy Power.

To Thee I desire to consecrate all my thoughts, words, actions and sufferings, that henceforth I may think of Thee, speak of Thee, willingly refer all my actions to Thy greatest Glory and suffer whatever Thou shalt appoint.

Baba! I desire that in all things, Thy will be done, because it is Thy will and in the manner Thou willest. I beg of Thee to enlighten my understanding, inflame my will, purify my body sanctify my soul, and help me to acquire the virtues proper to my state. Fill my heart with tender affection for goodness, hatred for faults, love for my neighbours and disregard for worldly objects.

Let me always remember to be submissive to my superiors, condescending to my inferiors, faithful to my friends and charitable to my enemies. Assist me to overcome sensuality by mortification, avarice by alms-giving, anger by meekness and tepidity by devotion.

O Baba! make me prudent in my undertakings, courageous in danger, patient in affection and humble in prosperity.

—S. D. Khera.

Brindavan

In the journey of life, youth travels farthest; the middle aged and the old have but a few miles to go. Youth have a crucial and significant role in the mission of Lord Sai. Therefore, Bhagavan pays special attention to the education and reconstruction of the Youth of the country. He affords Youth more opportunities of sharing His company and counsel.

A couple of hundred boys of this vast land have spent the last five years or so and had the good fortune of coming under His Divine care, at Brindavan where they have resided in the Hostel attached to the Campus, for the students of the Sri Sathya Sai College also situated within the

same campus. Had the Rishis of old ever known that life in the Brindavan Hostel would be so happy and fruitful, they would have done years of hard penance for winning this boon. For, the boys sit for hours at the Lotus Feet of the Lord; they follow Him wherever He moves, drawn by the Love He bestows upon them; they sing of Him for Him and with Him. They are even privileged some days to serve the Lord at mealtimes and to partake of the Divine Prasadam. When they are unable to be with Him at places other than Brindavan, they receive from Him Divine Messages conveying His concern, His encouraging counsel and His Blessings.

Academically, the College offers Degree Courses in Humanities, Science and Commerce, besides a two-year Pre-University Course of Instruction. But, we have morning-prayers every day, a daily noontime bhajan session for half an hour, and a weekly lesson on moral principles and practice. The discipline maintained in the College and the teacher-student relationship prevalent therein are uniquely spiritual and spontaneous. The College has won laurels year after year among all the Colleges of the University for outstanding successes of its alumni in University Examinations.

But, the all important feature of the College is the Hostel, which is unique because it has among the inmates, boys from all parts of India (and even some places beyond the seas), from Lucknow to Trivandrum and from Baroda to Manipur. In the Hostel, we are shaped into self-less servants of the motherland and votaries of the Culture that the Rishis of old have established. Here, hearts are purified, lives are fortified and prejudices and angularities are nullified. It is in Brindavan that minds broaden, visions widen, and the roots of virtue deepen. Brindavan can be named the "Divine Chitta-Shuddhi School".

It stands unique, even when compared to the gurukuls of which we read, as having existed in ancient India. For, never before has the Lord come in human form to teach Atmavidya to so many for so long, and with so much love. Here, Darshan, Sparshan and Sambhashan are vouchsafed by the Lord in abundant measure.

Bhagavan's Love is annihilating, for, it slays the deadly foes that lurk in the hearts of the recipients. His Love is transforming. As He has said often, His Love and Grace have transformed many a vagrant youth loafing in the streets fascinated by trivialities into earnest, humble, steady Sadhakas eager to help themselves, their parents and society, and thus win His Appreciation. "Street dogs have to be transformed into street lights", He says, for, Light spreads joy! His Love is inspiring. He draws out the best in each and prepares them for confronting with courage any test that life might offer. His Love radiates and expands, so that the recipients are messengers of that Love wherever they go. It knows no season; it is above any reason. It is Love for Love's sake. And, we too imbibe that pure Love; we Love because it is our nature to Love, and not succumb to hate, jealousy, or pride.

If Arjuna was the instrument for Sri Krishna to give the immortal Bhagavad-Gita to posterity, we, the boys of Baba's College at Brindavan, feel that we are destined to exemplify the message of the Gita that Bhagavan confers on us through our lives. That message lays special stress on the true meaning and purpose of the years we spend at College. Sacrifice and dedication are, we are told to remember, the criteria of a true life. The body is but an instrument for the achievement of

the Divine qualities that will consummate in our becoming Divine ourselves. Conquer the ego and be the master of the senses which are its minions, He directs.

Bhagavan guides us even in the details of behaviour, manners and mannerisms, ideals and ideas. He is a hard taskmaster, who does not condone or excuse misdemeanours, however small. Bhagavan is, for us, the ever-present Exemplar and Teacher. He teaches mostly by example the lessons of perfection in work, economy, liberality in giving, and open-heartedness in service. He encourages self-reliance and simplicity; we love to help in the kitchen either making chapattis or in cutting vegetables, besides the usual help in managing the purchases and management, under the guidance of resident wardens. We serve at mealtimes, by turns; we clean the rooms. We are glad we can go, on nagarsankirtan, into the neighbouring villages on Sundays and on most Thursdays. We look forward to the Bhajan Sessions in the Hostel and at College.

Devotion, Discipline and Duty are the mottos which direct our daily lives. The atmosphere is one of quiet sanctity and the air is saturated with love and the spirit of service. Physical inconveniences pale into insignificance, before the advantages of mental peace and the spiritual satisfaction that we experience. In fact, the only occasion when Brindavan appears a little gloomy is when Bhagavan's car drives away.

As a graduate from the Hostel, presently studying in a Post-graduate Institution in Bangalore City wistfully remarked recently, "Life in Brindavan is beyond compare; if there is Paradise on Earth, it is this, it is this, it is this !"

—A Student

Prayers from Prisons

Bhagavan has inspired all those who have had the good fortune of contact with Him, or His followers or His teachings to spread the message of Love and Non-violence, of Truth and Righteousness and of Fortitude and Tolerance, by the best means possible, namely, living these virtues in their daily lives and standing forth as examples for the happiness and joy that one can derive from them. The Seva Samitis have been directed to seek out avenues through which the members can involve themselves in service activities, and carry light, love and spiritual Sadhana to groups of people most needing them. Accordingly, they visit Hospitals, Remand Homes, Borstal Schools, Homes for Lepers, Hostels for the Blind, and Jails, at stipulated intervals, and encourage the inmates through precept and example to participate in and perform Bhajans and to share with them the joy derivable therefrom and from the Satsang they organise. The Welfare Officers of Jails, in many States of India, welcome these visits and the prisoners look forward to them with great enthusiasm. At the Alipore Central Jail, the Dum Dum Jail and many other prisons, the Samiti members are, within the limits of Jail rules, carrying on regular Bhajans and spiritual talks and exercises on the basis of Bhagavan's teachings of Sathya, Dharma, Shanti and Prema, which are the basic principles of every faith. Baba says that there is only one religion, and that is the religion of Love; there is only one language, the language of the heart; there is only one caste, the caste of humanity and there is only one God, and He is omnipresent, in all lands, climes, and hearts. Consistent with this universal message which is instilled into their

daily lives, the Samiti members engage themselves in the service of the prisoners. A letter received, "for favour of necessary action" through the Prisons Welfare Officer, Central Jail, Jaipur, Rajasthan is evidence of the great need that the Samitis are trying to fulfill. The letter forwards a prayer from a prisoner, a B. Com. and a C.A., calling for the continuation at the Jail of the Kirtan programme that was vigorously conducted by the local Sathya Sai Seva Samiti every week for full one year, and then, dropped for some unknown reason! "Fifty of us here are daily practising the kirtans with the aid of books", the letter says. "If at all possible, kindly issue necessary instructions that they should again continue- to visit this Prison", is the prayer. This is the measure of the strength, satisfaction and sustenance that Bhajans and Kirtan satsang can give to those behind the prison doors.

[Ed.]

The Four Firemen

Dr. Luis Alonso Muniz from Mexico arrived in India accompanied by his wife and proceeded to Prasanthi Nilayam. He had planned to stay there for six or seven days, but, upon seeing the incredible things which were taking place there, he stayed seven weeks. He returned, motivated by the deeds and activities that he had witnessed, and succeeded in publishing the Spanish Version of the book on Baba written by Howard Murphet. Several works about the Avatar are to be translated into Spanish.

"Baba is bringing the ancient wisdom into light and re-energising it, in order to give it new meaning and power. He speaks, and writes, using simple analogies and parables, so that every one who reads or listens can understand and become inspired with faith. He insists on reminding all that it is not enough if they hear and know; they must live the wisdom and make it their own inner treasure", writes Muniz.

"He says, man is essentially Atma. He is not his body and must never identify with, that temporary suit. The Atma has no form, but, it creates the forms it needs. Baba does not teach that the path which can take us to the spiritual goal lies through hermit caves and monasteries. A ship is built to travel on water, He says; but, water should not enter the ship! Similarly, we are destined to move about the world; but, the world must not enter us, and disturb our equanimity. And, Baba adds, with characteristic clarity, that a man should grasp God with the right hand and the world with the left. Gradually. the left will loosen its grasp, but, this should not bother us; it has to be so. Perhaps that was the reason why it was named `sinister.' Let the world remain behind; it does not mean that you have lost anything precious."

"But, that which we have firm in the `right' hand, we should never let go. Speaking of the troubles of our times, Baba says, "Nations are arming themselves and sowing hatred in a crazy manner. Man has reduced himself to the status of a wild animal. The spark of hatred which has emerged from the individual mind has infected others too, until it -has become a huge conflagration of greed and anger. These dangerous viruses have to be eradicated in the individual mind, the family, the village, the community, in the nation wherever they are growing and

ruining the health of the race. Only four firemen—Sathya, Dharma, Shanti and Prema—can extinguish the conflagration." But, truth and justice are distorted; people refuse to recognise that which benefits a few can be greatly injurious to the majority. Because these four virtues have declined and are threatened with death, it is necessary that the Avatar has to arrive. He has come to give mankind the key to Peace and Joy."

They Were Called

It was spontaneous; an urge from within, a call from the depths of the heart; an echo of the Cosmic Voice, which resounded within them. Tens of thousands felt it in all lands. They rose and moved towards Prasanthi Nilayam, so that they could be there in the Presence of Siva on Sivaratri Day! Millions more pictured Prasanthi Nilayam in their hearts and prayed.

At Prasanthi Nilayam, the dawn of Sivaratri saw more than twenty thousand eager devotees gathered in front of the Mandir, to witness the Hoisting of the Prasanthi Flag by Bhagavan. That Function, marking the Inauguration of the Festival was held at 7-30 A.M. Bhagavan gave Darshan at the Silver Door on the First Floor. The College Bands from the Sri Sathya Sai Colleges at Brindavan, (for Boys) Bangalore, and Anantapur (for Women) were played by the Students; Vedic Hymns were chanted by students and members of the Staff of the Pathashala. Bells rang in ecstatic unison. Bhajan Songs from twenty thousand throats filled the dome of space.

Sri. N. Kasturi spoke on the significance of the Festival and of the Vigil and Fast that were prescribed as the means by which it was to be celebrated. He also referred to the sublime mystery of the Emergence of the Linga from the Formless Absolute, now before the world in human form, as Sathya Sai.

Sri Shiv Pandit, M. B. A, of the Sri Sathya Sai College and Sri Kamal Sahani of the same College spoke on the immeasurable Love, Power and Compassion of Bhagavan. Then, Bhagavan addressed the gathering on Sivam and the Lingam and exhorted the listeners to win back their lost but still latent Divinity through the exercise and expansion of Love and Service.

During the Bhajan Sessions at the Poornachandra Auditorium, Bhagavan did the Abhisheka of the Sai Baba of Shirdi (His own previous Form) and after putting round the idol a gemstone garland created for the occasion on the spot by a wai: of His Hand, He drew out from a pot held over the idol dozens of potfuls of Vibhuti which poured like a continuous stream of wonder for minutes together. He then sprinkled the holy waters of the Abhisheka over the heads of the mammoth crowd sitting jam-packed in the Auditorium. It was indeed an hour replete with ecstatic experiences for one and all.

In the evening, three students of the Sri Sathya Sai College, Brindavan, Sri Srinivasan, and Sri Sunil Rajan (in English) and Sri Umamaheswara Rao (in Telugu) spoke at the meeting at the Auditorium. The students spoke so sincerely, so meaningfully and so knowingly on the various aspects of Bhagavan's Avatarhood, that the assembly was struck with admiration and gratitude.

Sri Umamaheswara Rao made them realise how mellifluous, poetic and scintillating the Telugu language could be, especially when it is used to delineate the multifaceted Love of Bhagavan, by one who is fortunately experiencing it.

Then, Bhagavan started His Discourse, about 6-30 P.M.; but, even as He rose, signs of the surge of the Symbol of the Formless appeared in that Formful Human Embodiment. Despite this, Bhagavan spoke for over an hour, occasionally resuming His seat and raising Himself up again, tantalising the thousands with the master mystery of Lingodbhava. When the discourse ended, Bhagavan sang a few Bhajans for the gathering to sing in chorus; during the Bhajans, when the first signs of the emerging Lingam were evident, the vast assembly changed over to OM SIVAYA as the song, and after a few more minutes of evident upcoming, an oversized oval Linga of brilliant greenish luminosity, which Bhagavan named as Jyotirlinga, came out of Bhagavan's mouth and was caught by Him in His palm. He then showed it to the thousands reverentially awaiting its Darshan, from the Dais as well as from the long lanes between the devotees through which He walked slowly holding the sacred gemstone Linga between His fingers. All eyes were aglow with grateful joy and all hearts thumped with firmer Faith that night. Throughout the night, Bhajans were sung by the devotees, in celebration of the unique Night of Siva they were in.

The next morning (29 February), Bhagavan gave Darshan early, during the Arati, when the Bhajans closed. He also gave an inspiring discourse on the value of Bhajans Bhagavan Himself inaugurated the Distribution of Prasad to the vast numbers of devotees.

The Sivaratri Celebrations at Prasanthi Nilayam were recorded on Television by the All-India Radio Station at Madras, and telecast by them later, for the edification of the vast mass of viewers.

This year's Mahasivaratri was a rewarding revitalising experience for the thousands who were fortunate enough to hear the Call and respond to It. Memories of the happy fortnight they spent in the Presence during the Golden Jubilee when the World had come to Prasanthi Nilayam to pay homage to Baba were green in the hearts of most of them. The Lingodbhava was for them a replica of the process of Creation which was awakened by the Will of the Supreme and which proliferated into all this apparent multiplicity; and flux. They left the Nilayam, chastened and inspired, for more fruitful participation in the Sai Era of Spiritual Reconstruction.

Sivam-Lingam

India has been blessed by the consecutive appearance and ministration of profound thinkers and wise guides. Of these, the exponents of the three great schools of philosophical thought-Dvaita (Dualism or Realism), Advaita (Idealism, or Monism) and Visisht-Advaita (Qualified Monism)—namely, Madhwacharya, Sankaracharya and Ramanujacharya are very important. Historians have struggled to identify their birth-dates, their places of nativity and other details, and in spite of their enthusiastic researches they have arrived only at tentative conclusions. But,

these facts are not so essential after all ! What is of lasting value are their teachings and the practical application of the lessons they convey for our own lives.

Of these three, Sankara (7th Century A. D.) is the earliest. He was born in Kerala, and lived only for 32 years; but, in that short period, he achieved the well-nigh impossible task of not only mastering the entire sacred literature of the land, but, also interpreting the most valuable theological and philosophical texts, in simple and comprehensive commentaries, which revealed that they had all one message to teach mankind: Brahman is true; Jagat is illusion. He made a distinction between appearance and reality, and declared that the One Reality appeared as all this multiplicity, as a result of a pre-conditioned mind which is unable to apprehend the Truth. Sankaracharya overcame in scholastic disputation the renowned scholars of his time who believed otherwise, and established the validity of this truth about Reality, a truth announced in the Vedas in various axioms, like, Aham Brahmasmi (I am Brahman, the Universal Absolute), Tatt twam asi (That thou art), Prajnanam Brahma (The highest wisdom is the Universal Absolute) and Ayam atma Brahma (This Individual is the Absolute Itself). He laid down the intellectual and moral disciplines essential for the clarification of the reasoning faculty and the purification of the individual ego, in order that the illumination of wisdom can be earned.

Though as part of this preliminary process, Sankaracharya stressed the need for devotion, and dedication to a personalised God, and though he composed and propagated a series of inspiring hymns and verses of adoration, the monistic philosophy failed to encourage the attitude of worship and surrender. Sankaracharya established monastic centres with the express intention of spreading the monistic system and counteracting opposing interpretations of the scripture; these were situated in the North, South, West and East of the subcontinent and are powerful influences even today.

Ramanuja, born in the XI century A. D. He realised that the vast mass of people can be aroused and guided towards the good life and self-realisation only through prayer and worship; he taught a modified form of monism, called, Qualified Monism, Visishtadvaita. The Individual was a part or limb of the Absolute or Brahman, conceived as a Person, and so derived strength and sustenance from the Godhead. The Identity was of a special kind, direct but yet distinct.

It can be described with the example of a coconut, which is familiar to all. The fibrous covering of the nut is Objective Nature; the hard shell inside is the Subject, the Individual, the Jivi. The Kernel is the Atma, the Core, the Reality. The three are distinct, but, they, subserve each other, and exist for and with each other. The Objective Creation, the Individualised Jivi and the Atma are One, said Sankaracharya; they are Three-in-One, with interdependent intimately-bound characteristics, said Ramanuja.

Madhwacharya, born in the XIII century A. D., laid emphasis on the special features of the three, Jiva, Easwara and Prakriti (The Individual, God, and the Objective World), and taught that the scriptures enjoined dedication and surrender as means to win Grace. The Universal and the Particular were separate entities, and had to be treated as such. So, he is believed to have propagated the dualistic philosophy.

All three teachers acclaim Godhead and declare that the sole duty of man is to establish awareness of Godhead as the source and goal of all activity. This awareness either expands the Individual to Cosmic proportions or reduces him to complete non-existence by merging his activities in the Divine.

Sivaratri is the day on which the contemplation of Godhead, as Sivam, that is to say, as Eternal; Ever-pure, All-knowledge, Absolute, Universal and Unchangeable, is prescribed as a spiritual exercise, accompanied by vigil and fast, so that the 'Night' enveloping the mind can disappear in the rosy dawn of Illumination. All three proclaim that the Divine is inherent in man and nature, and can be realised by spiritual disciplines.

On Sivaratri, each of you has to initiate the process of discipline to visualise and base your lives on the vision of the supreme Force that permeates the Universe. Dalton demonstrated that the Universe is fundamentally a concourse of atoms. Anoraniyan mahathomahian, is how the Almighty is described. It means, "Atommost in the atom, vastest in the vast." Even the vast is a consistent concourse of atoms. There can be no vast, without the least; there can be no Brahman without the Jiva, its emanation; there can be no Objective world without the Primal Substance, Brahman; there are no pots which aren't clay; there are no ornaments which aren't gold. In every particle, Brahman is immanent.

This holy day you must dwell in that elevating thought. The Linga that emerges today from me is the symbol of the emergence from the Universal Absolute (Brahman) of the Cosmos, conceived first as an Idea, a Will, a Wish and concretised as Hiranyagarbha (Effulgent Sphere). The mystery that the Lingodbhava (the emergence of the Linga) reveals is: that the Cosmos with all its multifarious components has emerged from Sivam, the Godhead, devoid of Beginning and End, and incapable of being identified or delineated as having this or that attribute. Be aware of this truth, every moment of this day and night and get yourself saturated with it. Then, time is sanctified and activity is rendered meaningful.

There is another conclusion too which you should draw and fix in your consciousness: what has emanated from Sivam is also in essence Sivam; so, you too are in core, Sivam, however much you may ignore the fact or deny it or act contrary to it. The Linga that is the symbol of this truth is the Primal Form of the Will of Siva; Siva is the Reality in this moving (Jangam) agglomeration of limbs (Angam) and in all acts that you perform in Society (Sangam). Not only in you, but in every one, willed by Sivam, there is Siva. Or else, each Individual will be but a Savam (Corpse) ! So, treat every one as Sivam; be happy in that Brotherhood and blessed by that vision. That is the Message this holy Festival confers on you. Cultivate the inner discipline necessary for this task, get rid of the intellectual and spiritual sloth that stand in the way of this discipline, and march on to victory!

Discourse: Sivaratri Morning, Prasanthi Nilayam

The Divine Sign

Embodiments of the Divine Atma: Imagine a situation in which there is no birth and therefore, no death; there is no earning and, so no spending; there is no meeting people and, consequently, no separation from them; there is no nothing transient and so everything is ever existing. Then, there will be no opportunity for compassion, no charity, no mutual help, no sympathy, and no comradeship!

Through the cultivation of these qualities, the ego gets increasingly attenuated; the truth that the pain and pleasure of each individual at loss or gain, disgrace or success, are identical in quality with another's is experienced in depth and consequently, the sense of equality is strengthened. Again, the axiom, Ayam atma Brahma, "This is a wave of the Ocean" is brought home with a keen awareness. This is the dawn of the highest Wisdom. "In me, in you, in every being and object, the Reality is the One Universal Absolute Brahman"—this is the Wisdom that comes to every inquirer.

That One Immanent Brahman is also transcendent. It can be cognised by the sound-symbol, OM. "OM ithi ekaksharam, Brahma", say the Vedas; the One Letter Om is the Brahman. The Atma encompassed in the Individual undergoes apparently four states : (1) The Waking State, when It is named Viswa, in the Upanishads. When in that state, it contacts the objective world through nineteen channels of awareness- the 5 sense organs, the 5 organs of action, the mind, the consciousness, the intellect, and ego. The attraction towards and the attachment with the external world are so strong that the Jivi entangles itself more and more with it. (2) The Dream State, when It is named Tejas, in the Upanishads. The sense organs and the organs of action do not operate now. The inner vision and the inner activities produce dreams based on the experiences of the waking state. (3) The Deep-sleep state, when It is named Prajna, in the Upanishads. All the nineteen inlets are inactive now; that is why it is considered to be very akin to Samadhi. There is no awareness of the objective world, nor does the external world of objects impinge upon the consciousness. The Individual is in bliss, but, is unaware of it, at the time of being in it.

OM which is the symbol of the Atma has three sounds incorporated in it, A U and M, the A representing the Waking State or Viswa, the U, representing the Dream State or Tejas and the M representing the Sushupti or Deep-sleep State or Prajna. There is a fourth State also, beyond the Deep-sleep, known as Turiya, when Pure Consciousness is aware of itself only, when Bliss is experienced independent of any Source. This is represented by the silence into which the OM merges—the interval between the recital of one OM and the next.

Of course, it is impossible to visualise the One Atma that is in every being. No one can see his own eye, though he sees everything else with it. All consciousness is derived from It but that cannot be the object of consciousness. Can a salt doll discover for itself the depth of the Ocean from which the salt was derived? How can the Atma be marked out when it has no marks? Everything is Atma; so, how can it be described or delineated? With whom or with which is it to be compared or measured? When the sun's ray is passed through a prism it splits into bands of several colours; so too, the effulgence of the Atma is expressed multifariously when it is manifested through various containers called bodies. The form is what you plead or plan, or prepare for. When you swing a burning stick in a circle in the dark, you see a circle of light; when you swing it in a straight line, you see a line of fire. The Intellect and the mind shine as a

result of the light they reflect from the Atma; they have no light of their own. But, if you keep a lamp in a pit, it cannot illumine many things; keep it on a height, and then the light will shine on much more. So too, keep the illumined intellect and mind on a high level of cognition and they will benefit much. Feel intensely that it is your duty to achieve an expansive heart and share the wisdom with as many as you can. That will ensure your spiritual progress.

Always be vigilant about the inroads of desire and egotism. There are some who look out for their own faults and the virtues of others. They are the best of humanity. Others take delight in searching for faults in both themselves and others! These are middlings. Others there are who seek to extol their own virtues while condemning the faults they find in others. These are of low status. But, there are quite a few who argue their vices into virtues and attack virtues in others as 'downright vices'! These are, indeed the lowest of the low.

One can progress in spiritual journey only when one is ceaselessly engaged in self-examination. The servant of the household knows only items and affairs related to the periphery of the family; he cannot be aware of the really valuable items and properties of the household. He knows all about the garden, the trees, the lands and the garage, but, not about the jewels and precious ornaments of the members. That is information of which the master only knows.

But, so far as the Individual is concerned, since he does not know the most precious possession of his, namely, the Divine Atma, he is only a 'servant', though he calls himself the 'master'! What an ignominious position this! And, if he does not seek to make an inventory of the precious treasure that he has with him, then he is certainly a fool worse than a servant in his own home.

Consider for a while for what purpose you have come into this world with this body, framed by your own past deeds. The coconut is prized, not for the fibrous outer cover or the hard shell underneath it, but, for the sweet relishing kernel inside the shell. The iron safe is prized because it holds within itself the jewels of the family. Divinity is the kernel, the jewel; the body is the means you use in order to realise the Divine within. It is not everlasting; it is a component and so will certainly fall asunder. It is full of lust, and so dust-ridden and subject to rust. The gems it contains have to be polished by good thoughts, good deeds, good company and good words.

Now, the individual soaked in the darkness of ignorance neglects the "embodied divinity" on account of the false fascination for the body. But, the things that cater to the body are as unreal as the body itself. They are as illusory as things experienced in dreams. The towers and turrets seen in dreams disappear when the eyes awake. So too with the dawn of wisdom, the diverse attractions of the world also reveal their unreality. Be ever vigilant against the deceptive fascination of the body and the senses. Know that the Atmic Reality is the one fact to be certain about; that is the highest wisdom. A mind that does not waver, a vision that does not confound—these are the two pre-requisites for full Peace. Having lost the art of acquiring them, man is trapped in anxiety and fear, in all lands and under all conditions.

The world is the home of sorrow; the body is the seat of disease; life is a bed of thorns. The horde of bed-bugs that infest it, namely, the thousand odd pains, pricks and worries, do not give you a moment's respite (A humourist poet has declared that Siva has taken residence on Mount Kailasa among the Himalayas because, no bed-bug can survive that cold! The other two

members of the Trinity, according to him, are equally anxious to avoid the pest. So, Vishnu rests on the coils of a serpent floating like a raft on the Ocean of Milk, and Brahma has selected for His seat, a lotus flower, with a long stalk)!

The mind of man is ever seeking sensual pleasure in the outer world. It craves for all things that attract it. The tongue pays attention only to taste; it does not concern itself with the hardship it inflicts on the stomach. Regardless of the warning belch, it continues to send down further quantities of things which it alone realises, to the detriment of total health. When such uncontrolled eating continues from dawn until late at night, life becomes a burden and a pathetic waste of precious years.

Embodiments of Divinity! Resolve from now on to make your lives meaningful and profitable. You are clamouring to spend your years in holy surroundings, at a holy spot. The word Ashram means a place where there is no Shram, or Worry. Ashram is a place where one can lead a life free from worry. And, worry is the result of desire and its fulfillment. For, desire breeds desire and it can never be fully realised.

And what does a man gain, by pursuing the vain trinkets of worldly fame and happiness? He reels under the burden, and unable to reach the end of the road, he dies only to leave behind on earth a handful of ash. His possessions, his earnings, his kith and kin, they all pass away into oblivion; but the evil that he has done will haunt him till eternity, while the good he has done will sustain him for ever. Therefore, avoid evil; be good. Yearn for trivial pleasure here; you cannot earn the source of lasting Joy which will sustain you hereafter.

"I am true body," is what ignorant people swear; they realise too late that it is not true. "I am the Jiva—a separate Individual"; that is what people a little more advanced believe. But, even this is not the full truth. For the breath teaches man that he is not a distinct individual; it says, Soham, 'so' when inhalation takes place and 'ham' when exhalation follows. Soham means..."He, Is I" "I am He." And, He is God. It impresses on your consciousness every time you breathe, that you are Siva. Remember this truth on Sivaratri.

The Linga is the Divine Sign of Siva. The Cosmos is the symbol of the Will of Siva; the Atma is the symbol of the Grace of Siva. Since the Linga symbol is the reflection of the Splendour of Siva, a Flame without wick or oil, it is called Jyotirlinga, the Linga of Light. It is effulgent in the body of man, when he is free from the pulls of gain and loss, love and hate, attachment and non-attachment. It is then called the Antar-linga, the Inner Siva. The Atmalinga is called so because every being and thing has a basic Atmic Principle embedded in it. It has both Kshara and Akshara as its manifestations. Linga is the Formless with Form, the Nameless with Name, the very primal emergent from Godhead, which cannot be considered as having any other Form or Name, except the simple Oval or Spheroid and the name, Linga; which is like X- all attributes and none.

Pundits and scholars describe these various Lingas—Atmalinga, Antar-linga, Jyotir-linga etc—but, they seldom endeavour to listen, to reflect upon and practise the preliminary stages of spiritual discipline which will grant them the Bliss of Realising, the Siva in them, as a Linga of Light. They listen to discourses and when they toss the towels on which they sat when they rise

from the floor, what they have listened to is also tossed off! Practise, yearn for success, live what you preach, set your minds in order; that is the duty of Sadhakas. And, every man, whether he acknowledges it or not, is a Sadhaka.

—Bhagavan's Discourse. Sivaratri 8 P.M., Prior to the Emergence of the Jyotirlingam that had formed in Him

The Gift of Food

The Sun occupies a special place of honour in the pantheon of the people of Bharat. The most potent of the Vedic prayers and the most popular—the Gayatri—is addressed to the Splendour inherent in the Sun. The Sun is also adored as the Gardener. For, he draws enormous quantities of water from the Oceans, raises them up into the sky, and makes them available for fields and forests all over the world.

He is the world's foremost servant, tirelessly working for its upkeep and uplift. He rises at the right moment and departs when term of day has to end. He sets a supreme example for discipline and duty. He is never idle or wayward or vacillating. He teaches the world a lesson, namely, each should fulfill his nature to the utmost. His nature is to shine and give warmth. So, he reduces his heat to bearable proportions when he sends his rays on earth. And, he permits night to modify the rigour of his heat, and grant all living beings time for recuperation and resort to their Reality. If only man would learn the lesson and be true to his own essential nature, namely, Divinity, fear and hate would disappear from the human community.

Another cardinal lesson that the culture of Bharat emphasises is the importance of intake of food, which is grown by the grace of the Sun. It is called Anna in Sanskrit, and the Anna-sheath is the first of the Five sheaths that encase the Self in man, influencing the nature and characteristics of the other four. So, Bharatiya Culture has laid down as a result of centuries of experience and introspection, certain rules for the proper intake of food by man.

The first rule is that the food has to be purified by mantra and yajna. The mantra is a mystic formula which when repeated draws down potent influences which can interpenetrate the material that is taken as food. Yajna is translated as sacrifice, in the sense of 'foregoing something in order to get something more valuable and lasting.' The purpose of insisting in Yajna while taking food is that a portion has to be offered to those who have less, so that the 'sacrifice' will ensure health and happiness. The Gita declares that food that-is-not-shared is 'stolen property' and has to be condemned as such!

The second rule is that the food has to be satwic, that is to say, neither Rajasic (pungent, 'hot', arousing passions) nor Tamasic (inducing lassitude, sleep or deadening the intellect or the senses). Satwic food is wholesome without being heavy, moderate and promoting equanimity and a balanced view of situations. People prescribe milk and fruits as satwic food; they say that the food should not involve cruelty or violence in the process of preparation; they say that the food should not injure the even tenor of Sadhana. But, this applies only to one type of food, the

food consumed by mouth; the intake of impressions and influences by the other senses are ignored. One has to be careful that sights, sounds, tastes, smells and physical contacts that tend to dull the intellect or arouse the passions are also not consumed.

The third rule is that the quantity of food has to be severely limited. Just because it is available and attractive, do not overfeed yourselves. Do not allow others to persuade you to take more and ruin your health; you are the custodians of your health; do not yield to the temptations the tongue holds forth. One good rule that you can follow while judging the quantity that is desirable is: When you get up from a meal, you must feel as light as when you sat down for it. Do not get up heavier than when you sat. Limits observed while eating helps right and quick thinking too. Too much food clogs the body as well as the mind. The fourth rule regarding food is that it should not be acquired through wrong means. It has to be earned by right methods. A fruit tree growing in the garden of your neighbour might have a branch of projecting over your garden, and it may have bunches of fruits that tempt you. Eating them without obtaining his permission will be theft and the food is bound to have deleterious effects. It cannot be satwic food promoting spiritual progress.

The fifth rule is that food not offered to God before consumption is as harmful as poison. One has to consume food as a gift from God; the sense of gratitude can sanctify and purify it. Even if the food is impure and harmful in the subtle sense, or even if the character of the cook is prejudicial to its purity, the act of offering to God will nullify the traits and render the food beneficial. As, Prasad (consecrated) it becomes good for body and soul.

—Baba's Discourse; Student Group, 'Brindavan'

Who and What is Sai?

Who and what is Sai?
It is a Name for the Nameless,
It is a Form for the Formless,
A symbol for the Supramental,
It is all-to-all, for all time.

It is all that you were,
It is all that you are,
It is all you ever will be,
It is Self-Attainment for All.

Sai is redeemer for sinners;
Sai is healer for the ailing,
Sai soothes the afflicted,
He is the hope of the desperate;
He is the succour of the suffering;
He is solace for seekers,
The awakener from slumber.

Sai is the object of all quests,
The subject of all inquiry;
The self in self-inquiry;
Igniter of inquiry in the heart,
Mentor, master, scientist, guide,
Makes you convinced, at the end,
That you seldom know the end.
Sai is the end-less End—
Where you and I are One.

Sai dethrones the ego,
Demolishes the beast,
Denatures nature's fantasies,
Denotes the three D's
Discipline, Devotion, Duty
To divinise us in a trice.

Sai designs our destinies
Makes us, remakes us, until we wake
To God-awareness all the time;
Teaches, preaches, the 4-fold path—
Sathya Dharma Shanti Prema—
He reaches all, for He is all.
At His call, we rally round
And, learn the lesson to draw upon
The Kundalini-coiled Force.

Sai is Mother, the Mother Incarnate!
Sai is Love, which gives, forgives.
Liberates us all, from fear and death;
Nourishes Cosmos facing chaos;
Uplifts and feeds, nectarine clasp,
Sings many lullabies in language
All children love to hear.

Sai is Peace, abundant, celestial—
Peace that passeth understanding,
Pervading through and through,
Everlasting, elevating, endless.
Peace that is never piecemeal
But, plenty, ending every strife.

Sai is Bliss-Oceanic,
Disseminating nectar-divine,
Fountain-head in every heart—

Sat, Chit, Ananda—
The Bliss, surging in Cosmic Bosom
Never miss that Bliss, O human heart
Dont waste life; taste the Sai Bliss.

Sai Sarvabhouta, the Emperor,
Everlasting, mighty, eternal,
Omnipotent, Omniscient
The One God: the Omnipresent.
The end of Knowledge,
The fruit of Wisdom,
Where eloquence ends, He dwells!
Where Time does stop, He stands!
Where Space is not, He rests
Where there is no restlessness!
He is the unknowable Unknown,
The Victory that ends all struggle,
The Unity that ends all diversity,
The Vastest and the Least,
Sai is All; All is Sai.

—Dr. L. S. Bore Gowda, M.B.B.S., M.S. (Del) 23-11-75

Love and Laughter

Baba means Father. Our beloved Baba is, as the Vedas extol, the Fatherliest of Fathers, the Motherliest of Mothers, and the Childliest of Children. When we celebrate the golden birthday of our golden Baba, it occurs in our minds that Baba is born every day, in the hearts of those He loves and who love Him.

The Rg Veda (10-123-1) says of the Lord, "This is the Loving One, driving the issues of the many-coloured; the Spring of Light, in the chariot of splendour; Him, at the meeting of the waters and the sun, the sages with their hymns caress as a CHILD."

Blithe of spirit, light of mind, lithe limbs—He has the eternal Child in Him. This Child has for its play, the entire world. Every human being is Its toy. The Divine Mother is referred to in the Hindu Scriptures as a Child, Bala. She revels in Play, as Leela-vinodini. But, the play is not whimsical or capricious. Bound in Dharma (Law), yet revelling in Leela—that is the enigma of Bala as well as Baba. Baba is so simple, and open, like space, that you do not feel anything enigmatic in this Babe.

Baba says about Himself, "Baba never rests. He is never tired. ...Endless work, in all the world! Easy, no weight, always happy! That is the miracle. Other so-called miracles are not miracles!" Yes. "Easy, no weight, always happy"! That makes and marks Baba the Babe. Baba explains,

"Baba has taken this body, without any tendencies, completely free, no desires, no attachment." This marks the eternal play-boy. "Strain-less, spontaneous life", that is the characteristic. Baba advises: "Let go. Don't cling. Be still. Establish yourselves in the homelessness of the mind. Be the witness of everything. Abandon all your plans, even the 'best' ones. Abandon all the theories you cherish; the doctrines you hold dear; the systems of knowledge which have accumulated." We too must become children like Him.

For Baba, it is all fun and frolic; even the most breath-taking wonders. See Him heaping soft sand on the sea-shore near Dwaraka ! It reaches the height of a cubit. He flattens the top and levels the sand. He draws with evident glee a three slanted line, with His finger. People look on with amazement and curiosity. He enjoys their amazement. He adds a small triangle over the circle, on top of the slants. Another short line across the circle, and He chuckles, 'It is ready'.

While the gathering is perched on the verge of suspense, the 'Child' digs its hands deep into the heap, and draws forth a bright golden idol of Lord Krishna, about 15 inches high! The three-slanted line has become the tribhangi body of Govinda; the circle on top, His Head; the triangle, the peacock-feather crest; the line across the circle, the flute! Sai's golden Will has manifested itself as the golden idol. But, the dazzling magnificence has been completely scattered by the disarming coolness of His child-like felicity.

Take another instance. Tagore sang of the baby who wanted to catch the moon with its hands and Dada scolding it, "You are the silliest child I have known. If the moon came nearer, you would see how big it is." But, when Baba the babe has it in His palm, it is not so big at all! Recently while conversing with some students of the Whitefield Sathya Sai College on a night, Baba said, "Ask for anything you want of me." One boy made hold to ask, "Baba please bring the moon down here." "Oh, yes" said the wonder-worker, whose wondrous love shears his wonders of their eerie weight. And right in his palm was a splendrous globular object pouring out of soft cool moonlight. "Look up at the moon in the sky", Baba said. The 'original' moon up above had by then lost its luster and appeared a plate of paper; Baba folded his fingers and closed the 'moon' in his palm and then asked the boys to once again see the moon above. Now it had regained its splendour. On Baba opening his palm again, the sky-moon lost its radiance but the same moonlight emanated from the object in his palm. Baba repeated the 'same' again and again. What ought to have been an astounding miracle was alchemised to a baby's prank. It was all a matter of love and laughter.

Sacred relaxation is as much religion and spirituality, as intense concentration—and this is what Baba conveys through his childlike way of performing wonders.

Babe, not only in what he does! He is just Babe at times. During Bhajans when he is seated on the throne, what a variety of Bhavas he manifests. One moment he glows in all Majesty. Next moment he is the mellow Mother. Then the Mother too melts in an ocean of serenity and he looks the picture of peace. And next he is Child. With immaculate innocence, the Child goes on feeling the small bouquet placed in the arm of the chair. Then It twirls it with obvious relish.

If thou appear untouched by solemn thought, Thou ! whose exterior semblance doth belie Thy Soul's immensity—

Thou, little Child, yet glorious in the might
Of heaven-born freedom on thy Being's height

The mischievous, Baba-babe plucks petals from the flower bunch. A smile lits Its face. Its light
lightens our wearied hearts too. It is:

That blessed mood
In which the burthen of the mystery
Is lightened.

Not only the mystery of our life's turmoil, but the supreme mystery of Baba too ! Behind and
beyond the mystery He is the loving, loveable Baby. "Delight and liberty, the simple creed of
childhood, whether busy or at rest"—The delight of *brahmananda*, the liberty of *Moksha* so
silently breathed into us, without any philosophy, ritual, exercise.

Krishna lived to be a centenarian and yet we adore him only as a Balagopala. Sai Krishna,
whether 50 or 500, will be the eternal Baba to us, blessing us with the highest bliss by his very
Babiness. The Philosopher-Prince of the Bhagavad-Gita himself becomes a Gita (song) when he
is child; paandityam nirvidya Baalyena tishthaset (Casting off knowledge, he stands out as a
child). Let us sing hallelujah to Baba in the words of "the Crescent Moon."

They clamour and fight, they doubt and despair, they know no end to their wranglings.

Let Your life come amongst them like a flame of light, Child, unflickering and pure, and delight
them into silence.

They are cruel in their greed and their envy, their words are like hidden knives thirsting for
blood.

Go and stand amidst their scowling hearts, Child, and let your gentle eyes fall upon them like the
forgiving peace of the evening, over the strife of the day.

Let them see your face, Child, and thus know the meaning of all things; let them love you and
thus love each other.

—Ra. Ganapathi

*Life is a long process of struggle, striving and achievement. God has created man so that he
might use all his talents to the utmost, and express his special personality or Purusha. The
purpose of man is not mere consumption of food, ending up as a burden upon the earth or as an
animal that is a slave to the senses. God has no need of a horde of loungers and idlers; He
grants Grace only on the active, the adventurous, and the assiduous marchers. Intelligence and
the capacity to discriminate between the good and the evil should not be laid waste or left
uncultivated. Using them for one's own good and the good of society is the best way of showing
gratitude to God for all that He has endowed man with.*

—Baba

A New Year for 'Sivam'

'Sivam'—the architectural jewel enshrining all the spiritual activities of the Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organisation in the Twin Cities of Hyderabad and Secunderabad, was inaugurated on the New Year Day of the Telugu Region, three years ago, by Bhagavan. This year, He visited Sivam again, on the eve of the New Year Day, and He stayed there itself, for six days, during which He had a very busy schedule of engagements. Reaching Hyderabad by plane from Bangalore on the evening of the 27th March, Bhagavan was welcomed with Vedic ceremonial at 'Sivam' by thousands of devotees. While they were singing Bhajans on the open grounds of Sivam, Bhagavan moved between the adoring ranks and blessed them. Every day, groups of devotees from various sections of the City started before dawn on Nagarsankirtan Missions singing Bhajans while they proceeded and merged near Sivam into a pellucid stream of devotion, which flowed into the Open Grounds 'Lake' before it. Bhagavan gave them the much-coveted Darshan from the specially designed window of the symbolic structure where He resided. Later, Bhagavan graciously came down during the Bhajan Sessions, and moved among the devotees receiving their prayers, and acceding to demands for initiating children in letters, for naming them, and for various other signs of Grace.

The "Deccan Chronicle", popular Daily of the Twin Cities, brought out a Special illustrated Supplement on March 28, with their English and Telugu Editions, welcoming Bhagavan as the Avatar of the Age.

28th March: The day began at Sivam with a Rally of over 300 Bal Vikas Pupils in the Divine Presence. The Organisers and the Gurus had incorporated some fresh and meaningful ideas in the Festival. The March Past of the kids was arranged in sections, led by Representatives in costume of Sanathana Dharma (carrying the symbol of the Pranava), Zoroastrianism (with the symbol of Fire) Buddhism (with the Dharmachakra) Christianity (with the Cross) and Islam (with the Crescent). While the participants drew in front and moved forward these Five stood in the vanguard, as proof of the Brotherhood of all Faiths. Then, four little pupils bravely stood before the vast gathering and spoke on the lessons they have, learnt from sharing in the Bal Vikas movement, blessed by Bhagavan. "The more you give Love to others, the more Love you can draw from within you and from others. Let us all love each other and make the world a happy place to live in," one kid pleaded. Bhagavan evinced great joy at the sweetness and innocence of the children. He gave prizes to many children for their aptitude and skill in reciting Bhajans and Gita Verses and in Elocution.

In the evening, at the Hall of the Institution of Engineers, Bhagavan spoke at a gathering of the elite of the Cities including Ministers, Heads of Government Departments, and Senior Officers, Advocates, Doctors and Administrators. The Governor of Andhra Pradesh, Sri Mohanlal Sukhadia presided. Sri Sukhadia described Bhagavan as a mighty force in the spiritual awakening of India and therefore of the world. "He is helping us to recapture our ancient glory in the spiritual field, and to learn that there is a basic unity in all the religions of the world. He draws our attention to the dangers inherent in ignoring the spirit while catering to the senses and the intellect. He is putting humanity back on the rails," he declared. "His outstanding achievement has been the promotion, among hundreds of thousands of people, of the spirit of discipline, sacrifice and hard work, without the prop of law or power of office," he said.

A young student, Kamal Sahani, of the Sri Sathya Sai College of Arts and Science, established by Bhagavan to train youth through Discipline, Devotion and Duty, then spoke for a few minutes. He said that Bhagavan advises students to fill their homes with Love, their studies with Confidence and their dealings with Society with a spirit of righteous Challenge.

Bhagavan's Telugu Address was translated by Dr. S. Bhagavantam, D. Sc. Bhagavan said, "Humanity has landed itself in fear, anxiety and confusion, because it has concerned itself mainly with the physical and the material, ignoring the ethical and the spiritual aspects of living. Man believes the world as interpreted by his senses as wholly true; he does not realise that there is a vast unseen Power which manifests as the seen.

The truth is that there is no East or West distinguishable as such on this Globe; that the body is composed of cells and the Cosmos is mere energy felt as matter; even the atom has more empty space in it than cognisable matter. But, man ignores these truths and relies more on sensory experiences. Thus all acts are based on a warped view of Reality.

The same mistake is made in social schemes. There are at present various efforts being made to equalise, but, how can aspiration and achievement be equal for all, as easily as the quantity of property or possessions? Love alone can be shared without loss; it increases by sharing. So too, does Light. These two can be acquired by awareness of the Divine within oneself and others. And, the ancient Rishis have laid down steps by which that Awareness can be gained and converted into a permanent possession.

This is the heritage that has now to be handed down to the youth of this land. This is not now being done and so youth is affected by many deplorable ills. The children of the nation have to be shaped by farsighted and intelligent sculptors into strong, self-reliant, steady, loving citizens.

Our homes, our schools and our society do not provide the environment or the example for their growth on these lines. Instead, everything is done to lead them astray. Children growing in rich families are the worst sufferers; for, the parents provide pernicious models, though they might offer beneficial advice. The children get no chance to hear about the Divine that is inherent in them and that calls out for expression from around them. The activities of the elders and leaders are the lessons the youngsters learn; so, they have a great responsibility to keep their thoughts, their words and their deeds all in line. This is the way of Truth, the real Sadhana, the royal road to realisation.

Spiritual progress has to be judged by refinement of character and expansion of Love. The yearning should be to give and not to get, to offer and not receive, to share and not to grab. When one sees all as embodiments of the Divine, every gesture becomes an act of worship, of humble dedication. Such dedication is far more potent than Japa or Dhyana. It is the lesson that youth has now to learn everywhere."

After the Discourse, Bhagavan proceeded to Castle Hill, opposite the Masab Tank, where a spacious and imposing building has been acquired by the Trust for the running of a Children's Boarding School, according to the ideals propounded by Him. Bhagavan met during Dinner a

large number of distinguished invitees from all sections of the City's elite. Bhagavan spoke to them of the spiritual training that supplements the curricular training given in the Sri Sathya Sai College at Brindavan.

Sri. C. Gopinatha Rao, State President of the Sathya Sai Seva Organisation, Andhra Pradesh had called together the District Presidents and Convenors as well as the Presidents of Mahila Vibhag from all over the State for receiving the Blessings of Bhagavan at a gathering on the morning of the 29th at Sivam. Bhagavan spoke to them for over an hour, on the significance of the Organisation and the inner purpose of the various activities laid down for adoption. He stressed on the need for mutual love and co-operation, and for an over-all eagerness to treat all Seva as Sadhana. Each unit is a petal of the one flower, the Heart filled with the nectar of devotion to God. He wanted that the Units must learn about religions other than their own from persons well versed in their tenets. These tenets, whatever the religion, are but signposts; the devotee has to travel along the road indicated; then, he will discover that the goal he reaches is the goal attained by followers of other religions also. He asked Bal Vikas Gurus to relate to the children stories from the lives of saints and seekers of all faiths. He emphasised the urgent need to arrange for training the Gurus in the methods and principles of Bal Vikas. He said that the Seva Dal members both men and women, have to- be trained according to the curriculum laid down during the World Conference.

That evening, Bhagavan gave a Discourse at the Gujarati High School Hall at Jeera. Secunderabad under the auspices of the Hare Ram Bhajan Mandali. He advised the thousands, who had assembled to have His Darshan and to listen to His Message that "the Jagat was the body of God, just as the human body is the temple of God. The I that resides in and motivates everybody is the Divine Principle. It is omnipresent, and has to be recognised and revered as such. He commended the Mandali on their enthusiasm to repeat the Name of Ram; He said that any Name of God is as effective as any other. This is the core of the teaching of the sages of India, who always insisted on the universal and the eternal. In other cultures, the attempt is made to give every one a ready made garment of one size, which each one has to wear, whether he is big enough to fill it or whether it is too small for his requirements. The fact that there are degrees and stages in spiritual vision and intellectual capacity is well recognised here, and each one is encouraged to move forward from wherever he is. Bhajan is of primary importance for all; it promotes individual progress as well as social," He said.

Bhagavan's short stay at Hyderabad was availed of by the Governor, Sri Mohanlal Sukhadia, the Chief Minister, Sri Vengala Rao, Sri Suryanarayana Raju, Sri Subba Reddy, Sri Chokka Rao and many other Honourable Ministers. They had the unique chance of welcoming Bhagavan to their homes and listening to His simple expositions and enlightening conversation.

On the 31st March, the New Year Day, a vast concourse attended the morning Bhajan Sessions at Sivam, and Bhagavan moved among the devotees, giving Darshan to all. The evening gathering was phenomenal in size, the milling crowds filling the open spaces beyond the road and blocking all traffic for long distances on either side. Bhagavan walked upon the narrow edge of the compound wall for hundreds of yards in order to give Darshan to those who could not get into the shamiana in front of Sivam. Thousands were delighted at this gesture of Grace.

Bhagavan inaugurated the Scheme under which the Seva Samiti of Hyderabad was equipping a hundred Centres of First Aid in all sections of the City, where Seva Dal members and devotees will serve people who need help. He also released the very useful and comprehensive publication of the Samiti, called 'Information Service', containing details of not only Bhajan Centres and other units of the Organisation, but many other details concerning Hospitals, Ambulances, Fire Services, Employment Exchanges, and Career Advisory Bodies etc.

Sri Nityananda, of the Sathya Sai College, then spoke in English, wishing a happy New Year to every one and reminding all that one more year has gone by! He exhorted them to indulge in stocktaking and decide to dedicate themselves to Silence, Sacrifice, Service and Surrender, along the lines laid down by Bhagavan.

Sri Umamaheswara Rao, another student of the same College, then spoke in Telugu on how to ring out the old year and ring in the new. Hon'ble Sri Challa Subba Reddy, Minister for Municipal Administration, congratulated the citizens of the Twin Cities on the unique good fortune of having Bhagavan in their midst, at least for a few days. He stressed the importance of character in all fields of life and pleaded for greater faith in God, Religion and Morality so that character might be built on the unshakeable foundations of Truth and Non-violence.

Bhagavan in His most thrilling Discourse, declared that Ananda can be won only from the Inner Springs of Divinity and not by acquiring and accumulating external objects. Life, He said, is an interval between birth and death, just as valuable as the interval between one heartbeat and the next, or between one tick of the watch and the next. He advised every one to take up earnestly some Sadhana path, based on Discipline, Devotion and Duty, and march on, until the goal is attained. That is the best preparation, He said, for the New World that Sai has come to shape and sustain. He insisted that mere profession of high principles without practicing them in daily life has to be condemned as deceit.

He said: Every person in a particular City was proud that he was a Brahmajnani, a realised Soul. The Ruler of the City State was also very proud of this unique distinction. One day, a physician from a distant kingdom came into the City in search of a place where he could settle down and start medical practice. He was discouraged by all whom he met; for, they said, each one had become aware that he was not the body, and that every object and idea was only Brahman. How then would they seek a 'doctor', or ask for 'cure'? While the stranger physician was in this quandary, the Ruler fell ill, and it was announced that the physician who could treat the illness was urgently required at the Palace. The man was happy at this; he hastened to the bedside of the Ruler and, thanks to the luck of both doctor and patient, the cure was effected!

The physician secured an honoured and lucrative job in the Court. Some days later, the ruler called him and asked that some tonic to restore him to full health and confer on him full strength might be prescribed. The doctor thought that this was a good chance to expose the hypocritical claims of the people of the City. "I am afraid you may not be able to supply me the ingredient I need to prepare the tonic I have in mind; but, that tonic alone can bring back your lost health and strength," he said. The Ruler wanted to know what it was. He said, "It is a very rare article—a piece of flesh from the body of a Brahmajnani, a realised soul." The Ruler laughed. He said "It is easy for me to get it; here, in this City of mine, every one is a Brahmajnani."

And, since Brahmajnanis have no attachment to the body, any one will part with a lump of flesh in order to help his Ruler. The Ruler sent out his emissaries to bring the "flesh", but, he was shocked to find that not one of the Brahmajnanis was willing to give the gift. They said, "We are Brahmajnanis only in name. We can talk about it for hours and establish by arguments the validity of Brahmajnana. But, we are too fond of the body to inflict any harm on it."

In fact, the only true Tapas that man has to do to win Divine Grace is: Speak as you think or feel; and do as you speak. Let your thoughts, words and deeds be consistent and correct," Bhagavan advised.

The Bal Vikas pupils presented a few scenes from the epics—the Exile of Rama and the Assignment for Bharata of the Sandals of Rama, the Travails of Karna and His Generosity, etc. The items of dance and mono-acting by, the kids were also highly commendable. Bhagavan blessed the participants, and the Gurus who had trained them.

On the 1st April, Bhagavan flew back to Bangalore, "Brindavan", thousands of devotees praying earnestly for an early visit again to the Twin Cities.

—*Ed.*

An Appeal

The Units of the Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organisation are engaged in arranging various programmes and planning various lines of service, in order to convey Bhagavan's Message and share with others their experiences and the joy they have derived there from. The Editor will be thankful if the Secretaries, Convenors or Organisers write to him about any specially designed programme or feature, or specific item of service, which, can be adopted by other Samitis with advantage. A page each in this Magazine can well be set apart for the Seva Dal, Bal Vikas, Mahila Vibhag, Sadhana Camps, etc., provided interesting factual information on such activities are received.

—*Ed.*

A Rug at Your Feet

I found another way, to live.
I found another way, to breathe.

In my heart—a tiny flame of Love
A kindled Crucifix, a Dove,
has finally lit those lamps, my eyes,
to drive away the cloud that cries,
to scald away the sleet that dies!

And, now, I ask one boon of you,
a gift that you may never rue;
just let me sit here at Your Feet!

Make all my Bones and Skin, a Street!
Just let me sit here, at Your Feet.

—*Ronald. M. Rowe*

Paradise

Everyone who visits Prasanthi Nilayam encounters some wonderful experiences. But most of these experiences are 'heartfelt' and hence difficult to express, difficult to put in words, because they are at a level deep within.

However, many people give vent to their experiences and feelings by spasmodic utterance, or spurts of expression, which would be considered as illogical in the normal run of life. But such 'tangential' expressions and exclamations are sometimes very interesting and, in a way, they express much more than our long-drawn descriptions!

Many a visitor has expressed that, qualities such as Logic, Relevance, Conformity and Consistency which are musts in our normal social relations are at their dead end at Prasanthi Nilayam. Visitors transcend these things quite effortlessly. Most of the people are not even conscious of this achievement!

During our recent trip to Prasanthi Nilayam, there were two men and a couple who were going to Prasanthi Nilayam for the first time, while two of us had visited the place before. I propose to relate some expressions and impressions that poured out, or rather were spurted out of these people, and other visitors. They would be found to be full of pure sentiment and deep meaning.

When we were nearing Prasanthi Nilayam, one of us exclaimed 'I feel I am sucked in; I am pulled towards the hill by some huge gigantic magnet, I do not feel I am in the car at all'.

At Prasanthi Nilayam, I have heard it said that 'On each and every grain of sand is engraved the name and figure of Baba! The photos in the shops are superfluous.'

One of the friends who had come for the first time, remarked after having the Darshan of Baba, "Baba does not walk at all. He only glides; He keeps on gliding on an arc of a circle, like an angel. He appears from nowhere and disappears into nowhere."

A friend said that Baba looks at everyone, simultaneously, all at a time—very deeply and intensely, much more keenly than when a common man looks at a single object at close quarters. "Yes, Sir, He is THE THOUSAND EYED Purusha, of the Purusha Sukta."

I have enquired of people whether they also happen to give up their normal spiritual practices and sadhana like me when at Prasanthi Nilayam and most of them say that they do discard such routines of theirs without any hesitation or feeling of guilt though there is no such direction from any source. KULARNAVA Tantra emphatically declares that when in close proximity of the Divine GURU, no Tapas, no fasting, no observance, no purificatory bath need be performed.

In spite of Baba's advice I often foolishly delve into the mysteries: Who is Baba? What is Baba? Who am I? When I grapple thus, I sometimes reach to the expression of Gurustotra—Sarva Sruti Sirorathna Virajitha Padambuja: (The Lotus Feet adorned with the highest ranking Gem of all Shrutis). But then the MYSTERY becomes only greater. But let me say that while the normal mysteries of our life confuse and annoy us, THIS one is sweet in itself; it elevates my spirit, every time I dwell on it.

Now, I shall enumerate a few interesting utterances that have fallen on my ears while in the Presence:

"Why should Baba give anybody anything at all? How and why does everyone feel that he is entitled to receive something?"

"Who is Baba? Who am I? I do not know; the answers are two blanks; but these two blanks are intimately connected; that is my direct feeling and conception; it gives me great solace within."

"People come to Prasanthi Nilayam because they think that their real life-centres and spiritual content is at Prasanthi Nilayam. People know that they are nearer to themselves, when at Prasanthi Nilayam than anywhere else."

"Baba is dark like Sri Krishna at first sight, but He becomes fairer and fairer as you see him more and more."

"Baba looks small in stature, but when he comes near us he appears majestic and mighty and gives cool shade in which we feel pleasurable obliterated."

"After talking with Baba we have to seek our own arms and face and trunk to make sure that we are intact and exist as before."

"Asking for alms, something for nothing, is quite common within the precincts of Prasanthi Nilayam; we do it whenever we go there."

I must now relate the story of the young man who was engaged and was in our company. His fiancée is a Baba devotee and had asked the young man to go with her to Puttaparthi. For the first two days at Prasanthi Nilayam, he was asserting that Baba was only a Siddha Purusha. But, on the third day, without the benefit of any interview, but in a flash and with a gush of tears in a dazed state, he came to the conviction that he was grossly mistaken.

We reached Bangalore the next day late in the evening. Next morning the lady who had accompanied us, told every one, "How nice to think that on this very earth, there is Paradise, and

we were there yesterday! I can always remember the Paradise and visit it again when the call comes.”

—*Dat Pethe*

Ramakatha Rasavahini
Sri Sathya Sai Baba

76

Bitter Advice

"Lord," Mandodari pleaded, "Pardon me for these words. You are badly mistaken, when you consider Rama a mere man. He is the Master of the Universe; He is an invincible hero. You are already aware of the extent of his might and valour, aren't you? Recollect the facts related by Angada, quietly within yourself.

You were seated in the gathering of kings having entered the Hall of Janaka, to exhibit proudly your strength and skill; but, you failed even to shift a little the position of the Bow of Shiva. This Rama lifted it as if it was a spurt of playfulness and cast it aside in broken halves. This demonstration of might was seen by you with your own eyes, hasn't it been? Having seen so much, if you still do not give up your foolish tenacity, it is an indication that your destruction is imminent. The Crow Demon, indulged in a foolish prank, unaware of His might; and, he met with terrible punishment at His hands; do you not know this? What could you do when the nose and ears of your own sister, Surpanakha were sliced off by him?

Are you not ashamed to proclaim and boast about your strength and your heroism, after all these experiences? He killed Vali with a single arrow. Was Vali an ordinary foe?... Rama has now come with his army of Vanaras and encamped on the Suvela Hill. Rama is 'the very embodiment of Righteousness and Morality; or else, why should he send an envoy to you, as he has done, to advise you on the path by which you can still save yourself? This envoy has tried various ways to turn your mind towards accord with Rama; but, you do not give up your sense of pride; you do not appreciate the moral sense that moves Rama; you do not understand the virtues that animate the supremely sacred Person who has sent the envoy. And, you are yourself causing the downfall of your kingdom!

What could you do now to throw away Angada, the envoy, who entered the Audience Hall? There are in their camp thousands, nay, lakhs of Vanaras, mightier and more destructive than this one. Listen to my words; give up this demonic passion; go and surrender to Rama.”

These words of counsel reminding Ravana of happenings in the past, struck like sharp arrows into his heart... Meanwhile, a new day dawned. Ravana entered the Audience Hall as the very personification of Vicious Pride and installed himself on the Throne. Inside his head were revolving fast and furious the words of both Angada and Mandodari, the Queen. Plans, Fears, Schemes, and Surmises rolled inside like earth and sky rotating around him. But, none of them was along right lines, for, the day of destruction of the demon clan of Rakshasas was drawing near.

A Trick

Ravana accosted a Rakshasa named Vidyutjihva, and said, "Fellow! Use your magic skill, add bring before me the 'head' of Rama as well as his 'bow and arrows'. Seeing them, Sita must believe them genuine. She must be plunged in grief!" Vidyutjihva rose from his seat in a trice and moved out of the Hall. He made a correct replica of the 'bow and arrows' of Rama as well as of his head. Ravana was pleased at the exactness of reproduction. With them, he himself proceeded to Ashoka Vana, where Sita was kept in confinement.

Holding them before her, he said, "O Sita! See, these are the bow and arrows, this the head of the very person whom you are pining for and extolling, night and day. I have annihilated the Vanara hordes; Lakshmana has saved himself by fleeing from the field. In order to convince you that all this has really happened, I have brought before you this head and these bow and arrows. Look at them." With these words, he placed them before her.

Sita was hit by grief for just one moment; but, she reminded herself that there was no one, in the fourteen worlds, who could so pluck the head of Rama; she knew that this was a mean trick played to terrorise her and she brushed aside the threats directed towards her by Ravana. She said, "Ravana! Surely, your destruction has arrived very near. Or else, such abominable thoughts would not have come into you. You have no courage even to approach Rama; how then could you ever hope to kill him? Even in dream, you cannot realise that hope. This is a dirty magic trick, which fails to deceive me." Sita poured scorn and insults on Ravana. Meanwhile, loud exultant shouts of 'Jai', 'Jai for Lord Rama', 'Jai, Jai for Lord Rama', were heard from all around. The Vanaras had entered the City from all directions! Ravana hurried back into his palace and the Audience hall.

The good woman, Sarama, wife of Vibhishana, then, came near Sita and consoled and comforted her. She said, "Mother! This Ravana is a trickster and all that he does is subterfuge. No one can dare hurt Rama; just now, he has triumphantly entered Lanka with his Vanara hordes. Lanka is being shattered into shreds, by the very shouts of the monkeys."

The Siege

When Rama heard from Angada what has happened at Lanka and learnt from him about the attitude and alertness of the enemy, Rama called together the chief leaders and commissioned them to decide how best to lay siege to the four gates of the City. At this, the Ruler of the Monkeys (Sugriva), the Ruler of the Bears (Jambavan) and the Ruler of the Rakshasas (Vibhishana) met together; they decided on the division of their forces into four, under their commanders and guides; then, they fell at the feet of Rama and enthused by his blessings, they gave orders for attack.

With Rama in their hearts, the Vanaras armed with boulders and trees rolled forward in terror-striking ranks. Lanka was reputed to be an impregnable fortress; but, the blessings of Rama helped them to break into it. The Eastern Gate was stormed by the forces under Nala; the Southern Gate was breached by the millions under the command of Angada; the Western Gate fell before the onslaught of the army led by Mahavir. The Northern Gate was guarded by Ravana himself, and Rama himself fought with him there. The Vanaras had no war-drums or trumpets;

but the "Ram-Ram" they voiced forth in devotion rose as one Call from all throats and echoed from the sky above.

The entire City of Lanka was sunk in confusion and panic. Ravana was blinded by foolish pride; he was exulting at the prospect of victory over the opposing forces, and revelling in the thought that the festive day of victory had dawned for his Rakshasa clan. The Rakshasas had taken up positions over the walls and turrets and bastions of the fort, just as clouds rest on the peaks of the Meru mountain. They were beating their drums and blowing their trumpets. Their shouts of "Victory for Ravana" confronted the confident shout "Victory for Rama, the Lord." The boulders that the Rakshasas were hurling on the Vanaras attacking the walls and attempting to scale them were seized ere they fell by the very Vanaras and hurled back with fatal effect on the very Rakshasas standing on the walls.

The advance of the Vanaras gained in strength as the fight progressed. They killed the Rakshasas wherever and whenever they caught them. As a giant storm scatters the clouds into the four directions, the mounting onslaught of the Vanaras so dismayed the Rakshasas that they fled into the distance, and the City was shrouded in despair.

Women, old men, and children began blaming Ravana for bringing about the calamity that had descended on their innocent heads. Some Rakshasas gave up the fight, and fled with their wives and children, in order to save themselves from certain death. Noticing such groups, Ravana gnashed his teeth in anger and yelled, "Cowards, backing out of battle! I shall cut you into pieces with my Diamond Sword!" At this, a few of the fleeing Rakshasas stayed to join the fray. Meanwhile, the Vanara heroes penetrated the enemy lines and reinforced by contemplation on Rama, they entered the inner fortress of Ravana himself, and succeeded in razing it to the ground. They plucked a pillar of gold and wielding it as a weapon, started their orgy of destruction. Every Rakshasa they encountered was given a terrible beating, before his head was severed and cast away, with such force and such aim that it fell right in front of Ravana himself. When darkness fell, the Vanaras, after demonstrating their superior might and heroism before the Rakshasas, presented themselves before Rama.

The Rakshasas are nocturnal beings also so, when night fell, their acclamation and fury increased many-fold. Their shouts of 'Victory to Ravana' fell on the ears of the Vanaras like the roar of lions. The Vanaras plunged into battle again. The Rakshasa generals, Akampa and Adhikaya through their magical skill spread pitch darkness over the four quarters, and, under cover of the blackness, heavy rains of dust, stones and blood were poured on the enemy forces. The Vanaras could not distinguish friend from foe. They were afraid to fight with full fury. They prayed "Rama! Rama," in a loud voice, so that they could gain courage and give the enemy a good fight. Rama heard their cries; he called together Angada and Hanuman and told them that the magic skill of the Rakshasas had caused the commotion. They were furious at the shameful tactics of the enemy, but, Rama coolly pulled out the Agneya-astra, the Fire-arrow, from his sheath, and shot it into the darkness they had designed. The effulgence of that arrow destroyed the darkness, and filled the area with splendid illumination. The Vanaras and the Bears set about their task of overwhelming and destroying the enemy, with redoubled energy and enthusiasm. When the triumphant yells of Angada and Hanuman were heard, the Rakshasas took to their heels and fled. But, they could not escape; the Vanaras caught them by their feet and threw them

far out into the sea! The Rakshasas retreated into their camp when night advanced. They had no energy left for continuing the fight. The Vanaras came into the Presence of Rama; when the eyes of Rama fell upon them, they were refreshed and recouped, with no trace of exhaustion.

Unwelcome Counsel

Meanwhile, Ravana summoned his ministers and addressed them thus: "This day, thousands of Rakshasas were slain on the battlefield by the Vanaras. We have now to plan our strategy to foil them." Then, up rose Malyavanta, the aged Minister who had served Ravana's father and who was also the father of Ravana's mother; he counselled various rightful and moral paths for his edification. "Ravana!" he began, very endearingly, "Listen to my words in calmness. Pardon me for being outright. Every since you brought Sita here, bad omens are being witnessed. It is not possible to describe them in detail. The glory of Rama, the Supreme Person, cannot be measured and extolled adequately even by the Vedas. By opposing this Cosmic Person, this Virat Purusha, you cannot earn any good, or win any grace. You would do well to ponder over this in a calm mood. Rama is the very Person who slew Hiranyakasipu and Hiranyaksha. He is the repository of all virtues. Do not entertain hatred against Him. O Emperor! Save Lanka, I pray. Surrender Sita to Rama. Do not delay any longer. Your safety lies in immediate surrender." Thus saying, Malyavanta bowed his head and performed obeisance to the Ruler.

These words hurt Ravana. He was infuriated. He ejaculated, "You seem to be, determined to enter the jaws of Death. Your senility is pleading with me to pardon you; or else, I would have hacked you to pieces. Beware. Get up and go out of my sight" Ravana hissed like an angry serpent. Malyavanta felt sorry, for, he felt that Ravana's end was fast approaching. He laughed within himself at the conceit and ignorance that had blinded Ravana; he concluded that he was yielding to ruinous reasonings and foolish reactions, brushing aside the advice that would save him and his empire, because destiny had decided to close his career.

The Promising Son

At that moment, Meghanada rose and said, "Father! Do not hesitate. Tomorrow, during the morning hours, you can witness my skill in war. I shall demonstrate in action much more than I declare in words." His assurance mollified Ravana's anger and assuaged him a little. He was filled with joy; it gave him courage and hope. He drew his son near and caressed him fondly. He patted his head and extolled before all the bravery and adventurous heroism of his son.

The Assembly was dispersed by about midnight. Each member hied back to his own residence but, no one of them had a wink of sleep. Nor had any one an appetite for food. All were sunk in anxiety and terror, about what calamity would overtake them at any moment. Even as they were rolling in fear, dawn spread over the east.

The Vanaras and the Bears laid siege to Lanka from all directions. Confusion and panic raised their heads. Their roars echoed from the sky. The Rakshasa warriors too had to take up arms and oppose them, for, they had no other alternative. The rain of rocks and hills that fell on the City from the walls around were fought back with arrows and other weapons from billions of Rakshasas. They too shouted and yelled reverberating the sky as on doomsday. But, the huge peaks and hilltops that the Vanaras threw at them reduced the Rakshasa hordes into a mass of lifeless pulp.

The Rama Story: Stream of Sacred Sweetness (To be continued)

Sai Baba and Sankara

Sai Baba embodies the essence of Vedanta; He is an Advaitin, preaching and practising Aham Brahmasmi. He teaches that Ajnana, through its Aavarana and Vikshepa effects causes Samsara. He writes, "In the dissolution, or, Mahapralaya, Easwara too will become non-existent; Brahman alone will exist."

But Baba is not an orthodox Vedantin, believing in Jnana alone. He accepts and advises Karma, Bhakti and even Dhyana Yoga. He is in line with Sri Ramakrishna, Vivekananda, Sri Aurobindo, and Rabindranath.

Sri Ramakrishna, for the first time ever in human history, advocated Integral Experience and advocated that it is essential for human progress. Sri Aurobindo emphasises the self-same Integral Experience, along with the wholesale supramental transfiguration. But, he pointed out that the descent of the Divine is impeded by a twofold defect. (1) The lower instincts of human beings are, in conventional religions, purified, with an eye to renounce the world, and attain salvation beyond the world. (2) The Collective Life and its aspiration to nobler heights are missed in the search for spirituality. But, the Integral Experience does not mean that world and the spiritual reality are in rigid isolation from each other.

God in man may be a problem; but it is already a Possession, a task a Fact. Rabindranath says in "Sadhana", "Not only in nature, but, in the family, in society, and in the state, the more we realize the World Consciousness in all, the better for us. Failing to realise this, we turn our faces towards destruction." The Divine is there, where there is an awareness of the Universe instead of the ego. Ego blurs the Truth and clouds the purity of our Consciousness.

Baba is of the firm view that Humanity and Divinity are not divided from each other. Humanity is Divine. Perfection must be rounded and concrete and integral—through Realisation, in and through Realisation, in and through all experiences of Life. He asserts, "Ajnana can be removed, by acknowledging the Universality of God, and the merging of your individuality in the Universal." "The little wave must realise that it belongs to the Ocean." The Individual has to nurse the attitude, "I am yours." The next stage, according to Baba is, "The wave demands the support of the sea as of right." The Universal Divine becomes the guardian and guide of the Individual. All responsibilities of the Individual become the Divine Responsibility. The final stage is, "You are I." This is the ultimate stage. The individual has no separate validity. Sai Baba calls upon all to organise life in terms of Vedanta.

In the Rgveda, there is the persistent question, "Kasmai Devaya havisha vidhema?" (To what God shall we offer our oblations?). This is the question posed by perplexed humanity all through the ages. In our haste, we must not seek the answer in our intellectual subtlety and sophistry,

since they are endless and confusing. The Upanishad says, "Naisha tarkena matirapaneya" (Real wisdom cannot be found in and through the Intellect alone). We look in amazement at the triumphs of the human intellect; but, its failures are no less shocking and dangerous. Over intellectualism reduces life and the world into a dull show. We need very much integral wholeness; the answer is to be found in the deepest recesses of Love, and the maturity of Wisdom and Vision. Sankara knew this; his Stotras and hymns are evidence of his anxiety to sublimate Love and broaden Vision.

Mere passive endurance or indifference does not carry us far along the spiritual path. We must aspire, with all the resources at our command, to effect an inner and outer change. The aspiration and hope in man become strengthened when he is, under the shade of the Avatar. The Avatar according to Aurobindo, "It is the Manifestation from above of that which we have to develop from below; it is the descent of God into that Divine Birth of the human being into which we mortals must climb; it is the attracting Divine Example given by God to man, in the very type and form of the perfected model of our human existence."

Prophets and Avatars embody in their Lives this Advaitam and Anandam, and all the eternal attributes of the spirit. In them, the Eternal and Divine Man finds supreme manifestation. Rabindranath says, "They came as the Messengers of Man to men of all countries, and spoke of the Salvation that could only be reached by the perfection of our relationship with Man, the Eternal, Man, the Divine. Whatever might be their doctrines or dogmas their Life and Teaching had the deeper implication of a Being, who is the Infinite in Man, the Father, the Friend and the Lover whose service must be realised through serving all mankind." The Avatar is the Man among men, who counsels. And corrects, warns and guides. He takes man into confidence, assures him, assuages his sufferings and anxieties, and guides man on to the highway of Sadhana through loving gentleness. He belongs to those who devote themselves to Him. Avatar is the Divine Personality who fills the Consciousness of the human beings and replaces the limited egoist Personality. Sai Baba treasures the high dignity and destiny of man. He calls upon him to realise his pricelessness, since he is the imperishable Atma. This is the message of Sankara too.

—Dr. Devaprasad Bhattacharya

The most popular activity of a Bhakta in our country is to plan a temple for the God he adores. He runs about with appeals for funds, he parades donation lists and clamours for contributions from all and sundry. At last, a new temple raises its head and an old one crumbles! Each one is prompted by his ego to build a temple, not for God, but, for himself; in fact, very often, the temple is known as the temple of the So-and-so, who had it built, and not of Rama or Krishna or Siva! The vain and vulgar motive is, "I shall build a House for my God who has now so roof over His head"! This only reveals his want of faith; the persons who give money for the temple feel superior, for, they built a House for God. Do not hope to come nearer to Me by such means. Realise the God that is installed is the temple of your Body and the bodies of all living things. That is the shortest way to win my Grace.

—Baba

Siva Shakti

Bhagavan once declared that He is the incarnation of 'Siva Shakti'. And he gave the historical background of this divine birth. In the 'Treta Yuga' Lord Siva, at His abode 'Kailasa', gave a promise to Bharadwaja that he would take birth in his 'Gotra' during the Kali age. His consort, Parvati Devi is along with Him as his own left half.

This 'Siva Shakti' principle has great inner significance. When the 'life force'—Chit Shakti—merges with the higher Divine Consciousness (Sivam) he transcends his mind and intellect and becomes a Jivan Mukta—he realises the self. In other words, he becomes 'Brahman'. (Brahma Vid Brahmaiva bhavati)

Bhagavan, in his divine human form, represents this stage; not as one who reached this stage by Sadhana, but as God who has come down as an Avatar. Man can aspire to reach this stage by sadhana. The 'Kundalini Shakti' situated at the 'mooladhara', lying at the base of the spine in the shape of a coiled serpent, can be made to rise and reach the 'Sahasrara' (or Kailasa) after crossing the six intervening gates called the different 'chakras' (lotus shaped wheels). When the Shakti merges with Siva, man also becomes 'Siva Shakti'. What separates the 'Shakti' from 'Siva' is our own body, and the identification of our selves with the body. In other words, it is our own body-consciousness that keeps these 'two divine entities at a distance. When this body-consciousness disappears, the two merge with each other to form the 'Siva Shakti' principle.

'Raja Yoga' helps to bring this 'Kundalini Shakti' up to Sahasrara, and then the body-consciousness automatically disappears. Or, when through knowledge and devotion (Jnana and Bhakti Margas), one discards the body-consciousness, the Kundalini power gets merged with the Divine Consciousness. As Bhagavan has stated, Raja Yoga is a combination of physical and spiritual efforts which makes the Yoga (the merging) possible.

A beautiful comparison has been given by Bhagavan in one of his evening discourses at the 1974 Summer Course (Summer Showers 1974, page 255). Divinity is present in everybody lying concealed at the 'Mooladhara' like sugar at the bottom of a cup filled with water. If we take one spoonful of water from the upper layer of the cup it won't be sweet. But if the water is stirred with a spoon, the water becomes sweet including the upper layer. In other words, if the Divinity lying concealed in the Kundalini is stirred with the spoon of 'Buddhi', and 'Sadhana', even the worldly experiences (upper layer) become really sweet or blissful. Otherwise they give us only sorrow and suffering. As Jivanmuktas, we can live in the world and at the same time, enjoy bliss continuously.

The best example of such a realised soul is found in Ramayana, viz., Janaka, who is supposed to rule the country of 'Videha', (a stage when there is no 'deha' body consciousness.)

The term 'Siva Shakti' also implies the combination of 'Purusha' and 'Prakriti'. Purusha represents the totality of 'Prajna' or the wisdom that is present in all heads (Sahasra Seersha). Prakriti is the Maya Shakti which is an attribute of Purusha. As long as this Shakti remains separate it creates all illusions. When it merges with the 'Purusha', illusions disappear.

According to Bhagavan's words, Siva and Parvati (Shakti)—Grace and Charm—represent the surpassing sweetness—Madhurya—which attracts the devotees towards the lotus feet of Bhagavan.

God has come down to this world in the form of Sathya Sai Baba, in the unique Form of 'Siva Shakti'. Man too can rise up to this position, if he aspires and acts through any of the four royal paths—knowledge, devotion, work or Raja Yoga. Madhava has come down as Manava to enable Manava to become Madhava. This role is being elaborated by Sai in every Leela. It is now our duty to attempt to benefit by His grace. Bhagavan's grace will surely fall upon those who sincerely make an effort to rise up to the destiny.

—Prof. M. Krishnan Kutty Menon

The Concept of Dharma

Dharma is the foundation for the welfare of humanity. Man must dedicate himself to Dharma so that he may live in peace and the world may enjoy peace and prosperity. Bhagavan Sathya Sai Baba thus describes the, paramount importance of Dharma. "When man strays away from Dharma, many—faced destruction is inevitable," says He.

Dharma can be interpreted in two ways: according to the basic structural form of the word, Dharma, and according to the significance that convention has attached to the word. Grammatically, Dharma is derived from the root, dhr, meaning, that which upholds, sustains or nourishes. Conventionally, the term is used to mean religion, or code of morality, or the ideals of righteousness. In the Vedas and the Upanishads, the term is found used to mean religious ordinances or rites. Also, socio-moral implications are found in the Aitareya and Chandogya Upanishads and in the Dharma Sastras. Dharma in the Dharma-Sastras means: the duties, privileges and obligations of men and women, their standard of conduct, according to the stage of life in which they are or the status in society that they have attained.

The metaphysical interpretation indicates the norm of reality or that which sustains whatever is in existence. It is the principle of a thing in virtue of which it is what it is. It is the essence of all that is. According to Vaidika tradition, the dharma or essence of the thing is the ultimate itself. When we analyse the meaning of dharma, we get the concept of reality also clarified.

It can never be asserted that what we sense is actually that which we are aware of. Instances of error and illusion are not negligible. Pondering over the nature of the Real, one can discover that the apparent is only a participant of the ultimate, and that the ultimate is not only real, it is the only real. Secondly, the ultimate real is, it will be found, non-material in nature. And, one can understand that there are well-defined ways of not only knowing the real, but, what is far more essential, realising it.

The apparently real is named Samsara or Vyavaharika world. This undeniable, unavoidable Appearance is a fact; but, despite its oppressive fact-hood, it is not really real or valid. The Real is all-pervasive, universal, non-contradictable, non-material. This is the Paramatma, also called Brahman or Atma. Nothing is other than this. From the point of view of Sat or Existence, Dharma is identical with Atma. From the point of view of Chit or Knowledge, dharma is known through either subjective or objective, approach or attitude. When the mind is perfected, the two approaches merge and the knower and the known are cognised as one. This is the state of Bliss; hence, the Dharmic way is described in terms of Ananda.

When knowledge of dharma is confined to the intellect, there is no progress, for there is no participation! To know the real is to be the real; or else, the knowledge is partial and even perfunctory. The primary condition of the Dharmic way is, as Bhagavan emphasises always, the practice of Dharma. Once Dharma is made a way of life, meanings are not distorted and values are not destroyed. Matter, life and mind reach a state of equilibrium. The Vyavaharika and the ultimately Real fall into proper perspective.

As Bhagavan has elaborated in the Dharma Vahini, the Vedic thinkers have dealt with Sadharana Dharma (to be adopted by all persons capable of leading a reflective life) and with A-sadharana Dharma (to be adopted by persons in accordance with differences of age, caste, status in society, kinship distinctions etc).

As Bhagavan has laid down, when the realisation of the Real is achieved, Dharma becomes one's very breath, one's very nature. Conservation and sustenance of Values is possible only through Dharma. This is the reason why the Avatar is engaged in Dharmasthapanam—the establishment of Dharma, in the heart of the Individual and in the very core of Society.

—*Dr. Sailaja Bhattacharya, Calcutta*

The Voice of Youth

(Sri Umamaheswara Rao, (18) Student, Sri Sathya Sai Collage of Arts and Science, addressed a huge gathering in the Divine Presence at `Sivam', Hyderabad City on the Telugu New Year Day. The following is the English Rendering of his mellifluous Telugu Speech)

They say Siva resides on the Kailasa peak; we see Siva Sai here in `Sivam'. They say the Ganga flows in triumphal glory from Siva's Locks. We witness the captivating stream of sweet sustaining love flowing in overpowering glory from Siva Sai here. They say the Crescent moon is the jewel Siva wears on His matted hair; we see the Source of Cool comforting Grace as the jewel Sai wears. They say Siva's throat is blue, for He has drunk the poison that threatened the world; we see Sai's throat as the Flute that fills the world with song capable of turning poison into nectar. They say Siva has a Third Eye; we see Sai has the Eye that can see the Future, besides the two that can see the Past and the present. They say Siva has a passion for snakes, which He gladly allows to roam over His Frame Sai, we know, has Compassion sparkling from

His eyes, smiling from His lips, emanating from His Heart, and charming all, from all over His Charming Frame. The three-pronged Trident they say is the weapon Siva holds; the three-faced Time is the weapon which Sai wields. Siva is described as wearing a tiger-skin; Sai has all Creation as His Vesture. They say Siva loves to dwell on the Cremation Ground; we know Sai loves to instal Himself in the Heart where the ego and all its vile brood have been burnt to ashes. Nevertheless, don't we know that Siva is Sai, that Sai is Siva? The distinctions are superficial; they are not fundamental. The Core, the Truth, the Reality are One. I bow down to the Siva that is present here as Sai.

The Holy Day, Yugadi has come, ringing in the New Year and ringing out the old. It has ushered in the New into all lives, high and low, fortunate or famished. Sai has come with the gift of joy, to endow it on all, whatever be the age, the creed, the caste, the colour of the skin. Yugadi has brought new clothes to man, woman and child in every home; Sai has brought new strength, new tasks, new inspiration, new light and new Love to man, woman and child, on every continent. The Yugadi Feast brings sweet, bitter, sour and salt to the tongue; Sai Festival ensures all tastes in the Divine banquet—Sanathana Dharma, Buddhism, Zoroastrianism, Christianity and Islam. Accept the Ananda; do not delay out of dullness, doubt or distracting desire. The hour that is past will not come again; the hour on hand is the precious treasure.

When the New Year dawns, and Yugadi is celebrated, we plan to live new lives and have new joys. But does the 'new' consist merely of new dress, new slang, new sights, new attractions and new fashions, adopted from strange lands and cultures? Do we need to strut about as images of ultramodern pomp trying to draw the curious eyes of all on our absurdities? Does the New Year demand that we should let body and mind wander unchecked in the wilderness of futile imitation? We call this Festival, Yugadi; the Dawn of a New Era.

What exactly is the 'era'? Is it a novel fashion era? Like the newspaper of today, the fashion of today is cast away as waste, when tomorrow arrives. Yugadi gives us another, far more significant message. It calls us to welcome more constructive thoughts; it exhorts us to plant new ideals in our hearts; it pleads with us to desert the byelanes and take to the royal road of Truth, Sacrifice and Service. It condemns our desire to shape ourselves on the model of others, giving up our innate glory. It asks us to be proud of our land and its heritage. It tells us that the fox, which tries to parade stripes on its body drawing red hot rods along the skin in order to make us believe it is a tiger, is only proclaiming that it is a fool.

Life is short; days are flowing fast; every tick of the watch on our wrists is a scissor-clip on the strand of life. And, we fritter these precious days in purposeless pursuits. We spend hours to 'beautify' ourselves; we run after mirages; we are drawn by tinsel toys. Like the frog that is proud of its dear little well, we are happy with our dear little body, with its tantalising senses and titillating pleasures. Is this the summum bonum of our existence? May I ask people of my age-group: Are we born only to achieve just this? Have we fulfilled our destiny if we have managed to satisfy our senses? No. Surely there must be something higher for which we are born in this world, at this period of its history!

We come alone into this world and depart alone. People crowd around us from birth to death; we gather kinsmen and friends; but no one accompanies us into the beyond. While here, we have

to be always conscious of the inevitability of our departure. But, that should not encourage us to live like beasts from moment to moment, intent on the pursuit of physical well-being; even a serpent in its hole lives like that. This is a great chance given to us, this human Life. We are served during this life all varieties of experience, a mixed dish, as mixed as the Yugadi chutney we relish to-day. Joy and grief, gain and loss, pain and pleasure, combine to make our life a matter of rose and thorn, of slush and lotus. Exercising the faculty of discrimination we possess, we have to benefit by this pabulum of opposites.

Of course, we young men are not entirely responsible for our present plight. The snake-gourd will grow crooked when the gardener does not hang a stone to its lower end; when the elders do not insist on discipline and are not examples of discipline themselves, how can youth grow straight? When the youth of the land grow up with no love for the culture of the land, how can there be continuous progress on right lines? The training of the spirit is as important as the training of the hand and the brain. That alone can reveal our one-ness with others and inspire us to love and serve. Faith in God is the very foundation for the life of the spirit. People ask, "Does God exist?" not realising that if He did not, the word 'God' would not be current at all. Even 'castles in the air', presupposes the existence of 'castles' and 'air'. 'Is there a chair?' presupposes the existence of an article of furniture called 'chair'. God is in the mind of every one; He is denied only by the tongue. You may call God, Intelligence, Power, Grace, or even Mystery. But, even the atheist has to accept a supreme sovereign Idea. Youth have to rid themselves of absurd doubt, vulgar conceit, and vain pursuit.

Sai is here to confer faith on the doubtful, humility on the proud and meaning to life. We have experienced Him and seen that, when He moves, thousands move with Him; when He speaks, thousands of hearts are filled with courage and confidence; when He raises His hand, thousands of heads bend in grateful homage; He is in every cell, atom and grain, as Bliss and as energy.

We have heard many times the phrase—'Youth is the backbone of the Nation'. It has become a cliché; but, it is a profound truth. We have to be alert and active now; postponement of the tasks that have to be done and done well during youth is pernicious. We must not forget the creative aspect of the intellect and the imaginative faculty, and yield to the wiles of imitativeness. When we learn in schools and colleges, let us be wholly engaged in that process, which cannot be postponed to later years. The master of archery, Drona, asked his pupil Duryodhana one day, to aim to the eye of a vulture sitting on a tree. When the pupil took aim, he asked, "What do you see?" Duryodhana said, 'I see the branch, the leaves and a few flowers; I see the vulture and its eye.' Drona asked Arjuna to aim at the same target and asked him, when he had taken aim, the same question. Arjuna said, "I see the eye." When asked, "Naught else?" he replied, "Only the eye." No wonder Arjuna became the greatest bowman in history.

We, students of the Sathya Sai Collage at Brindavan can claim to be conscious only of our duty to learn; we are like television sets, not radio receivers, for, radios reveal only words while tellies reveal action activity and how the words are put into practice. The mind runs about like a horse that has no bit in its mouth; we have to control our thoughts and rein in our emotions. We must not accept our norms from the populace around. Vibhishana dared differ from the people among whom he lived, and he made his name immortal. Swami's teachings have soaked into each and every cell of the students at Brindavan and transformed them. "You see your self in me;

I see myself in you. Love travels faster than thought" This was what Swami wrote in a Message. He sent from Puttaparthi to us, His dear students at Brindavan.

We know the aptness and authenticity of those words. Swami is in us we are in Swami. How then can we think ill or act ill? Everyone is we ourselves, seen in a world of mirrors. How then can we look upon one person as a friend and another as a foe? All have God as their very core. Ponder over this fact which is within every one's experience: Though we all know that death is certain, each one believes he is free from death! This is because of the Immortal Atma that is the Realty. Even the ugliest person resents being called so; he likes to feel that he is beautiful and charming. This is because the Atma within is really Beauty; so also our conscience insists that falsehood is unnatural and should be avoided. Man is intrinsically the Atma, which is Truth. The Atma is Sathyam Sivam and Sundaram—Truth Goodness and Beauty. When we revel in falsehood, wickedness and vulgarity, we are shrouding the glory of the Atma we are. The effulgence of the Sun is hidden by clouds for a little while; but, it is never really lost. So too, our Intellect which is Truth, our Emotions which are Good, and our Impulses which are Beautiful are clouded by the clouds of Ignorance. A storm scatters the cloud and sun shines again in all Its Glory. The dewdrops on the leaves of trees evaporate when the Sun rises and elevate themselves into the regions above.

Let us also awake and arise when the New Year (Nala) Sun has risen. Let us pray, "Swami! Fulfil our wishes. Satisfy our desires. Transform our thoughts into deeds. Bless us that our wishes, desires and thoughts are pure, and Saturated in self-less Love"

Let us not ride on two horses at the same time. Our bodies may be in a cool place but, the mind traverses a desert! Youth is today ploughing the sands with might and main. We march away from the Sun and so we are pursuing shadows. Let us proceed steadily towards the Sun and the shadows will be behind us. God is the Sun and the Objective World the shadow. Street dogs run hither and thither in search of selfish joys; street lamps shed light and guide the passersby. Students of the Sathya Sai College aspire to be street lamps.

We know that Swami is ever with us, before us, beside us, behind us. We are eager to shower Love on dedicated hearts and plant therein the seeds of Swami's message of Strength and Service. We are dedicated to the task of rebuilding India on her ancient foundations of Truth, Righteousness, Peace and Prem. Every one in this Land must be a Precious Gem that Mother India will be proud to wear. We know we can succeed, for we have the blessings of Bhagavan in our endeavour. We are the harbingers of the Sai Era of Peace and Prosperity.

A Peep into Next Week

Three persons (May, Dick and Verity) flew out of Auckland, New Zealand on 11th October 1975, on the long journey to Prasanthi Nilayam. It was undertaken, principally, "to seek a divine blessing for all HNA (Heralds of the New Age) members throughout the world, so that their efforts be renewed and strengthened by an inflow of spiritual confidence, so vital to the holding of the positive vibrations needed in a world filled with negative forces."

They had learnt from the writings of H. P. Blavatsky that from 1975 onward "those aware would have the opportunity of renewed spiritual contact through the Presence of a Living Master." They had understood from the book written by Howard Murphet that here was a Living Master."

Added to this, some six months before they ever read the book of Murphet, Sai Baba appeared in vision at an open HNA meeting, when the seer described Him, his distinctive hair style, and the garment he wore. "At this point, not one of us was aware of His existence," they say. An account of their encounter with Sai Baba is given in the magazine Heralds of the New Age." No. 63 (P.O. Box 72-002), Northcote, Auckland 9, N Z.

The journey was punctuated by a series of inexplicable incidents. A typhoon near Hong Kong grounded all flights between Tokyo and Hong Kong and the entire itinerary was thrown into jeopardy. Air India told them gloomily at Bangkok that they expected nothing through until Friday! A delay of two days seemed inevitable. They were bothered by this unexpected calamity, for, they had "arranged with the entire Auckland 'Heralds of the New Age' Group (and other), to tune in on Saturday, 18th October, in anticipation of receiving a blessing from Sai Baba."

But, the miracle happened! Though the only possible plane out of Thailand was "fully booked, save for one seat," two cancellations came in and that single seat remained vacant also. "It was found that with a 4 A. M. start, we could fly from Bangkok to Bangalore in one day, changing planes three times! Our Calcutta arrangements did not synchronize; the Madras tour was jettisoned. But, we were back on schedule and actually arrived at the Ashram on Friday! Far more miraculous was the composition by one of the party of a Poem on Sai Baba while *enroute* to India, somewhere above S. E. Australia, on the 11th October 1975. The poem was dictated on the 11th, at 9 A. M. "It proved to be an accurate prediction as to what was to happen in the Ashram a week hence," writes verity.

They met Sai Baba at the Prasanthi Nilayam, only a week later. But, see how beautifully, how deeply and truly, how lucidly and luminously, it describes the ecstasy that they were to experience.

Good News For the Family

(1) Bhagavan at Madras City

Three years of yearning and ardent prayer were rewarded. Bhagavan reached Madras by plane from Bangalore at 9-30 P M. on the 11th day of April last. Devotees in large numbers rose well before dawn on the 12th and proceeded from every section of the far-flung City singing in chorus their favourite Bhajans to the residence of Bhagavan; where they were blessed by Divine Darshan. On 13th, Madras City was agog with exalted excitement, for it was New Years Day for Tamil Nadu. Bhagavan was received with Vedic Ceremonial at the residence on Pugh's Road, Adyar, by the members of the Samiti and its Units; the charming little kids learning the rudiments and mores of Indian Culture, at the feet of Gurus inspired by Him, lined the path and scattered roses on His Feet. Bhagavan hoisted the Prasanthi Flag. He gave His Divine Message for the New Year in the evening, exhorting all to adorn themselves with new vestures of good thoughts, good words and good deeds, and be examples for all in the Sadhana of Devotion, Duty and Discipline.

On the 14th, the grounds of Abbotsbury on Mount Road were packed with thousands of devotees assembled to watch the Rally of Bal Vikas Children in the Divine Presence. The march-past and drill reached the acme of perfection in turn-out, timing and footwork. Besides, they offered homage, forming themselves into charming cohorts, in designs of high symbolic value, like Lotus, Lamp, Swastika, the Sun, a Star, a Circle and finally, the letters `Baba'. Some idea of the alertness and the agility of the kids and the discipline that had been instilled into them can be gauged from the fact that all these permutations and combinations were executed in the short period of 20 minutes.

It was Children's Day, for they spoke on their experiences, and on Bhagavan to the gathering. They received prizes from Him, and they had His Blessings. In the evening, they exhibited dramas on Krishna Leela and on Thyagaraja; they sang and danced; they played and mimicked; they won the appreciation and admiration of all.

Bhagavan delivered His Divine Discourse, emphasising the need for recognising the Unity that underlies and gives meaning to Diversity.

On the 15th, Bhagavan gave precious advice and inspiration to the members of the Organisation who had come to Madras from the Districts. He gave Darshan in the evening at the Sal Baba Temple at Guindy, where an Exhibition on the Sai Message had been arranged. He also visited the Sathya Sai Nivas at Perambur; where an Exhibition on Bal Vikas Activities was on, at the time. Bhagavan left Madras on the 16th April.

(2) The Sixth Day of May

All over the World, this Day was celebrated as Student's Day, to recall to memory the Mother, Easwaramma. She loved children and students; she counselled and comforted thousands, with her vast fund of wisdom and compassion. The World Council of Sri Sathya Sai Organisations resolved to celebrate the Anniversary of her passing away as Students' Day, and, the thousands of Units scattered over India, and more than 50 other Nations, enthusiastically accepted the Call.

They extended the celebrations to six days, beginning from the first day of the Month, and concluded them with a Rally and an Assembly where the Bal Vikas kids received prizes for Bhajans, Recitations, Elocution, Histrionics and other skills. Essay writing competitions, quiz programmes, interviews of Press Correspondents with the kids, Radio programmes by them, plays, dramas, dances, painting and rangoli competitions—all were arranged by the Samitis and their Units—the Mahila Vibhags, and Seva Samitis, all around the world. and grateful homage of the children to the Love that Mother showered on them echoed full circle round the World, from Hawaii, Fiji, Hong Kong, and Singapore, through Sri Lanka and India, Tanzania, Ghana, London, New York, Chicago and Mexico, to mention just one of the many pathways through which its movement could be identified.

At Prasanthi Nilayam, the hub of this Divine Wheel of Love, Bhagavan visited the Samadhi of the Parents and Himself distributed Food and Sweets to the villagers who had gathered in. very large numbers. He blessed more than 300 children from the Bal Vikas Centres working in the Anantapur District of Andhra Pradesh, the District where Puttaparthi and the Nilayam are situated; they were led by their Gurus, and in the evening, they put up a very attractive and inspiring variety show, including Folk Dances, Classical Dance, and playlets on Valmiki and other epic characters.

At the gathering of devotees which assembled at the Poornachandra Auditorium, the representatives of every Unit belonging to the District garlanded Bhagavan in reverential homage, and children spoke on the Gita, on Bal Vikas and on Bhagavan's Love towards them. Kumari Lakshmiddevamma, District Educational Officer. Anantapur Dt. Sri N. Kasturi and Brahmasri Jammalamadaka Madhavarama Sarma spoke on the Mother and Her Tenderness and Serenity. Bhagavan in His Discourse emphasised the role of the Mother and of Love in fostering spiritual aspiration and achievement. Bhagavan then blessed the Variety Entertainment items of Balavikas, enacted in His Presence, until about 8-30 P. M.

It was an eventful Day redolent with gratitude and God-ward urge, for the thousands who had come to Prasanthi Nilayam to offer their homage to the Mother.

(3) Kurukshetra

On 29th April, a unique type of Solar Eclipse—an annular one, where the outer rims of the sun remain visible—the last one of this kind happened 42 years ago—attracted pilgrims to the sacred bathing places in India, Kurukshetra, immortalised in the Bhagavad Gita attracted a million people, for it has two sacred tanks wherein a bath during eclipses is held to be highly auspicious and beneficial. The Sri Sathya Sai Seva Samitis of the Ambala Zone—Kurukshetra, Shahabad Markanda, and Ambala—jointly arranged a Seva Camp at the holy Brahasarovar, during the three-day Festival. The Camp Dispensary treated hundreds of pilgrims. Books and pamphlets on the Sai Message were distributed to earnest seekers. Nagarsankirtan and Bhajan formed regular features of the Camp Programme. Besides, the free kitchen which was worked by the Seva Dal offered halwa and puri to thousands, free. Ramayana Readings at the Camp attracted sizeable groups who listened with rapt attention. The Seva of the Samiti members was appreciated by the Chief Minister of Haryana State and by the leaders who had organised the Festival.

(4) Pondicherry

On 25-4-76, Sunday, the Sri Sathya Sai Seva Samiti celebrated the Valedictory Function of its ambitious Programme of Worship, reciting the 1008 Names of Bhagavan , 520 times.

(5) Mathura

Sri. M. C. Asthana, Chairman, of the Sathya Sai Seva Samiti writes: A Service Programme of Daily Narayana Seva was inaugurated in this City by our Samiti on the Akshaya Tritiya Festival Day.

(6) Indore

An Inter-State Conference was held in mid-February at Indore, where Delegates from the Seva Samitis of Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh, took part. A Refresher Course for members of the Seva Dal from both States will be arranged in a Common Camp in June.

The Conference laid down the guidelines for the conduct of Bhajans by Mandals and Samitis.

(7) Bhopal:

A Research Programme to assess the impact of the Bal Vikas curricula and course of instruction, on the pupils, the parents and the Gurus is to be conducted at Bhopal, by Kumari Villy Nanji, B. A. who had collaborated with Prof. T. R. Kulkarni of the Department of Applied Psychology of the University of Bombay, in the Scientific Investigation held with the same intentions into the Impact made by the Bal Vikas classes in Bombay city.

(8) Madras

On the Tamil New Year Day while Bhagavan was at Madras, He released the Manual Part I for Bal Vikas, giving meanings of the Slokas and Hymns which the children have to learn and also containing a number of popular hymns from ancient Tamil saints, with their meanings clarified in simple Tamil.

(9) Kollapur (Mahbubnagar Dt), Andhra Pradesh

A week-long Seva Dal Training Camp was run by the Seva Samitis of the District at Kollapur. Of the 90 members selected for training, 71 were students from Colleges. Two features were unique in this Camp: (1) It created a significant spiritual awakening `in that little town. In about three to four days, the entire town was so moved that for Nagarsankirtan more than 200 men and 75 ladies joined spontaneously. For the evening Bhajan Session at the Camp, the attendance of the townsfolk rose from 200 on the first day to over 1000 on the concluding days. (2) During one of the days of the week, the trainees spent hours and a half, busily and enthusiastically cleaning the premises of a Mosque in the heart of the town. This evidence of the sincere observance by the Seva Dal of its symbol moved both Muslims and Hindus to tear of appreciation, and made them anxious to know more about Bhagavan and His Universal Massage of Love. Irrespective of their faith, the townsfolk accosted the campers' thereafter with `Sairam'.

Motherhood

Sloth and dullness fog the mind and prevent the acquisition of knowledge. A passionate and extrovert nature prevents the growth of humility and devotion. Only the serene can win wisdom. The Indian way of life encourages serenity and equanimity; it fosters the ideal of Satwa, and helps man to overcome sloth and passion, that is to say, Rajas and Tamas.

That is the reason why that way of life and the culture that promotes it have stood the test of time, the ravages of history and the reverses and triumphs of movements and personalities. The consummation which that culture aims at is the attainment of bliss through the cultivation of self-confidence, meaning, confidence that the Self or Atma is the very core of one's reality. This cultivation is to be undertaken through various prescribed Sadhanas, which prepare the brain, mind and heart for the planting and growth of Love until the harvest of Bliss is gathered. Atma is but another name for the spark of God in you; and, that spark is the light, the love, the energy, in every cell and atom of every being and thing in the whole Universe.

The Vedas have laid down the injunction that one should revere the mother, the father and the preceptor as Divine. This is an inescapable duty. The vilest criminal and the wisest paramahansa, the poorest mendicant and the most affluent billionaire, the lowliest serf and the most autocratic ruler have all come into this world, causing suffering to the mother, fed on her blood, fondled by her arms, and toddling under her watchful eyes. But, children there are in plenty who neglect and torture her most ungratefully, making her days a nightmare of hunger and fear.

Treat your mother with care and consideration; God will treat you with affection. So, make her happy to the best of your ability.

There are many plans afoot to make the country advanced and progressive. From every platform and on the pages of every newspaper, we hear and read accounts of these schemes and plans. But, many of these are devised without proper diagnosis of what ails the people, and a proper study of the past history and present trends and attitudes of the vast majority of the people. India must remain India, after the treatment by these doctors; they should not be allowed to equip it with brain, brawn, mind and heart, imported from other countries with different trends of culture. Brushing history aside is not a profitable or desirable step. To discard ideals and practices that conferred peace and happiness to countless generations is not wise. Transplanting foreign modes of thought and action will cause social dis-ease and upset peace and contentment.

The attempt must be to resuscitate and recondition the Bharat that is. Competition, greed, violence, and autocracy—these do not fit in with the ideals of this land. They do not encourage the accumulation of trivial things or the acquisition of transitory knowledge. They have held up for the people the acquisition of discipline, devotion and duty as the richest treasure. Codes of conduct and goals of progress that peoples of other times and climes have set before them are found even by them to be not wholly effective, if not positively harmful. How then can they be borrowed with any confidence? Artificial lives led on borrowed levels of behaviour can yield only artificial happiness and prosperity. The Indian Way is to walk in the path of truth and morality; to handle all problems and situations, from the solid foundation of the Reality of one's Personality, namely, the Immortal, Ever-pure Atma, above all the tantalism dualities of good and bad, profit and loss, victory and defeat.

The Indian knows that Nature is God's vesture, He does not talk of conquering Nature, exploiting Nature, or commanding the Forces of Nature. He moves from Nature, quickly and easily, to Nature's God. We are but short-term tenants on God's estate. There is no justification for claiming ownership or mastery or the spoils of conquest. Not exploitation, but, Love, not mastery but reverent homage is the Indian reaction to Nature and her mysteries. Love is the Sadhana; Love is the Lesson; Love is the Instrument; Love is the Gain, the Goal. Truth and Love are the two wheels of the chariot of Life.

Truth and Love are there already in the human heart, but, they have not permeated into every thought, word and deed; they have not sweetened and sanctified every thought, word and deed. Just as stirring with a spoon will render the entire water in a glass sweet at all levels by persuading the sugar at the bottom to saturate the water, the spoon of Buddhi or Intelligence must be used to perform the Sadhana of stirring, so that you can realise Divinity in every, particle, cell or mom in the entire Cosmos. Isavasyam idam sarvam: All this is enveloped by God, says the Upanishad.

When the level of water in the well goes down, things at the bottom are seen more clearly. When the level of desire falls, God who is the unseen spring in everything is cognised clearly. So, man must try to reduce attachments that clog and confuse, desires that agitate and confound; less luggage more comfort, makes travel pleasure, as the Railway Administration advises. Travel through life with less luggage.

This message must be spread by example and precept, by every one of you, through the activities of the Samiti. Since the members and office-bearers of the Units of the Anantapur District are here, I am emphasising this point. Not individual but collective effort has to be encouraged, so that pride and greed may be eliminated. A single strand is too weak to bind an ant; but, a thousand becoming a rope can hold an elephant in restraint. The Individual while in the Tamasic stage is like the mango when it has just emerged from the flower; it is bitter in taste. Later, when man becomes Rajasic, he is like the grown fruit, sour and not very welcome. But, when the fruit ripens, is like the Satwic person, desired and revered by all. Do not seek the faults of others; seek rather your own. And, if you are not able to discover any good points in you, hasten to shed the faults and cultivate Sathya, Dharma, Shanti and Prema. That is the message I am giving on this Day when the Mother and the Motherhood are remembered with gratitude.

—*Baba: Prasanthi Nilayam 6-5-76*

Ramakatha Rasavahini

Sri Sathya Sai Baba

77

Indrajit Advances

Enraged at the news that the Vanaras had rushed into the City, Meghanada took up arms and advanced to attack them. The Rakshasa hordes that followed him beat their war-drums and sounded their clarions. Meghanada was famous as Indrajit, for, he had once overwhelmed in

battle, no less a person than Indra, the Ruler of the Gods. He was chief among generals and a terrible warrior. The Vanaras lost courage when they espied him on his chariot. Sighting the flight of the enemy forces, Meghanada shouted in joy and stringing his mighty bow, he shot a rain of arrows upon them. Drawing the string right back to his ear, he shot the arrows fast and furious; they flew like winged serpents in all directions; so, the Vanaras were afraid to face him. They lost the urge to fight. They gave up the fight and retreated. Some were felled by arrows; others fainted and fell.

Witnessing the pitiable plight of the Vanaras, Hanuman was overcome with rage; he hastened towards Meghanada, full of fury appearing as the God of Death Himself! He plucked a mountain peak that stood near by and threw it at the Rakshasa leader.

As soon as he saw the peak rushing towards him like the messenger of Death, Meghanada used his magical skill to rise up into the sky. His chariot, the horses and the charioteer were all crushed underneath that peak as it fell exactly where it was aimed. Meghanada designed many other magic stratagems. But, his design to create terror in Hanuman was as ineffective as the attempt of a miniature snake to terrorise the King of Eagles, Garuda. He showered fire from the sky; he rained blood. He spread thick night, when day was bright. The darkness was so dense that one could not see his own palm spread before his eyes. The Vanaras were confused and rendered despondent by such tactics. They felt that their end had come.

Vanaras press Forward

Rama saw the tricks into which the Rakshasas had descended in their despair; he laughed within himself at their helplessness; he became aware that the Vanaras had lost their confidence and courage; so, he shot one single arrow into the fray. The magic of the Rakshasa was mortally hit and it no longer worked. Brightness was restored to the earth, as if the Sun had risen in the sky. The Vanaras recovered their self-confidence and advanced towards the Rakshasa ranks. The compassionate glance of Rama fell upon them and they were refreshed. The entire Vanara horde shouted with one voice, 'Jai', 'Jai for our Lord, Rama,' and pressed forward against all odds. Nothing could halt them; no one could delay their advance.

To heighten their courage and quicken their pace, Lakshmana joined Hanuman, and with his mighty bow and sharp arrows he fell upon Meghanada. Ravana heard that Lakshmana had jumped into the fray and so he hastened to send strong reinforcements to support his son on the field. The Vanaras fought without respite, armed with trees and rocks. Both sides fought ferociously with unabated fury. Most of the fight centred round duels between warriors and leaders.

The Vanaras hit with their clenched fists and bit with their sharp teeth; this caused the death of a vast number of Rakshasas. They clipped with their nails many a head from the shoulders on which they rested; they pulled many a hand from the sockets in which they were fastened. The yell of victory with which the Vanaras announced their triumph resounded among the Nine Islands. Headless corpses of the Rakshasas continued to run along the direction which the Rakshasas took while alive; seeing this eerie phenomenon, the Vanaras were surprised into ribald laughter. The roads that criss-crossed over the vast field of battle were filled with streams of blood.

The Brother and the Son

Lakshmana and Meghanada were involved in frightful combat. Each appeared the other's equal in skill and strength. Indrajit decided to defeat Lakshmana by magic stratagem rather than by the usual tactics of war. But, even these were foiled and his plans ended in failure. Lakshmana in a spurt of terrific rage destroyed the chariot of Meghanada and killed his charioteer. Afraid that his death was imminent, Meghanada took on hand the Supremely Potent Weapon, Shakti, that Brahma had gifted, and, aiming It at the very heart of Lakshmana, he directed It to the target.

The Weapon hit the heart of Lakshmana, coming straight from Meghanada's hand. Lakshmana fell on the ground, in a mortal swoon. Meghanada, now no longer in fear, approached the fallen hero and tried to lift the body away to his own camp. Though his strength was equal to Lakshmana's Meghanada could not raise the body. Countless warriors came forward to help him; but, numbers were of no avail. Lakshmana was the Primeval Serpent, that bears the Cosmos on Its Thousand Hoods, Adishesha, come again, How could any one however strong or any number of such ones succeed in lifting him? Only those who have won the Grace of Sri Rama could move Lakshmana!

The Fatal Wound

Meanwhile, the shades of evening invaded the land. The two opposing forces returned to their camps. Sri Rama saw the returning Vanaras but, could not see Lakshmana among them, He asked, "Where is Lakshmana?" Just at that moment, Hanuman entered with the body of Lakshmana lying across his shoulder. Hanuman was praying plaintively, "Rama! Rama!" Rama acted as if he was perturbed and affected by anxiety; but, he soon righted himself. He laid the body of Lakshmana on his lap and examined it carefully for long. Jambavan, the aged, spoke at that juncture. He said, "Lord. Let us not lose time; Let us not delay treatment or hesitate. It is best we get Sushena here, the physician, from Lanka; he knows the remedy."

That very minute, Hanuman assumed a microscopic human form and entered the inner city of Lanka. Even while moving in, he was hurt by a doubt whether Sushena would comply with his request to come into the camp of Rama. So, Hanuman resorted to a ruse. He lifted the house of Sushena with him inside it, and brought it intact over the intervening distance. When Sushena emerged, he found himself in the presence of Rama Himself. Sushena fell at the feet of Rama, and disclosed the name of mountain where the drug, which could save Lakshmana, was growing. While considering whom to send in search of that precious drug, Hanuman himself prostrated before the lotus feet of his Lord, and prayed that he might be enjoined to bring it. And Rama conferred the task on him.

The Kalanemi Interlude

Meanwhile, one of his spies reported to Ravana that Sushena, the physician, had reached the presence of Rama. Ravana consulted Kalanemi on this new development and its consequences. Kalanemi replied, "Ravana! This Hanuman is an impossible person! Did he not set Lanka in flames even when you were looking on? What special skill or strength do I have to contain and conquer this Hanuman? The time to do the right is still not past. Give up the absurd notion that it is possible for you to win a victory over Rama. Go; take refuge at the feet of Rama. Your

fortunes will get better thereby. Forsake your pride and pertinacity.” Kalanemi gave Ravana good counsel; but, what he looked for was something different.

Therefore, 'Ravana condemned him; shaking with rage, he shouted," Are you prepared to obey me? If not prepare yourself for death.” Kalanemi thought that it would be much more beneficial to die at the hands of Rama than being killed by Ravana; so, he left for Rama's camp. Exercising his magical skills, he sought a lake in the centre of a lovely park, and wearing the robes of a Rishi, he set in deep meditation on its bank.

Hanuman who was on his way to the mountain range where the life-saving drug grew, was exhausted, since he had no rest after the fierce engagement with Meghanada. So, he felt that a few moments' rest and a drink from the cool lake would be worthwhile, for he could proceed thereafter all the quicker. Hanuman fell at the feet of the Rishi, who was reciting the name of Rama and extolling his exploits and excellences. Hanuman was delighted; he too sang the Name "Rama! Rama!" The disguised Kalanemi told him further, "O Vanara! There is a battle now being fought between Rama and Ravana. I am watching it every day from here. There is no doubt that Rama will win. Rama will emerge as victor without fail.” Hanuman was elated at this; he told the sage, that he was very thirsty. The sage told him that his water-vessel had cool refreshing water and he offered it to him. Hanuman said, "Master! This little quantity cannot quench my thirst to any appreciable degree."

Then, the Rishi told him that there was a lake nearby and he could have a dip in its limpid waters and also drink his fill, in order to get refreshed. Hanuman agreed and proceeded towards the lake indicated. He stepped into the lake, until his feet were immersed in the water; just then, a crocodile crept up from within the lake and held his foot in its vile grip. Of course, it could not do any further harm. For, Hanuman shook it off and hit it to death.

As soon as its crocodile life ended, it stood before Hanuman as a resplendent Heavenly Being. Hanuman was surprised at this vision. He asked the Appearance, "Who are you?" That person answered, "O Servant of Rama! My load of sin melted away, when I had the good luck of seeing you and being touched by you. Kalanemi and I were musicians, Gandharvas, at the Court of Indra in Heaven. One day, the sage, Durvasa, celebrated for his short temper, arrived at Court. When our eyes fell on that wild ferocious figure, we burst into laughter. And, so he cursed both of us to be born on earth as Rakshasas. We pleaded for mercy, holding his feet and shedding tears of contrition; he took compassion on us and said, "Well! You will take birth in Lanka. The Lord will be incarnating as Rama, in the last quarter of the Treta Age and a terrible battle will ensue between Rama and the Ruler of Lanka; during that battle, Lakshmana, the brother will get fatally hurt by the weapon called Shakti and Hanuman, a devoted servant of Rama, will be journeying to the Sanjeevi Mountain green with bushes of drugs; you will both be liberated from the Rakshasa encumbrance by contact with him.”

"O Vanara! The Rishi who lives near by, who directed you here, is no Rishi at all. He is a Rakshasa in disguise; he is named Kalanemi. Hanuman approached Kalanemi, and shouted in his ear, "Dear Preceptor! Accept the offering I propose to make in return for the lesson you taught me. You are my Guru and I have to pay you fees" What had happened was that Kalanemi had wondered why Hanuman had taken such a long time to quench his thirst and return, and he had

guessed that the reason was the revelation of his own identity and history, by his brother who was living his curse out there, as a crocodile. So, Kalanemi pretended to be too deeply involved in Dhyana to recognise the person who stood before him and accosted him. Hanuman knew the disguise that Kalanemi was hiding under; he grappled his neck and twisted it fast until he died, with the words, "Rama! Rama!" emerging from his lips with the last breath.

Up with the Hide

Kicking aside the corpse, Hanuman hastened towards the Drona Peak Mountain Range and reaching the Sanjeevi Hill, started looking for the drug he had come for. But, he failed to identify it among the plentiful vegetation with which the hill was carpeted thick. Time was running out; there was already considerable delay; he was conscious of the urgency of Rama's Command. So, he resorted to another plan. He plucked the entire hill and flew through the sky carrying it on his palm.

He had to pass over the City of Ayodhya on his way to Lanka, during the hours of night. Bharata was at that time pining alone, wakeful but worried about his brother and his life in the forest. Suddenly, the moonlight was cut by a shadow, the shadow of Hanuman and the hill, falling upon him. Bharata inferred that the monkey with the mountain load must be a Rakshasa that has assumed that form proceeding on some nefarious mission. He decided to destroy it before it could accomplish any mischief. Seizing his bow, he shot an arrow at it, drawing the string right back to the ear and with good aim. When the arrow struck him, Hanuman gave out a shrill cry, "Rama!"

When that name fell on his ears, Bharata stood up shocked and ran towards the fallen monkey. From Hanuman he learnt the story of his mission and the urgency of his errand. He was overcome with grief; but he embraced Hanuman and pleaded that he must be pardoned for his foolish haste. Bharata broke into tears. He prayed, "If it is true that I have adored Rama through thought word and deed and that I have not deviated from this path, let this Vanara be restored to his original health and strength."

The Rama Story: Stream of Sacred Sweetness

(To be continued)

The Cup and the Needle

Saint Thiruvalluvar, the author of the famous Tamil Scripture called Kural, used to keep by his side when he sat for taking his daily meals a needle and a small cup filled with water. Asked why he insisted on these, he replied, "Food should not be wasted; sometimes, stray grains of cooked rice or stray pieces of cooked vegetables fall off the plate or away from it, while I eat; then, I will lift them off the floor with the needle, clean by stirring it in the water in the cup, and then, eat them. What a great lesson this is!"

Steaming to Sai

I thought the leaden winter
would bring me down forever;
So, I caught a golden steamer
for the brilliance of the Sun.

Then, the burning streamers
of the azure haven heaven,
blinded all my senses with
the violence of its Light!

O! the Splendour of the Lord
will cast away the Darkness;
and, melt the lead on chains
into a blaze of silver glow

The match sticks of the star-lights
have crackled there like cannon
to break the bones of Sin
and speak the glory of His might.

Yes; I thought the leaden winter
would take me done for ever,
So, I caught a golden steamer
for the incandescent Sun.

—*Ronald. M. Rowe*

A Master Appears

With soft and silent tread. He came,
And touched me, passing by.....
I SAW HIM....
And His Shining Presence made me want to cry!
I felt the Glow within my heart
A soft and warming Flame,
And deep within, my humble soul
Was whispering His Name;
I knew not whether I should speak,
This Miracle to probe
Or ... fling myself before His Feet,
and touch His precious Robe,
But, the reverence of the moment
Held me tightly in its spell,
And all those words my heart would speak,
I knew I could not tell.
And so, I quietly bowed my head,
And clasped my trembling hands;
How can one find the words
Unless one truly understands
The reason for such miracles?
Butlet me grateful be
That Someone, Wise and Holy
Chose, to walk so *close to me*!
I dare not yield to human pride,
And think I stand apart,
But, let me hold the memory
Within my thankful heart,
That He... O, so tenderly,
O, God... I never will forget,
A Master dwelt*within me*!

—Ed.

The Significance of the Gayatri

In the Hindu tradition there is a remarkable consensus (Ekavakyata) regarding the sanctity of the Gayatri Mantra. Manu, whose utterances carry generally accepted authority, declares that the Gayatri is the quintessence of the three Vedas. As picturesquely depicted in Manusmriti, the Supreme Lord of Creatures milked the three 'Padas' (units of eight syllables) from each of the three Vedas, making up the twenty-four syllabled Mantra, here called the 'Savitri,' as it is addressed to Vedic deity Savitar. (2.77).

Gayatri is the name of a Vedic metre. There are innumerable Mantras in this metre in the Rigveda. Why this particular verse commencing 'Tat Savituh' should be singled out for its unique distinction is really an enigma. The ordinary criteria of importance are of no help here. There are over 10,000 Mantras in the Rigveda grouped into hymns (Suktas) addressed to the various deities. The largest number of hymns is addressed to Indra. Next come Agni, Soma and the Ashvins. By numerical standards, Savitar is a 'minor' deity, with only about a dozen hymns exclusively addressed to him. Strange to say, the celebrated Gayatri Mantra does not occur in any one of them. It is to be found in a hymn addressed to a miscellany of deities (Vishvedevas). Why then this obscure Mantra should be so highly prized is a mystery. The reasons are subtle (Sookshma) and not quantitative (Sthoola). We can only make a guess at them.

I shall first give an analogy. Savitar obviously plays a key-role in the Vedic scheme, and we know that the size of the key need have no relation either to its efficacy, or the size of the receptacle which it serves to open. Besides, according to the Veda, the stuff of divinity is one and one only, which can manifest in a multiplicity of forms, like ornaments made from gold. The gods are not distinct from one another.

Divinity is primarily symbolized by light: The word Deva comes from the root 'Div' which means both to shine, and to play. The visible source of all light and energy is the sun. He is therefore preeminently fitted to be the basis of contemplation. Hence the Vedic dictum that the sun is the visible Brahma: 'Asavadityo Brahma!' Savitar is a name of the sun in his aspect as the Impeller; the hidden source of power behind the obvious sun. In the Isavasya Upanishad, the sun is apostrophized as a golden disc covering the face of truth, which he is implored to unveil. Savitar's function persists even when the sun is not shining. Thus a verse of the Rigveda declares: "He knows the light amid the blinding darkness (So'andhe tamasi jyotir vidat). Again the Arsheya Upanishad speaks of "Him who is higher than the highest, the All-Impeller, who pervades inwardly all these worlds."

He is the source of all impulsion. In particular he impels or stimulates the worshipper's higher intelligence (Dhi) which brings him knowledge, mundane as well as transcendental. What the eye is to the body, that intelligence (Dhi) is to the mind. In its utmost reach it is designated Pratibha, about which the 'Yoga Sutra' says: Pratibhad va sarvam—through this all 'Siddhis' are achieved. Man need pray for nothing else.

This tradition is uninterruptedly continued in classical Hinduism-of somewhat later times. Thus Sankaracharya specifically makes out in his commentary on the Chandogya Upanishad that Savitar is to be praised as the practical efficacy dwelling in all acts of sacrifice, and as the fruit of the devotional efforts of all beings, through which they obviously live; 'Sarva ya jnanancha karya-nirvrittirupah Savita mahatya shriya dipyate. Sa esha sarvapranam karmaphalabhutah pratyaksham sarvairupajiviyate'

II

All this is at one level. Savitar has a crucial role to play on a somewhat higher plane. The world of experience envisaged in the Veda is a unity amidst diversity. It is Savitar who is the link

between the two; the mediator 'par excellence', serving to unite them. Hints and suggestions of this are found scattered throughout the Veda but the clearest and most explicit statement of this is to be seen in the Shvetashvatara Upanishad (Ch. II) where seven out of the total of seventeen verses deal with Savitar, and the rest with the process of Yoga and its results.

The very first Mantra is a specimen and a masterly introduction to the theme: 'Yanjanah prathamam manas tattwaya savita dhiyah Anger jyotir nichayya prithivya adhyabharat'. Rendered somewhat freely, this means: Intending first to yoke the mind to the guest of categorical truth (Tattwa) Savitar extracted the light from Agni's heat and manifested it on earth. The point to be noted here is that Agni Symbolizes the world of Vedic experience and activity. His light stands for his essence (Jyoti). It is no other than Savitar himself, the means as well as the end.

On the next level, Savitar leads to the convergence of the mind and faculties, which is the condition precedent to the attainment of philosophical truth (Tattwa-jnana). He is the origin of the impulse towards Yoga (Prathamam yunjanah). 'Yun jana' is derived from the root YUJ from which the word Yoga itself emerges. It is noteworthy that in the ensuing verses occur the following terms: 'Yuktvaya, Yunjate, Yuje' and so on. Closely allied words play a great part in the 'Bhagavad-Gita' and the 'Yoga Sutras.' The purport is clear and beyond dispute. The whole trend of the Veda is in the direction of Yoga as a means to 'Tattwa-jnana.' If we may say so, the crucial role of Savitar is to mediate the transition from Yajna to Yoga. This notion of 'transition' is profoundly significant.

To attempt its elucidation may look like a digression. But the links in Vedic comprehension are not always apparent. The Brahman treatises constantly reiterate that the gods love the indirect approach Paroksha priya vai devah. In this context, it is interesting to note that the word 'elucidation' comes from the Latin—LUX, LUCIS—light, and means to throw light upon, or to explain. Thus we may, safely venture on the proposition—All elucidation proceeds from Savitar. It is a process of "enlightenment". We speak of the 'light' of reason, or the 'illumination' of the mind or heart. In all this, the presence of Savitar has to be recognized.

Enlightenment is a transition from the unknown to the known, from darkness to light. In a sense, it may even be described as the passage from the known to the unknown. In any case, It is a border phenomenon occurring at the junction (Sandhi) of two regions of experience. All experience is made up of apparently antithetical, but in reality co-operating principles designated as Dvandvas. Their meeting ground is a Sandhi or Samanvaya. It is this that is concretely symbolized by Sandhya, the twilight periods of morning and evening, when day passes into night and night into day. This is the most suitable time for invoking Savitar using the Gayatri Mantra, which is imbedded in an elaborate context of Mantras known as the Sandhyavandana.

It is entirely in keeping with Hindu thinking that the period itself is revered as a deity apart from the content of the 'Sandhyavandana', and addressed as Mahadevi (the great goddess), as Saraswati (the goddess of learning) and as the embodiment of the letters of the alphabet (Sarva-varna), She is the personification of the complex mosaic of vitality, of which the Gayatri is the heart.

It might be asked by modern simplifiers: Is not the Gayatri by itself sufficient: Why all this elaboration? To this it may well be replied, that as in the living organism, it is not enough if the heart alone is functioning. That is a sign of the beginning of the end. The vital and mental functions should also be in good form, the limbs as well as the senses. We may even go further, and take the analogy of a single living cell: the nucleus will not survive unless it is provided with the appropriate environment.

Before closing this section, it has to be added that the Gayatri Mantra is a composite made up of the Vedic Mantra 'Savitri' preceded by the 'Pranava' (Omkaara) followed by the three sacred cosmic syllables (Vyahritis): 'Bhuh' (earth), 'Bhuvah' (the intermediate region) and 'Suvah' (the heavens above).

III

Some further implications of the concept of Savitar need to be examined. As the mediator, his specific role is that of synthesizer of antitheses, i.e., of the 'Dvandvas', in particular of light and darkness, in each of which Savitar has a foot, as it were. But it has to be remembered that in Hindu thought, light and darkness are not contradictories like good and evil, but correlatives: hence the possibility of reconciling them, that is, from the commonsense point of view.

More specifically, the light which the supreme principle represents does not set. It has been described as the light of all lights (Tat jyotisham jyotih). By its light, all other lights shine (Tasya bhasa sarvam idam vibhati). Primarily its locus is in the 'Buddhi'. A careful scrutiny of this notion will be useful as well as interesting.

So far as I am aware, the word 'Buddhi' does not occur in the Veda, which prefers the term 'Dhi' which is at once more basic and more suggestive. It is mostly used in the plural 'Dhiyah' to denote the senses, faculties or thoughts. As a verb it means 'to mind', or 'minding' to meditate or contemplate. In the first person plural—Dhimahi—it is the operative part of the Gayatri Mantra, the objective being the stimulation of the 'Dhiyah'. The process is 'Dhyana', which is derived from the same root. The core of the Gayatri meditation is the realization of the identity of the light of the sun and the light of intelligence. The Hindu experience through the ages has shown that such meditation is effective. The how of this will be discussed later.

But the word Buddhi does figure in the Upanishads. Thus in the Katha we have the fine simile of the body as the chariot and of Buddhi as the charioteer. The senses are horses, and mind constitutes the reins. The self is depicted as riding in the chariot. In conjunction with the senses (Indriya) and the mind (Manas) he is said to be the enjoyer (Bhokta). The purpose of the illustration is to make out that only he who has understanding (Vijnana), and is mindful and pure, will attain the ultimate goal of all spiritual endeavour. It is noteworthy that after mentioning Buddhi once to start with, the term 'Vijnana' is used as its equivalent five times in succession.

Dr. Radhakrishnan explains this as follows: "Mind (Manas) is the faculty of perception. At the stage of mind we accept authority which is external; at the stage of 'Vijnana' internal growth is effected." In other words, it is a level of understanding where truths are not inferred, but become

self-evident, and cannot be invalidated by ordinary reason; it is characterized by directness and immediacy. It is a synonym for 'Dhi'.

The character of 'Vijnana' has been described in the Taittiriya Upanishad. Here 'Vijnana' is said to be the penultimate sheath (Kosa) of the Self, and personified as follows: Faith (Shraddha) is its head; Order (Ritam) the right side; truth (Sathyam) the left side; contemplation (Yoga) the body, and the great one (Mahas) the substratum. 'Mahas', we may note, is analogous to the Samkhya principle of 'Mahat', Buddhi considered as a cosmic principle. The Taittiriya goes on to cite some ancient texts in support of its position. With reference to the Gayatri we may say that meditation on it leads to the attainment of 'Vijnana', whereby one may transcend the Veda itself. Hence the Gayatri has been extolled as the Mother of the Vedas. It is like the acorn which contains in itself the potentiality of the mighty oak tree of the future.

When we speak of Buddhi, we are, of course, not thinking of it in its unregenerate condition. Buddhi is capable of cultivation and refinement. The Gita calls this process 'Vyavasaya', and stresses that the one-pointed (Ekamika or Ekagra) Buddhi is the master-key to all 'Sadhana'. Whatever else it may be or may not be, the Yoga advocated by the Gita is first and foremost 'Buddhi-yoga'. The Lord enjoins that one should seek refuge (Sharanam) in it.

Manu also attaches great importance to the training of the Buddhi (Kritabuddhi) and places it above erudition. He does not stop there; but adds that the trained Buddhi too is futile if it does not lead to right activity, which is the precondition of knowledge or experience of Brahman (I 96).

In one sense it may be said that Buddhi is the axis on which the classical philosophical systems revolve, although it may not be visible to the cursory glance. It also finds mythological and symbolic expression in the Puranas. It is not for nothing that the celebrated 'Devi Bhagavata Purana' opens with an invocation to the World-Mother in a verse couched in the Gayatri metre, which is a striking paraphrase of the Vedic Gayatri; 'Sarva chaitanya rupam tam adyam vidyam cha dhimahi buddhim ya nah prachodayat'—We meditate on Her who is the all-pervading conscious-energy, the primeval One (Adya) who is identical with the Supreme knowledge (Vidya), in order that She may stimulate our intellect (Buddhi).

The familiar verse (Dhyana-Sloka) in the Sandhyavandana, commencing: 'Mukta vidruma hema....' pictures the Gayatri as a Goddess with five faces, each with its own symbolic colour, and ten hands each pair carrying weapons traditionally associated with the five major deities: Vishnu, Shiva, Devi, Ganapati, and Surya. The composite figure stands for the synthesis of the five forms of worship (Panchopasana) in the first instance, and then for the repeatedly five-fold ingredients which make up the universe (Prapancha). Among them may be named the five vital airs (Pancha-Pranas) the five great elements (Pancha-Mahabhutas), their subtle counterparts (Panchatanmantras), the five organs of sense (Pancha-Jnanendriyas) the five organs of movement (Pancha-Karmendriyas) and so on. The greatness of the Gayatri lies in the fact that it symbolizes the unified field of all awareness (Sarva-samanvaya).

I may close on a personal note. It was the forenoon of Wednesday, 6th December 1972. I had gone to Brindavan with my family at the bidding of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba. We were

seated in the front lobby of Baba's residence; and there were several others present. A group of about fifty girls from the Anantapur Women's College, who were returning from an educational excursion had come for Darshan. All of a sudden, Baba turned towards me, and said, "Give them a talk." The unexpectedness of it took away my breath. But I mustered courage, and trusting in Baba's inspiration, spoke for about twenty minutes on the Gita text: 'Shraddhavan labhate jnanam, tatparah samyatendriyah' (The attainment of spiritual knowledge demands three preliminary qualifications—intensity of faith, singleness of aim, and control of the senses).

Baba listened with appreciation; and then followed it up with a marvellous discourse on the Gayatri Mantra, as the foremost means for the attainment of 'Jnana'. He asked the girls whether they had not seen a picture of the five-faced Gayatri Devi. Evidently they had not. Then Baba with his characteristic gesture materialized a lovely and perfect silver image of the Goddess about two and a half inches in height. It was passed round from hand to hand to all who were present. Everyone scrutinized it with reverence and pressed it to the eyes and handed it on. I got it last; and after I had a good look at it, returned it to Baba. He smiled and said: "Keep it; it is for you." Tears came to my eyes. What had I done to deserve this supreme Grace?

—K. Guru Dutt

Welcome

(Homage offered by Dr. J. Hemalatha, M.A., Ph.D., Principal, Sri Sathya Sai College for Women, Anantapur, while welcoming Bhagavan).

The College Quadrangle is resplendent with Divine Light this Day, as if a New Deepavali is on, and it is lit with a million lamps. A roseate Dawn is illumining our lives this Day, and scattering into the far distance the Night that infested time so long. Bhagavan has come to us like the Moon from behind the clouds, appearing before the Child that squirmed in the dark and yearned for that Face of Love. With hearts sanctified by immersion in the Ocean of Bliss, we offer our adorations. We are celebrating in this College today the Birthday of Bhagavan. Some persons may doubt the propriety of this event. when the Birthday of Bhagavan is on 23rd November. Bhagavan has said that, when the heart yearns for Krishna, He will be born therein: when we feel the agony of separation from God acutely, He will come to us and install Himself within us. That is the day when we have to celebrate His Birthday. And, how else can we celebrate the birth of the birthless? For Bhagavan is not man, but even more than an embodiment of the Divine, He is God Himself. In the words of the Poet, "O Lotus-eyed One! You are not an Avatar among the many Avatars of God. You have come as the master and mentor of the thoughts and actions of all living beings; You have incarnated to save and sustain entire Creation; you have assumed this charming human form in order to draw our hearts and sanctify them." Our duty at this juncture of history is to make use of this opportunity and retraining unaffected by the ups and downs of fortune, like the water drop on the lotus leaf, derive the Bliss of Darshan from the Incarnation before us. The path of Bhakti is made easily available and quickly fruitful just now. Prahlada, the greatest among the Bhaktas of the Lord has said, "He cannot be won by rites and rituals, by charity or character, by skill or scholarship; He can be won by pure unflinching Devotion alone."

Surrender the entire consciousness to Hari; that is the sole means for salvation. Nara saved himself, winning Narayana thus. Listen to Nara or Arjuna describing his experience: "He beckons me with smile one day; He respects me one day as a Brother-in-law; He treats me as a kinsman another day; He offers me wealth as my Guardian; like an Adviser, He offers me counsel, and as a Teacher, he gives me lessons galore; He acts as my charioteer; He plays pranks with me as a comrade. He takes food with me; He overlooks and pardons my faults, like my own Father."

These various experiences are now available for mankind, from the Sarathi that has come again to be our Charioteer during the battle of life. Devotees know that when He is called with sincere yearning evident through the tears of surrender that flow from the eyes, He is with them, wherever they might be, bringing succour and strength. Means prescribed to scriptures for attaining Heaven promise but temporary happiness; the highest and the most lasting gift of Blessedness can be secured by us, through constant meditation on Sai. He has been teaching us that the repetition of the Name of God accompanied by meditation on Its significance is the quickest means of winning Grace. Beauty is the splendour of virtue emerging out of the crucible of Discipline. Sundaram has to be sublimated from Sivam and stabilised by Sathyam. This is the special contribution of Bharatiya Culture to the world, the gift for which Bharat is revered through the ages. Parvati could not win Siva through physical charm. Later, when It was transmuted into spiritual beauty through ascetic discipline, it won His Grace and She was accepted as the 'better half' of the Lord! Bhagavan is that unified Godhead, the Siva-Shakti in human Form. We are fortunate indeed to have the Darshan of the Siva Shakti Swaroopa. Of course, it is natural that we should yearn for that Darshan always. Bhagavan has said, when He was among the Gopis as Krishna, that He keeps Himself away off and on, and for long periods of time, so that they may learn to meditate on Him and His Name. Let us learn a lesson from that statement, and be engaged in intermittent Dhyana on Him and His Glory.

To welcome Bhagavan is to welcome Truth; to offer a 'seat' to Bhagavan as rites requires us to do, is to offer a seat to Dharma Itself; to adore Him to adore Shanti; to worship Him is to worship Prema.

Consecrate!

My dears! Perfect submission to His will brings us immediately peace and bliss. This self-surrender is attained only by our ceaseless remembrance of Him and His attributes. Let us therefore consecrate, our life to Him and live, in thought, word and deed, for His sake. He is our all in all. Love is the Light of the Spirit. Realise the Light of the Spirit and you are filled with Love. Get the flower, and you have its beauty and fragrance. In colour; see harmony, in light see joy. In outward forms and in the depth of things, behold yourself. You are the Truth. With Love and Blessings.

—Baba

Why Organise?

The task before mankind is: to plant the seeds of Truth; Righteousness, Peace and Love in Heart, made ready for their reception; to foster the saplings and watch over them with love and care until they grow into trees, yielding rich harvest of sweet fruits; and, to enable all to share in that sustaining repast. Sages who had succeeded in this beneficial culture have laid down the means and methods, the steps and slips, the helps and hindrances, that men have to consider, while engaged in this task, and millions have benefited by their counsel. But, never before has this become an organised movement in which entire humanity was involved. Unless it becomes so, there can be no liberation from fear, anxiety and injustice.

The sages of India knew that man was fundamentally Divine; they sought to make man aware of his inner Reality and expand that spark of Divinity into Light that can illuminate the individual and society in the splendour of Love.

As a first step, they advised the discarding of violence, which has egotism and greed as its roots. The Vedas, the Sastras, the Epics, the Puranas that they collated or composed carry this message. Man is afflicted by misery, since he is caught in the coils of never-ending desire, and all-consuming greed. Casting off these trammels, man has to march on towards the goal of realising the God which is his inmost Truth. The swimmer has to push the water behind him so that he might proceed forward. So too, while attempting to march forward, man has to push back from him the evil thoughts, habits, deeds and impulses that crowd into him. The Sathya Sai Seva Organisation has to teach this lesson, not by precepts elaborately described in elegant language, but, by examples that spread conviction, instil faith and assure success.

Members of this Organisation must be examples also of the joy that can be derived from 'giving up' rather than from 'accumulating'. The Upanishads proclaim that 'giving up' alone leads to Immortality (Tyagenaike amrtatwam anasu). In spite of this, man seeks to 'own' and reeks with 'dis-ease'. He pursues Bhoga and is rewarded with Roga. Thyagaraja, the great mystic singer had realised that the Sannidhi (presence of the Divine) is far more preferable to Nidhi (Presents from men). The most desirable treasure is Truth-Righteousness-Peace-Love.

Truth is to be learnt first about oneself. When man does not know his own Truth, how can he judge others, or deal with others? When man knows that he is the Indestructible Eternal Atma, he is freed from fear. Truth can shine forth only from a purified mind and a clarified intellect. The Units of the Sathya Sai Seva Organisations must be ever active in following and observing the disciplines laid down for these two processes. Man has to overcome the animal in him. The pasu (beast) has to be laid low and the Pashupati (the Master of Living Beings) installed in the heart. This aim has to be constantly borne in mind by the Organisation and its members; the journey towards it has to be steady and fervent. Patience, tolerance, fortitude, equanimity, fraternity-these will prove valuable equipment for the pilgrim. Do not distinguish between one fellow-pilgrim and another, on the basis of caste, creed or colour, and do not divide them into friends or foes. Recognise only the common traits, the uniting efforts, the basic Divinity. Rich and poor, scholarly and illiterate-these are distinctions that do not hold good for long; they are but outer frills. A flower radiates fragrance and charm, whether held in the right hand or the left. It does not limit that gift to some and deny it to others. Every one, who comes near, is blessed.

The members of the units of this Organisations must be ever engaged in the twin process of purifying the mind and clarifying the intellect. They have to free themselves from all prejudices, and misunderstandings. They have to speak soft and sweet, and give every one the respect and attention due to sincerity. Humility and tolerance must characterise the behaviour of a Sai devotee. When the wind agitates the serene waters of lake, wavelets dance all over its face, and a thousand suns sparkle. When calm descends and the waters are still, the shadow of the Sun within the lake is one full image. When one fixes his entire attention on the Sun, apart from the image and the water that caused it, there is only the One Sun that is Real. The sparkling little images in the agitated lake is the symbol of Dvaita; the complete image in the depths of the serene lake is the symbol of Visishta-advaita; the one Sun which is reflected as one or many is the Advaitic Truth. This fact is clearly revealed in the three statements, made one after the other by Jesus; "I am the Messenger of God." "I am the Son of God" and "I and my Father are One." The three statements are revelations of the Dvaitic, Visishtadvaitic and Advaitic points of view.

The Organisation must help people to realise the Unity behind all this apparent multiplicity, which is only a super-imposition by the human mind on the one that is all This. The Vedas proclaim that God is One, that the Goal is same and that Truth stands self-revealed when the veil of world is cast away or torn off.

One simple way to realise the Unity is Seva, service. Service without being tarnished by a superiority complex, or by pride, or even by a sense of duty towards the Organisation with which you are 'bound'. Revere the Dweller within, not the House where He resides. The Dweller is the same in every house, whether it is a palace or a hovel, a flat or cave. Devotion to the Dweller must persuade you to worship the Individual in whom He dwells, through acts of service intelligently executed with sincere enthusiasm. It was announced that you are donating blood so that the gift might save life and restore health. Of course, it is a laudable act of service. Remember that there is something more laudable: to charge every cell of the blood circulating in you with Love and the spirit of Dedication to God.

Do not fret against the rules and regulations which the Organisation imposes on you; they are laid down for your own good. Regulation is of the very essence of Creation. The Oceans observe their limits; wind and fire respect limits and bounds. The human body has to maintain warmth up to 98.4 degrees in order to be free from fever. The heart has to beat a definite number of times a minute; breathing has to be done 21, 600 times a day. How then can the Organisation escape the prescription of certain rules and regulations?

Devotion has to be guided and controlled by Discipline and Duty. What exactly is Duty in this context? I do not mean by duty the items of work entrusted to you by your superiors or society. Duty means—the responsibility you have, not to hinder or harm any one by your movements, speech, behaviour, or activities. When you walk on the streets, waving your stick, you have to be conscious of the man coming behind; if you have the freedom to wave, he too has the same and both should behave as if they have a duty to the other. The Units of this Organisation too have to respect other Units and help them in doing their duty: Rules are called for, until the members realise the spiritual Unity of all. Then, they become incapable of inflicting harm or transgressing the moral code; and, so, rules become superfluous. Protect the plant from goats for a few years;

then, when the tree spreads its branches far and wide, thick and green, these very goats can lie down under its shade and rest.

We have five principal Units in the Organisation and in every village or town where we have these, there should be exemplary unison and co-operation between the five. They are like the five fingers of one hand. The little-finger is the Bhajan Mandali, the group devoted to singing the glory of God. But, they should not be proud that they are the pioneers and primary workers. The ring—finger is the Bal Vikas. On the precious gold plate of juvenile hearts, the Guru affixes the gems of goodness and godliness. That is the ring the finger wears. But, that should not make the Bal Vikas proud; the Guru should not feel that the work done by her is the most important and so she has to be honoured most. The sense of mutuality and co-operation must prevail. The middle finger is the Seva Dal, helping the two units on one side and the two on the other. But, they should not hold their heads high and claim to be superior to all the rest. The index finger is the Mahila Vibhag, the unit which is composed of women, who point to the good, the great, the useful, the right, etc. They too should not be filled with overweening conceit. The thumb, naturally is the Seva Samiti, the over-all Executive, the Guide and Guardian, the Promoter and Provider. The thumb has to join the other four fingers so that they may hold, grasp, or manipulate anything. Without the thumb, the other fingers are helpless. So, each finger must feel that strength lies in working with the rest and that all are but parts of the One Hand, which they cannot ignore.

In a world torn by factions based on the flimsy grounds of caste, creed and colour, you have to prove that it is possible to have faith in Sai being the motivator of every living being and get inspiration for genuine service from that faith. Service to the Sai in the other person must be your daily act of Worship. Of all Sadhanas, this is the most effective. Seek out the slum dwellers, the poor neglected dwellers in hamlets, and, take Love and Light in plenty to them. "God is the refuge of those who have no place to rest in," says the proverb. Go to places where you can find such; and carry the Message of Hope and Strength into their hearts. Be grateful to them when they welcome you and provide you chances to serve them. Your happiness depends on their happiness; your health depends on their health. You keep your houses clean; their houses too are yours, for, the same Sai that resides in you resides in them. Until houses and their surroundings are bright and clean, how can you feel clean and bright?

The Organisation must promote this high sense of Unity and Responsibility. It must constantly enthuse and educate members to engage themselves in the Sadhana of Service

—Bhagavan: Discourse; Hyderabad 29-3-76, Sivam

Benediction on Bombay

Bombay Cite springs into joyous expectancy as May draws near; for, Bhagavan grants Grace by His Presence at Dharmakshetra (the International Centre of the Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organisations) on May 12, almost every year, the Day being the anniversary of its Inauguration by Him, in 1968. Bhagavan arrived at Santa Cruz Airport on Monday Night (the 10th May), and He drove to Dharmakshetra, accompanied by Sri. S. B. Chavan, the Chief Minister, Maharashtra State, Srimati Kusumtai Chavan, the wife of the Chief Minister and Sri. P. K. Sawant, President, Maharashtra Pradesh Congress Committee.

Thousands of devotees walked up, in the early dawn of the 11th, engaged in Nagarsankirtan, from Chakala Naka to Dharmakshetra, a distance of about two miles, and, Bhagavan blessed them by granting Darshan from the hillock, where the Sarva Dharma Stupa stands. In the evening, there was a Special Meeting at the Auditorium of the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, the Centre for the propagation of Indian Culture founded by that far-sighted patriot, Sri. K. M. Munshi, of hallowed memory. The elite of the City, the cream of its professional efficiency, intellectual leadership and business acumen were gathered there. The Welcome Bhajan was sung by Mr. Mohamed Rafi. Sri. N. A. Palkhiwala, the eminent jurist and expert on constitutional law spoke of Bhagavan as a mighty moral, and spiritual Force and of the upliftment of humanity that He is actively engaged in, through educational, moral and spiritual programmes. Bhagavan, in His Divine Discourse, pleaded for an orientation of human attitudes, elevating service into an offering of worship of the God within the person served or the cause promoted. He directed that huge amounts of money now being frittered in get-together parties etc by ostensibly Service Organisations be used for feeding and helping the hungry and the needy, who are none other than one's own brethren.

On 12th May, Bhagavan inaugurated at Dharmakshetra, an Exhibition, depicting the manifold service activities of the Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organisations, all over the world. The "Information Booklet" compiled by the Seva Dal, Bombay, giving detailed and valuable information (including the addresses) of hospitals, fire brigade, schools, colleges and other social service centres, in all the areas of Bombay for use by the public was presented to Bhagavan.

In the evening, Bhagavan blessed the Inauguration of the Seva Dal's Service Activities for the Seva Dal Year, 1976. Dr. K. M. Mistry, Chairman of the Seva Samiti, Bombay, outlined the various activities being taken up by the Dal. He said, "The watchword for us is, what the Bible declares: When I was hungry, you fed me; when I was without shelter, you gave me shelter. Service unto man is service unto God." A multi-purpose mobile van which the Seva Dal will use for its service activities was blessed by Bhagavan. Bhagavan also distributed First Aid Kits for use in different areas of the City by the Dal Members who had successfully completed the Course. Among the recipients were some who had qualified for this mission of Seva, by triumphantly passing through Bal Vikas Classes, into the Pre-Seva Dal Course, and finally, through the Seva Dal training camps and courses.

Sri S. B. Chavan, Chief Minister of Maharashtra, spoke on the occasion. He described what a Dynamic Force Baba is and how he is transforming the lives of the people all over the world. Then Bhagavan gave His Divine discourse urging that unity, harmony, mutual understanding and

love should prevail among all the wings of the Organisation, bearing in mind that each of the wings is as important and as essential as each one of the five fingers of the palm. He further said that purity of thought, word and deed and conformity among these three is the true mark of Man. "All should cultivate and practice this virtue. Without this practice, even if one is in the organisation, he is farthest away from Me" Swami said.

13th May happened to be a Thursday, dear and holy to all Sai devotees; it was Buddha Jayanti Day also. So, it became uniquely auspicious to the devotees. As the extension of Easwaramma Day celebrations, this day was chosen to be celebrated as Students Day. Children of Bal Vikas and Pre-Seva Dal from all over. Bombay assembled at Dharmakshetra, along with their parents, to pay their homage to Mother Easwaramma who gifted to us all our beloved Baba, and who departed from the world on 6th of May 1972. Sri Indulal H. Shah, Convener, World Council of Sri Sathya Sai Organisations, spoke on the Educational programmes and the activities being conducted under the divine guidance of Baba. One Pre-Seva Dal Student, Master Udyawar spoke how the Bal Vikas and Pre-seva Dal coaching have transformed his life and have set an ideal for him in life. Kum. Madhubala Sharma spoke on 'The Glory of Mother'. "It is said that the Adi Varaha incarnation of God was of such cosmic dimensions that all the waters of the seven seas could hardly suffice even to wet a single follicle of his hair. In this context, look at the blessed fortune of Mother Kausalya, Mother Yasoda and Mother Easwaramma who could bathe the whole body of the Lord with mere palmfuls of water. The Intangible Lord has been made tangible (made Saulabhya) for all humanity by these Mothers. How glorious indeed are these Mothers of God!" she said. Then two of the parents spoke Smt. Manjula Chakravarti said how Baba's Bal Vikas scheme has transformed their homes, their children bringing light of love into their homes. There is discipline, peace and a sublime atmosphere permeating the homes now—this is all the result of Baba's Bal Vikas scheme. Mrs. Yasmin Sibal said what a great impact and influence the Bal Vikas children's exemplary behaviour and conduct is having on their parents and the other members of the family. They are bringing a total transformation in the homes—such is the glorious contribution of Baba's Bal Vikas scheme, she said.

Smt. Prabha Rao, Minister for Education, Maharashtra Government, said that it is a most unforgettable experience for her of what she has been witnessing that morning—the impact of Baba's educational scheme on the young and the character-building and personality unfoldment and blossoming aims of the scheme.

Sri V. C. Shukla, Minister, Central Cabinet, Govt. of India, said how blessed indeed we of the present generation are to have been born at a time of the Avatarhood of God in the form of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba. Sri V. S. Page, Chairman Maharashtra Legislative Council, said that without moral and spiritual foundations, education becomes shallow and void—"there is an eye on each of the feathers of the peacock, but of what avail are these eyes? Spiritual education alone makes all other branches of education wholesome, full and complete. Baba's educational scheme provides a most integrated programme of training for the young," he said. Sri T. A. Pai, Minister, Central Cabinet, was also present on the occasion.

Bhagavan then gave his Divine discourse exhorting how moral and spiritual values are to be inculcated from childhood itself and through which alone national resurgence and regeneration

will be possible. Baba later blessed also the children of the Sathya Sai Pratham, Secondary and technical Schools of Dharmakshetra.

Among several persons and groups that called upon Baba were also the members of the Shirdi Samsthan who came to pray to Baba to visit Shirdi, the Abode of His Previous Avatar-hood.

On the night of 13th May, the Bal Vikas Children presented a few cultural items, one of them being a sublime drama item based on the life and teachings of Bhagavan Buddha. Kum. Santhi Krishnan, Bal Vikas child, and who is also a scholarship holder in Bharatnatyam of the Government of India, gave dance recital to the accompaniment of Meera Bhajan. There was a 'Burra Katha' item in Telugu by the Bal Vikas Children from Worli, Masters Vinod Limbayya, Ganesh and Sanker, singing the glory of the Avatar and the splendorous events of the golden Jubilee celebrations of the Advent of the Lord, during November 1975, at Prasanthi Nilayam.

During His stay in Bombay, Baba blessed 'Sahyadri' the residence of the Chief Minister of Maharashtra, Sri S. B. Chavan, where most of the ministers of Maharashtra had the opportunity of having Bhagavan's Darshan.

On the 14th May, early morning, Baba left for Bangalore, making all devotees sad and their hearts praying 'Baba, when will you come back?'

A brief three days' stay it was, but the most memorable days indeed in the life of Sai devotees of Bombay, who are swelling into lakhs and millions, year-by-year, month-by-month and day-by-day. Sai is entering into every home and every heart. The Bombay TV gave quite a good coverage this time on Bhagavan's visit to Bombay enabling lakhs of people to have a glimpse of Baba's glory on Television at least.

From "Esotera"

(The following paragraphs are culled from an English Translation by Leone Muller of New York of an article in German on "Sai Baba, Godman" by Dr. Sigrid Lechner-Knecht of Federal Republic of Germany, published in the October and November issues of the 'Esotera' magazine.)

"If you are interested in paranormal powers, you must absolutely get to know Sai Baba," a woman botanist told me, whom I had looked up in New Delhi, on account of the medical plants I had gathered in the course of my trip through Asia. She described to me miraculous events which she had witnessed herself, especially miraculous healings of lame persons, of persons born blind, affected with cancer and others who were gravely ill. I had been advised to request a meeting with the famous controversial miracle man, even before my departure for my year-long study-tour through Asia which I undertook together with my husband in our Volkswagen bus. Hardly had I set foot on Indian soil when again and again I met people who had experienced Sai Baba. He is said to be no 'normal saint', but a divine incarnation, possibly of Siva"

"During our stay at Bombay, we visited the lotus temple (Dharmakshetra) of Sai Baba. We arrived just at the time of the evening Puja. The white lotus flower, symbol of purity and spirituality, shone in the evening sun like a golden jewel. Before the clear evening sky and the distant gleaming sea, this temple seemed to lose its earthly heaviness and to transform itself into light and the radiance of the sun. I entered the interior of the temple in a 'lost-to-the-world' mood. In the flickering light of the candles and oil lamps, one could recognise an altar with the flower-bedecked picture of the re-incarnated Sai Baba on the right side, that of the Sai Baba of Shirdi on the left, and in front, a devout crowd of followers. The room was filled with spiritual songs and the sound of cymbals. It was an impressive ceremony.

Did the people who gathered there revere a Saint or a Divinity? The present Sai Baba is addressed as Bhagavan (God) and that is also what He calls Himself. As it is, He adds that every one is God, since the Godhead is active in each of us. He travels through the country preaching. He preaches of the love of God in man, of peace, tolerance, and the spiritualization of life. He sees His task in reconnecting men with God, in helping them in their needs and suffering. He is living completely in the service of humanity. I have met persons in India who revere Him as Christ returned to earth."

"I resolved not to leave India without meeting Sai Baba. But, this was easier said than done... Sai Baba is constantly on the move. Not even His closest circle of collaborators and devotees could give definite information on where the Master could be found at any given time, for how long He would be there, or what were His future travel plans...After having been three times in vain at Brindavan, Kadugodi, near Bangalore, I managed at last to speak to a professor of the Arts and Science College founded there by Sai Baba.He said, "The only chance you have to meet Swami is come back again—perhaps one day you will be lucky enough to be called by Him." It took five months of efforts, coupled with many hardships, till we finally had that good fortune.

"There, at last! A slim figure, clad in yellow, slides out of the villa. The gates swing back. For one moment, Sai Baba remains at the gate. We have known Him for a long time from countless pictures... now, the small person starts moving—all concentrated energy and vitality, an impression no photograph can convey. People prostrate before Him; whoever is near enough kisses His feet and the hem of His robe. A biblical scene... Bhagavan jokes and laughs with some persons in the crowd as though they are old friends. Now there lies an atmosphere of relaxed cheerfulness over the scene. Once, Sai Baba cuts through the formation of visitors and makes His way to a lady who tends to Him a child which pulls faces and is obviously mentally disturbed. He caresses the child and seems to speak comforting words. Several times we observe how He produces Vibhuti by making a quick circling movement with His flat outstretched hand. Then He distributes it to some petitioners. Now He is again standing in the midst of the crowd, calmly looking around. The visitors follow each of His movements like spell-bound. Again, He shoots like an arrow toward a specific person, or, He moves hesitatingly in a circle.... After His tour among His devotees, Sai Baba proceeded up to the College building. The students listened spell-bound to the words of their great Master. Just by the expressive gestures with which He underlined what He said, they had an absolutely convincing effect. Then, Sai Baba disappeared in the interior of the building, where He talked further with His students."

"This morning!... opening of the gates: the saffron-robed slim figure between the reverently inclined visitors, who were grouped most densely around the tree with the idol of Krishna. Sai Baba jokes; accepts petitions, distributes Vibhuti, and even gives autographs today. The light is favourable; we are taking photographs and are filming somewhat with palpitations. After Sai Baba has once circled the tree with the Darshan-craving crowd, He walks toward our VV Bus which is parked near byHe asks in pure English if we have driven the 'many miles' from Germany to Whitefield in this car. And, He adds as though it were the greatest matter of course "You come with me!"

"We follow Sai Baba into a small room. He takes His seat on a throne-like armchair covered with red velvet. Aside from us, a young Parsee and two young Indian couples from Bombay with a child each, are among the chosen. We squat in a half circle at the Master, separated according to sex... He nods at me and asks whether the unaccustomed way of squatting does not give me too much trouble; I should not hesitate to stretch my legs."

"Then, Sai Baba asks us what we want. We pray that He should first consider the other visitors, since we were no 'devotees' and had come only out of scientific interest in His much-praised paranormal faculties. He cheerfully makes a play of words on 'saintist' and 'scientist', emphasising that a scientist who only declares as true and valid what is calculable and ponderable, what can be fitted into the accepted so-called 'natural laws' can never penetrate into the essence. The most important thing in the world is love. Without love, there is no meaningful existence. At these words, He again makes a movement in the air with His right hand, palm downwards; He now turns it upwards and hands me a small photograph with His picture, which He then dates and signs 'with Love'...

I have with me Murphet's book, "Sai Baba, Man of Miracles" and "PSI" by Ostrander / Schroeder. He holds the first in front of Him and says with a smile, 'Well. Well. Sai Baba—Sai Baba. The author is a good man.' Then He turns over the leaves in the PSI book. I described PSI as a collective concept for everything paranormal and as an example, the apparition of Rosenheim and other psychokinetic cases, relating that the Soviets especially are engaged in the investigation of PSI." ...Sai Baba said, "Yes. Every one has these abilities and he can also increase them through training." ...I said, "It is to be feared that these forces will be used for strategic purposes, political prestige, therefore for selfish and destructive aims. That is why I was interested in knowing whether all men possess these powers and whether they may be used for good or evil."

He said in reply, "Whoever intends to bring about evil with his powers will reap evil. Whoever wishes to use them for himself will lose them. Those abilities are often limited to a certain time and a specific mode of operation. Especially, if they are practised without piety."...

"The atmosphere was refreshingly cheerful and pleasant. This meeting had nothing solemn or pathetic. His naturalness and high spirits were especially comforting. Once more He began to laugh—His clear and hearty laughter. Anyone may be cheerful who has within him the serenity of Divine Peace."...

After, about one hour's conversation (with the people who were in the room), Sai Baba withdrew to adjacent room with the American lady and the Professor. A servant brought us grapes. When the conversation in the adjacent room was over, Sai Baba took leave of us, with the request to visit Him again, "I am very happy that you came. Thank you very much."

Ramakatha Rasavahini

Sri Sathya Sai Baba

78

Hanuman with Bharata

When Bharata lamented so deep and took so firm a vow, Hanuman was relieved of his pain; he rose up fresh and free. Then a thought entered into him to test the sincerity of Bharata. He said, "Victory to Rama, our Lord and Master," "Victory to the Lord of the Raghu Dynasty." At this, Bharata's heart was so struck by anguish that he broke into loud sobs; he pleaded, "O Chief of Monkeys! Are Sita, Rama, and Lakshmana keeping well? My mother, Sita, is she happy and in good spirits?"

Bharata shed tears of joy when he recollected the absent Sita and his brothers. At this, Hanuman related to him all that had happened; Bharata was overwhelmed with sorrow when he heard the narration; he fainted and fell on the ground, when he heard that Lakshmana had lost consciousness on the field of battle.

Recovering soon, Bharata rose and said, "Hanuman! Pardon me for my foolish act. I ought not to cause any further delay. Hasten with Sanjivini Hill, with the precious drug that can cure him. Proceed fast."

Hanuman fell at the feet of Bharata and raised aloft the Hill on his palm. When he took off and flew into the horizon, Bharata watched him with unwinking eyes, until he disappeared from view. He was glad that at last he was able to secure some knowledge of the movements of Rama; but, he was full of grief at the thought of the condition of Sita and of Lakshmana. With a heavy heart, he went home and communicated the story to the mothers.

Sumitra, the mother of Lakshmana; though saddened for a while, quickly recovered her composure, reminding herself that Rama was present by the side of her son. She told herself, "The son born of my loins is offering his very life, in the service of Rama! That is enough consolation for me. It gives me a great sense of satisfaction. My life has attained fulfillment. But, I am concerned, because Rama must be afflicted at the fate of Lakshmana; this 'loss of consciousness' must be affecting him; separation from his brother might cause him grief. Son! Shatrughna! Go to where Rama is and be by his side." At this Shatrughna stood up in readiness, saying, "What greater good fortune can fall to my lot?" But, Bharata stopped him and said, "Without specific orders from Rama, I am unable to agree to your joining him." Bharata comforted Shatrughna, and told him that Rama might be disturbed by this act, and that it was always beneficial to bow down to his will.

On Rama's Lap

Meanwhile, in Lanka, Rama was guarding Lakshmana. The day rolled into evening and night, and even into the hour of midnight. The Vanaras were squatting around Rama. Rama, acting as merely human, expressed anxiety at the non-arrival of Hanuman. "It is midnight; there is yet no sign of Hanuman! Has he lost his way by any chance, unaware of the route by which Dronagiri can be reached? Brother Lakshmana is still in critical unconsciousness!" He turned the face of Lakshmana tenderly towards him, and fondling it with fearful affection said, "Brother! Open your eyes and look at me. Never have you spent such long hours without turning your eyes towards me. Without even a wink of sleep, you watched over me, all these years, with no respite. How can I bear this silence from you? Since yesterday, I have none to comfort me, with soft speech." Rama wailed thus like common mortals. He poured out his grief in words. "Brother! For my sake, you forsook both parents and wife; you came into exile and forest life, along with me, though you were under no obligation so to do. You never paid any attention to the hardships you encountered. You suffered unendurable sufferings. Your nature is simple and sweet. But, for my sake you welcomed the hot sun, got wet in the rain, and shivered in the cold. You would not take food, at mealtime; for, you had no regular hours. You gave me whatever food you collected and, Lakshmana, I am not unaware of the fact that often you laid yourself on the bare ground on an empty stomach. Brother! For twelve long hours, I am deprived of loving care, do you not realise this? Lakshmana! Open your eyes just once and look upon me; that is what I most need now." Rama held the chin of Lakshmana in his loving hand and prayed most touchingly for one glance from his eye. The Vanaras sitting near shed tears of sorrow, at the anguish that Rama had in his heart. Many of them climbed the hill-top trees and peered into the distance to discover signs of the approach of Hanuman.

Soon, Hanuman appeared carrying the Sanjivini Peak on his upraised palm. Hanuman shone before their eyes as the embodiment of courage, made more loveable by the splendour of compassion. He touched ground and came among the Vanaras. The Vanaras shouted, 'Hail! Hail!' They said, " You have made our lives worthwhile; had you not come before dawn we would all have plunged into the ocean and ended our lives, for, we could not have survived Lakshmana and cared to exist without him. You have saved our lives." When Rama saw Hanuman with the Peak on which the curative plants were growing, his delight was beyond measure. Sushena immediately secured the drugs he required the Visalyakarini, the Samdhanakarini, the Souvarnakarini and the Samjivakarini—from the Peak and administered them to Lakshmana. And, that very moment, Lakshmana sat up, fully awake. Rama was overcome with joy; he embraced his brother and caressed him very fondly. He exclaimed, "Brother! Brother! Where had you been these hours?" His eyes were streaming with tears of ecstatic gratitude. He was plunged in high delight, comparable only to Brahmic Bliss.

Meanwhile, as a result of contact with the vitalised air that blew from the Sanjivini Peak in their midst, the Vanaras who had fallen dead during the days of bitter battle recovered their lives and were able to sit up and move about as before. This produced great joy among the Vanaras, who danced in glee, embracing their revived companions and kinsfolk.

Rama showered his blessings on Sushena; he assured Sushena that he would guard him against any vengeful steps that Ravana might plan against him. He ordered Hanuman to deposit him back again in Lanka, house and all; and also to deposit the precious Sanjivini Peak near his

house; in memory of his service to Lakshmana and the Vanaras. Hanuman praised his services and thanked him for saving the life of his master as well as those of his companions. He carried his house with him in it, as well as the Peak and placed them safely on the ground in Lanka.

The War Resumed

Another day dawned; the war drums could be heard from the Rakshasa camp. The Vanaras were agog with excitement; they drew enormous strength from the thought of Rama, their guardian and guide. Each of them was filled with the might of many elephants. They all jumped about, eager and, impatient, to start the fray. That day the generalissimo was Dhoomaraksha; he fought desperately, but, he was killed the next day by Mahavira. At this, Akampa stepped into the breach and fought ferociously at the head of the demonic horde: Angada led the Vanaras against, Akampa, and he was able to kill the Rakshasa general the very day. Hearing that Akampa had met his death at the hands of the enemy Prahastha rushed into the battlefield, raising great hue and cry. Nila took him on, and, remembering ever more keenly the name of Rama, he engaged him furiously. Leaping on him with terrible ferocity, Nila succeeded in killing the new general, Prahastha. Mahodara came next. Hanuman jumped on him with a reverberating roar, and fought with him, tooth and nail. Soon, he was able to cut Mahodara into pieces.

For five long days thereafter, the two sons of Kumbhakarana, Kumbha and Nikumbha, by name, continued the fight, at the head of a phalanx of fierce Rakshasas. On the sixth day, both brothers reached the Heaven that warrior heroes attain on death.

Observing the unbroken series of calamities that rained upon their forces, the Rakshasas of Lanka were stricken by panic; they were struggling to hide themselves somewhere; in order to save their lives; many surrendered and sought refuge in the Camp of the Vanaras. They blamed Ravana and abused him extremely harsh. Many proceeded to the Queen Mandodari, and prayed to her to arrest the train of disaster. She too was sad that Ravana had yielded to his mad impulses, and she tried to dissuade him away from the war.

Waking the Sleeper

But, the war went on unabated. Makaraksha, the redoubtable warrior continued the battle; Lakshmana opposed him, and killed him. When such signal success was accomplished in a trice, the Vanaras leaped in joy and shouted, "Jai! Jai!" Ravana wailed and wept when he heard that his unbeatable generals had all, one by one, fallen dead on the ground! He ran towards the place where his brother, Kumbhakarana, lay asleep, and he attempted to awaken him, by various urgent and drastic means. Huge crowds of Rakshasas gathered near his ears and beat huge drums wildly. Ravana brought together hundreds of boxers, who hit the sleeping demon all over the body; hundreds rained blows on him with their fisticuffs; many dealt heavy blows on his thighs, with gigantic maces. At last, the eyes opened, and the demon looked around. Ravana related his despair to him; he told him of the death of his two sons. That made him rise in red vengeance, as if he was the very embodiment of Time, the Universal Destroyer.

He exclaimed, "Fool! Can victory be achieved by you? You have tarnished yourselves unpardonably by the sin of stealing and bringing away Sita, the Mother of the Universe. Your wicked act is inexcusably heinous. Your viciousness is bringing destruction on Lanka. Go, surrender to Rama at least now, regardless of your absurd sense of prestige and pride! Was it

right, for a ruler charged with the high duty of maintaining righteousness and suppressing unrighteousness in his kingdom, to cast off propriety and good conduct, and abduct another's wife? Has this the approval of ethics? Is it conducive to spiritual progress? You have to suffer the fruits of your actions. Ravana! Rama is no ordinary mortal. Surpanakha, our sister, was maddened by lust; she planned to achieve her selfish desire, and she suffered the consequence of her wickedness. She set your impulses on fire, and induced you to enact this barbarous crime. Listening to a wily woman, you cast aside all discrimination, and, brought on your head this calamity, by the mischief of your own hands." Kumbhakarana laid the blame on his own brother and advised him for long.

The Two Brothers

But, Ravana was in no mood to accept the blame. "Do not desert me in disaster. Prepare yourselves for leading our armies into the war; save my life," he pleaded. Finding no means of escape, and overcome by affection for the brother, Kumbhakarana got ready. They placed cauldrons of toddy and heaps of meat before him, so that he might breakfast on them. Gulping the whole lot in a moment, Kumbhakarana proceeded to the battle-field. Seeing him enter the fray, Vibhishana, his younger brother, ran forward from Rama's camp and, fell at his feet in humble reverence. Rising up, he announced himself by name.

Kumbhakarana beamed in joy; he embraced his brother with loving tenderness. Vibhishana was the first to speak. He said, "Brother! Ravana insulted me in open court and kicked me out of the Audience Hall. I considered the pros and cons, all aspects of this affair and counselled him in various ways. He discarded my advice and gave ear to power-mad foolish ministers; he hurled unbearable abuses on me, within the hearing of those persons. I could not suffer the shame of it. I surrendered to Rama, and, knowing that I was helpless and innocent, he accepted me and granted me refuge."

At this, Kumbhakarana replied, "Well. Brother! The shadow of Death is already on Ravana. How then can he pay heed to good counsel? Surely, you have done the best to fulfill the goal of life. You are not Vibhishana now, you are Vibhushana (the shining jewel, the most splendid ornament) of the Rakshasa clan! You have ennobled and purified the clan by serving so ardently the very Ocean of Happiness, the Crown of the Raghu Dynasty, Rama. Go. Serve him with sincere zeal Brother! I have to engage in battle, regardless of my fate. I am also nearing Death. Ravana knows that my heart is not with him. I advise you to give up loyalty to this side or that; but, confine yourself to loyalty to Rama."

Receiving this advice and the blessings of his brother, Vibhishana returned to the presence of Rama. He told Rama, "Lord! That mountain of a Rakshasa is Kumbhakarana; he is a ferociously brave fighter. He has come to engage you in battle."

When the Vanaras heard these words, they were so angry that they spouted fire and leaped, under the leadership of Mahavira on the enemy forces. They threw huge trees and enormous boulders at him. But, Kumbhakarana stood firm and unaffected. It was all like biting a mad elephant with an eyelash! Boiling with anger, Mahavira administered a mighty blow with the clenched fist and Kumbhakarana reeled. But, recovering soon he returned the blow, and felled Mahavira to the ground. Nala and Nila now joined Mahavira; they too could not withstand the

might of Kumbhakarana. Fear seized the Vanara hordes. Sugriva and Angada had their share of the, mighty Kumbhakarana's onslaught and they rolled on the ground. At last, Kumbhakarana squeezed Sugriva under his arm and carried him off the field.

Kumbhakarana asserted that, by carrying the King off, he had vanquished the Vanara army.

The Rama Story: Stream of Sacred Sweetness

(To be continued)

Summer Showers

The Summer Course for College students on Indian Culture and Spirituality, that Bhagavan arranges every year was held for two weeks this year, at His Residence, `Nandanavanam; at Ootacamund, the Queen of Hill Stations, in Tamil Nadu. This year, only students from the Colleges bearing the stamp of Sathya Sai Educational objectives, viz., the Boys' College at Brindavan, Kadugodi, Bangalore Dt, and the Women's' Colleges at Anantapur, Jaipur, and Bhopal, were selected for the Course. Over 200 students and 20 teachers from these Colleges attended. A spacious Lecture Hall was specially constructed as an adjunct to `Nandanavanam', for holding the Course.

A unique feature of this year's Course was the major role allotted to students. Students of various classes from all the Colleges were assigned subjects, on which they were asked to prepare speeches for delivery during the Course! The response which the students gave to this rather staggering challenge was extremely heartening. In fact, many felt that a batch of these students can well form the nucleus for further Courses on Indian Culture. Students handled subjects like "The place of Religion in the Modern World," "Vedanta", "Education and Devotion", "Purushottama Yoga", "Karma Yoga" "the Bhagavad-Gita" and "the Upanishads" with confidence and clarity; and their talks were appreciated for their fullness as well as freshness. They dealt succinctly and in simple style with the Messages of the Ramayana and the Bhagavata. They spoke on "Hanuman and His Role in the Ramayana", "Ramakrishna Paramahansa", "Vivekananda" and on "Great Indian Women". In short, they made the Course, in the words of Dr. S. Bhagavantam, M. A., D. Sc. "a resounding success".

Members of the Staff of the Sai Colleges also spoke on the main facets of Indian Culture and Spirituality. Principal Anima Mukherji of the Jaipur College spoke on the reverence that Man has to offer to the Earth that sustains him. Principal Dr. Hemalatha of the Anantapur spoke on Divine Grace and Means of Winning it, as demonstrated in the Bhagavata, and Principal Narendra of the Brindavan College gave an illuminating speech on the Ideals that motivate and shape the Students of the Sai Colleges. Smt. Jayamma, M. A. and Smt. Pushpa Ramanna of the Anantapur College lectured on Saint Purandaradasa of Karnataka and the Holy Mother, Sri Sarada Devi. Dr. Lakshminarasimham, M. Sc., Ph. D, Prof. Nanjundaiya M. A., Sri Sadarsan M. Sc. and Sri Shiv Pandit M. B. A. (Calif) of the Brindavan College also gave inspiring talks.

Dr. S. Bhagavantam gave two talks on the "Message and Mission of Bhagavan", with illustrations drawn from his experience of close contact and observation. Dr. V. K. Gokak, interpreted some Vedic Hymns, clarifying their inner symbolism, and expounded the famous Gayatri mantra, in the context of spiritual endeavour. Dr. S. Radhakrishna, M. Sc., Ph. D., described the ills to which the student community is being subjected all over the world and pointed out how Bhagavan is building up a strong self-reliant, self-enquiring generation of Youth. General Cariapa, ever on the alert to guide Youth on the path of Service, Discipline and Duty stayed in the Camp for three days and was called upon by Bhagavan to address the students on themes favourite to him. Swami Chinmayananda elaborated on the means of subjugating the waywardness of the mind, in the two talks that he gave. Srimati Soundarm Kailasam told the Campers about the ancient Tamil Saints and Sages and their Message of Love and Surrender. Mrs. Chakravarthy, M. A., gave a revealing account of the similarities between Sai and Jesus, and affirmed that the Mission of Sai is the continuation and confirmation of the work of the Son of God. Sri. N. Kasturi gave talks on Sri. Ramakrishna Paramahansa, Sri Shirdi Sai Baba and Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba.

Sri Jalota, the young master-musician from Bombay stayed in camp for a few days and sang Bhajans, during the evening Bhajan Sessions. Hon'ble Sri Challa Subbarayudu, Minister for Municipal Administration, Government of Andhra Pradesh, attended the entire Course with enthusiasm and confessed at the Valedictory Function that he had vastly benefited thereby. Sri Sohanlal from Delhi addressed the gathering one evening, and said, he saw in the Course, clear signs of the dawn of the Sai Yuga of Love and Brotherhood.

The two Sundays that intervened during the Camp were utilised by the Campers—boys and girls—to engage in Social Service. On both days, they moved into Bazaar, the Municipal Market, the City Bus Stand, and the Railway Station; armed with brooms and baskets; they swept the roads and shop fronts, cleaned the drains with enthusiasm and efficiency. This led the members of the Municipal Council to pass unanimously a Resolution of appreciation, which was sent to the Organisers of the Camp. On the last morning of the Camp, between the hours of 9 and 11, the students sang in chorus Bhajan songs as they went through the main streets of the City.

On 30th May, Baba reached Calicut (Kerala) and laid the Foundation for a Public School run by the Sathya Sai Trust on Sri Sailam Hill. He addressed a mammoth gathering of 25,000. (Details in Aug. No.)

The Summer Course was inaugurated by Bhagavan, on the 20th May. The campers came in procession led by the College Band up the hill road from their quarters, and stood in line while the Prasanthi Flag was hoisted. Then, they assembled in the Hall. Dr. Bhagavantam spoke on the special features of the Camp and Course. He said that students would certainly be moved into action on the spiritual path, when they are told by students of their own age-group of the efficacy of Sadhana and the Ananda that Prema-yoga confers. Hon'ble the Chief Justice of the Tamil Nadu High Court, Sri Kailasam, the Chief Guest, told them of the immense delight and strength that he had derived, from the study of the Bhagavad-Gita and the Scriptural Classics of Tamil Nadu, while at the Sri Ramakrishna Student's Home as a boarder for 7 years. He appealed to them to venerate our ancient heritage and learn to practise its teachings in daily life. Bhagavan, in His Discourse, deplored that, even after the lapse of more than 25 years since achieving

independence from thralldom to the West, the sons and daughters of India had not realised the values of Indian Culture as sustaining sources of strength, peace and unity. "History and Culture are the parents of a Nation's Heritage; not to be interested in knowing them is tantamount to orphan-hood." "Students," He said, "do not read the texts that are prescribed, (texts that are themselves not always the best reading matter); they read only cheap and tawdry Notes, and Guides, available in the bazaars. They get no inspiration from their teachers, who are themselves led astray, into weakening habits by the fancies and fashions of the moment."

"Living has become an exercise in hotly pursuing something that is itself seeing fast. People run after buses; they run towards houses of entertainment; parents run to secure seats for their children; leaders run from place to place in search of fame; writers run to win a name for themselves. In this helter-skelter, injury is inflicted on the innocent and short-cuts are tried. People have no inclination to travel slowly and safely, admiring the countryside and inhaling the peace and beauty around them. How can man purify his mind and clarify his thoughts and impulses, while engaged in this hurry and sunk in worry? In order that the Divinity in him can emerge and express Itself in Thought, Word and Deed, man must have Calm and Quiet, both inside and outside him. This can be achieved only when man is conscious of the One Universal Absolute Power, guiding and guarding the entire Universe. This is the lesson taught by the Sages of this land."

This year, Bhagavan selected as the topic for His daily evening Discourses, the Mahabharata, and the Role of Sri Krishna in the epic struggle between the Kauravas and Pandavas. During one discourse, Bhagavan revealed the exact dates, of a few great events that are mentioned in the Mahabharata: "Sri Krishna was born on 20th July, 3228 B. C., (Srimukha Year, Sravana Month, Bright Fortnight, Ashtami Day, Rohini Star, 3.00 A. M.); He left the body, on 20th February, 3102 B. C. ((Pramadi Year, Chaitra Month, Bright Fortnight, Prathama Day)—a Date that marks also the Inaugural Day of the Kali Yuga, the yuga in which we are. The Mahabharata War (the Battle of Kurukshetra) began in 3138 B C. in the Subhakritu Year, Kartika Month, Trayodasi of the Dark Fortnight."

Bhagavan advised that the 'human' characteristics of Sri Krishna be studied with reverence and sincere appreciation, so that one can train the mind to benefit by the example. The intention of the Divine Incarnation is to help man to do this. So, Bhagavan wanted the students to read the Bhagavata and the Mahabharata, direct, and not be confused by the garbled and garish interpretations of Krishna given by dramatic troupes and film directors.

Sri Krishna was an indefatigable Lover of Peace and an earnest worker for the Integration of the Nation. He was always prepared to sacrifice His personal pride and predilections, in order to promote Love, Concord and Understanding. Whatever role He took, He observed the Rights and Wrongs, the Rules and Limitations pertaining to that position, in order to teach mankind the value of discipline and decency in human affairs. Bhagavan illustrated these aspects of the Krishna Avatar from incidents, mentioned in the Mahabharata.

Those who had the privilege of listening to His exposition (besides the students, members of the public were also allowed in the evenings. for the Divine Discourses and the Bhajans) could

revolve contemporaneously in their own minds their own experiences with Bhagavan, and they were thrilled by the awareness that they are now with Sri Krishna come in human form again.

The University Examination Results of the students of the Sathya Sai College at Brindavan were announced during the Camp, and, the phenomenal success of the students, in bagging First class, Distinctions, and Ranks electrified the atmosphere of the Camp with joy and gratitude to Bhagavan. The Campers were also able, to score very high percentages of marks, many of them more than even 90 percent, in the rather stiff test paper that they were asked to answer, on the Discourses given by Bhagavan, as well as the Lectures and Talks they had heard during the two weeks.

Certificates were given to every one by the Divine Hand of Bhagavan on the evening of 4th June. The Central Trust has initiated a Diploma in Sathya Sai Education, which will be awarded to students who have benefited most from a series of Summer Courses and from sharing in the activities of the Sathya Sai Seva Dal. Bhagavan blessed 17 students (including two Girl Students), with the coveted Diploma on the Concluding Day of the Course. He also gave special Prizes to many among the Student Speakers, who had distinguished themselves as able exponents of the subjects allotted to them. The Final Session of the Course was addressed by the Hon'ble Sri Challa Subbarayudu garu, as well as by General Cariapa. Bhagavan exhorted the students to: 1. Follow the Master (the Voice of God within) 2. Face the Devil (the low desires, the deadening habits, the vicious temptations etc.) 3. Fight to the end (with vigilance and unremitting Sadhana) and 4. Finish the Game (of life, in Triumphal Victory).

On 5th June, Bhagavan had a very intimate sessions with the students only during which He narrated in a most inspiring and touching manner His own boyhood and school life highlighting the ideals of good life that He upheld by precept and example in those early days. He also materialised a medallion-type unique map of India, wherein were engraved in Sanskrit verse the events and achievements of Sai Era during the ensuing 46 years, that Bhagavan assured He will be among men. It was truly an Epochal Hour, in the History of Mankind—Providence predicting the Unfoldment of Its Almighty Will.

—Ed.

Modern Civilisation is based on technological advance, a degree of advance that can enable man to set foot on the moon and drop a rocket on Mars. But, there is a Higher Technology, the Understanding of the deeper levels of his own Consciousness and the transformation, through Dhyana techniques, of that Consciousness into a source of Power. This is Sujnana, Wisdom, as distinct from Vijnana which means, Science. There is also a Higher Understanding, called Prajnana, which transcends even the realm of Consciousness, and takes man into the One Basic All-pervasive All-inclusive Truth. Then there is no Knower, no Known; there is only Knowledge.

—Baba

The Pilgrimage of Life

Each of us born in this world has to travel on this journey from birth to death, from womb to tomb. We do not know where we came from; we do not know where we go! But what we do know is that life is an inevitable journey which has to be undertaken and the nature of this travel is the most important for us.

The kind of journey we undertake, the nature of the life that we lead depends to a great extent on what we are, where and when we are born and live. If we were born one million years ago, we would have been struggling with stone implements to kill animals and also lived in natural caves! We have travelled a long way from that stage and today our life is much more complex than it was for our cave-ancestors.

Adi Sankara has said and correctly, that human life is most precious and difficult of achievement. Life as we know in the world has evolved over three thousand million years and throughout the first 2500 million years it evolved very very slowly; there is only trace of primitive life such as fungi, algae and bacteria. The first proliferation of life is seen only some 500 million years ago and from then on life evolved fairly rapidly and, by the time we reach about 100 million years ago, we had profusion of a variety of life, both animal and plant. But the ancestors of man appeared only about 4 million years ago and only about a million years ago he was living in caves and using stone implements! However, much of his mental development has taken place only during the last 10 to 20 thousand years and maximum unfolding of his brain only during the past 2030 years! We also find that among mankind, even today, there are various grades of unfoldment from the primitive man in Africa and Australia to the greatest of godly geniuses, Sankara or Buddha.

What distinguishes man is his intelligence which is the consequence of the enormous development of his brain; while all other animals live according to instinct, man alone has liberated himself from instincts and has apparently virtual charge of his destiny; herein lies man's uniqueness, his problems and his dilemmas!

What we are thus depends on two things: what we have *inherited* in terms of our body and mental make up from our parents and their lineage; man's study clearly reveals, that we are not only the result of the immediate heredity of our parents but also any other traits, physical or mental inherited from any member from either side which may determine and influence our make up. We have our eye colour determined from a recessive gene of an uncle or aunt! Our musical genius may be inherited from a great grand father! In other words each is unique only in being a particular mixture of various traits!

What we are or will become is next *determined* by the family and the society into which are born. We may be born into a rich family with a silver spoon in the mouth as they say; this may be for our good or for our ruin since people who do not have to struggle do not have their personality fully developed! We may be born to poor, gifted parents, to poor dull parents. Our mother may die soon after we are born; we may grow up without the loving care of a mother. Or if we are unlucky we may be born to a mother who has no love in her heart! It may be that we are brought up by an "ayah". Our father may be a drunkard, may be an angry man! We may have many brothers or sisters, all struggling to live in a house full of discord! All that conditions our personality.

We may be able to go to a school which is good, where we have teachers who inspire us into a sense of values; we may be in the hands of a perverted teacher! We may get good advice, and also have the means to go to a good college; live comfortably and well; we may fall into bad company and indulge ourselves in the wiles of our senses. "Let us live happily, why bother about the future; Today well-lived is the most important"—may be our philosophy and we may become victims of insatiable sense gratification! Alternately we may have the good fortune to come under the influence of good parents, good friends, good teachers who may become a blessing not only to ourselves but to society at large.

Thus our life's journey depends on what we are, which means what we have inherited from our parents, our family and also the society we live in. The society we live in also includes, the means by which we earn our livelihood. If we are in business, our attitude to living will be of one type; if we are in a job with a fixed salary then our life will be of a different kind. Our outlook on life is determined to a great extent on the type of job we do. Whether, we are teachers, or doctors, or lawyers or businessmen, each of these moulds our character! Of course, what we are, which means the way we have been brought up also conditions and controls what we will be in each of these professions.

If our hearts are full of love, having been brought up by discriminative and wise parents, then we will have love and compassion to our fellow men and we will earn money and also gratitude; but if we have had a bitter childhood this will be reflected in our relations with others and we will have all sorts of resentment built up and we will create difficulties not only for ourselves but to all those around! How often we find people who, out of hidden resentment and hate create disaffection and trouble! These are the trouble-shooters in Society and one can trace these traits to their background!

We have hardly any independence in our thinking! We behave according to the prejudices of our caste, our creed. We endow the body with a label; call it Christian or Hindu, and our entire conditioning is such that we are no longer free to think! When we look at another and we hear his name, we have already made an assessment of what he is based on, his caste or creed or status in life and we behave according to a pattern which is certainly due to the conditioning of the mind. We also feel that we are not merely individuals; our caste, our position in society, Conditions or limits, our personality. Although we have the potentiality of being immense we believe that we are small according to the limits which we think society has imposed, and which we believe is the true measure of our life. We are prisoners of our "fate" which is exactly what many have come to accept "Destiny is no iron cage" reminds Baba but we are all prisoners in a cage of our own making!

The foregoing analysis clearly brings out that most of us seem to have hardly any choice in our inheritance, in our behaviour pattern and that we are victims of circumstances! The freedom which Man has acquired through the long process of evolution is imaginary and almost non-existent! This would make the situation very bleak indeed. Yet, we know of hundreds who have liberated themselves from the shackles of man-made imprisonment, and therein lies hope for humanity and for each one of us in our jeevan yatra!

Baba says, "You are not really one but three—the one you think you are; the one others think you are and the one you really are." This is a profound analysis of the human situation, and let us study this in some detail. First: "The one you think you are." We all have an estimate of ourselves. We believe we are really handsome, good people, in fact much better than others. We are kind and compassionate; we are embodiments of justice, courage, heroism, truth and what not. Of course this is more a wish than truth! We all live in an imaginary world; but these traits which we think we possess represent more the "targets" than the actual reality. It is this wish, that we should be our best, which makes us believe we are all this. We try to project ourselves as such. Next Baba says, "The one others think you are." What others think we are depends very much on their relationship with us. Most people are concerned with themselves; their evaluation of others is in relation to the benefits that they derive from them. If we have been helpful to them, they will believe that we are good, friendly. This again will change depending on circumstances. If we have not been helpful according to their estimate then they will believe we are bad people. "Good" or "bad" is mostly in relation to what benefit we get from others. Finally Baba says, "The one you really are." What we really are is actually a mixture; we are not entirely bad, we are not entirely good. We are actually victims of our inheritance, the love and hate we are born with, and conditioned by circumstances. We fear both the Devil and the Divine in us. But Baba always reminds that we are in fact Divine. We have the possibility of attaining the best that we think we are (which we are not now) and which we would like to have and which we would like to be. This analysis of Baba is a very important first step in the beginning of the unfolding of our personality on life's journey.

The moment we have tried to understand that each of us is not one personality and that we are three, then our next task of liberating ourselves from the limitations imposed by inheritance and society begins. Of course, the limitations that I speak of, are not those which are imposed by society for our good. Most of these limitations are disciplines to control the vagaries of the senses and these are essential not only for the well-being of society, but also for our spiritual unfoldment. The limitations that I speak of are prejudices against individuals or groups, or assumed virtues (nonexistent) based on mere birth or position.

The most crucial factor in our unfoldment is the realisation through critical self-analysis of what we are, and why we behave the way we do. If this is understood then we will, from then on, be in a position to start exercising the discretion and choice on which depends the elimination of tendencies which pull us towards the animal and the bestial.

If we can understand ourselves, and the motive forces of anger, malice, hatred and all other factors (which we often assume are virtues) then the opposite forces (which also exist within us) such as forgiveness, compassion, kindness and love start flowing. This is what we call purification and is also spiritual unfoldment. In fact spiritual unfoldment and sadhana are nothing but the steps taken to remove these limiting tendencies which imprison us and to let the opposite forces flow and displace the bad ones.

You will notice that in all this process of cleaning up, purifying, society's role is essential. The very limitations which are imposed on us by society must be removed by a conscious individual effort through society itself! This is possible the moment the human being is aware of the snare

that has been set up, and that it is in his hands to break them. Then he can use society to liberate himself from the imprisonment.

How can we test ourselves and the control we exercise on our mind except through the opportunities provided by society! How can we learn to show compassion unless we have somebody who apparently does not deserve compassion! There must be somebody to slap our cheek so that we can exercise patience and show him the other cheek! The world is the workshop of the Lord, says Basavanna. "Martyaloka vembudu kartarana kammataavayya"—Spiritual unfoldment is in and through society. Sadhana is not escape into the shrine room, or to the forest or shaving one's tress and wearing ochre robes.

The basic recipe, that Baba has been giving us to free ourselves from the limitations imposed by our inheritance and conditioning through the prejudices of society, etc. is, *Love*. He has repeatedly stressed that this is the path, the only path to liberation. "Love is the fly-wheel of the home," says Baba. Love leads to expansion; "Expansion is life; contraction is death." "Love knows no fear, no anxiety, no grief." "Love is expansion, inclusion, mutualisation" "Correct your vision; the world will get corrected. Reform yourselves, the world will get reformed. You create the world of your choice." Baba is giving us a clue to the means to liberate ourselves. We can be as free as we want to be. It is the mind that binds, the mind that liberates. Unless we determine to liberate ourselves we cannot change ourselves. This process is not easy because, the basic passions pull us down. We may like to love, but the opposite feeling of hate is strong and we succumb.

In our minds there is always this battle going on between the two forces. The conscience, which is God, telling us to go the right way; the opposite feelings, call it what you will, pull the opposite way. We want to be good but the senses, say "Why should you? The fellow has been ungrateful to you and even if you show love will it reform him? No. Your survival is important. What about your wife and children? Don't you have a duty towards them?" We can quote what ever we want and the mind overpowers us. Baba says: "Since God is in every heart, the Inner Voice is the signal that Dharma gives, while approving or disapproving any line of action. The Dharma that you have to follow is indicated by that Voice. That is the Swadharma for you."

The first essential step is to start on the path of Love; all else will follow once this is achieved. The step is "adweshta" do not hate, as the Gita says. Love is a feeling; the first step is not to hate; then the opposite feeling comes on its own. The moment we are able to generate the feeling of love, then all else follows. Then we are able to look at others with kindness, compassion, and helpfulness. A heart full of anger cannot love and is in turmoil. Baba says: "... the one single object that the Vedas have in view is to make man Divine, through a series of spiritual exercises. They lead man from the animal stage, when he believes he is just this body suffering hunger, thirst, and desires of various kinds into the state of humanness, when he recognises that he is higher than an animal and later, the Vedas persuade him to use his intelligence and discrimination to sublimate his passions and emotions to the Divine level where he is eternal bliss." "The four fundamental urges of man, Dharma—to be righteous, Artha—to earn and accumulate; Kama—to desire and get the desires fulfilled; and Moksha—to expand and get liberated from the 'here and now' into the 'ever and everywhere' get sanctified and sustained by the Vedic path."

Seva—service is one of the essential Sadhanas in this process of practising Love, the *prema marga* which Baba has been advising us to follow. Seva done with the attitude that the talents which God has endowed us with are for the use of all, and that the more they are multiplied the greater is the joy of sharing and the consequent joy of fulfillment. In fact, *nishkamakarma* on which the Gita stresses throughout, is impossible without love. The only way one can work without anticipating the fruits, is by being actuated by a strong feeling of love!

Baba has said: "Seva is the best Sadhana for eliminating the nefarious pull of the mind towards desires." "When there is no compulsion on one side and no compensation required on the other then it is really Seva" Baba has declared: "Human lives are now passing on and on, filth over filth, bent, broken, diseased, distressed, disheartened! To ennoble these lives and to make the human heritage worthwhile, I have come. I am evincing all this enthusiasm to teach you the proper attitude of Seva, for Love expresses as Seva; Love grows through Seva; Love is born in the Womb of Seva. And God is Love." "Scatter the seeds of Love in dreary desert hearts; then sprouts of Love will make the wastes green with joy, blossoms of Love will make the air fragrant, rivers of love will murmur along the valleys and every bird and child will sing the Song of Love... Service of man by man can lead to the discovery of man as the God that is his reality."

Blessed are we that we have Sai to take us step by step on our life's journey. How fortunate that He is with us, warning us and also waiting patiently until we are ready to take the step. Let us resolve to understand our good fortune and make use of Him on this journey of life. I started this article by saying, "We do not know where we came from; we do not know where we go." Once we have heard Sai's Clarion call, we know that the path is the ancient highway, now not recognisable, which He has come to clear. The goal is Himself, mergence with Him. He is the Guide and let us accept Him as such and then our life will be one of fulfillment and Bliss.

—*M. V. N. Murthy*

The Wish and its Fulfillment

—*Adi von Harder*

In autumn 1974, I spent several months in Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry. German friends living in the Ashram since ten years invited me. Though Mother had passed away in 1973, I felt very very near to her. For many years, She and Sri Aurobindo had been an inner Guru to me. Home again in Hamburg, in February 1975, I made up my mind to return to Pondicherry at the end of the year.

Meanwhile, a friend gave me the book, "Sai Baba, Man of Miracles", by Murphet of Australia. She said, "Perhaps, you may see Him in India." I was strongly impressed by the book and I decided to see Sai Baba.

While at Pondicherry, I prayed to Sai Baba for help. An American lady who visited the Asram met me by accident. She told me that I could try to reach Him from Bangalore. Very soon, a member of the "Servas", organisation to which I belonged came to my room; we had not met for ten long years. She wrote to another member, Mr. Sharma, at Bangalore, to receive me there and help me.

He was at Vallabh Niketan, Bangalore; to my surprise I was told that Sai Baba devotees had their gatherings in that very place. So, I could join a party of devotees proceeding in a private bus, on November 6, to take part in the World Conference of Sai Baba Organisations as Delegates, at Sai Baba's own place.

Arriving at Puttaparthi, the place where Sai Baba had His headquarters, I was cordially received by a young man. He asked me, "Are you a delegate?" I replied, "Oh, No. I only got here by accident!" "Then, you must indeed be blessed," he said.

In the afternoon, I was sitting in the Darshan line. Sai Baba came out of the temple in a dark orange robe. Slowly He came nearer. "Oh. I should paint Him." This wish came into me spontaneously. When He passed by, He gave me a deep look, smiled and inclined His head slightly towards me. Happiness flowed through me. I had found the living Guru for myself.

Since the place was filling up quite fast, I felt I should not stay, since all available accommodation was reserved for delegates. But, the young man who had met me on arrival advised, "Not so quick. You have to seek and secure Baba's permission to leave!" Half an hour later, he told me that Sai Baba wished me to stay for the Conference, and for His Birthday! My heart was full of joy and gratitude.

Happy at the turn of events, I sat on the Darshan line. Swami coming out turned at me, and gave me Vibhuti, created by a circular movement of His palm.

Some, one told me of a lady devotee who was expected to arrive for the Conference as a delegate. I had read about her in the book by Murphet, and admired her as the first German lady who had experienced the Baba miracles on the sands of the liver Chitravati. My room could well take another occupant and I prayed within myself to Sai Baba to give the place to her. Her name, I remembered, was Gabriella Steyer.

At 16 hours that day, a lady came in, looked around and departed quickly. At breakfast next morning, it so happened that we sat next to each other. She told me, "I was asked to share your room; but, it seemed too damp for me. I found a place in the second floor. But, it was a terrible night for me. Some one was snoring and sneezing. I could not get a wink of sleep."

We found that we both were talking German! I asked her, "Do you, perhaps, know Gabriella Steyer?" She replied, with a laugh, "Oh, yes. That's me!" "Then," I said, "Sai Baba sent you to my room, as I prayed to Him to do. Since you did not follow His response to my prayer, He gave you that terrible night." Needless to say, she came into my room and we became good friends.

The World Conference! What a flood of happiness and spiritual inspiration! The Poornachandra Hall was filled up to the very last row! Many interesting and informative speeches! Unforgettable were the Bhajans sung by Baba. Also, His materialisations, such as a Japamala for an old Vedic scholar.

On His Birthday, Swami came round on a helicopter, circling the Stupa of all Religions, waving His white handkerchief at us—a new kind of Darshan!

After His Birthday, I decided to leave; so, I sat on the Darshan Line, and prayed to Swami within myself, "You have brought me to your Presence in a quite unforeseen way. Please send me back now." At once, I heard His Voice, "Adi! Come in."

I woke, as if from a dream. "Yes! Adi! Come in," He repeated. So I did. He was giving interviews to many. He materialised a beautiful golden chain for a young Indian lady and gave it to her saying, "No depressions any more. This will guard you." Then, Baba turned to me. At the end of a short talk, He told me that He had arranged a Bus to take me and others to Bangalore!

On December 24, when I went to Whitefield to have Darshan, Swami was leaving for Puttaparthi! He told me to follow Him. At 9 P. M. the taxi arrived and, through the clear star-lit night with a shining white half-moon lying on his back, off we went to Puttaparthi.

I joined the morning Omkar for the first time; I was so taken by its strong vibration that I felt myself dropping in the Ocean of God's Love. In the afternoon, Baba spoke of Christ and on the true significance of His words which the world has missed.

Far far away from home, that Day gave me all the happiness and bliss of Christmas. The warm-hearted greetings from devotees made me feel at home.

On the last day of the year, Swami called me for an interview. "What do you want?" He asked. "Oh. Quite a lot!" I replied. "But, my main wish is that you look at the watercolor landscapes I painted for your Birthday... Chitravati with the hills beyond, and the expanse of sand where you thrilled your devotees with miracles." He looked at them and said, "Oh, I am very happy," He went through the pages of my sketch-book and all the little drawings. At this, I mustered enough courage to ask, "Would you allow me to paint you?" "Yes! I would be very happy. Do it when I am back at Whitefield."

Then, He looked into my eyes and said, "But, first let me set right your physical condition. Your health is not quite what it ought to be." Then, He materialised a little OM locket for me. It was for me the happiest day of the year; I felt overwhelmed with joy.

At 6-30 the next morning, I went up the Hill behind the Nilayam. From the crest, you can see the glory of the rising Sun and on the west, the beautiful valleys carpeted with green fields. The stream of Chitravati is charming, with the, backdrop of many-shaped multi-coloured hills. The roseate light of the fleeting morning granted delightful thrills to the onlooker. I sat painting the scene, and I went again the next morning, to give my work the last touches. But, I got very angry with myself, for, I had forgotten my, sketch-book. A voice rebuked me. "It is Sunday, You

should enjoy this lovely morning. Follow the little path up the hill, for a change.” I obeyed. The path led me into a little green valley full of beauty and peace. There in the middle of the valley I found two stone structures and a young man was singing Bhajans. He took me to a cool spring that came through the rocks. Many instances I could recall where Baba guided me miraculously from inside me. But, I know His devotees can recount many more.

I am leaving for Germany, thinking of all the months spent in the Presence and Omnipresence of our beloved Swami. He has taught me many lessons, easy and hard. I know that I have changed a lot and I plan to change and develop further. I am taking with me the picture of Swami, in my sketch-book as well as in my heart. I hope to accomplish my wish painting a fine picture for Him and becoming a fine picture for Him, of purity, humility and love, which He will bless.

Glory Galore

Students of the Sri Sathya Sai College of Arts and Science, Whitefield have achieved outstanding glory, this year also, in the Annual Examinations of the Bangalore University, as well as of the Karnataka State P. U. C. Board.

The percentage of passes is much above the University Average, being 68 in II PUC, 56 in Final B. A., 67 in Final B.Sc., and 75 in Final B. Com.

Students have also scored high ranks in all the examinations. K. Premanand, who came First last year in the I PUC has this year also secured the First Rank, among the many thousands from the entire State, in Commerce. Anup Jalani, has stood First in the B. Com examination this year, repeating his astounding success in getting that rank last year as well as the previous year, an achievement unparalleled in the annals of the University.

In the Final B. A., R. Sridharan stood seventh in rank; in the final B. Sc., K Devanand scored the third rank.

In the Second Year B. Com. Examination, K. V. Balasubrahmania Sarma and K. Vijayabhaskar maintained their progress by scoring ranks, again, standing second and fifth in the list of first classes.

These students have thus demonstrated, once again, that moral training and spiritual instruction, social service and self-reliance do really promote intellectual efficiency.

In a Flash

Dive in; dive in; and, peep into the deed within:
This, says, Sai, is the way Divine.

Surrounded by darkness, steeped in Ignorance, we are.
To light the Flame of Wisdom, to scatter the cloud
That separates, and seems to hide the Truth,
Say, "Sai Raamaaya Namah", "Sai Raamaaya Namah".

Sai—Sans I, gives Viveka to you,
Raamaaya-without Maaya (Delusion) gives Vichakshana, to you
Namah—Na mah—not mine, gives Vairagya to you.
Viveka (Intelligence), Vichakshana (Discrimination)
Vairagyam (Detachment)—these three shall give you Freedom.

Search—See and Reach? That is the Call, the Grace.
Words put on meanings in flash; hold fast
To the hope that shines in a flash.

—*R. Shankaranarayanan, Agartala, Tripura*

Ramakatha Rasavahini

Sri Sathya Sal Baba

79

The End of Kumbhakarna

Meanwhile, Hanuman regained awareness of the state of things; he found that Sugriva was not around; so, he began anxiously to discover his whereabouts. While being carried away, pressed under the arm of the mighty Kumbhakarna. Sugriva recovered consciousness and he tried his best to wriggle out of the hold. Hanuman found him engaged in this desperate bid to escape, and he ran forward to render help. However, Sugriva succeeded by himself in separating himself from his captor, and started a valiant fight against him. He bit off the nose and ears of Kumbhakarna, and the monster had as a consequence enormous difficulty to breathe.

Soon, a horde of Vanaras yelling "Victory to Rama" "Victory to our Master", surrounded Kumbhakarna and rained rocks, hills and trees on him. The infuriated demon leaped on the Vanaras and catching whomsoever he could lay hands on, he crunched them with his teeth and swallowed them. Many were crushed to death by his hands. Thus Kumbhakarna was able to scatter the Vanaras in panic.

At this, Rama told Lakshmana and others that the time had come when he had to enter the field and that his intercession could not be delayed any longer. "Lakshmana! Bring that inexhaustible arrow sheath hither," he said. Bearing the command of Rama on his head, he brought the sheath immediately and placed it in his brother's hands. Armed with the Kodanda Bow, Rama walked into the battle area, like a lion towards its prey. Lakshmana, Sugriva, Hanuman and Jambavan followed him behind. The arrows from Rama's bow flew like winged serpents straight at the foe. They spread all over the place and penetrated the four quarters. They destroyed millions of heroes and soldiers in the enemy ranks. Unable to stand the onslaught of the arrows, the Rakshasas fled the field. The stream of arrows never got dry, because, every arrow that was shot returned back into the same sheath after inflicting the injury intended.

Realising that Rama had exterminated the Rakshasa forces, Kumbhakarna was terribly enraged; he roared like a wounded lion and jumped into the fray. The Vanaras were alarmed; they fled in fear. Finding that no other plan was feasible, Rama aimed an arrow at Kumbhakarna and sliced off his hands at the shoulders. At this, the monster shone like the Mandara Mountain, when its wings were sliced off by the Lord of Gods, Indra. He rushed towards Rama with a shrieking roar. Rama drew the bowstring full behind the ear and let go a bunch of arrows that struck with deadly force all over his face. Kumbhakarna reeled under the impact, but, he did not fall. So, Rama shot another arrow which severed his head and felled it to the ground.

When the head was sliced off, the trunk continued to run for some distance, and to prevent this movement, Rama shot another arrow which cut it in twain. Suddenly, a splendour arose from the body and advancing towards Rama merged in him. The Rakshasa attained liberation without

performing any Sadhana of Japa (Recitation of Name) or Tapa (Austerity for Sense Control and Mind-control). While alive, he shone like an incomparable hero on the battlefield; dead, he attained the highest state of Mergence with God. Rama stood on the field; with a sprinkling of sweat drops on his lotus face; his body revealed a few drops of Kumbhakarna's blood that had fallen on it during the fight.

Meghanada leads

It was the hour of dusk; both armies had a fiercely hot day of ferocious fight. So, they retired into their camps. The Grace bestowed by Rama reinforced the spirits of the Vanaras. Like fire fed by dry grass, the flame of their ardour rose high. The Rakshasas lost strength, night and day. Ravana bewailed inconsolably. He was a cobra that had lost its crest-jewel. Pressing his brother's severed head to his bosom, he wept aloud. Meghanada his son, tried to soothe his anguish in various ways; "Tomorrow I shall demonstrate before you my heroic might. I shall, in a trice, smash this Vanara horde out of shape. I shall confer on you joy immensely greater in quantity than the grief you are burdened with today," he boasted. Very soon, dawn broke. Ravana was informed by messengers that the bears and monkeys had surrounded the city.

This drew the brave indomitable warriors among the Rakshasas into the struggle; they marched forth to meet the enemy. Each fought with whomsoever he encountered to the utmost of his skill and strength. The whole of that day, the fury of battle on both sides was indescribably frightening. Meghanada ascended his magic chariot and rose into the sky. His challenging roar thundered like the clouds on the doomsday firmament. That roar felled the Vanaras to the ground, as if by a mighty blow. The earth shuddered at its echo. In a moment, he contrived a Pseudo-Sita and, seating her in the chariot, he came down along the battlefield! Hanuman noticed this before every one else. And accosting him, Meghanada shouted, "Listen, Hanuman! This Sita, to recover whom you are waging this war, I am killing her this moment. Look. With her death, this war must end," and, drawing his sword, he cut her to pieces and cast them away. Hanuman was plunged in uncontrollable rage; he called upon the Vanaras to fight on, with no thought of survival, and exterminate the Rakshasa brood. The Vanaras attacked them so ferociously that the Rakshasas fell back into the City.

Hanuman approached Rama and reported to him the wicked deed performed by Meghanada. As soon as he heard the news, Rama pretended to be affected by it; he was not unaware of the fact that it was a pseudo-Sita contrived through the magic skill of the Rakshasas; still, he acted as if he was just a 'man among men'. Lakshmana too was affected by despair; he grieved at the loss of the Mother of all the Worlds, and sat despondent, at the futility of continuing in this world.

Hearing reports of what had happened, Vibhishana rushed to the presence of Rama. He said, "Master! You know the truth of this. The entire incident is a fake. Sita is alive and guarded with great care. Ravana alone can have access to the place where she is kept under guard. Meghanada has only designed a 'Sita' and killed her in order to deceive you into inaction and despair. Among us Rakshasas such tricks are very common; I know how they revel in such mean stratagems."

Rama and Lakshmana were happy when they heard him, and they appreciated his exposure of the secret tactics of the Rakshasas without keeping the information back.

In order to confirm the statement of Vibhishana and to satisfy himself all the more, Hanuman assumed another form, and entering Lanka City unnoticed by any one, he went to the park where Sita was kept under guard, and returning, he assured the Vanaras that all was well. This urged the Vanaras to greater enthusiasm in battle.

Meghanada returned to the battle very soon. He rained on the Vanaras this time, not only sharp arrow, but spears, maces, axes, pestles, and boulders. The Vanaras heard terror-striking shouts and commands reverberating all around them, "Beat", "Hack" "Hold fast" etc, but, they could not see who were obeying those orders and beating, hacking and holding them fast! It was an eerie experience which spread confusion among them. They were unable to decide whence the danger came and where they had to turn for refuge.

Even redoubtable heroes like Nala, Nila, Angada and Hanuman were filled with fear. Meghanada aimed arrows at Lakshmana, Sugriva and Vibhishana and pierced their bodies. But they fought against him nevertheless with unabated fury.

Meanwhile, Meghanada engaged Rama himself in battle. He showered hissing serpent arrows on him. It was the renowned Dragon Weapon, the Sarp-astra. And, Rama the Supreme Actor come in the Human Role, the mighty Hero who destroyed Khara, Dooshana and their phalanxes, allowed himself to be bound by the effects of that powerful weapon, the Sarp-astra! In order to give due respect to that Divine Dragon and to demonstrate its potency, he permitted it to harm him! This may seem strange, but this is the history of Rama, come with attributes, qualities, and limitations. So people with limited capacities of thought, word and deed cannot discover this Truth. The Vanaras were rendered helpless and worried, because Rama had been overpowered by the weapon of the Dragon. Meghanada was overjoyed; he rushed among the Vanaras, spouting vulgar abuse.

Jambavan saw him. "O You Vicious Worm! Stop," he cried. Meghanada brushed him aside, saying, "Fie on you. I had ignored you so far, as too old to deserve attention. Of what avail are your words to me? Move away." He threw a trident at Jambavan, which was luckily caught by him and thrown back at Meghanada himself. The aim was so correct and the throw was so forceful, that the trident hit him straight on the heart; the wounded man circled round himself a few times and fell on the ground.

Jambavan rushed to where he fell; he held his feet together and swung him round very fast before he dashed him on the ground. "Now, say whether I am an old man. Judge me whether I have strength of youth or the weakness of old age." Jambavan challenged Meghanada.

Meghanada did not die. He rose with great difficulty and moved away. He had not fulfilled his boast, and so, he felt ashamed to show his face before his father. He went straight to a garden named Nikumbala, where many Rakshasas had performed penance and endured austerities in the past. Four courtiers of Vibhishana who were watching incognito the movements of the enemy leaders came to know about this and they reported the fact to him.

He hurried to Rama and said, "Master! I listened to some bit of news just now; Meghanada is about to perform a malignant Yajna to propitiate evil powers. If he succeeds in his attempt and completes the ceremonials, it will be hard to defeat him. We will have to hurl obstacles." Rama appreciated the sentiments of Vibhishana and was pleased with his words. He summoned Hanuman and Angada and told them, "Brothers! Go and disturb and disorganise the Yajna which Meghanada is observing." He turned to Lakshmana and said, "Lakshmana! You have to defeat this fellow on the field of battle. Note that gods are grieving on account of his iniquities." No sooner had he ordered so, than Vibhishana, Sugriva and Hanuman—the three—collected a huge force of Vanaras and followed Lakshmana in order to give him support. Lakshmana armed himself with the bow and the ever-full arrow sheath, and after prostrating before Rama, he moved out of the camp, with Rama installed in his heart. Angada, Nala, Nila and other generals walked behind Hanuman.

When they reached the Nikumbala Park, they found the Sacrifice already on and the flesh and blood of buffaloes being offered in the ritual fire. So, they started disturbing the ceremonies. Meghanada did not however desist from continuing the schedule. They then began to loudly caricature the hymns uttered by them to propitiate the Forces, but, that did not persuade the priests to stop the rituals. So, the infuriated Vanaras rushed into the sacrificial area, and catching Meghanada by the hair, they pulled him to the ground and kicked him with their feet.

Meghanada took hold of the trident and pounced upon them. Angada and Hanuman fell on him, and were hit with the trident. The blow was so hard that both of them rolled on the ground. Lakshmana came to their rescue; he broke the terrible trident in two; Angada and Hanuman recovered soon and hit Meghanada with all their strength. However, the Rakshasa did not quail a bit; he did not show any sign of being hurt by the impact.

Lakshmana rained deadly arrows on him, as if he were the God of Death come to kill him. Each one attacked him as if it were a thunderbolt. So, using his magic skills, Meghanada rendered himself invisible. He assumed many a mysterious role and escaped. The patience of Lakshmana ran out at last; he fixed sacred arrows on his bow, and, invoking on it the might and majesty of Rama aimed it at Meghanada, wherever he might be. That arrow entered the heart of Meghanada and ended his life. Since, he had in his mind, during the last moments Rama and Lakshmana his foes, Angada, Hanuman and Vibhishana extolled his bravery and the way he died.

Mahavira lifted his body lightly on his shoulders and carrying it to the City Gate of Lanka, placed it there and returned. Lakshmana approached Rama and prostrated at his feet. Rama was pleased at his success; he listened to the detailed narrative of the events at Nikumbala Park. He fondled his brother with great affection.

The Rama Story: Stream of Sacred Sweetness
(To be continued)

Sai Family News

(1) Sathya Sai Newsletter, America

A Quarterly Newsletter containing Quotations from Bhagavan's Teachings, Reprints from earlier issues of the Sanathana Sarathi, previously unpublished materials about Bhagavan's Life and Message, Directory of Sathya Sai Baba Centres and other items of Information, besides Special Messages from Bhagavan Himself, is being published since June, 76 from P. O. Box 46290, Los Angeles, Ca 90046, under the auspices of the Sri Sathya Sai Central Committee of America. Ann. Sub. Rates: USA (incl. Canada and Mexico) 2 dollars, Other Countries: Surface: 2 dollars 25 cents; Air Mail 4 dollars, to Sathya Sai Society of America, Address as above.

(2) Film on the 'Golden Jubilee'

The Inaugural Presentation of the Film on the Golden Jubilee Celebrations of Bhagavan's Birthday held at Prasanthi Nilayam and the Second World Conference of Sai Devotees, prepared by Richard Bock was held on June 12th, at the U.C.L.A Religious Conference Centre, Westwood. California. There was no admission charge. Dr. Sam Sandweiss, Author of "Sai Baba, the Holy Man and the Psychiatrist" was the Guest Speaker.

(3) FARYAD

The Weekly, FARYAD, published from AMLOH, in Patiala District, highlights the service done by the Sri Sathya Sai Seva Samiti of that town, in voluntarily repairing a large number of hand pumps which had become unserviceable since some time and left unattended, and thus helped the people during the hot months when drinking water had become an acute problem.

(4) Hosur, Dharmapuri Dt.

Members of the Sri Sathya Sai Seva Dal helped in the construction of Toilets for the Government High School, Machinayakanpalli. They cleaned the premises of the Protestant Church at Hosur Town. During the 3 days of the Free Eye Operation Camp, held by the Government of Tamil Nadu at Hosur in June, they held Bhajan Sessions and on the last Day, they gave the patients sweets and Vibhuti Prasad.

(5) Sagar

The University of Sagar, Madhya Pradesh, has authorised Dr. Samarendra Saraf, Head of the Department of Social Science, to guide and accept as his student, Sri Diwakar Sharma. M. A., for writing a Ph. D. Thesis on "The Mission and Message of Sri Sathya Sai".

(6) Chandigarh

Used school text books and books useful for college students are gathered during special drive days from devotees and the public, and sorted out, class wise and subject wise, and distributed in schools and colleges in consultation with the headmasters and principals. New books are also purchased and given, using funds offered for the purpose by members.

(7) Sehare

A research report on the impact of the Summer Courses on Indian Culture and Spirituality, being conducted annually by the several States, under the auspices of the Sathya Sai Seva Organisation has been prepared by Prof. M. C. Dubey of the Agricultural College, Sehare,

Madhya Pradesh, from answers to an elaborate questionnaire sent to the students who have participated.

(8) Dum Dum

Free Coaching Classes for children of indigent families who require the extra attention which will help them to shine brighter at the examinations are provided. In the Boys' Section there are 75 students, who were coached by 14 qualified Seva Dal members. The Girls' Section has 45 students, with 11 Lady Seva Dal Members serving them.

(9) Bhopal

Joint Refresher Courses for Bal Vikas Gurus and Seva Dal Members from the Maharashtra State and the Madhya Pradesh State (120 Gurus and 157 Seva Dal Members) were held at Bhopal for three days. This is a welcome endeavour to spread the Message of Love and Brotherhood that Bhagavan is insisting upon in the Seva Organisation.

Sri Sailam

Nineteen miles north of the West Coast Town, Calicut, stands a Hill covered with cashew green, jutting into the Arabian Sea which laps it on three sides. Rabindranath Tagore had admired its loveliness and quietness, and named it, while resting on it and Watching the Sea around, "Sri Sailam," the Hill of Plenty and Peace. Most of the Hill has recently come into the possession of the Sri Sathya Sai Trust, Kerala, by voluntary donation, and the Trust is planning to establish thereon a Children's School on an All India Basis, with boarding facilities and a curriculum which includes moral and spiritual training on the lines laid down by Sathya Sai.

Sri Sathya Sai Baba laid the Foundation Stone of this unique educational venture, on Sunday, 23rd May 1976. He left Ootacamund on the Nilgiris at 7-30 that morning by car (the Summer Course on Indian Culture and Spirituality for College Students May 20 June 4, was on, there) and reached the residence at Calicut of Dr. P. B. Menon, the Convenor of the Trust Thence, He proceeded to Sri Sailam reaching the place, by about 2 P M. Meanwhile, a huge congregation of eager and enthusiastic Keralites, about 30,000 strong, had assembled on the Hill, in spite of the inaugural South West Monsoon rain that soaked them to the skin. Old and young, men and women, rich and poor, from all parts of Kerala occupied every vantage point to get a glimpse of Bhagavan. It was eight long years, since Bhagavan stepped on Kerala soil; the thirst of the people for the coveted Darshan could be judged, from the deep crowds that lined the roads through which the car of Bhagavan passed, all the way, from Nilambur at the foot of the Nilgiri Hills to the very place where the Function was to take place, a distance of more than 75 miles.

Matrubhoomi, the popular daily, published from Calicut, wrote, "It was a human ocean that had formed itself, silently and spontaneously on Sri Sailam that day.

Youths from various Colleges, judges, lawyers, doctors, administrators, factory hands police officials, landlords and ryots, jostled against each other in friendly companionship. Bhagavan was received with traditional honours of Kerala—a caparisoned elephant and a party of

trumpeters, buglers and drummers. Bal Vikas pupils stood on both sides of the passage with lamps aglow. Children scattered floral petals, on His feet.

Bhagavan was welcomed by Sri K. P. Kesava Menon, a Member of the Trust, a highly respected writer and journalist, the octogenarian philosopher of Kerala. He said that Kerala was fortunate to win the Grace of Bhagavan, and to secure Him for laying the Foundation Stone for the School which will raise generations of young men and women who will foster and propagate in their lives the priceless heritage of India. Justice V. Balakrishna Eradi, another member of the Trust gave details of the Public School that will be built on Sri Sailam.

The School will start functioning in the building now available on Sri Sailam with 25 children, in the first instance. It will be a Residential Public School, teaching English, Hindi and Sanskrit, besides Tamil, Malayalam, Telugu and other languages.

Writing on the Discourse that Bhagavan gave on the occasion, the "Malayala Manorama", one of the oldest and most popular dailies of Kerala, now edited by Mr. K. Mathew, wrote, "The Discourse was a series of whip-strokes, reminiscent of the Gitacharya, who exhorted Arjuna to give up his weakness of heart, and rise up to the performance of his duty. Impatience with the rising tide of falsehood and hypocrisy, dislike of mere information-oriented education, contempt for the conferment of degrees which serve only as begging bowls, derision at the pompous pride of little minds that deny God, anxiety about the future of humanity in the world fast polluting itself, all these formed the topics dealt with by Him in His tirade. He also emphasised the ideals of true education which alone can guarantee real peace and happiness, and explained convincingly the bases for an inflexible faith in God. His parables, and quotations from English and Sanskrit texts revealed His universal outlook and down-to-earth wisdom."

Bhagavan mentioned that Kerala was the holy land of Sankaracharya. It was for centuries the repository of Sanskrit and Vedic Culture. Even today. He said, the people of Kerala were soaked in spirituality, judging from the hundreds of thousands who visit the temples for solace and inner light. "This hill, situated on this lovely coast, will soon be the centre of an institute that will revive in the hearts and minds of the children of Bharat, lasting love and reverence for that literature and that culture. Vid means Light; ya means conferring. Vidya must illumine, reveal, make aware, arouse and awake. Vidya means education drawing out the Light from within. That is the purpose of education, to enable man to manifest the Divinity which is his reality and shove off the animality that burdens him. The educated person is recognised by the love that prompts his actions, the humility that adorns his behaviour, the depth of his eagerness to share the joys of others and assuage the sorrows of others. Love is giving and forgiving; self (or selfishness) is getting and forgetting.

Bhagavan complimented the mammoth congregation on the fortitude and devotion which enabled them to sit in silence in pouring rain. The shower of rain was as the shower of Grace that Swami bestowed on them. Bhagavan referred to those who boasted that they were a-theists; `abut, even they adored Truth, Love, Mercy, Goodness, Charity, and Virtue. Love is God; Truth is God. When they declared, "There is no God", they have willy-nilly, to proclaim, "There is." Whatever is, is God, that is what the theists affirm."

The clarion call of that Message will ring in the heart of Kerala for many and many a year to come.

—**P. Narayanan Kutty, Valakad**

I have come for the restoration of Dharma (Righteousness) for saving the good from harassment and harm, and for educating the 'blind' who miss the way and wander into the wilderness. When the Gita says, math karma krth (be engaged in My work) it means only this: Engage yourselves in these three tasks, to the extent of your ability. That is the Puja, I appreciate; that is the Sadhana I bless. Foster Dharma, help the good, befriend the ignorant, the indigent, the diseased, the distressed, the neglected. I will be pleased, when you do all this, without caring for the consequence or reward in a spirit of dedication.

—**Baba**

The Charioteer

The ideals held before mankind by Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba through His Teachings and His Actions are all gems from the immemorial traditions and texts of Ancient Religions. They are enshrined in the lessons taught by the Vedic Rishis, the Upanishadic Seers, Lord Krishna in the Gita, Jesus on the Mount and Mohamed in the desert camps of Arabia. They are lamps to guide man for all time and in all lands. He reveals to all men that God is the In-dweller in all-living beings—Iswarassarvabhoothaanaam Hrdde Arjuna Thishtathi. God resides in the heart of all beings—The Quran declares that God is present in the internal world as well as the external world; Christ declares, "I was hungry and you fed me; I was thirsty, you gave me drink; I was a stranger, you took me in; I was naked, you clothed me;" thus revealing, as Bhagavan says, "the blind, the poor, the diseased, the homeless, the illiterate, the lame, are all as much God as the rest of you."

The most fruitful and satisfying of the many ideals that Bhagavan teaches us is the ideal of Love. God is Love; Live in Love—says Baba. Christ said, "God so loved the World that He sent His only begotten Son so that whosoever believeth in him shall have everlasting Life." The Quran speaks of the overflowing Grace or Love of God thus: "And, remember the Grace of God which has showered upon you, that in the past you were enemies, then, God filled your hearts with Love and you were woven into brotherhood."

Bhagavan has Sathya as another great ideal for mankind. Sathya means Truth. He has declared often, "I am the Truth of all Truths, I propagate Truth, I promote Truth, I can be reached by Truth, I am Truth." Christ also said, "I am the way, the truth, the life," meaning that Truth is the way which leads to God and that life without Truth is death. The Quran says, "God is sure to reveal the Real and destroy the unreal, even if so doing would displease the sinners."

Bhagavan has said that Love and Compassion are the two eyes of a man which reveal to him the God in others. The members of the Seva Dal established by Him base all their actions on these two principles of life. The Bible has said, "If God be for us, who can be against us? God is

kind and gracious to all, but, woe unto them who have rejected His Grace.” Muhammad declared, "Be kind to those who are on Earth, then, He who is in Heaven will be kind unto you.”

Lastly, Bhagavan always stresses on the need for tolerance and understanding among followers of the different faiths, since they are all only various paths leading to the same God. He has stigmatised as 'narrow minded bigots' those who boast about the path they are following on the pilgrimage to God and belittle the paths that others have chosen. The Pillar of Concord that He inaugurated is the best lesson He has taught us on the occasion of the Golden Jubilee of His Incarnation. The Quran makes clear the Grace of God in this manner: 'Had I wished, I could have united all men into one Faith', but, the fact that there are many faiths along which men journey to God is evidence that God welcomes all who call on Him, whatever the language, whichever the Name chosen for the prayer. May Bhagavan guide us, whatever the Path allotted to us by Him as our Charioteer.

—*Aswini Kumar 'Ashraf', Muzaffarpur*

The Day of Reverence

Gurupoornima is the Day of Reverence and Remembrance, set apart in the Hindu Calendar, so that spiritual aspirants and seekers can offer homage to the preceptors who initiated them into the higher path. For the millions who have taken shelter under the Loving Guidance of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba, the day is doubly sacred, since Bhagavan cast off on this Day many years ago the paralytic stroke that He had taken over eight days previously from a devotee, who could not survive the physical calamity. Moreover, Bhagavan has Himself revealed the significance of this Day, by selecting it for the Inauguration of the Sri Sathya Sai Women's College at Anantapur, and, this year, for the Inauguration of the New Building of the Srimati Easwaramma High School, at Puttaparthi. For these reasons, Gurupoornima brought thousands of devotees from all the quarters to Prasanthi Nilayam, days before the Festival. The Day dawned, bright and beautiful, to awaken the thousands and set them on the march towards the magnificent new School Building, about two furlongs to the South. Bhagavan, Sri. T. A. Pai, Minister, Industries and Civil Supplies, Government Of India, Sri. M. V. Krishna Rao, Minister, Andhra Pradesh and Sri Challa Subbarayudu, Minister, Municipal Administration, Andhra Pradesh, were received at the Gate by the splendidly caparisoned elephant Sai Geeta and the Sathya Sai College Band from Bangalore, and taken in procession to the special Dais. The vast expanse in front of the School, and the lawn around the Statue of Srimati Easwaramma, the Mother of Bhagavan, were sparkling with joyous eyes, drinking deep the Ananda that flowed from Bhagavan's Presence.

Owing to the unavoidable absence of the Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh, Sri T. A. Pai, Minister of Industries and Civil Supplies, Government of India declared the Building open by lighting the ceremonial lamp.

He said, "It is our great good fortune that we could be hereon Gurupoornima Day to receive the Blessings of Bhagavan. We are assembled here to witness the Inauguration of a School, which will commemorate the Name of a great Mother. All mothers are great, because they represent Shakti and Sacrifice. They endanger their own lives in the process of bringing into

existence a new being, and sacrifice their own comfort and time to bring up and foster the tender child. Children have to be eternally grateful to the mother. The entire world has to offer grateful homage to the Mother who brought the Divine Being into existence and tended the Divine Child.

Bhagavan has come to give humanity new confidence, new faith and new vitality. He does this in various ways, always with love. One of the most effective ways by which He revives righteousness and restores morality and virtue is Education through Colleges and Schools. The educational system is at present making the educated, paralytic dependent and weak. It creates an idle, exploiting class of people, who have no self-confidence and self-knowledge. They are plucked from the roots of our culture and reduced to split personalities, and even multi-personalities. Bhagavan is inculcating in the students self-confidence and self-knowledge, and planting them back again in the fertile soil of Indian Culture. The system of education He has set before the nation requires adoption and expansion, so that we may be saved from decline and disaster.”

Sai M. V. Krishna Rao spoke in great admiration of the calmness and charm that surrounded the artistically built School; he appreciated the efforts made to instil spiritual progress in the hearts of the students; he appealed to the teachers and students to make the best use of the facilities so amply provided by Bhagavan.

Sri Challa Subbarayudu spoke on the excellent academic and spiritual attainments, the many skills and service activities, the expository capacities of the students of the Sai Colleges and described Bhagavan as the innovator of a New Era in Indian Educational System. Bhagavan, in His discourse, emphasised the great need for discipline, a sense of duty and a spirit of dedication, in all fields of life, especially in schools and colleges. He advised that the cultural heritage of India must be handed over to every child of this land, so that the evils of imitation may give place to the benefits of genuineness.

Earlier, Sri T. A. Pal inaugurated the Vocational Training Institute, in the School Campus, where facilities are provided to train the village youth and Students in spinning, weaving in handlooms and power looms, hosiery and other vocations.

With Sri T. A. Pai and the two other Ministers, Bhagavan, then moved on to the village of Puttaparthi, on the out skirts of which a well laid out Colony of 100 cottages built through His Compassion and Personal Supervision and Grace, for the Harijans rendered homeless by the disastrous floods during last year's Krishna Janmashtami season. The Colony was named Sathya Sai Nagar, amidst great rejoicing; they said the Divine Love of Bhagavan was showered spontaneously on the afflicted. Bhagavan spoke on the ideals of service, brotherhood and reverence. He stressed the unity of all mankind, for each one is a cell in the Cosmic Body of God. He presented each Harijan house-holder a set of utensils (See illustration) as a Special Gift.

The students of the Anantapur Government College, in the National Service Camp, at the Colony, were engaged in laying down bunds on the borders; Bhagavan witnessed their work and blessed them.

In the evening, the devotees gathered at the Poornachandra Auditorium to listen to Bhagavan's Gurupoornima Message. Sri Sohan Lal, of the Sri Sathya Sai Education and Publication Foundation, prayed Bhagavan to release the Indian Edition of the book on Baba written and published in America by Dr. Sam Sandweiss, the famous psychiatrist. (He declares in the book that the most beneficent psychiatry that he can now recommend is Sai-chiatry.) Sri Nityananda, a student of the Sri Sathya Sai College at Brindavan. Whitefield spoke next, on the 'pure Love, the pure knowledge, and the pure Power' which Bhagavan showered on students in order to help them manifest the Divinity inherent in them. Swami Karunayanadaji of Rajahmundry then spoke in Telugu on the uniqueness of the Sai Avatar, as revealed in the various facets of His Message and Activities.

Bhagavan, then, gave His Divine Discourse. "Man goes through life as a tree from the seed; the seed fulfils itself in the tree. The tree fulfils itself in the fruit and in its sweetness. The sweetness of life lies in wisdom. Man acquires knowledge for his upkeep and wisdom for his uplift. The effort needed for upkeep is really very small. He can live comfortably on very much less than what he now feels essential! Trying to cater to every passing wish, to satisfy every whim and urge, man mis-spends his precious days, and succeeds only in piling up discontent. He ruins his body, wastes his time and vitiates his skills. The body is but a chariot on which he moves; its axle is the Self. When the axle is broken, the vehicle cannot function. It has to be discovered and strengthened by faith, and restored to its crucial role.

Or, to put it in other word, the body is the temple wherein the Atma or the Self is installed. It has to be kept clean, and in good shape. This is the Sadhana. Cleansing the temple—the senses, the mind, the intellect; illumining it, with the lamp of self-knowledge; keeping it ever alert and active on the path of self-realisation.

The residences of spiritual preceptors are called Ashrams, because, there, Shram (Labour, Toil, Effort) ends; adventure and acquisition are finished. The Guru (gu means darkness and ru means disappearance) is he who has realised the Light and who can transmit it to the groping lives, there. It is to such Gurus and to the very first of them, Vedavyasa, that this Poornima (Full Moon Day) is dedicated. Veda Vyasa deserves to be the Guru for all time and all aspirants. He collated the Four Vedas and grouped the hymns and formulae into sections, dealing each with Rites, Worship and Inquiry; he wrote epics and myths in order to simplify and exemplify the teachings of the Vedas; and he laid down in one short maxim, the entire teaching of all the scriptures and sacred texts: "Helping others is meritorious; harming others is pernicious."

This maxim can be practised only by those in whom Love is dominant. The nature of the pain and joy that affect the mind are the same for all; the response to Love from every heart is the same. Love heals, nourishes, and sustains. Love knows no fear, no bargaining, and no prevarication. It promotes confidence, it does not try to deceive. But, selfishness breeds envy, hatred, and pride. So, it blinds the vision.

There was a Court Poet in the Vijayanagar Durbar called Pingali Sooranna who was known as Lingapurana Sooranna, since he had specialised in expounding that epic. He was afflicted with rabid envy against another Poet, Tenali Ramakrishna who had earned Royal favour through his many undisputed talents. One day, while Sooranna was composing a quartet to be placed before

the Emperor defaming Tenali Ramakrishna in foul language, his composition was interrupted by an urgent call from the Royal Presence; he had to leave it unfinished on his table. Tenali Ramakrishna himself happened to enter his house at that time; he looked at the incomplete line; he promptly finished the quartet, turning the tables clean on the envious man, and attributing to Sooranna, vices far worse than what he ascribed to Ramakrishna. The biter was bit, and badly too.

The patron deity of Ramakrishna, Mother Kali, prompted him to go into the house and seek out the poem and interpose the lines, paying Sooranna in the same bad coin. For, Divinity cannot tolerate the besmirching of true devotees by envious persons.

Some persons are like that. They cannot tolerate goodness and greatness. The crow abhors cuckoo notes. The duck turns away from the swan. The limited cannot appreciate or understand the Unlimited and, what they cannot understand, they ridicule! They hope to achieve some fame by ridiculing, defaming or denying facts they cannot comprehend. They are proud of their little knowledge; they have no patience to seek the truth. They cannot distinguish, in their hurry and conceit, the true and the false, the real from the unreal. Seeing the muddy stream that flows in the drains during rains, they proclaim that the clouds pour on earth muddy water and not clear water. One has to deal with such people with sympathy, for, they are content with the little they know. They feel that what they do not know is not knowledge. Only a true Guru can hold the mirror before them and make them aware of the truth they are missing.

Youth have to be instructed to hear with their own ears, see with their eyes; and not be influenced by borrowed eyes and ears. They are the builders of this nation, the pioneers on whom the progress of this great land and, therefore, of all humanity, depends. That is the reason why I have taken upon myself the task of guiding aright the students of Sai Colleges and others.

When Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa gathered around him students and young men from the City of Calcutta, and spent a large portion of his time testing and training them, Hazra accused him of neglecting his duties to others and wasting his life. Paramahansa was affected by this criticism; he went to the Kali shrine and asked Mother Kali whether what Hazra said in finding fault with him was correct. He said later, that Kali told him not to pay heed to Hazra. 'The boys are embodiments of Her own Divinity and are destined for Her own work.'

I need not consult Kali; I *know* that youth has to be shaped into ideal individuals, who can by their way of living, speaking and acting, promote goodness, wisdom and the spirit of dedication, in the world. I blame them often, I praise them often, I deal with each differently from others. For, no one treatment or remedy can apply to all.

Brahmananda reported to Ramakrishna one evening that, while he was crossing the Ganges in a ferry-boat, the passengers spoke ill of the Paramahansa, but, he himself kept quiet and unconcerned. The Guru rated him soundly for being a nincompoop, and threatened to disown him for suffering the abuse in silence. Vivekananda heard this advice; next day, when he crossed the river in the same ferry, men and women who were in the boat started to ridicule and defame Ramakrishna. Vivekananda rose to his full height, and threatened to throw the traducers bodily into the river. He got ready to act according to his word, and silence sealed all lips. When

Ramakrishna heard from him what had happened, he condemned Vivekananda equally strongly and reprimanded him equally severely, for reacting so angrily. Vivekananda was too emotional and active; so he wanted him to control his anger. Brahmananda was too soft and vapid; so he asked him to react more vigorously.

It is like the tyres of a car; the air pressure in each has to be tested and when it is low, you have to pump more into it and when it is more, you have to let some quantity off, in order to reduce it to the required degree.

So, do not feel envious or depressed when I encourage others, or exult and congratulate yourselves, when I keep others away or find fault with them. It is Love that prompts both varieties of treatment.

Give up envy, anger, cynicism, and fault-seeking. Keep your vision clear and pure; your emotions sacred and constructive. That is my Message on this Gurupoornima.”

The Life Sentence

Since some years, the Mahila Vibhag Committee of Calcutta has been conducting Rama Nam Kirtans and Ramayana Readings in the Women Prisoners Section of the Presidency Jail, Calcutta. The attendance at these Sessions is very good. The inmates also participate in the Bhajans and Kirtans. They look forward to the day and hour when the Volunteers come every week and their faces are bright and happy, when they go through the experience of moral upliftment and spiritual ecstasy.

At a Meeting of the Jail Code Revision Committee, an Officer asked me whether the prisoners would actually be benefited by the weekly programmes of Bhajans, conducted by us in the Women's Section of the Jail. I replied firmly, "Yes," for, I remembered what had transformed a prisoner, named Nitya. Her story revealed to me, more clearly than that of many others, how in times of unbearable mental distress, the human mind seeks spiritual support and sustenance.

I came to know Nitya during one of the Ramayana Programmes in the Presidency Jail. The Ram Nam Kirtan had commenced. The prisoners sat facing the garlanded picture of Rama; the room was vibrant with devotion and inner joy. Suddenly, a piercing cry awakened us into hard reality. A young woman rushed in and flung herself full length before the picture. She started striking her forehead hard on the floor; her sobs and groans rent our heart. All eyes in the room were shedding tears in silent sympathy. The Kirtan stopped. I found myself bending to take her in my arms and lay her on my lap. She looked up with a wild stare and quickly buried her face on my shoulders, as her entire body shook with long shuddering gasps of sorrow. I patted her softly and crooned gently in her ear; time passed; no one spoke or stirred. At last, she sat on the floor beside me.

"Would you like to join the Kirtan?" I asked, placing a copy of the Book of Songs in her hands. Her swollen, tear-stained face gazed at me with unseeing eyes. I led her to the Picture and she sat

stiff before it. The Kirtan was resumed. Every time the line ended with the word, Rama, I noticed that she was moving her lips and attempting to frame that Name.

The programme over, I asked the Matron, "What had happened to her?" She had just received a life sentence. "What has she done?" I enquired. "Murder, she poisoned her husband."

That was Nitya, who was only about 22 years of age. Thereafter she attended the Bhajan Sessions regularly; it was she who arranged the flowers, lit the oil lamps, set the incense sticks aglow, and when the sessions were over, gave every one her share of the sweets offered to Rama.

A few months later, I learnt that she had volunteered to work in the, sick room, helping to nurse her sisters and their children. The doctor spoke of her with thankful appreciation. Her gentle and painstaking habits behaviour pleased the Matron, and relieved her from humdrum chores. She learnt also from Instructresses in the jail to sew and embroider beautiful designs. In a few years, she became indispensable as a helper; during my visits I found her invariably by my side.

Then, one day, I did not find her. I learnt that she had earned enough remissions to be released much earlier than any one had anticipated.

I tremble to think what would have happened to her, if that little shrine, that garlanded picture, those sweet enchanting prayer-songs had not taken charge of her broken heart, and washed the crime from off her hands and heart.

—*Shudha Mazumdar*

The Perspective of The Gayatri

I

In a previous article, the significance of the Gayatri was explained more or less in accordance with the tradition. We will now attempt to examine it in perspective, i.e., against the general background of thought, ancient and modern. It has, however, to be borne in mind that the matter relates to experience based on experiment and practice (*Sadhana*), and cannot be judged offhand by criteria of a routine rationality. It would be safer to accept provisionally the statements of men of trained sensitivity and realization (*Aptavakya*) and proceed to verify them for oneself after acquiring the needful competence.

First, it might be asked: if Savitar is a divinity whose function is to illuminate the intelligence, why is it obligatory to use this particular verse in invoking him, rather than any one of the numerous others addressed to him in the Rigveda? The answer involves the crucial concept of *Mantratwa*—the efficacy of Mantras. To put it briefly, Mantras are thought forms: structures of meaning and value. The very sounds which make them up, their molecular pattern (on the analogy of organic chemistry) are uniquely constitutive of their essence. We may take the

example of poetry also. Mantras may or may not convey specific meaning, for their primary objective is not expression or communication. Rather, they are therapeutic statements which, under proper conditions, are self-realizing. A deity may even be defined as the unitary essence or presence of which the Mantra is the body. Hence the oft-quoted but much misunderstood dictum: *Mantradhinam to devatah*.

Although *Mantra* and *Mantratwa* are Sanskrit terms, the basic notion is common to all languages. It is a virtue not so much of language itself, as of the use made of it. As such, it is primarily applicable to the wording of the scriptures of all religions. Pre-Socratic Greek thought as well as Hindu thought started from the assumption that without an identity between the knowing subject and the object known, the fact of knowledge would be unintelligible. Aristotle said about Heraclitus, one of the great pre-Socratics, that for him the faculty of speech mediated between the physical phenomena and the meaning (semantic) function. The link was as it were, magical, using the word in its experiential sense and not pejoratively.

Martin Heidegger, one of the most original among contemporary Western thinkers, considered Greek to be the most spiritual among the European languages, taking one "back to the roots". For him it was no mere language. It and it alone was Logos, the language in which Being spoke to the mind of Europe. However that may be, this certainly applies with even greater cogency to the role of Sanskrit in Indian thought.

The relevancy and force of Sri Aurobindo's statement comes to mind in this context. He said: "In the first stage of language, the word is a living or even more, a living force than its idea: sound determines sense. In its last stage, the positions have been reversed; the idea becomes all important, and the sound secondary." This has, however to be understood with the proviso that the stages need not be chronological, but may be levels of understanding and application. The archaic faith in the potency of things as they were "in the beginning", is not without its own justification. That is what Heidegger meant when he said, "Great things begin great."

Common English words like incantation, evocation, invocation, enchantment, spell and so on testify to the sacramental-cum magical use of language. Such terms have their equivalents in other languages also. But each language has its own specific genius. It looks as if the Sanskrit language was fashioned through the ages for identifying and manipulating the subtler ingredients of human experience. Not merely whole words, but even individual sounds (*Varna*) have their efficacy. They are held to be indestructible (*Akshara*). They are like seeds (*Bijas*) endowed with the potential for growth. Or to vary the figure, they are like moulds (*Matrika*) into which the aboriginal undifferentiated experience is poured, and thus articulated. The matrix of all moulds is the sacred syllable OM.

Language is symbolic in structure. The realm of symbolism is far wider than that of conventional language. Besides words, it includes rhythm and verse pattern (*Chandas*), gesture (*Nyasa* and *Mudra*) and ritual action: Myths and legends are also important factors in the make-up of symbolism. The comprehensive aim is the fulfillment of human life in its totality (*Purushartha*), to make life meaningful (*Sarthaka*). It is important to note that the Sanskrit term *Artha* stands for fact and value, as well as for meaning.

II

We now come to the doctrine of Karma which is central to all Indian religions. It has its practical side as well as its theoretical and philosophical implications. (It may be said safely that here, as in most other matters, in India, the theory and speculation have always been derived from practical experience, and not the other way round. It is a case of learning by doing). Briefly, the idea is that every act is a seed (*Karma-bija*) derived from tendencies (*Samskaras*) which are the legacy of past actions which bears fruit (*Karma-phala*) in the due future. *Karma* is the bond between the past and future considered as human activity.

For the Indian mentality, *Karma* operates in two spheres simultaneously. One is that of obvious effort (*Paurusha*), the other of subtle influences (*Daiva*) which are not directly under the control of man, but with which it is possible to come to terms indirectly, and which is not less real. Karma has thus two aspects, which are not alternatives, but mutually reinforcing factors, which can and must co-exist. Faith in such a possibility is the core of Hinduism, as Louis Renou the eminent Indologist has said. Such faith is called *Astikya*, and is shared by most Hindus, educated or uneducated. It is in their blood.

Karma spans the twin spheres of *Paurusha* and *Daiva*. In this process, words and language act as a bridge between the two, just as speech forms the link between body and mind. As such, the pronouncing of hallowed words is a principal ingredient in Karma. The out poured energy of will and thought represented, by the utterance of *Mantra* is the core of sacrifice (Yajna), since whatever is conceived with the productive power of will and conviction inevitably produces a new reality as the concrete substance of the expended energy, which when directed to some objective of devotion, increases its force, thus enabling it to achieve adequate counteraction.

The scriptures envisage sacrifice as taking various forms, such as meditation, or procreation, speaking or breathing, etc. Even the doctrine of Bhakti comes within the purview of this. Literally Bhakti means not devotion offered to a single God, but reciprocal participation, its verbal root being *Bhai*, "to share, to partake, to enjoy" (cf. also its intensive form, *Bhaksh* "to consume"); and thus it is only a later expression for the earlier sacrificial partnership between God and Man, which again is based on the natural law of cause and effect—*Karma*.

Belief to the efficacy of Mantra (*Mantratwa*) is foundational to Hindu metaphysic. An ancient Vedic text declares that mind (Manas) is centred in speech (*Vak*), and speech is centred in mind; by their interaction, the unrevealed Truth reveals itself. They constitute an inseparable and indispensable couple. *Mantratwa* signifies the possibility of using language and symbolism for building up right relations with nature, with humanity, and with all that may lie beyond. It does this not directly but through the animating of intermediate entities (*Devas*) who may be defined in modern idiom as 'semantic presences' which can be fostered and developed. That is the function of *Mantras*, of which the Gayatri is the primary archetype.

The word Mantra is derived from *Manana*, the Sanskrit suffix (*-ana*) being the exact counter part of English (*-ing*). It is literally Mind-ing, and is analogous to *Dhyana* in which the same suffix is added to the root *Dhi* (intellect) used as a verb. The process has been compared to churning (*Nirmathana*), as in the primitive technique of producing fire by the attrition of two

pieces of wood (*Aranis*), the lower one being fixed, and the upper one pressed against it with a repeated churning movement (*Adhyasa*). Thus we read in the Shvetashvatara Upanishad (I. 14): "Making one's own body the lower Arani, and the *Pranava* (*Omkara*) the upper one, should aim at realizing God, as one would discover something hidden, through the repeated practice of *Dhyana*."

In later times, the practice is well-known as *Japa*. Thus the Yoga-Sutra (I. 27) says that the *Pranava* is the sound-icon of God, and that the aspirant should do Japa of it, dwelling simultaneously on its significance. The Gita also singles out Japa as the prototype of all Yajnas: *Yajnanam japa yajno'smi* (X. 25). Manu goes even further, and arms that irrespective of whether recourse is had to other forms of Yajna or not, Japa is by itself fully adequate to the attainment of perfection (*Samsiddhi*), adding that other forms do not possess even a sixteenth part (*Shodashi kala*) of the worth of Japa.

III

The stress on Japa, repetition (*Adhyasa*) may need some explanation; especially as, the modern mind is prone to look down on such practice as 'mechanical'. This is somewhat ironical in a world dominated by mechanisms, internally as well as externally, to an extent unparalleled in the past. Yet the word 'mechanical' has become a term of deprecation.

This seems to be due to an unquestioned and partly unconscious assumption that matter and spirit are in essence antithetical and have no common meeting ground. This, however, goes against direct human experience in which matter and spirit always appear in conjunction with each other, and can never be isolated. Such a divorce of matter from spirit was unknown to antiquity, which drew no hard and fast line between matter, life and mind. The distinction is characteristic of later Western philosophical tradition. It was given an exaggerated emphasis by the natural sciences during the past three centuries. There are however signs of a radical change in outlook in recent scientific thought.

Here an objection might be raised that the ancient Indian philosophical system known as the Samkhya was dualistic in character, and distinguished Spirit (*Purusha*) from matter (*Prakriti*). But the Samkhya ultimates are not at all on a par with the Western categories of Matter and Spirit. For one thing, intellect (*Buddhi*) and mind (*Manas*) which form the structure of Spirit in the West, are both held to be derivatives of *Prakriti*. Like the obverse and reverse of the same coin, they are distinguishable, but not separable aspects of empirically cognized Reality. That is how they are treated in the Vedanta which is the last word in Indian philosophy, and to which the other systems (*Darsanas*) are but stepping stones.

We may now consider the problem directly and in modern idiom. There are regularities and repetitions in Nature. Day follows night and night follows day in unbroken succession. The seasons recur. The Sun and Moon follow their phased courses. The clocks measure time in identical fashion; the days of the week follow each other in the sequence. There is a kind of identity in all this repetition. But it is an abstract identity.

In the concrete, however, each day and night, each season and each day of the week have their distinctive characteristics. Every cell in the organism is an individual, and so is every grain of corn or particle of sand, every finger-print. Even the proteins of the body, for example, although identical in gross chemical composition are uniquely different for each person. Thus, in skin-grafting, the body will accept a bit of skin removed from some other part of the body but wholly reject a bit from another person.

All this argument regarding the concreteness of reality applies with even greater force to time. In human terms, time is not what is mechanically doled out by the clock, but duration, endurance. It is common experience that there are occasions when a minute may feel like an hour, and on the other hand when a whole period of several days may in retrospect appear as if passed off with astonishing rapidity. Bergson has stressed and illuminatingly expounded this distinction between clock-time and time as lived (*duree real*). Time as experienced, and time taken as a mathematical dimension in physical science are wholly different in character. Scientific time is essentially a spatial concept in which each homogeneous moment is juxtaposed against its successor, like points on a line.

But lived time is not linear. In it, each past moment is assimilated in a present which carries within itself the potentialities of the future. It is not like a point, but as A. N. Whitehead and others have shown, it has a definite duration, and is far from being homogeneous. Although appearing as a continuous flow, yet as Heraclitus said cryptically, no one can step into the same stream twice.

IV

We may now attempt a tentative examination of the significance of the technique of Japa. It hinges on a cyclic concept of the nature of time, which is sought to be associated with the vital energy (*Prana*) in the body, manifesting variously as speech and hearing, touch and so on. The ordinary image of time as a homogeneous line proceeding from one infinity into another, is sought to be articulated by being broken up into 'quanta' or manageable units. The Hindu term *Bindu* or drop is very appropriate here. This *Bindu* is the focus of experience, in which the past dies into the present and is reborn as the future. Thus the *Bindu* is all-inclusive. There is not a mere succession of consecutive moments in a mechanical fashion; but a process which involves interiorization and vital growth.

The use of a rosary is an aid to this process but is not indispensable. It is not peculiar to Hinduism and Buddhism, but is a practice shared with Muslims and Christians (Roman Catholics). No doubt the Protestants have eschewed its use, along with that of other sacred symbols and rites. This is an essential part of the 'protest'. It has had two types of consequences. In one aspect it has given rise to the once famous, but now somewhat faded Protestant ethic (to use Max Weber's famous term) of work, which was the mother of the twins: Capitalism and Communism; or in one word, scientific secularism or reductionism. The other aspect, which is closely connected is the disastrous effects it has had on human psychology, which have been dilated upon by the eminent psychologist C. G. Jung in many of his writings. Himself a Protestant and the son of a pastor, he has dealt with this from the inside, and not merely as an observer. This is by the way.

Coming back to the use of the rosary (Japamala), we may say that it imparts a kind of cellular structure to time, endowed with the capacity for vital growth. This is the function of the automatic impulsion from within which energizes the 'leap' from one bead to the next. This gap of silent activity punctuates the uttered or silently heard sounds (*Bijaksharaj*) constituting the Mantra, and forms an indispensable ingredient of the Japa.

The analogy of the rosary has philosophical significance as well. Thus Shri Krishna says in the Gita: "I am the Supreme Experience which has no Beyond. I am the continuity running through all experiences, like the string which supports the beads in a rosary." (VII. 7) This is the *Sutratman*, the Self, pictured as the thread of continuity. This image is found in the Upanishads and also elsewhere. Thus Sankara in one of his shorter masterpieces (*Laghu-vakya-vritti*) develops the same idea. He says that consciousness (*Chiti*) is like the thread on which the ever changing modifications of the intellect are strung like the pearls in a necklace. He even goes further and adds that just as thread can be glimpsed in the interstices between the pearls, similarly pure unconditioned consciousness manifests itself in the interval between the subsidence of one thought and the dawn of another. Vidyanaraya in his well known *Panchadashi* designates this as the silent state (*Tushnimbhava*). All this highlights the importance of the gap or transition (*Sandhya*) referred to before.

Even psychologically the transition represents the bridge between the unconscious and the conscious mind, a twilight condition in which both overlap and blend. The use of a rosary combines unconscious (automatic or mechanical) movement with minimal conscious dwelling on meaning.

V

Perspective always presupposes a standpoint. We have glanced at the Gayatri from several angles so as to get a fairly comprehensive view. But there is still one important aspect left for our consideration the question of fitness (*Adhikara*). No Sadhana can yield results unless the aspirant possesses the needful innate aptitudes (*Samskara*) and develops them by training. Every *Sadhana*, like the meditation or Japa of the Gayatri, or for that matter, any Mantra, has to be judged as a concrete experimental process and not in any abstract intellectual fashion. The test of any such practice is whether it helps in achieving its objective (*Siddhi*). "The proof of the pudding is in the eating."

The notion of fitness has social implications. The classification of traditional Hindu society into four *Varnas* (Brahman, Kshatriya, Vaisya and Sudra) had its rationale and justification in the social possibility of adjusting innate aptitudes (*Guna*) and vocation (*Karma*), by utilizing heredity as well as environment. That is the real significance of the Gita statement (IV. 13) that the *Varna* system is divinely appointed. It has had its shortcomings, but appears to have been successful, on the whole, in preserving the essentials of a unique civilization over the centuries. But it is equally obvious that in the circumstances of today, it is unrealistic, and a social anachronism. Birth (*Jati*) has ceased to have any relation to either aptitude or vocation. Fitness, especially in spiritual *Sadhana*, depends entirely on individual considerations, divorced from social rigidities.

In the orthodox tradition, the Gayatri Mantra was held to be the prerogative of the three higher Varnas. Even as among them, the Mantra differed for each Varna. Such a stand is no longer valid, especially in the case of the Gayatri, which aims at the expansion and stimulation of the intelligence by meditating on its identity with the light of the sun. Both are universals, and cannot be artificially confined to limited coteries. Hence Sri Sathya Sai Baba's insistence on giving the Gayatri initiation to all who seek it, irrespective of the circumstance of birth, creed or race. Shall we say that in an important sense, the Gayatri is the birthright of every aspiring human being? This is not only not contrary to the spirit of the Veda, but even in the fullest accord with it. Thus a crucial passage from the Yajur Veda (26. 2) enjoins: So may I speak these blessed words to the people at large—to the Brahman, and the Kshatriya, to the Sudra and the Vaisya; to my own people and the foreigner! (*Yathema vacham kalyanim avadani janebhyah Brahmarajanyabhyam shudraya charyaya cha avaya charananacha.*)

(To be continued)

— K. Guru Dutt

In Human Form

It is profitable for mankind to conceive of God as man; that is the reason why God assumes human form and moves among men, shining forth as guide, teacher and saviour. Rama and Krishna were the human forms assumed with these intentions and for such purposes in the past. To restore the path of righteousness and morality, to reveal to man his own inner reality and divine potency, and to demonstrate in their own lives the validity of certain high ideals that have to regulate human life, avatars come among men. So, the birthday of Krishna must be celebrated as an occasion to discover what those ideals are and how best man can realise them in his own life.

The Gita is the repository of the essence of Krishna's teachings. It was communicated to Arjuna, only after no trace of ego was left in him. Surrender to the Divine Will is an essential prerequisite for the realisation of the Reality. Krishna drew all Nature to Himself, by His supreme Love. He sowed the seeds of inquiry, intuition and inspiration in hearts fertilised by His Love. He shone as the Lord of the entire Cosmos before the Wise and the Clear-eyed. He showered Bliss, at all times and under all conditions, with no respite. He strove for peace everywhere, in the mind of man as well as among the peoples; but, He never strove for personal glory. He stood forth as an example of supreme detachment.

The Gita emphasises the value of detachment and sacrifice. It speaks of the need to eliminate Anger from the heart. Anger pollutes learning and darkens wisdom. It blinds the vision and widens the distance between the individual affected by it and others. Greed is also declared as an equally pernicious enemy. It pollutes activity, and corrodes the consequence of every act. It diverts one's skills and energies into nefarious channels and lands him in vicious habits and attitudes.

Then, there is 'Desire', with traces of Greed and Pride. This undermines Devotion and the attitudes of Dedication and Surrender. When these three are conquered by systematic Sadhana, man becomes strong and pure, and fit enough to march on the Path of Higher Love towards Krishna, the Embodiment of Love. Anger, Greed and Lust are the thorns that prevent man from acquiring the Flower of Love. They are the three Iron Doors that prevent his entry into the Divine Presence. The guidance you need for mastery over the lower self that revels in anger, greed and lust is laid down in the Gita by Krishna. You have only to grasp it and follow it, with zeal and steadfastness. Life is a challenge; meet it. All the strength, all the courage, all the steadfastness you need are in you already. But, you are unaware of it, or, you use only a small fraction of the inexhaustible treasure lying dormant.

—Bhagavan's Discourse 17-8-76 Prasanthi Nilayam

Loving Care

I would like to share an experience which seems to point out a very important message.

On Wednesday, July 14th I awakened remembering the tail-end of a very vivid dream in which I found myself in a group of people waiting to be tested by judges, but I did not know the nature of the test.

Finally, my turn came, and they said with surprise, that this one, meaning me, was able to breathe the full breath.

Apparently, this was the test, and I remember being very surprised, as I do not practise Pranayama, and had not been aware of breathing differently from usual.

Shortly after waking, my husband Sidney and I started our usual morning routine of Tai Chi Chih physical exercises followed by the meditation according to Baba's suggestions in the Guide-lines.

A few minutes after starting the Tai Chi I was very strongly aware of Baba standing in front of me, only a short distance away, and I was most impressed with the fact that although I did not actually see him, I knew the space he occupied in the room, and his size and height compared to my own.

Then I noticed that he was literally pouring into my solar-plexus what felt like energy, and I was amazed at how very easy it was to relax and breathe it in; and wondered why it had never seemed so easy before, and hoped that I could continue to be so open to receive from him.

I didn't connect this with the dream until later.

I had awakened with a head-ache, so I thought that Baba must be helping me with that, and thanked him.

This awareness of Baba continued throughout the exercises and on into the meditation, until I began to feel that Baba was inside of me and that his energy was circulating all through my body with a tingling sensation.

I did not mention this to Sidney at the time, as it was such a subjective experience.

After breakfast I took a shower in the bathroom which Sidney always uses instead of the one I usually, use, which is being re-painted.

As I stepped out of the shower Sidney stepped in, and the next second I heard him crash as he slipped on the tile and fell on his back on the tile steps.

He could neither breathe nor speak, only groan, as he lay inert.

As Baba's presence was still so strongly with me, it was easy and natural for me to call on him for help.

Somehow I was able to move Sidney out of the shower and onto a mat on his stomach, and was horrified to see that his rib-cage on the right side was caved in, and there were two red marks across the back, and black and blue bruises beginning to appear on the upper back.

I quickly got Vibhuti and the mangalasutra which Baba had materialized at the spiritual marriage he gave us last year, and putting them on his back, started to rub it gently with the Vibhuti, massaging it in as I talked out loud to Baba, asking for help.

I was profoundly moved as I watched the ribs move up under my hand and the upper back resume the normal shape, at which point he gasped in and was able to breathe again and speak.

As I continued to rub the Vibhuti into the injured area, the black and blue bruises began to fade as if they were being washed away.

I could feel the broken ribs move under my hand, and could hear the broken ends rub against one another, and later, the X-ray pictures showed that he broke three ribs.

The amazing part is that there was no puncture of the lung; the broken ends were close together so that it was not necessary to operate to pull them into place; and there were no bruises visible.

I feel certain that Baba must have known that this was about to happen, but as he has said he will not interfere with our Karma, he prepared me ahead of time (without my knowing the reason) so that I would be alerted to call on him for help immediately, and already be filled with his energy so that it could pour into Sidney, and so prevent the accident from being more serious than it is.

The chief reason for me to share this is that so many devotees think that as soon as they come to Baba they will live happily ever after, free from problems, as we were taught in the fairy stories we heard as children; and are deeply disappointed and disillusioned, and often begin to doubt Baba, when the exact opposite often takes place, and they appear to be under an attack, with barely enough time to recover from dealing with one problem before new ones loom up.

However, Baba has told us that he often accelerates our Karma when we come to him, and as he will not erase it, he helps us handle it if we call on him, knowing we cannot deal with it alone.

In the experience, I have just shared, not only did he fill me with his presence, but he led me, (without my knowledge) to be right there, only inches away when Sidney fell.

If I had been anywhere else in the house he might not have survived, as his condition made it impossible to call me, and I could not have heard the fall with the bathroom door closed.

For me, it is much more realistic to know that Baba is always available to help us with our problems, than to expect him to wave a magic wand and avert them, and in so doing take away the chance to learn the necessary lesson through handling them with his help.

I am filled with awe as I look back and realize the loving care with which he came ahead of the accident to prepare the way to lessen the severity of it.

—*Ms. S. D. Krystal, Pacific Palisade*

A bird may soar to all quarters of the earth, but it has to come to rest on some perch, however long it flies, however far it wanders, and however fascinated it may be with the open, limitless sky.

So every man has some day to find refuge in the ETERNAL BEING, however strongly he may deny Him, however enthusiastically he may become attached to the pleasures of material existence.

—*Baba*

Ramakatha Rasavahini

Sri Sathya Sal Baba

80

Sulochana

Rama embraced Vibhishana, Hanuman, Nala, Nila and others and thrilled them all with the Divine Touch; at this, the pain that tortured them disappeared in an instant; the wounds on their bodies were healed in a trice. The Vanaras were delighted at the sight of Rama's happy face. The compassionate eyes of Rama were cast upon the Vanaras.

Meanwhile, Sulochana, the wife of Meghanada, heard the news of her husband's death, through her maids who ran to her with the tragic information. The entire palace was sunk in grief. Ravana was overcome with sorrow and anger. "Until now, I believed that this small task could be accomplished easily by either Meghanada or Kumbhakarna. Now, I have observed with my own eyes the failure of their prowess. I am ashamed that Meghanada fell a victim to the attack of monkeys. Those who are killed by monkeys how can they claim to be heroes?" she said.

Ravana tried to console Sulochana. He said, "Respected Consort! Give up your grief. Do not think that I am a hero of that type. I shall bring you solace, within an hour or so. You can witness on the battlefield, my terrific might. I shall pluck the heads of those who caused the death of your husband, and bring them with me. This shall be done, without doubt." Thus, Ravana boasted and raved in the presence of Sulochana. His anger burnt his frame and he was beside himself with rage.

Hearing his words, the wise and virtuous Sulochana said, "O Ten-headed One! Is there in your heart any trace of hope that you can win victory over the enemy? You are sunk in the deep darkness of delusion. I had swallowed my resentment and my disappointment so long, for, I felt that opposing one's father-in-law was improper, and in this case, it is also useless to try to convince you. Your rage is the prime cause for the destruction of the Rakshasa population of this

island. Let me tell you this-it is impossible for you to win a victory over Rama. This is the truth, the indisputable truth." Sulochana rose suddenly, and wailing alone, she moved towards the apartments of Mandodari, the Queen, the mother of Meghanada. Reaching there, she fell at the feet of her mother-in-law and said, "This calamity has been brought about by your husband and not by any one else. I too cannot escape such a calamity, which is sure to befall me, this day or the next." Her torn heart poured out words that were harsh and cruel.

Mandodari too was pained when she contemplated the evil desires of Ravana and his pride at his own wickedness; she wept at the realisation that the Words of Sulochana were awfully true. The two women sat silent for long, and later, they described to each other the virtues and excellence of Rama and the patience and chastity of Sita and told themselves that if only they could get a glimpse of that divine person their lives would be rendered worth while.

The Siva Temple

Ravana could not bear to witness the agony of his daughter-in-law, the bereaved Sulochana. Her words thrust his heart like sharp spikes. His grief was so heavy at the loss of such a bright and loving son that he fell on the floor and in despair, he beat his head on the ground. Rising up, he poured out his anguish before the Siva idol of his favourite temple.

Meanwhile, the ministers of his court approached him there. They said, "O King. Why are you grieving in vain? Sons, wives and all the rest on whom we lavish our love are all transitory lives; like the lightning flash that illumines the dark cloud for an instant, they come and go. Life is a flash, it does not last. Knowing this in full measure, it is not proper for you to sink in ignorance and engage your mind in bewailing their loss. Now is the time to plan the future. Plan out the strategy by which we can destroy the enemy at our doors." They tried to bring consolation and remind him of the immediate tasks, through various arguments. At last, Ravana folded his twenty palms and praying to Siva, he fell on the floor of the temple in reverent homage.

Another Son

When this happened on the earth above, Ahi-Ravana, living in the nether regions became aware that Ravana was suffering from a great burden of sorrow. He thought within himself, "How could this be? He has all the world under his control and within his grasp! No one can defeat him." Ahi-Ravana worshipped no other god but the Devi Kamada. Immediately, he meditated on Her, and She revealed to Her votary the place where Ravana was, at that time. So, he could appear before Ravana, in Siva Temple itself. He fell at Ravana's feet, announcing his name, while doing so. Ahi-Ravana was no other than another son of Ravana. He enquired the reason why the father was so upset and disheartened. Ravana related to him, all the events since the nose and ears of Surpanakha were sliced off by the brothers. This account made Ahi-Ravana very sad; he said, `The path of morality is adored by every one in the world. By straying away from that path and preferring the path of immorality, fear enters the heart. Instead of paying attention to the past and the future, and the likely course of events you have plunged into this foolish fatal war. As a consequence, you have destroyed your clan and your dynasty. You do not know the heroism and the power that lies dormant in `man'. You have counted the greatest among them as the least and the lowest. Yet I wish to tell you one thing now. I shall capture Rama and Lakshmana and take them with me to the nether regions. I shall sacrifice them as offerings to my Kamada Devi. I shall thereby bring immense fame to the Rakshasa name.

With these words, he prostrated before Ravana, and made obeisance to Kamada Devi; then he entered the camp of Rama. With his supernatural power, he invoked the spirit of darkness and enveloped the Vanaras in thick blackness. No one could see his own palm, when held before him! Such was the thickness of the pitch darkness around all. The Vanaras were extremely vigilant in camp; even Death dared not enter the place. Mahavira, the Vanara guard, elongated his tail to such an extent that he could encircle the camp with it many times over, until the coils one over the other became a high wall, of the size and strength of a mountain barrier. Mahavira himself sat alert at the only gate through which entrance into this impregnable fort was possible.

Ahi-Ravana saw the tail-fort and was stricken with great fear. He could not conceive of any strategy to outmanoeuvre this defence. Suddenly, getting a brain-wave, he changed himself into the likeness of Vibhishana and accosted Mahavira at the gate. He told him, "Friend! I must go into the Presence of Rama. With his approval, I had gone outside the camp to perform my evening prayers and rites. I have finished them now. If I do not go without delay, I would incur the sin of disobeying His command. So, allow me to enter the camp." Mahavira was taken in by those words and that form, which were to his ears and eyes the same as Vibhishana's. He allowed him into the camp.

He found Nala, Nila, and Sugriva fast asleep, since they were exhausted by the day's incessant fighting. Rama too was sleeping, with his hand clasping the hand of his brother Lakshmana. The pseudo-Vibhishana who was approaching him was not un-noticed by Rama. He had incarnated, adopting, in sport, the human frame and his purpose in so doing was to destroy the entire Rakshasa species and wipe them off the face earth. His task will remain unfinished if the descendents of Ravana survived in the least number. So, he played his role, as if he did not know the trick that Ahi-Ravana was about to indulge in. Others cannot understand his ways. He knows where, when and by which means, any one has to be exterminated. He plays his drama, in his own way, according to his own direction.

The Rakshasa who had neared him recited the Mohana Mantra, which would make whomsoever he wants swoon and become unconscious. That made the Vanara heroes sleep even more soundly. Then, he bound Rama and Lakshmana and carried them off to his region, in the bowels of the earth, the region called Patala.

Vibhishana Knows

After some time, the Vanaras woke up and were plunged in dismay when they found that there were no Rama and Lakshmana beside them. The place where they had slept had become a deep pit. The entire camp was soon filled with their cries and groans. The Vanaras were rendered as miserable as the sky without the moon, or lotus blooms without water. The Vanaras started moving in all directions to seek out the brothers and recover them. Many ran towards the shore of the sea; many searched the borders of the campus. No one could discover any clue, to trace their whereabouts. The Vanaras lost hope and courage; they were overcome by sorrow and despair. "All the Rakshasa warriors have been destroyed. Ravana alone has survived; his days too were nearing the end. At this juncture, this misfortune has overtaken us." The Vanaras lamented their fate in this manner. Sugriva, the King of the Vanaras, himself fell unconscious on the ground.

Vibhishana had not heard about this incident; he was returning with wet clothes on from a sea bath, after performing his morning rites. The Vanaras ran towards him and revealed to him that Rama and Lakshmana could not be seen in camp. Vibhishana was struck with sorrow for one instant; but, since he was conversant with the tricks that the Rakshasas could play, using their supernatural powers, he guessed the plot correctly. He instructed them to follow him into the camp. "Come. Let us go into the camp," he told them; this gave them some little consolation. When he talked with Mahavira at the gate, he was surprised and shocked. Mahavira asked, "Why? You passed through this gate into camp a while ago, and you asked permission to do so?"

It was now clear to Vibhishana. He could picture in his mind what had happened. So he addressed the Vanaras thus: "Vanaras, there is no need to be anxious. Ahi-Ravana, the son of Ravana is a master in such tricks. He is living in Patala—the nether regions. Judging from the depth of this pit, I am sure it is he who has carried Rama and Lakshmana to his own place underground. I have no doubt on this point. For, no one else can assume my form. Do not be disheartened that he is a great trickster. It is best that some one from among us who is mighty strong proceed thither,"

Then Vibhishana looked around and sighting Hanuman, he said, "Hanuman! Your physical and mental strength is known all over the world. Go immediately to Patala and bring back those Oceans of Mercy, Rama and Lakshmana. Vibhishana described also the route that Hanuman had to take to reach Patala, where Ahi-Ravana stayed.

Sugriva, Angada and Jambavanta clasped Hanuman to their breast and shed tears of joy. Hanuman solicited permission from his Royal Master, Sugriva and, while starting on his mission, told the Vanaras, "Do not fear. Do not be anxious in the least. Whoever he is, I shall destroy him, even if I have to sacrifice my life. I shall stand before you, with Rama and Lakshmana pretty soon. Be assured." With these words and with the acclamation, Jai Rama, Jai Rama (Victory to Rama, Victory to Rama) emanating from his tongue, Hanuman started off.

Hanuman in Patala

Reaching the Patala region, he rested awhile under a tree. He heard two birds sitting above him, conversing aloud. Hanuman knew that language of birds; so, he sat listening to their talk "Dear One," spoke the bird, "Ahi-Ravana has brought two brothers Rama and Lakshmana, and he had made all preparations to sacrifice both of them to Goddess Kamada just now. He will cast those holy bodies away, after the sacrifice. We can feast on those sacred bodies to our full content. This day, is a festival day for us."

Hanuman rose suddenly from under the tree; like a cobra whose tail has been trodden upon he hissed with rage, and leaped forward like a giant flame. "Alas! I fear what has happened already to my Lord," he wailed. He entered the City of Ahi-Ravana. At the very entrance, he had to fight and overcome Makaradhwaja, the guard in monkey form. But, seeing that he was a monkey, he explored his genealogy and history, Hanuman was able to win confidence and get from him inside information about Rama and Lakshmana and their fate. He also came to know from him that the brothers were to be taken at dawn to the temple of Goddess Kamada, for being offered as human sacrifice to Her.

The Rama Story: Stream of Sacred Sweetness

(To be continued)

Serve with no Wavering

In order to felicitate the brilliant students of the Sri Sathya Sai College, Whitefield, who won many distinguished ranks and first classes in the recent University Examinations, thus proving the efficacy of the constructive education imparted in that College in the field of academic attainments also, a pleasant Function was arranged by the Sathya Sai Seva Samiti, Bangalore, at Lal Bagh, on 1st August, 1976. Hon'ble Sri Huchmasti Gowda, the Revenue Minister of the Government of Karnataka was the President of the Gathering. Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba was present to bless the students.

Dr. M. B. Sundara Rao welcomed the gathering. Dr. V. K. Gokak addressed the students and said that the Spiritual atmosphere of the College, with its emphasis on Yoga, Meditation, Bhajan and Social Service under the direct inspiration and guidance of Bhagavan had impressed parents all over India and even countries outside; the result is that the College has among its students boys from the remotest corners of India, and from Fiji, Hong Kong, East Africa and other regions.

Sri Narender, Principal of the College then spoke on the gracious interest that Bhagavan is taking every moment in the progress of each student, not only as a Sadhaka, but, also as a student of the curricula prescribed. Anup Jalani, a student belonging to Delhi, and the winner of a record breaking First rank in the B. Coin. Examination spoke, with great sincerity, on the transformation that the College had induced in him during these years. Referring to the attempt of a University Committee to investigate 'miracles' under 'controlled conditions' he offered himself, for the purpose, since his transformation had all the traits of the inexplicable, and the wondrous, and could be interpreted only as the result of Divine Grace. Sri Kamal Sawhney, a student from Bombay, who too had the unique glory of securing the sixth rank in the Final Examination this year, after winning the eighth Rank at the II year examination last year, spoke very feelingly and with genuine enthusiasm on the debt he owed to the College, the teachers and above all to Baba Himself. He spoke of three stages in the process of transformation, which the student passes through: Bend the Body Mend the Senses, and End the Mind. He spoke of his discovery of the soothing effects of Divine Love, and the elevating effects of social service He also advised those who are unable to get the awareness of God in things and happenings beyond the reach of the senses and of logic, not to deny Divinity because they are too ignorant to recognise it.

The rank-holders were then presented to the gathering and the citations read. They were each given various gifts by the Samiti as well as the devotees of Bhagavan. To the amazement and appreciation of the entire audience, however, all of them spontaneously and immediately handed over the money gifts to for helping Students too poor to pay their fees etc. Sri Kamal Sawhney

who started of the process declared, quoting Bhagavan's statement, "Money comes and goes, but, morality comes and grows!"

The Hon'ble Minister said that it was really a revelation that the boys of the Sathya Sai College who were masters of many useful skills and who spent a good portion of their time in Bhajan and Namasmarana could achieve such rare academic distinctions also. Many of the top ranks in all the examinations were won by them, often consistently by the same set of boys. There were more than fifty-first class students also from the College. He referred to the devotion that the students and millions of others had towards Bhagavan and refuted the allegation that this devotion was a sign of superstition. Can we call the devotion of Anjaneya to Sri Rama as a manifestation of superstition, he asked. He spoke of the attempts to wean youth away from religion and their reverence towards the spiritual heritage of the country as ruinous and retrograde.

Bhagavan then delivered His Divine Discourse. "Without Sathya, Dharma, Prema and Shanti, He declared, the accumulation of scholarship is a barren achievement. Without them, all charities and services rendered to others are ineffective. Without them, positions of authority to which one is raised, become positions of persecution. Without them, no good act or meritorious achievement can yield fruit," He said. Delineating types of people who pronounce judgements, on others, He said, "There are four chief types: Those who see only good in everything and everyone, those who see the good as good and the evil as evil, those who see the good as evil, and the evil as good, and lastly, those who do not see the good at all, for even the good they transmute into evil. Of these, one can tolerate the first three, perhaps, but, the fourth type is definitely demonic." Bhagavan continued.

"Education is caught up in confusion; instead of leading the country on along prosperity and fraternity, it struggles to take it along alien arid degrading paths. It does not build on strong sustaining foundations of Indian Culture. It is still based on the plans of Macaulay. Among most of the products of modern education, we do not find even traces of moral virtues, honesty, integrity, eagerness to serve and readiness to renounce. The education that was practised in ancient India was far superior and far more fruitful, for, it equipped the student with a healthy spirit of self-reliance. It endowed him with mental peace and equipoise. It never allowed him to be enslaved by the glittering fancies and fascinations of other cultures. It taught him to discriminate between the flippant and the stable, the upgrading and the down-pulling. It enthuses the student to offer his life at the feet of his Motherland, with a laugh in his face and a twinkle in his eye. It arms him against all obstacles on the path of self-culture and self-realisation. It exhorts him to oppose without rest or relief untruth, injustice, and violence.

But, instead of cultivating these high ideals and incorporating them in our educational system, we are now borrowing educational ideals from other peoples with different heritages. We have no faith in the system that has been extolled by a billion throats, for millennia.

Education is to be valued, not as a means of earning one's livelihood, but, as the essential requisite for a happy peaceful and progressive life, leading man from the animal stage of existence to the Presence of the Devine, where Love and Light reign undisturbed. He who lives for the sake of eating is indeed a great sinner; he who lives for the sake of reaching the full

awareness of his innate Reality is blessed. The first one is a papi, and the second is of the same order as a Gopi.

Intelligence is the special mark of humans; so, every effort must be made to amplify and sharpen it, so that it may be a fit instrument for understanding the inner and the outer world. Along with intelligence, character too has to be cultivated in equal measure, for then alone can that intelligence be used to serve society. The readiness to renounce one's pleasure in order to relieve the burden of another is a prime virtue of character. Moksha means liberation; renunciation too involves giving up or liberation. The secret of both is the same.

What exactly has to be renounced? Desire is the worst enemy and it has to be canalised and reduced with determination, until it ceases to bother you. With Desire, Anger and Greed too have to be discarded, for, they are present, wherever there is Desire. When you say 'bowman', it is implied that arrows too are there with the bow. So too, 'desire' is ever associated with anger and greed. Desire is bad, even if it is for fame and authority. It is the avarice for power and pelf that ruins many a human life.

Life is a journey; the students here have to journey long. So, it is necessary to give them the skill, the enthusiasm and the security that can take them happily along. Their hearts are pure, steady and inclusive. Elders should so behave that they do not tarnish their hearts or make them narrow and vengeful. They must be encouraged to enlarge it and soften it through intensive social service.

Our educational institutions have failed to maintain the high standards which the ancients had. In the past, in the ashrams of the Rishis, one was declared fit only if he secured cent percent marks in the subject of study. Now, however, thirty marks out of a hundred are enough for the University to grant him a certificate of having passed. That is as much as to say, he can commit seventy mistakes with impunity and be none the worse. When such is the ease with which degrees can be secured and when degrees are the bases for being appointed to positions of authority, the person so appointed will commit a hundred mistakes for every hundred assignments and be safe in his post, nevertheless. How can these people be the saviours and pillars of the India of tomorrow?

I am often telling the students of my Colleges to attach more importance to the avoidance of 'remarks' than the acquisition of 'marks'. Wealth cannot yield joyous content. Divinity alone can confer that. Yearn for God. Joy and Peace will be added unto you. Embodiments of the Divine Atma! When you pursue these elevating ideals, you will have to come up against many obstacles which others place in your path. So, you must be ever alert and vigilant not to be taken in by their specious pleas.

Awareness is life; be aware of your inner strength and glory. Express that glory through loving service to society. In Northern India, they call Yogis, Sages and Monks, 'Maharaj', which means 'Emperor'. Yes. The Emperor is he, who has a rich treasury of the gems of Detachment and Service. It is not he who has in his vaults a great deal of precious metal. The wealth that you hoard is not yours; the wealth that you have shared is yours. The wealth that you have hidden cannot belong to you.

The wealth that you have given away is really yours. That is the reason why the Vedas have declared, "Not through acts, nor through progeny, nor through wealth can Immortality be won; it can be won only through Renunciation." Youth must acquire and invest in themselves all the skills and virtues which can help India prosper and shine forth as the benefactor and preceptor of mankind. They must develop Self-confidence, the base for the mansion of their life; they must then erect the walls of Self-satisfaction and put on them the terrace of Self-sacrifice. Then, they can live in that house and achieve Self-realisation. Youth must progress along these steps and become exemplars of Indian Culture in its glory.

Some people afflicted with envy at the reconstruction of Sanathana Dharma for the revival of the Glory of India are attempting to undermine its basic beliefs and create confusion in the minds of youth. The Kokil's song is harsh to the ear of the crow; but, its criticism will not silence the Kokil. The Hamsa is defamed as ugly by the duck; but, it does not worry in the least. Nor can the duck decrease the glory of that celestial swan. Defamation, criticism, slighting are all to be set aside, unrecognised; they shall not be valued at all. They are all in the order of things. And, they do also some good. For, they help emphasise the excellence and bring it more to light. It is a foil to make the thing shine brighter. Besides, when one person says 'no' and another says 'yes', it is an individual problem. The attempt to darken the splendour of Sai can never succeed, except by one means: Suppose Sai splendour is indicated by a line a certain length. Efforts to shorten it by wiping or erasing it will not make it shorter. But, if you draw by its side a longer line, then, automatically, it will become shorter! So too, do the things that Sai is doing, on a grander and more impressive scale than, fame of Sai will certainly diminish. That is the more effective way, and not the fabrication of baseless stories. Of course, one must have the qualification and the authority to enter on that attempt. How can an ant, measure the depth of the ocean? Still, many venture into this field, for they have nothing better to do. They succeed only in causing a stir in the calm atmosphere of the land.

Jesus was crowned with a crown of thorns. A thorny fence around a tree is clear proof that the tree has edible fruits in plenty. Precious time should not be wasted in such games; it is best spent in realising one's divinity and serving society.

The acts of Sai are all self-less, sacred, and beneficial. Sai has never caused harm; He is establishing the Path of Truth, the Path of Morality, the Holy Path to God-realisation. So, Sai's work will march triumphantly on. The person who can make Sai give up His task in fear is not born on earth; nor will he be born hereafter. For, Truth is impregnable. Truth must triumph. A dog barks at its own shadow, imagining it to be a rival. Other dogs, not knowing the reason, take up the cue and the whole area is filled with barks. Some bay at stars, but, the stars are unmoved. You should not be perturbed by this empty noise; carry on your mission of service, as now, with your usual enthusiasm. Youth should never yield to the call of fanaticism or revolution. Try to control your emotions, even from this tender age. In one way, the agitation is useful for you can practise self-control in these exacting conditions.

I desire to tell the Units of the Seva Organisation that very soon they will witness the realisation of all their ideals. But, as and when success is achieved, as a reaction, carping and denigration will also increase. When the well grows deeper, the mound beside it will grow

higher. That is quite natural. Some people pay attention to the depth of the well; others watch the height of the mound.

I have been telling you one truth always: Your Master is not Sai; your Master is your Heart, where God resides. You are 3 persons, not one; the One you think you are, the One others think you are, and the One you really are. The One you really are is God. God is in you, with you, above you, around you, behind you. All of you are Divine, in reality; differences in name and form are but temporary and external.

Carry on your highest duty to yourselves: following the four F's: Follow the Master; face the devil; fight to the end; and finish the Game. Then, you will win my Love in full measure. Love is my highest Miracle. Love can make you, gather the affection of all mankind. Love will not tolerate any selfish aim or approach. Love is God; Live in Love. Then all is right, all can be well. Expand your heart so that it can encompass all. Do not narrow it down into an instrument of restricted Love.

It is said that I try to attract people by miracles; the miracles are not "performed" in order to exhibit power; they just happen, and serve as evidence of the power. As a matter of fact, whenever any one misuses his powers, physical, mental, economic, or spiritual, Sai always condemns them strongly. Therefore, the Sai Power cannot be a subject for a University Examination; it is a subject for Universal Examination, by the entire Universe. Sai is limited only by His own will.

But, when "near-dear relationship" is established, one can delve a little into the Sai Mystery. That is the highest achievement possible. I am saying all this, not out of anger or resentment, but, solely through a desire to declare My Truth.

Embodiments of the Divine Atma! Develop peace of mind and equilibrium, and spend your lives in sacred pursuits like service to the distressed, the diseased and the deprived. That is my advice and that will ensure you my blessings."

Bhagavan then sang a few Bhajan songs, the first one being addressed to the Love-filled Mind.

The Divine at Dharmapuri

Bhagavan addressed a mammoth gathering of over a lakh of people at Dharmapuri in Tamil Nadu on Friday, the 13th August, while inaugurating the Tamil Nadu Sathya Sai Seva Dal Conference, held there for three days, under the auspices of the Dharmapuri Sathya Sai Seva Samiti. On His way to Dharmapuri, Bhagavan halted for a while at Bosur, near the Border, and gave Darshan to thousands who were yearning for the chance.

At Dharmapuri, Bhagavan stressed on the value of Seva as Sadhana for the removal of egoism and for the realisation of the Unity of all individual selves in the Universal Self, the Paramatma.

Over 700 members of the Seva Dal (men and women) from the units of the Dal had come for the Conference from the towns and villages of Tamil Nadu State.

Dharmapuri District, which was the worst to suffer from disastrous draught had heavy downpours of rain for days together, within hours after the Address of Bhagavan in the heart of the Capital City of Dharmapuri. From thousands of hearts, the homage of gratitude arose, spontaneously.

I refuse to call any person a Nastika, or atheist. All beings exist as a result of the Divine Will, in accordance of the Divine Plan, and, so, no one is beyond the Divine Grace. God will not exile any one from His Presence. His Presence is everywhere. Every one, however egoistic or wicked has love towards some one, a person, a plant an animal, or an ideal. That love is the Divine spark instilled in his heart. He must also honour Truth with some one. The moment when he utters Truth, entertains Love, or serves another or pays reverence to some one-that moment is God's Moment in his life.

—Baba

The Impact

Writing about Sathya Sai Baba is like trying to describe an iceberg, after getting acquainted with the tip that is visible over the water. What remains hidden in unfathomable mystery is by far the greater and more significant part, than what is revealed to human observation and understanding. The iceberg and other natural phenomena at least lend themselves to scientific exploration and analysis. But, the only way to understand the Sai mystery is, as Baba himself says, to merge in it. No small task that! Besides, success in such merging might find one engulfed in a vast area of silence!

Sathya Sai Baba is no ordinary saint or guru. He displays powers, knowledge, compassion and comprehension of the phenomena of the universe which are quite beyond the ken of normal human grasp or experience. The sure instinct of our people did not take long to recognise in him the Avatar of our age, a divine being in the line of our redeemers, Rama, Krishna, the Buddha, Nanak, Ramakrishna, Aurobindo, and Sai Baba of Shirdi.

Like the high personages of other ages, Sathya Sai Baba too has his critics and detractors who call him a fortuneteller, a magician, a clever mind-reader, a miracle-maker, perhaps, and other names besides. However these are mostly people who have not seen or known Sathya Sai, or, people whom he has, for some good reason, kept at arms length. Some among them are natural doubters, whose ego, blown high by a little philosophy, inclines them to a general disbelief in everything except their own infallibility.

There are others turned sour because of jealousy or grudge of those who, in their worldly reckoning, undeservedly enjoy Sathya Sai's favour. But, their number is small; and, in recent years, Sathya Sai's following has grown by leaps and bounds. His devotees count by the million and the tide is ever rising, ever surging forward.

To my mind, two happenings of daily occurrence, less noticed perhaps because of their frequency, are the most miraculous of all his works. (1) The creation, on several occasions each day, of Vibhuti or fragrant ash possessing curative and elevating qualities, is, I think, a most moving thing. He produces Vibhuti by moving his right hand, palm turned downward in circles, two or three times. Not many are lucky to induce him to this novel, though entirely simple and spontaneous, creative act, which always seem related to the needs of its beneficiary. During my first meeting with Sathya Sai Baba on the eve of my departure for an assignment abroad, he created some Vibhuti and giving to me said, "Take it with you." It was no more than a pinchful, but, it lasted me, with liberal personal use and the gifting of a few grains of it to others every now and then, a good year and half, till the time came for me to receive his blessings personally once again. There it was—a miracle, within a miracle.

Watching the circular motions of Sathya Sai's down turned hand, I have often felt as if he were churning the depths of a devotee's being to pull out from there the poisons of all his lust and anger, greed attachment and fear, malice envy and arrogance, which he would then incinerate in the pure fire of his love, and return the remains to the owner, without their original burden. The act has always struck me as a sort of Yajna, Sathya Sai performs, to help quicken the step of a weary but unfaltering devotee in his march on the highroad of liberation.

(2) The transformation of character that Sathya Sai Baba brings about in ordinary men and women is a still more remarkable miracle. A man who goes into a meeting with him seldom comes out the same. He emerges from the encounter exalted and radiant, as if Baba had stripped him of his motley cloak of many patches and fitted him out in love's pure raiment for a fresh journey towards a bright new destination. The transformation begins almost at the first moment of contact and the process of a ceaseless irresistible uplift never stops thereafter.

Perhaps this is his greatest appeal which draws to Puttaparthi and Brindavan men and women of all faiths and belief from all the continents of the world. The impact of his personality on men, women, and children is instantaneous, electrifying and elevating. In his luminous presence, they feel part of a higher order of reality, lifted out of themselves, as it were, on to a different, altogether pure plane of existence, where there is no lust, no sensuality, no greed, no anger, no wrong-doing, and where, while there may be suffering and pain, there is no fear.

—Maharajakrishna Rasagotra, Indian Ambassador to Nepal
From Article in Garland of Golden Rose

The Perspective of The Gayatri

OM SAI RAM

In concluding the article on Gayatri, I would say that the great spiritual truths are universal in scope and application, and independent of the word and authority even of the Veda. They can be and have to be restated from time to time according to the prevailing exigencies. In our days of

the dominance of science, it is difficult for people to use the image of the "person behind the sun" as a support for meditation. For them, the sun is no more than a stupendous mass of incandescent gas. They need a closer and more human receptacle for their devotion, which will respond with "grace abounding." Numberless people today have found such a refuge in the person of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba. They find it easier and more efficacious to dwell on his name, as their Gayatri —*OM SAI RAM*.

Like the "three-footed" Gayatri, it comprises three seed-syllables (*Bijaksharas*). OM is the sacred origin of the Veda. As the Mandukya Upanishad says: This Akshara is everything that exists; it is the past, the present and the future and also what lies beyond.

Again this syllable, also called Pranava, is the fountain-head of all renewal (*Prakarshena navatvasya hetutvat pranavah smritah*). Patanjali in his *Yoga-sutras* declares that it is the vocal equivalent of Ishwara, and recommends it as the base for *Japa* and *Dhyana*.

The significance and power of the name *RAM* is a devotional commonplace over the length and breadth of India. The tradition goes that repetition of the name, even in reverse, was effective, as in the case of Valmiki, the author of the Ramayana, whose life was transformed in consequence. It symbolizes the ideal ruler who establishes the Dharma and social harmony: *Maryada Purushottama*.

As for the great *Bijaksahra SAI*, it forms the bridge, the vital link between the universal and the specific Dharma. It represents their union (*Sandhi*) and their reconciliation (*Samanvaya*). It is the light of the sun made humanly accessible to us. His rays of love (*Prema*) are broadcast over all, including those who deny him. As Sankara says: He is the Self of the denier also (*Ya eva nirakarta tasyaiva'tmatvat*).

The secret of Baba's influence and power over those who have the good fortune to contact him has intrigued me ever since I came, almost against my own will, within his orbit. The more I think over it the more firmly am I convinced that he is a nucleus of solar energy, and that my identification of the Mantra—*Om Sai Ram*—with the essence of the Gayatri is not far fetched. This is a matter of experience rather than of argument. Still I wish to dwell for a while on its plausibility.

The majority of Baba's devotees are attracted to him after hearing about his astounding healing miracles. According to an immemorial tradition healing is associated with the sun. As our astrologers say: It is from the sun that we have to derive health (*Arogyam Bhaskarad icched*). I had my own experience of this when a longstanding disability of my right hand was healed after a mere touch. The wonder of it was that I had not mentioned it to him at any time before. I have given an account of this in an article in *Sanathana Sarathi* entitled "Hand in Hand" which appeared in 1973. Even earlier, after my first encounter with him, I had described my experience as that of a sudden influx of energy, as if run-down batteries had been suddenly recharged. *Sanathana Sarathi*—August-September 1972). I thought I was being original; but soon I discovered that the same expression had been used by many others before (e.g., by K. M. Munshi), and that it was in fact the standard experience.

Baba's mere presence, his glance, invigorates. It is like a ray of sunshine on a cloudy day. Hence the crowds that flock for *Darshan* day after day, braving the inclemencies of weather, and waiting for hours on end, sometimes in vain. But they are not put off, nor are they satisfied. The craving for *Darshan* is insatiable. No doubt people also muster for *Darshan* of V. I. P's or film stars, not to speak of saints. As foreigners have observed, there is a craze for *Darshan* in India. But Baba's case is unique. To adapt the stable words of Shakespeare, custom does not stale his infinite variety.

Baba's glance is nourishing. As with food, there is immediate satisfaction and a sense of fulfillment. But again the hunger returns and demands appeasement. This brings to mind the aspect of the sun as deity (*Aditya*) known in the Veda as Pushan, the Nourisher. The Upanishadic prayer to Pushan (*Isavasya*) has already been cited. The visible sun is there described as a golden disc veiling the face of Truth, and he is implored to remove the covering, so that the worshipper, whose goal is *Sathya* and *Dharma*, may have Vision (*Sathya dharmaya drishtaye*).

These hallowed words may be almost literally applied to Baba. I remember an epoch making discourse he delivered during one of the Summer Courses warning his hearers not to mistake his physical form for his essence, but to look for the Truth (*Sathya*), which is at once manifested and obscured by that form. Before he declared himself as SAI, his name was *Sathya Narayana*. Now he is *Sathya Sai*. *Sathya*, as we have seen, is intimately and symbolically linked with the Sun, who is the visible Brahman as the Veda declares (*Asavadityo Brahma*). In more familiar language, *Sathya Narayana* is no other than *Surya Narayana*.

The light of the sun is also the light of knowledge, not merely figuratively but even literally. Hence the prayer in the Gayatri for the impelling or stimulation of our thoughts (*Dhiyah*). Our thoughts and knowledge are the articulation of the Light, and in essence are identical with the Light: the Light of All-Knowledge (*Sarvajnatwa*) Omniscience. In Baba we find the concentrated seed of omniscience, which according to Patanjali, is the distinguishing attribute of *Easwara*: *Tatra niratishayam sarvajna bijam*. Its applicability to Baba arises from the fact that he is indeed the Avatar of our age. Effortlessly, he compasses the facts of the material and spiritual worlds, and with equal ease penetrates into the human heart.

The perspective which I have tried to present so far is personal, and lays no claim to general applicability or acceptance. It is far from complete, and aims only at being suggestive. I have dealt with the concept of *Mantra*, of which the Gayatri is the prototype; with the bearings of the doctrine of *Karma* on practice, especially of the meditational variety (*Japa*) and the rationale of technique of repetition, including the use of the rosary; with the universality of the Gayatri contemplation, and of the Mantra ON SAI RAM as its quintessence; and finally with the *Sai Tattwa*, as I understand it.

Baba has repeatedly said that his life is his message; and that we should go behind his words, even beyond his physical form to the essence (*Tattwa*) that underlies them. The proximate means to the attainment of this *Tattwa* (which is identical with *Sathya*) are ethical conduct, social service in its multifarious aspects, and congregational Bhajan which leads to emotional integration through participation in devotional ecstasy.

But when all is said and done, the fact remains that *Tattwa* can be grasped only in silence and solitude. Baba's silence is, as we know, not less effective than his words; perhaps even more. As A. N. Whithead has well said, the reality of religion lies in what man does with his solitariness: the Alone with the Alone. The penultimate means towards this end is Japa of the Gayatri Mantra, either in its extended Vedic form; or in its condensed, but not less efficacious form: OM SAI RAM. That is my experience.

(concluded)

—K. Guru Dutt

A person driving a car concentrates on the road; for, he is anxious to save himself and others from accident. Fear is what induces single-mindedness to his case. Love is a greater force for giving concentration. If you have steady and resolute Love, the concentration becomes intense and unshakeable. Faith develops into love and love results in concentration.

—Baba

The Pilgrim's Path of Glory

—Smt. Sudha Chakravarthi

Where does one start about one's Mind's rest, Thought's end, Heart's contentment, Body's refuge and Soul's repose? That the Glory of the Thousand Suns does not dazzle one's vision to the realities of Life, but, brings into sharp focus the myriad details of living? That the Awareness clears the brain, widens the heart, deepens the emotions, clarifies the vision, sharpens the taste, and envelops one's whole Being? All these are familiar emotions to any one who lays at the Ocean of Sathya Sai, who glimpses the Vastness and who hears one thrilling note of the Grand Symphony of Sathya Sai.

Attempting an objective study of Sathya Sai Baba rather than a subjective one is a satisfying experience in its own way. It takes an ant to recognise and enjoy the sweetness of sugar than the lump of sugar itself. Experiencing Baba is a rhapsody of sights, sounds and emotions. Whether one goes to Him as Mother at Parthi for comfort or as Purushottama at Brindavan for guidance and knowledge, one gets what one needs and deserves. With His Universal Knowledge, He knows what we ask for and what is good for us. We go to Baba with empty hearts, a body full of tensions, a mind full of worries, a soul full of ignorance and a way of life full of problems. With the one admission ticket of sincerity we continue to overdraw on His Grace, Mercy and Generosity, with seldom a balance worth mentioning in the Spiritual Bank. Whether it is a slow introduction, a cautious tasting of the Divine nectar or a headlong plunge into Eternal Joy, the reward is the same. It is one of fulfillment. The Mind and Heart join forces to lead us on in the path of Glory.

The initial emotion one experiences in the presence of Baba is awe. With full determination to be clear headed and logical, one cannot help being thrilled at Baba's Miracle. There is seldom a heart that is not moved, a mind that is not bemused at the materialisation of the fragrant Vibhuti or the locket bearing His Image. Only later do we realise that these are only appetizers given

before the rich Divine Fare that is to follow. This Fare includes items out of this world, dishes which fill the being, and bitter pills which often save the life. But the impact of these so-called miracles is to light up one's inner vision rather than blind it with its brightness. It is only later that we realise that these materialisations and miracles are the least significant part of His Glory. In the initial stage, this attractive Visiting Card makes us seek out His nature keenly.

In this circle (at this stage), personal experiences are innumerable. It often happens this way. The devotee who enters Baba's presence, often finds his mind stilled. Very rarely does the curiosity or expectation which filled the mind a few hours earlier exist when the actual moment comes. Without fuss or fanfare, the sprightly beloved figure of Baba walks amidst the group. The bright eyes often register laughter and kindness. With a few simple and brisk words, Sathya Sai skims through the murky past, long forgotten illnesses, traumatic fights, the problem-filled present, hope or desire-filled future. With swift words, He dispenses also mercy or justice.

He either spreads the healing ointment of comfort or does the incisive surgery with logic and reason. Whatever word that comes to the mind, whether it is attraction, awe or wonder, the devotee experiencing all these emotions often leaves the place either in tears or in an indescribable state of bliss. But one emotion is common to all and that is deep sadness to leave the Presence and a burning desire to partake of the Divine Feast at the earliest possible opportunity. There is, generally, a great untold sense of relief that His presence is a place where there is no need to bear the self-made Cross-of deceit and hypocrisy. This relief, coming from complete honesty, already starts working on the Character of the devotee. Once he realises the uselessness of concealment, many of the inhibitions, half-truths and pride that have been standing in the way to self-betterment are given up. The mere attraction towards God-head paves the way to better things.

Once urged by the genuine and spontaneous desire to seek Divine Grace, the pilgrim progresses further. The stepping into the second circle is a very pleasant and logical experience. Once there, the devotee finds himself surrounded by His Grace and His commiseration that make millions call Him "Premaswarupa". By one tiny gesture, one look or one word, the Lord sweeps aside doubt and hesitation and pours oil on the wounded soul. The perfection we seek in vain in this world elsewhere, we find in Him The song that pacifies the screaming child, the cool hand placed on the fevered brow the soothing judgement passed on warring hearts, the smilingly spoken joke to lift up the down trodden mood these things have to be experienced rather than explained. One comes to feel again and again that the happiness which Sai gives is beyond all comparison. Human similes and languages fail miserably to reach even the periphery of the joy.

Now the seeker enters the Garden of untold Joy. He discovers freshly for himself the newness of Sai. He surely beholds before him a treasure of such precious wonders that he is often dazzled. It can be the nectar-like voice of Swami, the thrilling rhythmic wielding of the cymbals, the swift narration of apt stories, musical chanting of the rarest Sanskrit verses, breath-taking exposition of medicine, mathematics, prehistory, sciences, music, art or Puranas. The results are always awe-inspiring.

People who fail to realise that He is the Fountain-head of Universal knowledge are, odd to say, fortunate in a way because they have an extra experience to gain with Baba. They feebly lay His

complete knowledge of Time, Men and Matters on to "coincidence" or "mind reading" or "psychiatry". Lucky are they, if He chooses to open their eyes. They could be made to see the Truth in many ways. Assuming the role of an indulgent Mother, Sai-Ma, may choose to clarify the misconception with a few direct explanations or as a Cosmic Joke, Sai may heap miracles on the doubter till the doubts crack or the Divine Judge, with His sharp justice may slash the questions with one Word. Any way, joy is in store for the doubter in the Merciful Kingdom of Sai.

Enjoying the hospitality of the Mother's Heart, basking in the warm sunshine of His Comforting words, marvelling at His Glories, profiting by His wise counselling, the seeker finds himself in "green pastures where he may rest". Here the crucial phase of Sai Bhakti comes. With the nearsighted view of our limited past and narrow present, we are reluctant to leave the comfort of the previous stage. There is nothing shameful about this. Was not Ramakrishna Paramahansa himself reluctant to give up the Mother Image when his Master asked him to seek the Nameless Formless one? By now, we are so deeply attached to the Sai-Prema that we seek nothing in the outside world. The pleasures and attractions of the world, which might have meant a lot a few months back, cease to have any significance. We often hear people telling that they are out of the rat race. Far from the madding crowds, ignoble strife, "many live in the cool sequestered vale of" Puttaparthi.

But, for the chosen few, the pilgrimage continues. How and why these are chosen, only He knows. It does not certainly depend on the wit, charm, beauty, power, wealth, goodness or greatness of the person. With our human knowledge, we may put it down to the good deeds of previous generations and the honest desire for progress and above all the Will of Sai. From this point, existence changes into living. All pet opinions, cherished theories, brilliant arguments, carefully constructed ideas, undergo subtle or violent change. The thought forces of positive and negative emotions lose their power and in their place, comes humility and acceptance. We learn that what we have learnt is not enough. Even the active seeking of information ceases. The calm acceptance of transformation prevails. All science, logic and reason, time and again fail in Baba's presence. It is not the innate weakness of these concepts but it is their inability to reach out the Divine. The inadequacy of human reasoning does not even produce a sense of failure in the mind. Paradoxically, it heightens the sense of triumph in the belief of the Divine. The strange alchemy of Love puts into proper perspective the successes and failures of human emotions. What appeared a wonder or a miracle is recognised as a part of the Avatar.

The seeking of the meaning of the word Avatar itself changes. We cease to look for physical-bi-location, inner vision, or materialisation. The very Presence becomes a miracle. His Life becomes the message. We, with His Grace, are permitted to interpret rightly His Messages. It is true that we draw the very essence of life from the Flame of Sathya. But we have to be careful when we are near the flame. One careless act, one relaxing of the Rule, one taking-for-granted notion can burn the being. Seeking without reserve the Divine Help, asking repeatedly Guidance, we can reside near the Source with peace, calm and security.

But the Lord's Kindness is infinite. His Justice is always tempered with Mercy. Time and again, He forgives the prodigal son. If the repentance is sincere, this forgiving is endless. Many

of the blunders committed by gross ignorance stand corrected for life by one gentle warning. It is left entirely to us to grasp the Divine concession.

Now the meaning of the concept of Fatal Surrender begins to dawn. It is a virtue out of necessity. In the Presence of Total Knowledge and Completed Power, we stand humble. We learn the sweetness of spiritual relaxation. All the commendable hankering after knowledge is stilled in the nearness of the Omniscient. The praiseworthy urge to act is stopped at the source of the Omnipotent. The desired search of the Godhead comes to its end at the Presence of the Omnipresent. By the Divine Grace, we become, in thought word and deed merely to await the Lord's Will and Wish. We recognise that it is the Soul's realisation rather than the Spirit's Freedom that is to be longed for.

Yet it has to be realised that all these levels, circles and steps are the products of the finite human mind. Bhagavan is far above and beyond these limitations. Depending on the nature of the individual experience, the capacity of expression, the accuracy of interpretation and above all the endowment of Divine Grace, these classifications and their names change. One is as good or as bad as another. Above all, one is as inadequate as another. Depending on Destiny, a person becomes a wave in the ocean of Sai, or a lotus in the lake of Bliss, or a fish to swim in the stream of Mercy or a plant by the Pond of Grace.

Once touched by the Grace, one becomes keenly aware of one's responsibility. The rigid discipline imposed by the Lord, whether it be the Bhajan singer, cook or College Student, moulds, cuts and shapes and reforms the person according to some Cosmic Plan. Discipline forms the very basis of life. A very slight relaxation often brings swift and terrible reprisal; the most unbearable sentence being the withholding of the Grace. A short absence of the Grace starves the soul and parches the spirit. Like the tight ropewalker, who for the fear of life does not lose the balancing rod for a moment, the devotee should not lose sight of the discipline. On the foundation of discipline, the superstructure of Duty is built. It forms the very building of the Temple of Life. Duty is to be done with care and love. When the foundation is deep, the structure strong, all it needs is illumination to make it fit for Divine Occupation. The Lights are provided with Devotion. The lamp lit with the oil of Love and the wick of Purity, the Flame of Devotion burns bright, inviting the Lord to reside in the heart forever.

In the all loving and all pervasive Love of Sai, there is no discordant note or disharmony. Any one, to whom knowledge is not completely denied, will realise that the Great Souls, Divine and near Divine, who have been sent to show the right path to humanity, are parts of the Whole that walks amidst us today. Those are the bright stones in the Magnificent Jewel that is Sai. Those are but a few melodious notes in the Grand Symphony that is Sai. Once we realise the Fullness of this Avatar, the secret of those lives opens up before us. The great men who were sent to us for our own good were Sadhakas. But Sai is the Sadhana those people practised. If those were the Siddhas, Sai is the Siddhi they sought. If those were the Messengers, Sai is the One who sent them.

Sai shows the Royal Path of Piety. It is the "Raja Margam" sung by Thyagaraja. When the Royal Path of Bhakti is there, there is no need to get lost in the by-ways of Tantra, Mantra, ritual and so on. With the comforting presence of the Divine Name, anyone can cross the seven hills of

life, haunted by the beasts of prey, of lust and greed, the seductive poisonous fruits of desire; the mirage of sensual fulfillment, the pitfalls of anger and envy. When we walk through the Dark Valley of Death, with the Lord's name in the Heart there from there is no need to fear pain and loneliness these, we emerge into the Eternal Sunshine of the Ultimate. Borrowing from Baba, with the right of a child from its Mother, His own apt comparison, the three Sai Avatars are but One. Shirdi Sai, Sathya Sai and Prema Sai represent Work, Worship and Wisdom. This Avatar has come for the spiritual upliftment of Mankind in a scale more massive than any other previous Avatars. The passage of time will slowly and surely prove this. The certain spiritual revolution that is taking place all over the world bears witness to this phenomenon. The very deep attachment to the Present Form itself paves the way to Advaitic merger. The "Him" and "Me" close in and the "ME" vanishes into "Him."

This then is the Awareness. The Awareness that was hankered after by Thyagaraja when he sang "Thelisi Rama Chinthanatho". Worship must be done with Awareness. The seeker, the aspirant, devotee or the embodiment of pure love, learns at the Lotus Feet of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba that Life is Awareness. This then is the Magic of the Miraculous One.

Always Welcome

All that rises must inevitably fall; all that is accumulated must inevitably be scattered. Meeting and separation, good and bad, joy and grief-dualities such as these are but flashes of lightning among the clouds. The One is their unchanging base; the eternal is the screen on which they flit and fade. The chief aim of spiritual Sadhana is to become aware of this truth. When the Sun rises in rosy splendour, the world is bathed in Joyous activity; when the Sun sets with a sudden spurt of glory, man is grateful for the chance to rest and recoup both body and mind. But, man does not realise that between the dawn of one day and the dawn of another, the Sun has clipped from the thread of his life-span a precious bit, which can never be his again. Contemplation of this will induce grief. In fact, what confers joy today may well cause grief another day. Events and things will be sweet or bitter, depending on the context of time, space and circumstance, which determines the attitude of the mind towards them.

The mind decides the undesirability or desirability of men and things. It is a volatile, wavering, wayward judge. So one has to keep it steady, unaffected by prejudice or preferment. The vision has also to be fixed on the highest and the best, without being drawn towards the low and the sensual. The vision has to be ever on the One in the Many; temptation to cast longing looks at many have to be rigorously set aside with the help of the discriminating Intellect.

This is the precious product of the Satwic quality. Be fixed in that quality; avoid being drawn into the vortex of Rajas or the slush of Tamas. Satwic quality alone lends glory to men; riches and reputation cannot confer the glory everlasting. The Satwaguna purifies the springs of character and elevates man to the level of the Divine.

This day, the Faculty of Home Science is opened in this College. I inaugurated the Class and the Laboratory. I met the Staff and went through the Curriculum. 'Home Science' is a high-sounding Name for what has always been known as 'making and maintaining the Home', in all lands and at all times. It is the native task of woman, since ages. Women have to learn how to manage the home in the best interests of the members of the family, including the children and ensure them all both health and happiness. This she has to do, relying on her own skills and aptitudes, her own mental and spiritual resources. She has been honoured in the legends and scriptures as the Goddess of the Home, the Moral Guide, the Companion on the Righteous Path and the light that illumines the Home.

The Indian Mother was bringing up children with loving care and transmitting their tender minds the lessons of truthfulness, compassion, brotherhood, kinship with all living beings, non-violence etc. But, as a result of the insane admiration for western standards and methods of living, her life has become a round of feverish activity and perpetual tension. She is handing over the task of fostering and educating the children to ayas and servants; she; has neither the skill nor the eagerness to make the home a seat of health and happiness, full of the fragrance of Sadhana.

Education must confer on the educated the strength of self-reliance. They have to carry out their duties themselves, well and worthily, without depending on others. Education must impart freedom for the soul. The educated should not hang around offices and institutions, clamouring for jobs to be dropped in to the bowls they stretch out, namely, the degrees acquired in College.

When once the Bliss derivable from Atma-consciousness is tasted, no one will clamour for the lesser satisfaction derivable from the job.

The house-wife must be able, as a result of the training in Home Science to speak soft and sweet, spreading joy and contentment in the hearts of all members of the family, including the servants and the neighbours. When Rama declined to take Sita with him into exile in the forest and decided to go alone, Sita won him over to accede to her prayer, by means of her soft, sweet and even 'apparently harsh' Dharmic counsel. She argued that she could clear the tracks in the jungle of thorns and pebbles in order to make his path smooth; she said that they were inseparable like the moon and its cool effulgence, and so, the moon cannot roam in the forest; with its effulgence hidden in Ayodhya. She declared that she can never be happy at Ayodhya, in the midst of events and things that arouse jealousy and anger. She imparted his refusal to his 'nervousness', for he did not wish to bear the burden of guarding her against the denizens of the forest. At last she gained her point and achieved *facie* by adhering to her Dharma.

Woman is the Light of the Home, the Goddess spreading Divine Bliss. That is to say, she has to maintain untarnished and foster the honour of her parents, her parents-in-law, and her husband; she has to spread affection and tenderness towards kith, and kin, and by her subtle impact, correct and direct the conduct of every member of the family. The mother opens the eyes of the child to the glories of God and God's creation. She makes the child aware of the God that motivates all. Even God Almighty comes as Avatar in human form to remind man of his Atmic reality, and thus, to save him from fear, hatred and greed. So, if the mother, in the home, does the same task in so far it lies within her ambit, how glad must the Avatar be!

In the task of home-making, now called Home Science, there is no place for laziness or complacency. The house-wife must teach and practise the lesson of contentment, economy and simplicity. Nothing should be wasted or spoilt, by the pursuit of excitement or pleasure. The Home becomes a Home, only when God dwells in the heart of the dwellers; it is a den for evil thoughts and wrong actions. The fragrance of the Shrine where God is worshipped can rid the home of polluting vibrations.

What you learn during the Home Science Course has to be put into practice in later life; of course, this is true of everything that you learn at College. But, the most valuable acquisition that you earn while here is not the lorry-loads of 'information' that you stuff the poor little head with, but, the 'transformation' effected in your attitudes and aptitudes, the lesson of love and mutual help that pervades the College in every field of learning and teaching. Remembering and reacting creatively to a few at least of lessons of this type learnt here are enough to enable you to lead happy and useful lives. Unfortunately, persons who practise, what they profess to be valuable guidelines for living, are few in number.

I must inform you about another development in this College. Very soon, the College will be offering Diploma Courses in Tailoring, Typewriting, Composing and other useful skills, in order to enable students to become more useful in the home and in supporting their parents.

This day, the Principal said, is also something like a College Day, for, we did not have one, in a formal manner, last academic year. She said that many students have left College after

completing their education and many new students have come and joined the College. She gave a hearty farewell and best wishes of the College to those who left and she welcomed the new entrants. I wish to say that this College is ever eager to welcome the Old Students too when they visit the College or when they wish to join the teaching fraternity, and it welcomes the new students when they come into the College, full of hopeful enthusiasm to benefit by the instruction given here and the inspiration available here.

I bless you that you imbibe the ideals of this College and make your lives happy and meaningful, by the steady observance of those ideals.

—***Bhagavan's Discourse; Sri Sathya Sai College for Women, Anantapur 9-9-76***

The Gayatri is a prayer that the effulgence of the Sun might illumine the intellect of man. Solar energy has to be drawn to re-inforce the inner vision of man, the Soul-force that is latent in him. When soul-force is strengthened, the intellect, the senses and the moral emotions are activated and directed along fruitful lines. Can darkness confuse the brain or hide the truth when the Sun shines? Can sorrow prevail, can ignorance confuse, can egoism blind, when the Divinity that shines as the Sun blesses you with Illumination? So, rely on the Gayatri to bring you Illumination and Effulgence.

—***Baba***

Another Reminder

We have been constantly warning readers and devotees away from various types of persons who trade upon their credibility and manage to extract money, or hospitality or homage from them, using the name of Sri Sathya Sai Baba. But, from reports received, we feel another strong reminder has become necessary. We wish to inform readers that some of these claim to be the 'disciples' of Bhagavan; some announce that they are 'deputed' by Bhagavan to 'spread' the Message; others proclaim that they are 'commissioned' to advise and supervise the Units of the Organisation or 'receive subscriptions' to the Sanathana Sarathi or discover devotees to whom 'tape recorders can be allotted on concession rates', or 'teach Bhajans the Prasanthi Nilayam way' or 'distribute Prasad'. The stories and stratagems, as well as the alias adopted vary from place to place. Bharadwaj in one place becomes Parthasarathi at another place. Some of these persons make bold to proclaim that they are in 'direct communication' with Bhagavan in a special way, and they start answering questions and administering cures, pretending that they draw Grace from Bhagavan! They are soon publicised by agents and others who use them for their own aggrandizement. Others parade articles ostensibly granted by Bhagavan or advertise happenings in their homes which induce the ignorant to fall into their traps for collections. Others reel off the names of residents of Prasanthi Nilayam in order to succeed in their confidence tricks. They assume, or are given by the groups that gather around them, names which will help them in cheating the public, like Sai Suresh (recently at Malaysia, and now, operating in the United Kingdom), Sai Krishna, Sai Balu, Sai Das, Sai Meera, and even Sathya Sai Baba itself. They claim that Bhagavan has set them up as such or that He has initiated them with those names. Readers and devotees have to be vigilant in their dealings with such persons and their wiles.

For, Bhagavan has instructed us so and He has also announced often that He has no disciple, agent or medium or representative, or any one specially near or dear. He does not speak, or act through another; he always speaks, directs or communicates, heals, solves doubts or advises or instructs 'directly' or in person. He has asked that the members and office-bearers of the Sathya Sai Seva Organisation must remind all members of this fact and remove from the Organisation any one who encourages or patronises such persons.

—Ed.

THE ONE

Mankind can be happy, peaceful and prosperous only through the knowledge and practice of Unity; if man's thoughts, feelings, and attitudes run along the bye-lanes of distinction and difference, his happiness is destroyed by fear, suspicion, pride, hatred, and greed. Shanti is beyond reach. Consider the One Indivisible Ocean as your goal and gain. Then, what does it matter, which current flows where. The Gulf Stream, the Arctic stream-all merge in the self-same expanse. People may be adopting the Bhakti path, or the Jnana path, or the Islamic or Christian paths; they all reach at last the self-same Ocean of Divine Grace. There, all distinctions disappear and are known as invalid. All labels and identification slips drop off by themselves. Names and Forms to which each tiny little river was attached fade away, when the waters merge in the Ocean. Keep the call of the Ocean ever echoing in the ear. That is the inner Sadhana for every one, until he reaches the ONE.

—BABA

Be a Lotus

In one of His Messages, Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba has given this simple formula for Sadhana: "Be a Lotus."

Baba clarifies further: "The Lotus, born in slime and mud, rises up through the water and lifts its head above it. It refuses to get wet, although it springs from water. Be like the Lotus—unattached."

The Lotus is an integral part of India's spiritual lore. According to mythology, Brahma who is the immediate cause of all creation, arose from the Lotus which emerged from the Navel of Lord Narayana. Many of our Gods and Goddesses are described as seated on the fully blossomed Lotus. The Lord is described as Lotus-eyed, since He has long petal-like charming eyes. We surrender ourselves to the Lotus Feet (tender, soft, fresh, fragrant, cool, comforting) of the Lord. The Lotus is also the symbol of the Heart, the spiritual center in Man. The heart is pictured as an inverted Lotus bud, and spiritual awakening is the full blossoming of the bud.

The Yogadanda which forms the central point of the Circle in front of Prasanthi Nilayam has the blooming Lotus at its apex. The Yogadanda, Baba has explained often, represents the various stages of spiritual Sadhana whose termination is the unfoldment of the Inner Awareness in the heart. In the remodelled Prasanthi Mandir, the temple of the Living God, the Lotus is seen on the pillars and the cornices, the doorways and domes.

"Be a Lotus." That is the mantra Baba has given us as the key to our Liberation. Let us examine this Mantra in some depth. The Lotus is a beautiful flower, attracting us sparkling in the sun while floating bright and broad on the blue waters. It has a very pleasing colour, the unique delicate pink, deepening on the border of each petal into a lovely red. The form of the Lotus Bud reminds us of the folded palms held up while adoring elders or in the presence of the Divine. The Lotus bud is offering Namaskar to the Sun (Suryanarayana). Baba has explained the Namaskar as the symbol of the utterance Na-mama (Not mine, but, thine). When the Lotus blossoms by winning the grace of the Sun, it seems to say that all this beauty and all this fragrance is Thine, not mine."

The Lotus is also unique in that its leaves rest flat on the surface of the water, allowing the bud to emerge from the depths, erect and firm, to offer its prayer to the Sun. How self-effacing are the leaves which indeed provide life and sustenance for the bud! They are so humble; they lie low.

Similarly, we too have to lose our body consciousness and let the Lotus Bud of our heart rise up to the Lord and unfold into an altar for the Universal Absolute. The Lotus has a mild and pleasing fragrance, which attracts the bees which seek honey and pollen. So too, the spiritual fragrance of the adept in Sadhana attracts like-minded aspirants and provide inspiration and instruction, solace and courage to them.

"Be a Lotus," says Baba. The charm and fragrance of the Lotus draw people to an ecstatic appreciation of its superb lesson. Do not be tight-fisted, is Baba's exhortation. Give, share, offer in plenty, this is the attitude He encourages. "Bloddu and dabbu" must circulate, He advises. (Blood and money must be ever circulating; or else, they will breed disease and dis-ease). "Expansion is Love; contraction is Death; Open out your hearts, do not fold them," He says. "The Lotus is born in slime and mud." But, it is miserable in slime and mud. It rises up from its native environment and pushes itself high over the intervening water to the brilliance of the Sun. We too are writhing in slime and mud, the coils and tangles of the sensual world, fumbling and failing, toddling, in the pursuit of pleasure whose obverse is pain. The Lotus, however, has ever in its consciousness the memory of a sun-lit world of bliss, where the Grace of God confers on it Beauty and Fulfillment. Every day, the Sai Surya rises, beckoning us too, "Arise. Awake. You are Divine, accept this heritage and be happy for ever."

"Be a Lotus," reminds Baba. "Lift up your heads above the turbulent earthy waters of worldly existence, the flux of joy and sorrow, of bad fortune and good. Though born in slime and mud, the Lotus is conscious of its destiny, its goal and is aware that its fulfillment lies in rising above the water into the purity and light of the upper regions. We too have within us the 'inner voice' prompting us to rise. Like the Lotus, we too can become worthy of becoming the Seat of the Lord.

But, how to be like a Lotus? How to emerge pure and perfect, shining and beautiful, in spite of mire and slush? Baba reveals the secret of the Lotus for us. 'It refuses to get wet'. It has a thin layer of wax-like substance, which saves it from that contamination. Water on the lotus leaf curls into a drop, accepting defeat since it cannot spread and wet the leaf. Sri Ramakrishna reminded,

worldly people that they should smear on their hands the oil of detachment, before they peel the jackfruit of worldly life, lest the sticky gum that streams from the fruit contaminate the hands. We too must learn to escape the sticky gum, by means of the practice of detachment.

Baba uses the word, 'un-attached'. The Dictionary defines 'un-attached' as: not attached, as of a student not living in a college hostel, but, in outside lodgings. 'Un-attached' is not the same as 'detached', which means: unconnected, separate, free from care, passion, ambition or worldliness. Unattached means, we must be in the world, but, not of it. It is not an escape. Baba says, "A moment comes when you have to depart, leaving behind all that you have laboriously collected and proudly called your own. Develop a sense of proportion; a true sense of values. Love the things of the world with the love that is their due, not more."

Have a thin coating of wax, says Baba, of discrimination and the awareness of the transience of things. "Be aware that all earthly relations are ephemeral, that even the body behaves as if it does not belong to you. Moreover, the real core of each of us is also the real core of every one. That is why when you make another happy, you feel happy too; when you find another miserable, you feel misery yourself."

Baba is for us the highest living example of the 'un-attached Person'. The real cause of His overflowing Love and Bliss is this 'un-attachment'. He is adored as Kamalanayana Sai Ranga, the Lotus eyed Sai. Yes, His eyes are not only as beautiful as lotus petals, they are also as unattached as they. To each of us He is attached, but, not in the way we understand the word. To us, attachment means, being tied up with the body and the mind; it means each of us is a separate, distinct individual. He knows that each of us carries a special burden of Karma-consequence. Rid of this burden, we are all the same, the same spark of Divinity imprisoned in different bulbs. We must be attached to the Atmic core and detached from the body and mind. That is the goal of Sadhana.

There is another lesson, too, which we must learn from the Lotus. 'Living' is an essential subject in the spiritual curriculum. Being in Samsara is a must for the awakening and consolidation of the spiritual urge. The Lotus draws the nourishment needed to elevate itself from the slime and the mud. We too must learn our lessons at the school of life, in the rough and tumble of the game of living, and becoming aware of our strength and real self, place ourselves at the feet of God. This is the Message of Baba. Rise up and up, lift your self by the strength of the self, and discarding the pulls of the tentacles of the beast, elevate yourself into the Divine, which you really are. Manava has to fulfill himself as Madhava.

—Dr. M. V. N. Murthy

True Devotion must not get dispirited or elated or satisfied with lesser gains. It must fight against failure, loss, calumny, ridicule and against egoism and pride, impatience and cowardice.

—Baba

Hospitals and Health

Health is an essential requisite for man. The man afflicted with ill-health is powerless to execute even the least burdensome assignment. The scriptures proclaim that health is the very root of all endeavour-in the four fields of human achievement, Dharma, Artha, Kama and Moksha. Without health, man cannot brave temptations, earn a decent living, fulfill his basic urges, and succeed in spiritual Sadhana. Man can engage himself in obligatory and optional functions, only if he has health.

Food habits and recreational habits are the two main causes for ill-health. Great care has to be bestowed that injurious tendencies do not affect these two. At the present time, though drugs have multiplied and hospitals have been established in every nook and corner, ill-health has also spread wide; this situation is traceable to the spread of deleterious food habits and ruinous ways of spending spare time.

It is also necessary to keep the environment of the places where one works and lies, unpolluted by smoke, dust or dirt, or germs of disease. The clothes that one wears as well as the body that one is encased in, have both to be washed clean and kept clean. Health endows a person with joy and brightness. The fruits of the tree of human life are sweet; but they are encased in the bitter skin of egoism and ignorance, and they have hard uneatable seeds of desire, anger, pride etc. One has to exercise one's intelligence to peel off the outer skin of ignorance, throw of the seeds of vice and wickedness and partake of the sweet kernel of life.

To remove the evil of egoism, Service is the most efficient instrument. Service will also impress on the person doing service that unity of all mankind. One who leads can never know the joy of the one who serves. He who dedicates his time, skill and strength to Service can never meet defeat, distress or disappointment. For, Service is its own reward. His word will ever be sweet and soft; his gestures will ever be reverend and humble. He will have no foe, no fatigue, no fear.

The units of the Sathya Sai Seva Organisation are engaged in enthusiastic Service, in the two areas of 'Health' and 'Education'. To improve and maintain the health of the people, continuous education on the principles and practice of hygiene and environmental cleanliness is essential. Education is the most effective safeguard against physical and mental ill-health. So these two activities are closely inter-related. The body is a temporary habitation; it is subject to all kinds of dis-ease and injury. But, yet the body is the boat through which alone we can cross the ocean of Samsara or Flux. The boat has to be kept trim and serviceable. It should not distract our attention, more than the minimum necessary for its upkeep. It has to be used for reducing the burden of others; it should not itself become a burden on us. It should serve others; it should not demand service from others. That is the reason way this Hospital is being established here, to remedy disease and help people to keep their bodies in good condition.

People of this village and villages that are in the surrounding area will resort to this Hospital for medical relief and advice. Unfortunately, hospitals that treat patients with love and care, with dedication and devotion, are very rare. There are hospitals with costly equipments and expert doctors, huge buildings and spick-and-span interiors, but, they indulge more in profiteering than

affording relief. Their services are for those who can pay large sums of money. Villagers are not welcome there, nor do they, feel happy to resort to them. They are afraid to approach the doctors there, nor is it always necessary. Therefore, this Hospital is being started amidst the villages, so that expert advice and treatment can be rendered to them, in a loving atmosphere of reverence and devotion, No fees will be levied or collected here for any service. The villagers and others can come here, regain their health, and return hale and hearty in order to carry out their tasks, and fulfil their responsibilities.

The doctors and volunteers who help in this Hospital must feel it a part of their duty to advise the villagers about environmental hygiene and prophylactic measures. The members of the Sathya Sai Seva Dal have a special call for this type of service. They have to visit the villages and after winning the confidence and love of the people, advise them on good food habits and other means of maintaining health. They must also exhort them to resort to this Hospital as soon as the first symptoms of ill-health are evident. Early treatment will save the villagers many days' spending in bed, away from the fields. The villager now lives on food that is deficient in vitamins and proteins, though he is growing vegetables and food that provide these ingredients in plenty and selling them to city-dwellers. He has to be told of the value of fruits and vegetables as sources of the components that will promote and preserve his own health; for healthy parents mean healthy children, and sick parents pass on their ill-health to the coming generations. Members of the units of the Sathya Sai Seva Organisation can also join the Seva Dal in this campaign of educating the villagers. This activity is as meritorious as worship itself.

Today is Vighneshwara Festival, the Day on which the entire country is worshipping the Elephant-headed God, who helps man overcome all obstacles. Worshipping Vinayaka or Vighneshwara (or as He is also called Ganapati) endows man with the courage and confidence, needed to enter upon and carry through any undertaking in the world. The elephant is the biggest animal of the forest; it is very intelligent; it has a powerful memory. Its foot-print can erase the foot-prints of all other forest fauna. When it marches through the thick jungle, it creates, by clearing, a pathway for all other animals to pass through. It is a path-maker for all the forest animals. The Elephant-Headed God confers Intelligence and Memory, and the power to subdue evil and vice. He is also the path-maker. So, it is only appropriate that every rite, ceremony or project is started with the worship of this God. This day, we are inaugurating this Hospital, so it will be of good and lasting service to the people of this region.

I must also point out to the doctors serving here that, perhaps even more than the drugs they prescribe, the sweet soft words they speak and the love and sympathy they evince, can cure better and quicker, the ill-nesses for which the patients seek remedy. Look upon them as your own kith and kin, as your special guests, as your closest friends, and tend them lovingly and with unflinching care. I call upon you to maintain this attitude in every situation. Remember that the patient has to co-operate with you in order that you may effect the cure and when cured, the patient confers on you satisfaction, joy and even a sense of elation. Be grateful to the patient for all this.

We have in this hospital as Doctor a lady devotee who is highly qualified, and who has done signal service for the backward regions in Nigeria and Ethiopia, in Africa. We have also others, equally able and enthusiastic. Experts in special branches of medicine and surgery will also be

visiting this Hospital off and on, and diagnosing, advising and helping patients who need their attention. It is for you now to make the best use of these facilities, offered free and with fullness of heart.

I am glad that the members of the Panchayat of this place as well as of near-by villages are here today and have been with us, ever since this Project was begun. If only they help the patients from the villages to be happy and healthy, they will have no more need to beg for votes from door to door when the elections come round; the voters would themselves come in large numbers to get them elected in order that their service will be available to them in greater measure. India was long famous for the sense of compassion that animated her peoples. She is now dishonoured by some as a 'poor' country, No. She was for centuries the Preceptor of the World, and she is assuming that status again today. India is the land where the ideals of service, renunciation and spiritual endeavour were born and flourished. It is only recently after India fell under the impact of alien cultures which highlighted material comfort, physical luxury, sensual libertinism and exterior display that Indians have trodden wrong path of exploitation and violence, idleness and pompousness. With the spread of alien cultures and alien ways of thought and life, diseases too have multiplied and mental imbalances have increased. But, when simplicity, humility and the ideal of social service (as the worship of the God in man) are restored, the nation will again be happy, healthy and full of peace, prosperity and joy.

*—Bhagavan's Discourse; Opening of the Sri Sathya Sai Hospital
for Women and Children, Whitefield. 28-8-76*

Ramakatha Rasavahini

Sri Sathya Sai Baba

81

The Roar from the Garland

Hanuman asked Makaradhwaja, the Monkey Guardian of Patala, where the two brothers were kept by the cruel Overlord of the Nether Regions. In reply, he gave him all the details. However, he insisted that he will not allow him to enter the area, for, he had to obey his master and be loyal to him and to his interests. 'Whatever the suffering I have to endure, I shall not let you in', he said. "If I show you special consideration for the reason that you too are a monkey, I will thereby be dishonouring the entire monkey species, as unreliable and ungrateful. My lord, Ahi-Ravana, is as much adorable to me as your lord, Rama, is, to you. So, however near you may be to me, I shall not waver or deviate; I must do my duty and carry out his command. You can get in, only after defeating me in combat," he said, challengingly.

Hanuman appreciated his sentiments and his sense of duty. He was happy that Makaradhwaja had taken the proper attitude. He took up the challenge and entered into the fight. After sometime spent in fierce combat, Hanuman decided that protraction was not desirable; so, he twisted his tail around the body of Makaradhwaja and, cast him far out in the distance. Then, Hanuman boldly entered the City.

He noticed a florist entering the Gate with a fine big garland of fragrant flowers. Resolving that this was the best chance to reach the place he wanted to, he assumed suddenly a small molecular form and occupied the garland he was carrying. The garland was not tendered any heavier; it was as light as ever. No one knew that he was on it; the florist had no idea of what had happened. Everything was as before, for him. It was a garland to be delivered to Ahi-Ravana himself. He took it in both hands and placed it round the neck of the image of Kamada in the temple. He also offered various rich dishes as sanctified food to the Idol. From his vantage point on the garland round the neck, Hanuman ate up the dishes as they were placed before in position. The Rakshasas saw the food disappearing, and they were delighted that their Goddess had deigned to accept their devotion. Ahi-Ravana too was happy, at the thought that 'this day, my prayers have been answered; my fortune has reached its summit'.

Meanwhile, Rama and Lakshmana, the brothers, were brought in, decorated in the manner in which sacrificial animals are decorated. Gigantic Rakshasa warriors were holding their arms tightly on either side. Hanuman saw them being made to stand by the side of the sacrificial altar.

Hanuman bowed obeisance to Rama from where he was, and filled his mind with adorations for Him. The guards placed the brothers right in front of the Idol, and held sharp swords near their necks. Ahi-Ravana said that the sacrificial offering of the lives of the two brothers has to take place, immediately after the waving of the Holy Flame, and that they ought to be ready to execute their task, without a moment's delay. Rama and Lakshmana, who were really Divine Beings playing the role of humans had discovered that it was Hanuman who had eaten off the food offerings placed by Ahi-Ravana before the Deity, and that knowledge induced them to take on the impending events with a great deal of good humour. Seeing them smiling and light-hearted, Ahi-Ravana was awfully enraged. Ahi-Ravana said, "Well. If the few moments more of life that you are granted give you so much of joy, I do not grudge it; be happy while you can. A while later, you can smile in the realm of Yams, the Ruler of the Dead." He paid no regard to the brothers, but, continued to relish their fate and utter harsh words to wound them even more.

At this, the priest rose and paying respects to his master, he informed him that, the code of political morality requires that the victims be permitted to pray, if they so desire, to their guardian for peace after death. The Rakshasa Chief rose from his seat and announced, "Princes! If you have any well-wishers, this is the time to express gratitude for them, since you have only a few moments to live." Rama and Lakshmana looked at each other's face and smiled.

That very moment, Hanuman let out a terrific roar. Hearing it, the Rakshasas imagined that their Goddess had manifested Herself and was expressing Her anger. Hanuman jumped down from the garland, assuming his terror-striking Form and grasping the sharp sword that was in the hand of the Goddess, he felled Ahi-Ravana to the ground and hit him all over the body, hacking him to pieces. But, his body was of diamond strength and he had a mysterious boon which made the bits get together and become whole, as soon as they were separated. At last, Hanuman fixed Rama in his mind and with the shout, Jai Rama, on his tongue, he caught the head in one hand and with the other sliced the neck. Before they could join again, he threw the head into the blazing fire, in the sacrificial pit, before the Idol.

Just then, Makaradhwaja managed to reach the temple and the presence of the Goddess. On seeing him, Hanuman recovered the golden crown from the head of Ahi-Ravana, and placing it on his head, he proclaimed him ruler of Patala and advised him to be ever grateful to the Brothers and to be always loyal and devoted to them. He had Rama and Lakshmana seated on his shoulders and, at one jump, he rose from Patala and landed safe in the midst of the Vanara horde eagerly looking for them with their million eyes.

Vibhishana and others could not contain the joy that overwhelmed them when they saw the Brothers safe and sound before them. They fell at the feet of Rama and Lakshmana; they clasped Hanuman in their arms and shed tears of gratitude. The Vanaras praised Hanuman in a thousand different ways. They carried him on their shoulders; they fed him and fondled him. They embraced him, poured their love on him. Vibhishana stood before Rama and said, "Lord! What shall I say of your Leela, your Sport? You alone can reveal to us the meaning of your acts and activities. You have come with the resolution to wipe off the Rakshasa denizens even of the Nether Regions. All this stage-acting is, I know, to fulfill that resolution."

Narantaka

Ravana came to know that Rama and Lakshmana had been brought back by Hanuman from the kingdom of Ahi-Ravana in Patala. He heard the tragic news of the death at his hands of his son, Ahi-Ravana. He collapsed and fell on the ground; he lamented his loss, long and loud; tears flowed in streams from his eyes. Mandodari, the Queen, came to him and tried her best to console him and reduce his grief. He did not give ear to her words; he only grew more and more enraged at her soft counsel. Ravana mustered courage and rose suddenly, to meet a Minister who presented himself at that time. His name was Sindhuranatha; he was a respected elder, far gone in years. He was a very wise man, who was in close proximity to Vibhishana, when he was formerly in Lanka. He started giving him advice on various moral virtues and on the mortality of men and things. Ravana did not listen to his words; he even treated them with patent disgust. The Minister was sad, when he saw his reaction. He felt, "In times of misfortune, the intelligence too gets warped. Poor fellow! He is heading towards disaster and so, even sound counsel tastes bitter to him." Still, out of compassion, he continued for some time, his words of sympathetic advice.

Ravana said to himself: "Now all my kith and kin have been decimated; there is no one left alive." Just then, the aged Minister said, "Why do you say so? You have another surviving son, Narantaka, who has with him 72 crores of Rakshasas. Call him for support; send a messenger immediately. He can destroy the enemy; you need have no doubt." Ravana was delighted at these words. He sent the messenger, named Dhoomaketu with instructions to bring with him the clever son, Narantaka.

The messenger described the tragedies that had overtaken Lanka and communicated the urgent appeal Ravana had made for big help. He proceeded on the spot with his hordes and as soon as he reached the field he fell upon the Vanara forces. Hanuman spied him from far. He went forward. On seeing him and his terror-striking Form Narantaka was struck with fear. He asked Dhoomaketu who he was and was told that he was Hanuman, the invincible hero who had killed all his brothers.

Hearing this, Narantaka became even more ferocious; he placed arrows on his bow and let them off against Hanuman; but, he caught them all by the hand and broke them to pieces. He came very close to Narantaka and pounded his breast heavily with his clenched fist. He lifted him aloft and turning him around fast, he threw him deep into the Nether region named Rasatala. Millions of his Rakshasa followers were thrown into the sea, by Hanuman. He broke into smithereens the chariots in the army of Narantaka; the charioteers were also decimated.

Ravana Advances

When Ravana heard the news of this holocaust, he exclaimed, "Whoever expected that the war would end thus? Whoever expected that the war would be so calamitous a disaster?" The news of Narantaka's death spread terror in the hearts of all throughout Lanka. Many wise scholars approached Ravana, the bereaved father, and sought to give him consolation and comfort. But, theirs was but a waste of time; their advice did not enter the heads of Ravana. When Ravana recovered himself, he heard the wailings of Narantaka's wife, and that made him angrier still, against his enemies. He forgot himself in the flame of vengeance and anger.

The night ended and the day dawned, even though Ravana did not notice it. The Vanaras gathered at the four gates of the City and were, as usual, getting ready to storm them and enter. Ravana assembled the Rakshasa warriors and addressed them thus: "Soldiers! If your hearts shudder at the prospect of battle, it is best you leave the ranks this very instant. Do not flee when the battle is on and if you do, so, I shall slaughter you with my own hands." Threatening them thus, he felt they would fight to the last. Then, he ordered the fleetest chariot to be brought to him. He ordered that the war-drums be beaten and trumpets blown. Like darkness intensifying mountain peaks, the Rakshasa warriors marched forward in serried ranks. A series of bad omens assaulted them as soon as they started; but, Ravana who boasted of his physical prowess did not pay any heed to them.

The weapons he held in his grasp slithered down; the charioteer who had taken his seat accidentally fell down from his perch. The elephants and horses marching forward to battle suddenly started wailing aloud. All around, dogs and foxes set up a cacophony of grief. Owls hooted ominously as if announcing the doom that loomed over Lanka.

The Rakshasa forces—cavalry, elephantry and infantry—marched forward to meet the enemy at the gates. The earth ended tremors when the forces trampled hard on it. The splendour of that army was indescribable. The army led by Ravana shone like the army that the God of Spring leads every year, with all its colour, music, and joy. Drums, trumpets, bugles and pipes sent around a majestic stream of heroism and adventure.

Meanwhile, the Monkeys and Bears pounced on the Rakshasas and fell upon them, like a host of heavy mountains whose wings were clipped by the arrows of some strange power. They attacked them like the minions of Death. Their most efficient weapons were teeth and nails. They threw hills and huge trees on the foe. By their leonine roar, "Victory to our Lord, Sri Rama," they made the elephantine hearts of the Rakshasas shudder in mortal fear. Very soon, the battle became a series of duels between the Rakshasas and the Vanaras. The cry, 'Victory to Rama' was met by the cry, 'Victory to Ravana'. The Rakshasas fought like the emissaries of Death; the Vanaras started bleeding from many wounds. They pounded the enemies heavily with their fists.

They tore them to pieces with their teeth; they kicked them in the ribs with their feet. They held them in their grips and tore them apart. They pulled out their entrails and wore them round their necks.

Ravana saw with alarm the decimation of his army. He took up his bow and shot arrows at soldiers of his army fleeing for sheer life from the field of fury. The Vanaras were inflamed when they saw Ravana filled with anger at his own warriors. They yelled in joy and leaped towards him in large numbers. They aimed peaks and trees at him. Ravana turned all round him and encouraged his soldiers to stand firm and smash the Vanaras. The Vanaras fled in all directions unable to meet the onrush. They wailed, 'O Lord. Sugriva! Sugriva; Save us, save us.'

Earth and sky were darkened by the showers of arrows sent by Ravana. The Vanaras ran to the far corners of the land. Chaos prevailed in the camp. Lakshmana noticed the situation; he girded up his loins and armed himself with his bow and sheaf of arrows. Prostrating before Sri Rama, he rose with his blessings and proceeded to the field of battle.

The Rama Story: Stream of Sacred Sweetness
(To be continued)

Sai Family News

Sri Sailam

On Sunday, 22 August, the Sri Sathya Sai Public School was inaugurated at Sri Sailam, on the Calicut Cannanore Highway, Kerala. Hon'ble Sri. Challa Subbarayadu, Minister, Government of Andhra Pradesh, presided. Hon'ble Sri. Karunakaran, Home Minister, Government of Kerala delivered the Inauguration Address. Hon'ble Justice Sri. V. Balakrishna Eradi of the Kerala High Court laid the Foundation for the Easwaramma Children's Hospital at the village of Thikkodi, where the Sri Sal lam School is situated. Sri. K. P. Kesava Menon, the 90-year old philosopher-statesman of Kerala spoke on the constructive ideals of education which the school will implant in the students under the guidance of Bhagavan.

Seva Dal in England

Members of the Seva Dal Units from various cities of the United Kingdom (London—North, and Central and South, Birmingham, Coventry, Bradford, Bolton, Leicester, Wolverhampton, Cambridge and Hounslow) met recently at Bradford, and discussed their programme of service. Sri. Krishan Kaul, the State Convenor, told them that the Sathya Sai Seva Dal afforded its members a precious chance for spiritual evolution and uplift, through the Sadhana of Nishkama Karma, both within the Organisation during its various activities, and in the midst of the community where they live and work. Sri Naveen Patel of Leicester, a former student of the Sri Sathya Sal College at Brindavan, Bangalore was nominated as the Secretary of the Seva Dal in the United Kingdom and a plan of service for the coming years was drawn up.

Onam

Legend declares that Emperor Bali, the grandson of Prahlada, the unflinching devotee of the Lord, ruled over Kerala in ancient times. When God came to him, assuming human form as

Avatar Vamana and secured from him as a gift his entire empire, his pride was curbed and he was exiled into the nether regions, to rule that area forever. But, Avatar Vamana permitted him, out of compassion, to visit his erstwhile dominion—Kerala—one day in the year, i.e., on Onam Day. The Keralites celebrate the Occasion as a National Festival, with song and dance, sports and pastimes, and special worship in domestic shrines as well as village temples. All castes and creeds join in the celebrations. For every Kerala home, it is the Festival of Family Re-union, since Keralites wherever they are hie homewards in order to gather around the elders and share in the joy of the land. Since many years, however, thousands of Keralites have found solace and joy, on Onam Day, celebrating the great Festival in the Divine Presence of Bhagavan the Avatar of the Age, reminiscent of the Vamana who grew into Trivikrama and overwhelmed the Three Worlds. On 6th September, this year, more than 3000 Keralites were present at Prasanthi Nilayam for Onam, which has become an annual Feature of its Programme of Festivals. Bhagavan allowed them to decorate the Poornachandra Auditorium in true Kerala style and to gather there For His Divine Discourse, on the meaning and significance of the Bali Chakravarti Legend. In the evening, the Keralites assembled again at the Auditorium and Bhagavan granted each of them the supreme joy of Darshan, Namaskar and gift of Prasad.

The Siganallur Sacrament

The Sathya Sai Seva Dal, Singanallur has blazed a new trail; it has pioneered a programme of social service which is bound to spread joy and contentment among villagers, now caught in the grip of destitution. They were engaged in surveying the villages around their headquarters, in order to select one, for being 'adopted' for intensive service; they found, during the survey, in every village, a few old persons who lived on the fitful charity of their fellowmen, unable even to move from door to door, and helpless and distressed. Not that there were none to pity them. What the village needed was some one who would take the lead, collect grains, flour and other wherewithal for cooking a whole-meal porridge for them and, supervise its distribution among the most deserving, and direct act of charity. The Seva Dal stepped into the breach. They gathered, the villagers, they issued identity and porridge cards to the dozen or so cases that most deserved the daily litre of healthy gruel, and they take it by turns to visit the village and supervise the Seva. They also collected a Central Store of Grain so that any temporary deficits can be met. Now the Seva has spread to six villages around Singanallur this sacramental offering of food to the hungriest and the weakest. Dr. Punnaivanam, the State Convenor for Seva Dal was able to secure the Hon'ble Minister for Municipal Administration, Government of Andhra Pradesh, Sri. Challa Subbarayudu to inaugurate the First of these Sacramental Centres and to serve the welcome porridge to the card-holders. It is really good news for the Family that the movement has spread and taken root in three villages in Hosur taluk of the neighbouring Dharmapuri Dt., thanks to the enterprising outlook of the members of the Seva Dal of Hosur Town.

Sri Lanka

Training Class for Bal Vikas Gurus (from Colombo, Batticaloa, Anuradhapura, Kalmunai, Nawalapitiya and Trincomalee) were held recently at Colombo, where the syllabus for Groups 1 and 2 were gone through, with emphasis on methods of teaching. The Seva Dal Members of Colombo were given training in First Aid, by the St. John's Ambulance Association and they will appear for the Certificate Examination conducted by that Association so that they can confidently run First Aid Centres in their residential areas.

Goundan-Pudur

The Goundan Pudur Sathya Sai Seva Samiti celebrates its Annual Day every year, as a Mela, where hundreds of villagers from the region gather to attend the Bhajan, the Discourses, the Bal Vikas Children's Stage Plays and the Special Pujas at the Village Temple. This year, the Samiti was persuaded by the devotees to include in the Programme the weddings of two devotee couples, who were too poor to meet the heavy expenses of the function if held in their own villages and who were deeply desirous of celebrating them in the Divine Presence, and in the gathering of likeminded devotees. The brides and bridegrooms were so happy that the Samiti accepted their prayer that the idea has already spread among other villages that have come into the Sai fold.

Village Malegaon Project

Forty Seva Dal Workers and 35 village volunteers have planned a highly commendable programme of Service in the village of Malegaon, on the Nagpur Delhi Road, 28 km from Nagpur. The doctors of the Medical College, Nagpur and the staff of the Health Unit, Saoner (9 km from Malegaon) are evincing keen interest and participating actively in the Project. The village has been adopted by the Samiti. As a preliminary step extensive socio-economic and health survey was carried out. 97 families have been screened by medical personnel. Sanitary latrines and soakpits have been constructed. 469 children have been immunised against polio, diptheria, whooping cough, tetanus, and given BCG Vaccine. Six students found backward, economically and educationally have been selected for, special care and training, and all expenses of their schooling are being met by the Seva Dal.

—Ed.

To insist that a person has to be good and pure and that he has to observe certain codes of conduct, before he could be considered a candidate for Sadhanas tantamount to saying that a person must be-free from disease and in perfect health, in order to deserve medical attention! This is absurd, on the face of it. Purity, goodness etc are the consequences of the journey towards God, and the Sadhana prescribed for that journey. The drug will induce health and cheer; health and cheer should not be prerequisites for taking the drug in.

—Baba

Something in Your Smile

Something in your smile speaks volumes to me,
Something in your voice sings solace to me,
Something in your eyes reveals the truth to me
That you are closest and dearest to me.
Something in your talk thrills, fascinates me,
Something in your face overwhelms, enlightens me,
Something in your laugh rejoices me-I've no choice
Except to feel `I'd always love to be with you,

Something about you makes me pine for your care,
Something in you is so rich and rare You are the
One I most could trust to keep me from harm;
And, there is something in your heavenly charm
That fills my heart with faith, both fall and free.

—*Harish Mannthakur, Ullhasnagar*

The Hound of Heaven

(Dr. Desiraj Dhairyam, the famous Psychotherapist, whose Mental Institute and Clinic near Madras has achieved International Reputation was the Head of the Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organisation, in Madras City. He passed away at Madras on the 24th day of February this year. The day previous to his death, he wrote this article on his experience of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba and His supreme Compassion, which insists on liberating the entangled individual, however recalcitrant or rejective the person might be. He refers to the working of this Compassion, as 'pursuit' by the 'Hound of Heaven', immortalised in the poem of that name by the great mystic, Francis Thompson. The poet describes in that symbolic song, how he fled Him down the arches of his years, how he hid from Him under running laughter and sped from Him up vistaed hopes, but, how with unhurrying chase and majestic instance, He pursued him and clasped him close, assured him, "Ah, fondest, blindest, weakest, I am He whom thou seekest." Dr. Dhairyam must have had a vision of the truth of this experience that Thompson has immortalised, for, he was drawn by the prolific Grace of Bhagavan into the Sai Circle of Love and Light.

The article is a Testament of Faith, a Litany, a Document of Devotion that Dr Dhairyam has left for each of us fleeing from the Feet of the Lord, little knowing that we are the ones He is seeking to save, sustain and gather into His Loving Fold.

Readers are invited to partake of the inspiration, he imparts and the hope of fulfillment he implants, in the heart, by the transparent authenticity of his story.)

—*Ed.*

The poem, 'The Hound of Heaven' by Francis Thompson, has fascinated me from my youthful days. Now that I look back through the fifty odd years of my life I feel all the more strongly how the Hound of Heaven has pursued me, in spite of my best efforts to elude being hunted down.

I have never wanted to be a 'religious' man, nor do I really feel the need even now. During my seven years in the United States of America, I was an adherent of the philosophy of 'humanism' which is my belief even now, with an important and vital difference. In earlier days, I embraced the easy and rosy path of Epicureanism: 'Eat, drink, and be merry, for, tomorrow you die.' 'You came into the world will-nilly; you are at the mercy of events and death is not in your hands. Take the cash in hand and live life to the lees'.

Providence had been extremely good to me. Born in moderate luxury, whatever was desired came in easy. In the States, the climax of self-satisfaction was reached with affluence and a good reputation in my profession and life was a round of parties and gaiety. To give an example: It was a Saturday night, frolic till 4 A. M. After consuming a full bottle of whisky, I drove back thirty miles, in the pre-dawn. I had run into an island in the traffic and passed out. At seven in the morning, I was woken up by a policeman. "I had driven back from an all-night party, Officer." "Lucky Guy," replied the Constable, enviously. Stretching myself indolently in the car the world seemed a wonderful place. I recalled Robert Browning's words, "The snail is on the thorn, the bird is on its wings, and all is right in God's Heaven." Thus, the road of drunken-ness, licentious-ness etc., seems paved with sweet smelling roses, fun and song, until self-destruction sets in, insidiously.

The Hound of Heaven was, ever, pressing me. Life could have been, so easily a total wreck, addicted to evil habits. God saw to it that bad friendships wrong ways of thought and action were out of my path at right moment, in spite of my desperate efforts at continuance. Productive and constructive work was subtly substituted, leading to the constructive fulfillment of my inner need. God was showing me the way to Him through a simplified humanistic philosophy of life. This way of life asserts: "There may be a God; there may not be a God. The question is not important. Do good and be good. Actualise your inner potential as a full human being and thus improve the quality of life for yourself and others." I belonged to a number of Organisations of humanism. They helped. Yet, the important ingredient was missing; "where is the stimulus, the motivation, to be good, unless it wells up from the Brotherhood of man and the Fatherhood of God?" In another way too, the Hound of Heaven has been protecting my very physical existence. From early infancy, I was subject to constant ill-health. Only light intellectual work was planned for me. At 12 years, my heart stopped and I was given up as lost. My doctor-father was beside me and suddenly, I revived. I have been through a dozen deaths. At 18, learning to pilot a plane I had two narrow escapes. Once, I was lost in the clouds and was given up as lost when other planes could not find me; miraculously, I rediscovered the airport and landed safe. On another occasion, I made such a bad landing that the Chief Instructor said by any reason, I should have crashed.

In the U. S. A., in that fast-moving country, the very first month, as a 'green hour', a well paid job as chauffeur to a salesman touring the camps attracted me. Untrained in driving powerful cars, I drove all night on the super-highway, at 120 M.P.H. Various accidents occurred and yet, I was saved miraculously, from major crash. At one stretch, driving with a friend at 60 M.P.H., we hit a tree and were thrown out and escaped with merely a few scratches. The Hound of Heaven was constantly behind me.

Even in my career, my path was diverted in spite of my best efforts to go by different routes. I was accepted in the Air Force during the war days; but was luckily invalidated due to an eye defect. Similarly, I got out of being an Officer in the Army. After delving into various studies, and occupations, by a round-about route, I got my training as a clinical psychologist /psycho-therapist. I was all set to live permanently in U.S.A.

Success came my way, quickly-monetarily, professionally and socially. Looking back, I now know that the virus of rot was settling in me and my Immortal soul was in jeopardy. Then, a tragedy—the sudden demise of my beloved and saintly father—jolted me out of that contingency. I had to come back to Madras, and develop my father's Institution, along my lines.

Running the psychotherapy centre has proved to be very fulfilling to me. It is immensely satisfying to attend to persons with mental illnesses of various kinds—drug and alcohol addicts, and persons having emotional problems in work, marriage or in other inter-personal relationships. Only an all-loving and personal God, interested in the individual, unmindful of demerits, weakness and sinfulness, can pass them over, protect and chart the course.

The 'Hound of Heaven' had done with its subtle pursuit. He came out, in the open, in His relentless tracking. In 1960, I married a lady who had known Swami for 12 years. I had no need for God; but, to oblige her, I undertook the journey to Puttaparthi, the last part, by bullock cart. As Bhagavan often says, devotees are 'poles', to contact new 'poles' for the transmission of His Divine charge. I was the 'new pole', and, His Presence charged me with the current of His Divinity.

Swami personally directed our life at every turn, ever consoling and sustaining and guiding, during four years, of vexatious litigations. It is needless to detail His all-encompassing Love and guidance to each and every one of us. It is as if the Universal Brahman abhors the seeming separation of the individual 'Jivi' and perpetually seeks to clear the 'Maya' of duality.

Two recent Personal Interventions are worth mentioning: I had gone to see Bhagavan at Hyderabad. The Raja of Venkatagiri and myself were returning by the night plane to Madras. The Caravelle, while taking off, hit a buffalo. Its head and shoulders were torn from the rest of the body and got jammed into the landing gear, which got jammed. Emergency was announced. We circled the airport till the petrol was exhausted and landed without crashing, in spite of the brakes having failed. The Raja of Venkatagiri and I rushed back to the Mandir and saw Swami at 5 A. M. Swami passed off this incident with a smile.

Again, at the recent visit to Puttaparthi, two days ago, I was wracked with overwhelming chest pain. (Here, I must mention that Swami had saved me from a heart attack in 1966, at Ooty, of which I have written elsewhere) This time at Parthi, I could not move a step because of the pain. As I stood outside the room at West Prasanthi, Swami came out on His usual 'tour of inspection' of the 'work' in progress. Casually, but, most unusually, He asked me to accompany Him. We went round for nearly half a mile.

That evening, as I was seated for Baba's Darshan, I told Mr. Achuthanandam (our State President) about the pain, expecting anything to happen, any moment. Bhagavan called us both for an interview. We heard a long discourse from Bhagavan and I was giving rapt attention. At the end of the interview, I told Swami of the pain, and Bhagavan laughed it away.

Next morning, we drove non-stop to Madras. That night at 1 A. M., intense pain woke me up and I was rushed to the hospital. After the tests, the doctor said, my heart was normal and that it was only bronchial asthma. Yet, he said puzzled, "You had ischemia of the heart, 5 years ago.

You don't have it now. Take it easy," I said to myself, "May be, the ischemia of the heart was not only 5 years ago, but, also 5 hours ago."

This has been a personal account. It has not been written to highlight the 'uniqueness' or the 'special' Providence of God, but, to stress the theme of the 'Hound of Heaven'. The Hound pursues, tracks down, and captures every Jiva, in its own unique way, according to the needs, the peculiarities and potential of the Jiva. Bhagavan Baba draws people by the millions, because in each and every case, He pursues and brings the person to his fold.

I am not a philosopher or a religious man well versed in the religious texts. For them, special paths may be necessary. But, as Bhagavan said, "To find God is easy and simple." I find it so. "Surrender to the God calling you. His Grace will encompass you, ennoble you, and enable you to reach equilibrium of the mind, Samadhi."

—**Dr. Desiraj Dhairyam, Madras 23-2-76**

Temples are centres of discipline where man is guided step by step to attain a vision of the Truth. They are schools for the training of the spirit; they are academies for the preservation and promotion of the ancient wisdom; they are institutes of Super-science and super-technology; they are laboratories for testing the authenticity of the scriptures; they are hospitals to cure mental disorders and the most disastrous of all illnesses—'birth-death-disease'. They are gymnasia where man is reconditioned and made happy and healthy.

—**Baba**

The Unseen Gift

Let us have a look at those on the open ground in front of Prasanthi Nilayam. They have all only one hope, one wish, one desire, one thought, to win the Grace of Bhagavan, and to be called in by Him for personal talk and blessings. They have all some personal problem or other and they believe that His Grace will solve it in the way they wish. Bhagavan appears, moves slowly around, scattering His sustaining smile of recognition. He stands before some persons, allowing them to touch His feet—a gift that fills the heart with joy. He blesses by a touch the books, photographs and Vibhuti packets that the pilgrims hold out before Him. To a few He creates the curative Vibhuti and gives it on the spot. He writes OM on the slate held in the chubby hand of a toddler, thus initiating him into the wonderful realm of letters. And, He invites a few to follow Him into the Mandir, for the coveted 'interview'.

Wait; let us watch them emerging from the 'interview room'. They bear the Vibhuti dot. They look bright and cheerful. Only, their eyes are wet. Some walk as if they have won an empire. The Engineer from Hong Kong is assured that the dire stroke of paralysis that has laid his son low will be cured quickly. The businessman from Calcutta brings his wife walking from the room; she was carried in by three persons. The young typist from a factory in Bangalore who was put out of action by finger-cramps is admiring his fingers and twisting them ecstatically. The old woman from a Penukonda village turns back to get another glimpse of the Lord and Master. The

I.A.F. pilot has been given a talisman which will inspire him for further adventures in the sky. The two brothers from Kerala are happy that Bhagavan has asked them to sing Bhajans, as many as they wished. The child of the beedi worker from Madras has had polio; Bhagavan has given him a handful of Vibhuti specialty created, for the child.

A happy bunch of grateful joyous persons! But, let us not forget that each one of them has also been given a discourse on Sadhana, on the need for Japa or Dhyana or Namasmarana, on the paramount importance of simple living and purity of intentions, and on Grace being available only to the virtuous and the vigilant.

—*Prof. G. B. Pillai*

Navaratri—Discourses

Flag-Hoisting

Important festivals like the Navaratri, the Sivaratri and Bhagavan's Birthday are inaugurated at the Prasanthi Nilayam by Bhagavan hoisting the Prasanthi Flag on the Prasanthi Mandir. The flag has the symbolised representation of a Sadhaka, who overcomes the temptations of lust and hatred, and cultivates Universal Love and then, practising Yoga through the elimination of desire has his heart blossom into the Universal Self, when the Flame of Illumination is aroused in his Inner Consciousness and all Duality vanishes in the Awareness of the One.

On September 24, at 7-30 A.M., Bhagavan hoisted the Flag to mark the beginning of the Dasara Festival. Nadaswaram music, Vedic Chanting, Bhajan, and the ringing of bells provided the background of holy sanctity to the Ceremony. Sri Kasturi laid the homage of more than twenty thousand devotees who had gathered in the Quadrangle before the Mandir at the Feet of Bhagavan. He said that Bhagavan was the Mother of Mothers for millions and that like the Maternal Trinity, Lakshmi Durga and Saraswati, Bhagavan too fostered, guarded and guided mankind, with Divine care and Compassion.

Bhagavan then gave His Divine Discourse: "The Life of Man has become meaningless and complicated; it has become a tangle of complex problems. The physical and mental happiness which men enjoyed in the past has now become a distant memory. With the increase in the speed of communications, the world has become smaller, and so, the travails and troubles of one country affect all the countries around in a short time. Diseases spread beyond the boundaries in a trice; hatreds affect people who remained unconcerned till they were caught in the storm. Fear and anxiety leap like forest fires from community to community and gain fury as they pass along. Such a tragic state can be cured only by deeper diagnosis and intensive treatment. The reason lies hidden in the mind of man and its vagaries.

There is an urgent need for analysing the mind and understanding its true nature and the modes in which it operates. Peace and happiness can be secured only when the mind is cleansed and shaped as a fit instrument for the progress of mankind.

The study of the Mind and the science of perfecting the Consciousness has not developed since man seeks peace and joy in external things and objective pleasures. The attention all along has been on the outer senses and methods by which they can be used to collect information and pleasurable experiences. The vast regions of inner consciousness have been left fallow; the fact that the mind is the creator of the multiple world of the senses is ignored. When a thorn enters the sole, it has to be removed by another thorn and after that is done, both thorns are thrown away. So too, the world of things that the mind has projected has to be negated by the clarified and concentrated mind, and then, both the Universe and the Mind disappear. The thorn it is that pricks; the thorn it is that removes the thorn. The mind binds; the mind releases.

When the consciousness of man has become as transparent as a glass bead, the string that runs through all the beads in the rosary becomes evident. There is a vast literature on the subject of the Mind and how it has to be used in order to draw the maximum benefit. But, this Country is looking to the West for guidance. It sees through other eyes than its own; it listens through other

ears; it thinks through Western brains. So, every experience now gained is artificial. It is only when one sees through his own eyes, hears through his own ears and thinks through his own brain that he can be fully free. Hunger cannot be appeased when the neighbour has a full meal. Illness cannot be cured by some one vicariously taking the requisite drug.

Confidence in oneself is the essential prerequisite for spiritual progress. Without it, all the hours spent in Japa or Dhyana or other spiritual exercises are a pathetic waste. When one realises his inner Reality as the imperishable Self, he becomes aware that the Self is the inner reality of every thing and being in the Universe. He cognises that all are images in vessels of varying size or nature, of the One Supreme Atma. The Sun is reflected in thousands of different pots of water. Looking upon the reflections, one may infer that there are a thousand suns. But, the thousand are but images. Holy days were demarcated in the Calendar by the seers and sages, in order to give man a holy day when he can ponder on such higher Truths.

One has to transcend all attributes and qualities and virtues and vices—in fact, all mutually opposing dualities, in order to reach the Infinite. The three Gunas or Natures of the Mind—namely, the slothful, the active and the balanced are represented by the three aspects of the Mother worshipped during the Navaratri—three days for each of the three phases—named Mahadurga, Mahalakshmi and Mahasaraswati. It is only when man has by the blessings of this Trinity transcended the three Natures that he can establish himself in. Peace and Joy.

Thyagaraja sang that without Shanti, man can have no peace and no prosperity. Dhritarashtra held on, fast to the kingdom and never parted with even a handful of earth to the legitimate sharers of the patrimony. Dhrita means, "hold fast" and 'rashtra' means "kingdom". This insensate greed made him blind to all the virtues of life; in fact he is represented in the Mahabharata as physically blind. He did not have the support from Divine Grace; he did not have the confidence that virtue can impart. He had only plenty of arms and armed forces; so, he had to face defeat and destruction. The Prasanthi Flag teaches you the same lesson. Realise the soul force that lies dormant within you and be bold and fearless—that is the message of the Flag. Have, this Flag ever unfurled on your heart to mark the triumph of your Sadhana.

The Annual Day

The First Day of Dasara is the Annual Day of the Sri Sathya Sai General Hospital at Prasanthi Nilayam. This year Dr. A. C. Narasappa, M. D., Professor of Experimental medicine, Medical College, Bangalore was the Chief guest at the Celebrations. Dr. Alreja, Resident Medical Officer, narrated his experiences at the Hospital and as Medical Officer in Maharashtra State and gave examples of cures by Bhagavan's Grace. Dr. Narasappa spoke of the consistent encouragement that he was receiving from Baba in his experiments with Ayurvedic Drugs and his studies on their efficacy and usefulness.

Bhagavan emphasised the role of the Mind in causing illness and in removing illness. "It is a remarkably interesting part of man; its behaviour is strange and unpredictable. It has no fixed shape; it assumes the shape of the thing it dwells upon. Like water, it takes on the shape of the vessel which holds it, the canal through which it flows or the field it fills. It can be used for either beneficent or maleficent purposes. Like fire which can be used to warm ourselves or to provide light, it serves good ends. Or, when one is careless, it can burn our bodies or our dwellings in a

trice. The fire cannot be either blamed or praised. It all depends on our intelligent and controlled use. So too, the happiness or misery that we earn is the result of our own desires, impulses, habits and fancies. With the knife in your hand, you can cut fruits or vegetables; or, in a fit of anger, you can inflict a stab on yourself or on another. The first duty of man is to learn how the mind can serve his best interests. Everywhere underground we have a stream of potable water; between us and the stream, there is a thick bed of soil. By Sadhana, that soil has to be removed. So too, peace and contentment exist deep within the consciousness of everyone. But, they are overlaid by thick beds of evil tendencies and habits (Kama, Krodha, Lobha, Moha, Mada, Matsarya and the rest), and so, man has to remove these in order to benefit from the treasure.

Ignorant people seek joy and, contentment from external objects, though they are treasured inside them. They arise from the Lord who is inherent in them. I am the 'seed' of all that is, says the Lord in the Oita. The fruits, the leaves, the flowers, the boughs, the twigs, the branches, the trunk and the roots are different in colour, taste, feel, form etc., but, they all arise from the self-same single seed. So too, even the external sources of joy give joy as a consequence of the inner source of joy.

Since it is Hospital Day I must say something about health also. Only a healthy body can keep the mind healthy and a healthy mind helps maintain the health of the body. The best sign of health is sterling virtue. And, sterling virtue expresses itself as selfless service. Detachment, compassion and love shine forth from the healthy man, equipped with a healthy mind.

Doctors get plentiful opportunities for Seva. They can manifest the divinity inherent in man to the best advantage. The doctor is extolled as Narayana Himself—Vaidyo Narayano Harih. Doctors should treat patients with sweetness on their tongue and smiles on their faces. Good deeds go with good thoughts and good words. Love indeed is the most effective drug; it cures the illness much quicker. Of course, man must not spend his days welcoming disease, approaching doctors and getting rid of disease. Man should so live that he does not get disease. It is only when man blunders into wrong paths in his food habits and in his search for pleasure that he gets ill. A healthy body is needed even for spiritual Sadhana like Japa or Bhajan. Illness begins in slum areas and spreads all around. So service done to clean the slums and help to keep them clean is of double benefit. Seva Dal members should pay special attention to this. The human body is a unique gift; it is only while in this body that man can realise himself as Divine. So, until that goal is attained, the body has to be fostered and kept fit, Baba advised. On the 25th September, more than ten thousand people were fed and given Saris and Dhotis. It was the day earmarked for service to the poor and the needy, the defective and the handicapped.

Vedapurusha Sapthaha Jnana Yajna

On the 26th September, at 10-30 A. M. the Vedapurusha Sapthaha Jnana Yajna was inaugurated by Baba. Reputed Vedic scholars and ritualists who had mastered the expertise, were invited from the Kerala State, and they joined with the scholars and ritualists from Andhra to make the Yajna a great success—an achievement in integration seldom tried before. The ceremonial items included in the Yajna were a daily Ganapati Homa, culminating in the Mahaganapati Homa on the seventh day, a daily Chandi Homa with the Poornahuti on the seventh day, a daily Suryanamaskar with Vedic hymns, Durga Puja as per Sastraic Injunctions, the worship of a Thousand Lingas as per Agama regulations, the Recital of the Ramayana, the

Srimad Bhagavata, and the Devi-Bhagavata completable in seven days. Every participant did his share of the sacrament according to scriptural tradition and procedure, and so, the many thousands who witnessed the Yajna were thrilled into ecstasy.

The Annual Meeting of the All-India Prasanthi Vidwanmahasabha founded by Bhagavan to foster Vedic learning was held that evening at the Poornachandra Auditorium. Br. Sri Diwakaran Nambudiripad of Kerala recited a Sanskrit Stotra composed by him, and Br. Sri Parameswaran Nambudiripad dedicated a Sanskrit Life of Sankaracharya to Him. Br. Sri. Kappa Bairagi Sastry, a reputed scholar in Grammar, Astrology and Advaita, then spoke on the significance of the Yajna being celebrated during Dasara.

Bhagavan then addressed the mammoth gathering of devotees from all parts of India and from many countries overseas. He said, "All mankind lives under the same sky; they breathe the same atmosphere. Yet, man hates man, man plots to kill man. Man finds it impossible to believe in the brotherhood of man and the Father-hood of God. Envy and greed divide mankind into opposing camps and promote wars between nations. This Yajna has as its aim the promotion of peace among men. The participants and priests have to possess the requisite authority to share in its performance. Every duty presupposes that man has the qualification to fulfill it. To build a bridge, to argue a legal case or to diagnose a disease, people must acquire the authority by long years of study and practice. So too, those who participate in this Yajna must themselves be full of love and compassion for all mankind.

As part of Vedic Yajnas, Bhutabali is performed. The Sanskrit word Bali is translated as 'sacrifice' and bhutabali is taken to incur the sacrifice of a living animal. But, this is wrong. Bali means 'tax' or 'cess'. The bhutas are the 'five elements, earth, water, fire, wind and ether' which compose the universe and every particle, atom or cell in it. So, the bhutabali is a tax that has to be paid for the good we gain from the elements. It is an offering of gratitude.

Yajna means renunciation, giving up something in order to receive a higher reward. The offering of tax or bali is also a sacrifice. The mind of man will not easily agree to this renunciation. It craves for all that it sets eyes upon; it does all that it wills, not what it is directed to do. So, do not make mind the master. Give supreme power to the intellect. Let the intellect analyse each plan, stratagem or desire of the mind and determine whether it is good or bad, just or unjust commendable or blameworthy.

The nature of the Mind is Apeksha or Attachment. It pines and strives to gain whatever it sticks to. So man sinks in struggle and sorrow. Upeksha or Detachment is the opposite quality. Man must develop this attitude of detachment. Never be stuck with some objective desire. Note that all objects are trivial and transitory. Nothing is worth losing one's peace of mind for. The gourd sinks in water when green and full of kernel. But let it dry, and it will float. Be a like a dry gourd. Float in the sea of ceaseless change, unconcerned and free. Man was not born here to get caught in defeat and disappointment; he has the duty of realising the Source, the God from which he has exiled himself," Baba said.

The Jnana Yajna—Discourses

On the 27th evening, Justice V. Balakrishna Eradi, of the Kerala High Court, spoke to the gathering on the Revival of Vedic Lore by Bhagavan and its significance for World Peace and Progress. He also spoke of the revival of Namasmarana and Namasankirtan by Bhagavan and described how they are becoming potent instruments for purifying the national consciousness and strengthening it.

Bhagavan in His Discourse emphasised the role of the three Gunas in shaping the mind of man.

One has to get rid of slothful and the volatile qualities and become well established in the stage of equanimity (the Satwic quality) before he can progress in spiritual Sadhana. The thought of the moment is the seed of the desire that surges up during the next few minutes. The urges harden into habits and attitudes, prejudices and preferences. So, one has to watch the thoughts. Keep a watch over the thoughts and the region from which they emerge. How can a fruit that itself draws its sustenance from the tree guide and guard another fruit? Learn to depend upon the tree, not upon a fellow-fruit.

Potharaju, the great mystic and poet who composed the Bhagavata in Telugu was a very poor man in actual life. His brother-in-law Sreenath advised him to dedicate that magnificent epic to the Ruler of the Kingdom, because the Ruler would certainly grant him some pension or allowance in return. But, Potharaju refused to extol any earthly person and barter his devotion for a pittance. Goparaju, another Telugu saint and singer had the same exalted state of mind. He spent the royal revenue for the renewal and repair of the Rama temple at Bhadrachalam, but, when he was imprisoned for the unauthorised expenditure incurred by devotion, he refused to plead for pardon; he relied on Rama Himself and bore all the travail in joyful meditation on Rama. Rama reimbursed the money spent by him and persuaded the Sultan to release him from jail. Another saint-singer, Thyagaraja also had the same supreme disregard for the comforts of life. The Raja of Tanjore invited him to court, offering him vast treasure; but, he replied that the Nidhi (treasure) had no appeal to him who was ever in the Sannidhi (Presence) of Rama.

The minds of these three heroes of the spirit behaved beneficently and withstood temptations to stray away from the Truth. If you lose hold, the mind will drag you to the depth of helplessness. The mind likes to dwell on the faults and failings of others: It fears to delve into one's own faults. Imagine that a cobra has crept into your bedroom; can you get a moment's sleep, while it is in? Would you not try to discover its whereabouts and remove it dead or alive before you go to bed again? You know that six deadly cobras, Lust, Anger, Greed, Attachment, Pride and Hate are creeping inside your mind; they are poisonous not only to you but to all those who happen to contact you!

But, still, you foolishly try to sleep over the tragedy! Man seeks good but does bad; he avoids bad but lands himself always in bad. His philosophy of living is: Khana, Peena, Sona, Marna (Eat, Drink, Sleep and Die). Instead, man must take his life more seriously and purposefully.

Transform the mind into an instrument of progress, for liberation. However many trials and tribulations come in the way, look upon them as an unconcerned Witness, with Upeksha and do

not let your mind be affected. Teach it this witness attitude. Stand upon the rock of the Atmic truth. Without taming the mind by means of systematic exercise along this line, all spiritual disciplines will end in failure.

Clarity of mind can be earned only by withdrawing the mind from external objects and teaching it through Dhyana to concentrate on the One behind the Many. When you see the One and not the Many, you are liberated from the coils of Delusion. Egoism is a doctrine that binds; but, the ego as the reflection of God in you liberates, Baba advised.

On the 28th, the World Council of Sri Sathya Seva Organisations, Bombay, arranged an Exhibition of Photographs, Charts, Maps and Drawings at the Prasanthi Mandir, to illustrate the manifold activities in the service of mankind that the Units of the Organisation are engaged in, throughout India and other countries. The Exhibition was opened by Bhagavan Himself at 9 A.M. Later it was visited by thousands of men and women who were all informed and inspired by the message-full exhibits. The visitors got also a chance to see and admire the new sculptures erected in the Mandir of the Ten Avatars and of the Gitopadesa—the Chariot and Horses, with Krishna arousing the despondent Arjuna through the Atmic awareness.

In the evening, Sri Kasturi spoke to the gathering on the Love that had come incarnated as Baba and about the various modes and methods through which It enriches, comforts and counsels man at the present time.

Bhagavan declared that the time that man has to spend for his elementary needs was very short, but, nevertheless, he has multiplied his desires and needs to such an extent that he finds himself in desperate hurry almost all his life! Most of his time he uses for manipulating external nature and learning its behaviour. No time is used for learning about his own inner nature and manipulating it to suit his interests. When disintegrating influences become powerful in the family, there can be no peace and joy in it. When a single fault is allowed foothold, the entire edifice will crumble down. Ravana was a great scholar of the four Vedas and the six Sastras. He had enormous strength, both physical and spiritual. But, when the weed of lust gained foothold on his mind, he toppled down with his kingdom and his clan.

The cart cannot move on its own; it must have two bullocks yoked to it and the animals must be used to draught and to the road. The Consciousness is the cart; the Mind and the Intellect are the bullocks. The road is Sathya-Dharma-Shanti-Prema. Man has all capabilities in him but he is unaware of his glory; he knows only a fraction of his power and even that faintly and falteringly. He is degrading himself by yielding to three temptations: Physical, Worldly and Scholastic. The scholastic temptation attacks people who are learned; it prompts them to controversy and competitive exhibitionism and ruins them by bloating their ego. The worldly temptation leads them to seek cheap renown and gain fame and favour through all means available. The physical temptation insists on their beautifying the body and resort to measures which will hide the oncoming of age. Be careful that these three do not conquer you.

Foster Divine thoughts; cultivate nonattachment; remember the fleeting nature of things. Then, the work of resistance will be easy. The mind grows in strength every time you yield to a desire; so, in order to subdue it and shape it into a useful tool, reduce desire. The mind drags you into

disrepute, into anxiety, into fear and cruelty. Be vigilant. Discriminate, every time a desire wells up; negate the desire. One conquest like this will make the next one easier. You cannot easily 'control' the mind; for, though it may appear controlled, it is only lying low. When the situation is favourable, it will raise its hood and inject poison again. Ravana prided himself on his ascetic practice which had controlled his mind! But, he fell, when he loosened his vigilance. Has not Sankaracharya said that one must keep the mind in good company, so that it may get rid of its nefarious tendencies and make itself pure? When the mind is inactive as in sleep, the world disappears from the awareness. So too, when wisdom dawns, the subjective world created by the delusive Power of God as a superimposition on Himself disappears and He alone IS."

On the 29th, Sri Anup Jalani, a student of the Sri Sathya Sai College, who has won unique laurels in the academic field at the Bangalore University, spoke on the self-confidence, self-knowledge and self-sacrifice that Baba instills in every student, as means of self-realisation. The famous Telugu Poet, 'Amarendra' (Dr. Chaturvedi Narasimha Sastry, M.A., Ph.D.) spoke in mellifluous Telugu on Bhagavan as the Embodiment of Beauty and Sweetness. Bhagavan continued his description of the Mind and his prescription for overcoming its stratagems. He detailed the passions of Lust, Greed, Anger, Attachment, Pride and Hatred that infest the Mind and turn it into the mortal enemy of man. "Moksha means 'Liberation'. Liberation from what? From Bondage. Bondage with what? These inner enemies, the passions mentioned above. Therefore, relying on the inner strength that belief in your Atmic core can confer, proceed with the battle with desire that must end in victory," Baba said.

On 30th September, Sri Srinivas, a student of the Sri Sathya Sai College addressed the huge gathering of devotees. He dwelt on the Trinity aspect of Bhagavan and also revealed that He has in Him the attributes of the Shaktis associated with Brahma, Vishnu and Siva. Then, Swami Karunanandaji of Rajahmundry spoke on the Avatar and its significance in the context of the crisis in character that is affecting man today. Bhagavan in His Discourse advised "that whenever a wish or impulse arises in the mind, one has to discriminate whether its fulfillment will lead to lasting benefit to the Individual; an immediate acceptance of the whim and fancy of the moment will lead to calamitous results. The urges that arise in the mind are prolific and pernicious. Some of them survive even the death of the body; Ahalya was cursed into a stone, but, her urge to save herself by being purified by the Darshan of Rama persisted and so, her redemption was made possible.

It is wrong to believe that a chariot can be driven smooth when horses are provided. No. The charioteer is of prime importance; he can lead, guide restrain and hold the horses. The body is the chariot wherein man is seated; the senses are the horses; the mind forms the rein; the intellect is the charioteer. When the reins are let loose and the intellect is not allowed to take charge, the horses will run amok and disaster is inevitable.

The mind and its activities depend to a large extent on the quality of food. Food means, not only the calories that one consumes through the gullet; it means also the impressions and impacts that one feeds himself through the eye, the ear, the tongue, the nose and the sense of touch. The quality of these inputs too should be conducive to health—both physical and mental."

After the Discourse, at 8 p. m. the students of the Sri Sathya Sai Women's College at Anantapur provided an excellent Variety Programme of (Dance Gopika, Adoration Dance, etc.) Devotional Music and Orchestral Music.

The morning of the first day of October saw about 300 District Presidents of the Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organisation from all parts of India and the State Presidents of the Organisation from India and the neighbouring nations gathering in the Prasanthi Mandir in Conference. Bhagavan addressed the Conference at 9 a. m., and stressed on the need for discipline and dedicated effort to promote Love in oneself and manifesting it through Service. He advised fortitude and tolerance, charity, and compassion as the bases of the attitude each has to develop while sharing in the activities of the Organisation. Instead of Apeksha (Craving, Desire to acquire and accumulate. Attachment,) develop the spiritual virtue of Upeksha (Non-Attachment, Equanimity, Renunciation), He said. The Conference continued in the afternoon too and resolved upon various Organisational matters, in order to translate its universal ideals into practice.

The gathering in the evening was addressed by Sri Nithyanandam, M. Com., a student of the Sai College at Brindavan. He spoke on the streams of Grace that flow from the Divine Love of which Bhagavan is the sweet Embodiment. Sri Nakul Sen, I.A.S (Retd.), former Governor of Goa then spoke on the aspects of the individual's effort to earn awareness of the Divine; the Nirguna-nirakar as the ideal (contemplating on the Divine as above and beyond all attributes and forms); the Saguna-nirakara as the ideal (contemplating Love, Ananda, Power, Glory, Splendour etc, but, Immanent and Transcendent and so without any specific Form) and as Saguna-sakara (endowed with Form and Attributes). He quoted profusely from the Bhagavad-Gita and other texts while clarifying the paths and so made every one realise the efficiency of all three.

Bhagavan dwelt on the common aspect of all religions and elaborated on the basic purpose of religion, in all lands and at all times. No religion preaches or upholds violence, injustice or falsehood. All are in. tent on the purification of the instincts, impulses, emotions, passions and desires of man and on the clarification of his intellect from wrong and limited attitudes and prejudices. The Sanathana Dharma has raised its superstructure of Dharma on the dictum; “Lokas Samasthaas Sukhino Bhavanthu”—Let all in all the worlds live happily. It emphasised the Unity underlying Diversity. But, as a result of the innate desire of man to cling to duality and to diversity many sects developed in India. They were all however brought under three philosophical systems, each highlighting one aspect of Truth—the Advaita established by Sankaracharya, the Visishta-Advaita by Ramanujacharya and the Dvaita by Madhwacharya. Sankara declared that there is only One Reality which appears as Many as a result of the Ignorance that deludes the vision. Ramanuja said that the Many are really parts and forms of the One, as the rivers that rose from the sea and are flowing towards it are really One with the Sea, before and after. Madhwa declared that one has to be separate and different from the Reality so that one may derive Ananda from Its contemplation and Adoration. The ant alone can enjoy the sugar; if it is sugar itself bow can it be thrilled by the sweetness?” Madhwa queried.

Then, Bhagavan spoke of the Buddha, Jainism, Sikhism, Zoroastrianism, Christianity and Islam and the underlying principles of each. Finally, He declared, "The Sai Religion is the essence of all these Religions; it is not a new Religion, but, it is the Religion that is the basis of

every Religion, the Religion of Love; Love is the Cause and Consequence of Religion, its Source, Sustenance and Goal.”

At 8 P. M. that day, the students of the Sri Sathya Sai College, Brindavan, Bangalore, gave a variety Entertainment, full of exhilarating items with Divine Content. A student from Kerala gave two thematic dances, one in Kathakali style and the other in Bharat Natyam technique. Sri Rupak Changakoti, a student from Guahati, Assam, recited with excellent mastery of music a number of Hindi devotional songs. Orchestral accompaniment was provided by a group of students of the same College, who played on Tabla, Harmonium, Sitar, Veena and Violin with remarkable skill.

Vijayadashami

October 2 was Vijayadashami, the 10th Day of Dasara, which marks the Victory of the Divine over the Demonic. It was the Day when the Vedapurusha Sapthaha Jnana Yajna had its Valedictory Ceremony of the Final Offerings in the sacred Fire. Bhagavan proceeded in procession from the Prasanthi Mandir to the Poornachandra Auditorium, accompanied by the Vedic Pundits from Kerala and Andhra Pradesh, the State Presidents of the Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organisations and others; the richly caparisoned elephant Sai Geetha led the procession; the College Band of the Women’s College at Anantapur and the Sathya Sai College for Boys at Brindavan, Whitefield accompanied the procession playing Bhajan songs. The Nadaswaram party from Tamil Nadu played its pipes and drums. The path was laid in floral petals colourfully designed in suspicious drawings. Bhagavan sat in a Silver Chair facing the Sacred Fire and He created special gold offerings to be poured into the ceremonial Fire as the Valedictory Offering, called Poornahuti. The priests pundits and reciters of Vedic hymns then performed the adoratory circumambulations and prostration to the Vedapurusha, Bhagavan Himself. Later, Bhagavan consecrated the Idol of Shirdi Sai Baba by the ceremonial shower of Vibhuti, which flowed continuously from an empty pot held over it when His Hands were twirled inside. He decorated the image with a garland of gems that He created. Bhagavan also moved among the vast gathering of about 25,000 devotees and sprinkled on them with a handful of Kusa grass the holy waters sanctified by the process of Abhisheka and the recital of Vedic Hymns. The entire function was exhilarating and elevating; the atmosphere was charged with devotion and ecstatic fulfillment. A West German T. V. Team took pictures for being televised abroad. In the evening, the Poornachandra Auditorium was packed to overflowing; thousands gathered outside to hear the Discourses. Sri Kamal Sahani, a student of the Brindavan College, addressed them on the love and care that Baba bestows on Youth in order to shape them into fit instruments for the fulfillment of His Mission; Prof. Kuldipchandra Gupta of the same College recited two poems in Hindi that he had composed on Baba, and Sri K. Prahlada Rao, the Post Master of the Prasanthi Nilayam Post Office, who is a scholar and poet in both Sanskrit and Telugu languages, read extracts from his poetic compositions in praise of the Compassion and Grace of Bhagavan. Bhagavan declared, in His Valedictory Discourse of the Dasara Series, that man must not rest content with his achievements in the fields of science and technology; he must strive equally hard, if not even more enthusiastically, to achieve triumphs in the field of self-knowledge, self-conquest and self-realisation. Then only can man have peace and prosperity and freedom from fear, enjoy un-diminishable Bliss. A length of bamboo is valued in proportion to its straightness, thickness and strength. A length of cane is valued in proportion to its sugar content. A bullock is valued for its ability to draw weight. A man is valued for his virtues and moral

strength, his straight talk and behaviour, and his steady, march towards the Divine Goal. Or else, man lives and dies, a dismal failure. Goods wagons are marked: 'To be returned on' and a date is marked within which it has to return back to the yard. Man too is a wagon with a date affixed, when he has to return again to life. But, he must not simply be pushed around or dragged along. He must achieve victory over the destiny of this everlasting journey. He must not allow himself to be swept along the flood of desire. He has to learn the lesson of 'giving up', so that he may gain more.

Breath once inhaled has to be exhaled; blood has to be received and dispatched by every cell in the body; or else, illness will result. Every moment, this lesson of giving up so that health may be assured is taught to the body and the mind. Give up the ever-multiplying breed of desire. Desire, when opposed, breeds anger; when it is satisfied, it breeds greed. All three infect the mind, and ruin Karma, Bhakti and Jnana, the three paths to God-realisation.

The God-ward path is not a smooth path. Various pulls and pettinesses hamper progress. Tears and travail will be the lot of the aspirant; they are useful to toughen him and soften his emotions. They are challenges which have to be met by calm and confident responses. When you drive a nail on a wall to hang a picture, you try to shake it before the picture is hung, in order to find out whether it can bear the Bliss that is in store.

Therefore, aspirants and Sadhakas, both within the Organisation and without, must be strong enough spiritually not to be enticed by the vanities of the world; they must visualise the One behind the Many and know that the One is the Source and Spring of Love; they must develop that Love by manifesting it more and more, deeper and deeper, in vaster and vaster fields of service. They must be careful about the purity of the inputs into the body and the mind. Eat only to appease hunger, not to satisfy the cravings of the palate. Keep the goal ever in view; examine each day, how far you have advanced, and discover the reasons for any dilatoriness or delay. Thus you will be able to shape your mind into a beneficial instrument for your spiritual progress.

With that exhortation, Bhagavan concluded these series of discourses He vouchsafed, during this Dasara on the vital role that the mind plays in shaping the destiny of man.

At 8 P.M., on Vijayadashami, Bhagavan gave Darshan on the Jhoola to the vast gathering of devotees. The ceremony was symbolic of Bhagavan swinging joyfully in the jhoola of our hearts. Sri Jalota of Bombay sang a few devotional songs and heightened the thrill of that charming Darshan.

—Ed.

Ramakatha Rasavahini

Sri Sathya Sai Baba

82

Lakshmana accosted Ravana, and scoffed him thus: "You villain! What benefit can you gain by slaughtering monkeys and bears? Gaze at me, standing before you like Death itself, the Spirit

of Time come to finish your earthly career.” Ravana replied, "O! Don't I know you? You are the destroyer of my son. I was looking out for you since many days. My heart will find solace only after my killing you this day.” Ravana yelled in anger and let loose sharp arrows at Lakshmana. But, Lakshmana cleverly cut them into thousand splinters. In addition, Lakshmana shot fiery shafts at Ravana and they succeeded in cutting to pieces the chariot of Ravana as well as his charioteer. Lakshmana rained arrows in deadly groups of hundred and more. They found their mark on the face of Ravana and on his chest, so that he was felled to the ground, having lost consciousness with the blow and the pain.

Yet, he recovered very quickly and rose up in ferocious anger, and directed against Lakshmana the terrible mighty missile that was conferred on him by the First of the Trinity, Brahma Himself. When the missile hit him, Lakshmana rolled down to the ground. Hanuman saw the fall, and he hastened to the aide of Lakshmana, shouting imprecations against Ravana. Ravana administered a heavy blow on Hanuman with his clenched fist. It made Hanuman reel in pain, but, he steadied himself before the fall. He returned the blow even more power-filled than what he got from Ravana. Ravana was stunned at the impact. He said within himself, "May this fellow's hit be burnt to ashes. I never dreamt that a monkey's fist could discharge such a thunderbolt.”

Meanwhile, Lakshmana recovered from the swoon and rose ready for the fray. Ravana had to be helped into another chariot, having become unconscious again. His charioteer cleverly drove the chariot in the direction of Lanka itself. He got back his awareness as soon he reached Lanka. He ordered that a special destruction-yielding, victory-ensuring ritual called Patala-homa be performed so that he could defeat the enemy at his door.

What a big fool was he! Can he ever achieve victory in a fight with Rama? Those who were spying his activities on behalf of Vibhishana carried the news of the Patala-homa to him and he was alerted in time. Vibhishana approached Rama without delay, and falling at His feet said, 'Lord! Now Ravana is engaged in a ritual of the same category as the one which Meghanada began in the past. This ceremony too has to be defiled and desecrated by the, monkeys so that Ravana might be deprived of the benefits he hopes to secure through it. In case this Homa is allowed to reach its conclusion, without interruption, it will be very difficult to defeat Ravana.”

Very soon, the day dawned. In accordance with the orders of Rama, Angada and Hanuman proceeded to the Ritual Enclosure with a large following. They jumped and leaped in great hilarity and surrounded the palace of Ravana. "Sacrilegious sacrificer! Fleeing from battle, and finding safety at home, are you sitting cosily performing meditation?" Angada dared go very near him and deal him a kick with his foot. Ravana was engaged in preparatory silence and 'meditation' Even the slightest movement or distraction of attention would make him unfit and unholy, so that the Homa he had to perform for victory would be rendered in-fructuous. Angada and the monkeys took liberties with him. Some of them dug their teeth into him. A few tugged at his crown of hair. That was the limit. Ravana became fiercely angry; he rose to his feet and catching hold of a few monkeys, he twirled them fast over his head and tried to smash them on the ground. But, he could not move even a little step. This became a matter of greater shame. Soon, a regular scramble and struggle ensued between Ravana and the Vanaras. The ritual ceremony he had planned could not go through. Ravana was sunk in grief.

The Vanaras approached Rama and related to him, all that had happened. Vibhishana and others were happy at the consummation of their strategy. Ravana was badly disappointed that he could not succeed in performing the Yaga. But, yet, he had to resolve dutifully to proceed to the battlefield. As soon as he started from his palace, bad omens greeted him. Kites flew in and sat on his head, and his hands, and his crown slipped from its place. He paid no regard to the warnings. He ordered that the war-drums be beaten and the clarions sounded.

Hundreds of thousands of Rakshasas gathered when that signal was given. The army proceeded to wage the mortal battle against Rama. Rama equipped himself with the arrow-case and took the bow in his hand. With his long arms and broad chest, the splendour-filled embodiment of charm stood on the battlefield, the very picture of heroic might; the gods assembled overhead and offered reverend homage to the Saviour of humanity from the Rakshasa horde. The Vanara army followed Rama, arrayed in perfect order and alert to every command. Like the thunder-spitting clouds bringing destructive floods on the earth on the Day of Deluge, the Vanara hordes moved fast towards the Rakshasa forces bent upon their annihilation. The mountain peaks that the combatants threw against the enemy fell with the noise of thunder; in an instant, the chariots, elephants and horses of the Rakshasa armies were destroyed. Thousands and thousands of Rakshasas fell on the ground. Blood flowed as rivers. Ravana lost all his warriors. He felt he was alone, and that the monkeys and bears were many. So, he decided to elaborate his magic powers. He exercised magic on all except Rama. But, Rama willed otherwise. Through His Will, Ravana saw wherever he turned a vast ocean of Vanara hordes, with Rama and Lakshmana, in the vanguard, leading the forces. At this, Ravana realised that his magic cannot produce any effect.

Soon, Rama called to his presence the Vanaras and told them in grave seriousness, "You are all exhausted by the long and hardy battle. Go and take rest. Now, watch the fight between Rama and Ravana." No sooner he said these words, than Ravana encountered Rama with a challenging roar. At this Rama smiled and said in a soft voice, "Fool! First listen to the words of moral counsel I am giving. There are three types of men in the world: The first are like the patali tree, which blossoms finely, but, the blossoms do not turn into fruit. Those who indulge in mere speech and do not practise a mite of what they talk are of this type. The second group are like the plantain tree. It gives flowers and fruits, both. Those who speak and act, practise what they assert, these are of this type. The third type is like the jack tree—it has no flower; it has only fruits. The best type of men do not prattle or boast or talk high; they are silent workers, who act with no boast. You are a mere braggart. Your immoral rule has brought ruin on your race."

Ravana could not swallow these imputations. He said, "What? Dare you teach me?" and he poured out a stream of abuse. Suddenly, he shot a bunch of hard-hitting arrows on Rama. Rama replied with the Fire Arrow. The arrows of Ravana were burnt to ashes by the weapon that Rama released. Ravana directed against Rama millions of sharp edged wheels and three pronged spears. But, the hopes of his wicked heart were not fulfilled. Rama thereupon lifted his redoubtable bow and shot a stream of deadly arrows, which flew straight at Ravana like irresistible messengers of death, and cobras eager to inject their fatal venom.

Rama noticed that as soon as one head was sliced off by his arrow, another grew in its place. Ignoring his impending death, Ravana was immersed in pride; he challenged Rama in great

exultation. It was a ghastly sight; the heads that rolled to the ground, were shouting, "Where is that Rama? Where is Lakshmana? Where is that Sugriva?" The heads that remained on the trunk were gnashing teeth and asking for Vibhishana, and pouring abuses on him. They said, `you brother of mine! Shame on you, for awaiting the news of your brother's death, so that you may succeed him on the throne! You are not a hero; you are a cowardly ascetic. Fie on you, No one should look you in the face." Soon, the lost heads reappeared and Ravana fought most fiercely and with unequalled valour Lakshmana, Sugriva and Angada watched him and admired his prowess.

Ravana Killed

Finally, Rama resolved that the end of Ravana should no longer be delayed. His iniquities were multiplying with every passing day. Meanwhile, Nala, Nila and other Vanara heroes were casting rocks at Ravana, and hurting him greatly. But, the dusk of evening intervened and the battle ended for the day.

That night, Trijata sat near Sita, describing the battle between Rama and Ravana. She told her that whenever Rama sliced off a head, another grew in its place. Sita's face paled at this news; she sank in sadness. Trijata was surprised at this development; she said, "Do not yield to anxiety. His heart has your Form enshrined in it; that is the reason why the heads grow." At this, Sita became both sad and happy. Trijata hastened to add, "Sita! Have no doubt. His end is imminent. Rama will triumph. Rama too is remembering you every time he shoots an arrow; he too has your form in his heart. So, the end is prolonged, until the moment comes, when he will give up your memory for a short while. That moment will spell his doom; he will be killed that instant."

Ravana filled the next day of the battle with his magic mystery. The battlefield was filled with his creations: ghosts, eerie beings and sprites with bows and arrows. Female spirits danced around holding swords in one hand and gorging blood from human skulls held in the other. 'Hold' `Beat' Kill"—they yelled in screaming voices. In whichever direction the Vanaras advanced, they were met by high walls of fire. The monkeys and bears were astounded. A thick rain of sand fell without stop on the Vanara forces. Ravana roared in glee at the plight of his enemy. Lakshmana, Sugriva and others were incapacitated. The warriors prayed pathetically to Rama to come to their help. Rama was besieged by many 'Hanumans' created by Ravana's magic; each ' Hanuman' carried huge mountain peaks; they also attempted to bind Rama in the knots of their tails! The tails coiled and grew over many miles in all directions.

But, Rama shone unconcerned and unharmed, blue like a fresh blossom in the midst of all the carnage and confusion. He knew that it was all the trail product of Rakshasa magic. He laughed within himself at the efforts of Ravana to mystify him. With a single arrow shot from his bow, he destroyed all the varied effects of that magic skill. The monkeys and bears saw the frightful scenes disappear in a trice, and they were happy. The entire thing melted away as fog before the rays of the sun, as soon as the arrow of Rama entered it. The Vanaras caused a hailstorm of stone to fall on Ravana. They jumped all around him with the missiles. Rama then selected a sharp arrow and shot it straight at Ravana. It sliced off ahead.

Another head grew on the spot in a trice. It happened again and again. Rama watched the fun and even seemed to be enjoying it. He remembered the phenomenon of greed coming in place of gain; as soon as something is gained, greed for more is born. He pictured the falling head as gain and the growing head as greed. The battle that ensued between Rama and Ravana was fought with incomparable and unexcelled fury. The saying goes that the Ocean is like the Ocean and the Sky is like the Sky. They cannot be compared with any other phenomena; so, too, the battle between Rama and Ravana has that battle alone as equal to it. The battle lasted for eighteen days. Rama was not in the least exhausted by the fighting; it was a sport, a pastime for him! There were a few more days left before the fourteen years' exile was to end; so, he could well afford to engage himself in the game of war. If Rama decides on the finale, how can Ravana postpone his end or change the decision?

When the fourteen days were over, Rama fixed a fiery arrow to his bow; everything conspired to create bad omens for Ravana. Dogs howled; foxes moaned; donkeys brayed. Bird and beast set up piteous wails. Balls of fire dropped from the sky. Sudden bursts of flame became evident in all directions. The heart of Mandodari, the Queen, beat loud and fast. Every idol in every home and temple in the island shed tears in plenty. Tornadoes spread havoc over hill and dale. Alarmed by these calamitous signs, the gods knew that the end of the Rakshasas was near and they gathered overhead, to witness the triumph of Righteousness, shouting 'Jai! Jai', welcoming the victory.

Then Rama shot a bunch of thirty-one arrows at the same instant on Ravana. They darted like deadly cobras. One arrow entered the 'nectar-jar' that Ravana had underneath his navel; the rest, the thirty, sliced off his heads and hands. When the heads and limbs rolled on the ground, they hopped about and rose and fell in frantic dance, for some little time and then lay quiet. Thus Ravana rid himself of life and reached heaven. The day was the fourteenth of the bright half of the Chaitra month.

The Rama Story: Stream of Sacred Sweetness (To be continued)

Of what can man say, "This is permanent; this will not undergo change?" Truly when he sees and experiences from his very birth the changes that happen in him, how can the objective or subjective world that he is conscious of, be permanent? That is the reason why Sankaracharya declared that this is an unreal world to which we must not barter our soul. For, if this is real, how can it change? How can we hold on to It? Sathya is Reality, the Unchanging IS. That is the Atma. The Atma is the Form of the Lord, the Power and Glory of the Lord.

—Baba

The Sai Religion

Whom the Muslims adore as Allah, whom the Christians adore as Jehovah, whom the Vaishnavas adore as Phullabja-aksha, whom the Saivites adore as Sambhu, who grants, fn

answer to their several prayers, health long life prosperity and happiness to all, wherever they may be, He, the One God, is the God of all mankind.

Bharat has been since ages teaching the message of the spirit and the means to gain and ensure equanimity and joy. She has stood forth as the preceptor of the world for centuries. The prayer that Bharat has taught to its people is, Lokas Samasthaas Sukhino Bhavanthu (May all people everywhere be happy). This is the consummation pictured in the thoughts of the Hindus, from ancient times. This whole-some ideal was propagated and fostered by the rulers of this land, the seers, and yogis who guided the populace and the chaste mothers who reared the generations in the atmosphere of spiritual effort.

But when the country was involved in the vicissitudes of history and the people were subjected to pressures and counter pressures, the ideal suffered set-back; the abstractions of faith received concrete form and get crystallised into specific identifiable names and forms; each new attitude, or aptitude, each new, concretisation, became a special sect, every theory got itself enveloped in its own shell. Thus, the One Vedic Religion, became the parent of a number of sects and sets of belief, like Ganapatya (centering around the concept of Ganapati), Saaktheya (centering around the concept of Cosmic Energy as the expression of the Divine). Soura (centering around the Sun as the Source, Sustenance and Goal of Spiritual Achievement), the Charvaka (centering around the concept of Pleasure and material prosperity) and Veerasaiva (centering around Siva, as the Inner Motivator of all beings). Every one of these sects and many more besides elaborated its own rituals and modes of worship, its own priorities in spiritual attainments and its own body of doctrines about the Individual, the Objective World and God.

The purpose of these codes and modes was, in all cases, to purify the mind and insist on the practice of high moral virtues. But, this was soon ignored and importance came to be attached to superficial conformity and outer purity. The craving for personal aggrandizement and personal power made the sect or faith or religion, rigid, and dry. There is a great need today to discover the inner spring of all faiths, the spring that fertilises the outer rites and ceremonies. A little quiet study will reveal that this is an undercurrent of moral enthusiasm and spiritual adventure.

The word for religion generally used is Matha; the word to indicate the Mind is Mathi. Putting the two together it can be said that Matha is primarily engaged or ought to be engaged in straightening and strengthening the Mathi. The goal, the purpose, the key, the essence; of all creeds; faiths and religions are just this the sublimation of the mind or the consciousness of man, so that it can guarantee liberation for the individual concerned and happiness for the society of which he is a unit. Principles and practices have grouped around this prime need and creeds are the result.

Religions attempt to implant holy ideals in the heart of man. But, man does not allow them to sprout and grow. His egoistic craving for power and competitive success has in most cases persuaded him to use religion as an instrument of torture and persecution. Instead of uniting mankind in a common endeavour, it has become a system of walled enclosures, guarded by hate and fanaticism. So, each religion is an armed camp, sunk in self-aggrandizement, trying to wean others into itself and preventing defections from it. Religion, therefore, is being condemned as

the root of chaos and conflict. In spite of great progress in many other areas of life, religious animosity is aflame, even today in many parts of the world.

It has to be emphasised that religion is not the root cause of this state of affairs. The factious fights and fanatic hatred are due to the unruly ego that is given free play. Religion strives to destroy just this vicious tendency; so, it has to be supported, not condemned. What has to be condemned is the narrow, perverted, attitude of hating those who do not agree with us or who hold different opinions of the mysterious Force that animates the Universe. Religious wars and conflicts breed in the slime of ignorance and avarice. When people are blind to the truth that the human family is one indivisible unity, they grope in the dark and are afraid of strange touch. The cultivation of Love alone can convince man of this Truth, that there is only one caste, the Caste of Humanity, and only one Religion, the Religion of Love. Since no religion upholds violence or despises love, it is wrong to ascribe the chaos to religion.

It is also not advisable to engage in campaigns of vilification or exaggerated propagation of any religion, with a view to draw votaries if only each one lives the ideals propounded by the Founders of their religion, unaffected by greed or hate, the world will be a happier and more peaceful habitation for man.

The religion of the Hindus stressed the Unity of all Creation, and declare that the diversity we experience is not the genuinely true picture. But, since faith in the One comes into awareness only to a mind clarified to the utmost, the religion had soon to posit duality, and even multiplicity, with deities for every facet of the Whole. The most widespread of these dualities is the Saivita and Vaishnavite faiths, centered round the Siva and the Vishnu aspects of the One. This process of splitting into diverse viewpoints has taken place in all the major religions. Islam has Shia and the Sunni sects; Christianity has its Catholics and Protestants. But, however deep the cleavage, no sect denies God and no sect extols violence and falsehood. Names may be different; the facets emphasised may be different; but, the Almighty Providence is denoted as Absolute and Eternal. The terminology may be different, but, the Concept is not different. Bhagavan is referred to as Allah; prayer may be called Namaz; pundits may be known as kaajis; scholars may be hailed as Mullahs. The Veda may be in the form of the Holy Quran. But, the undercurrent of energising power in all cases is Love, Love of all Beings, towards all beings. The Founders have ever in view the Unity of all Life and the progressive march of man from mere humanness to the heights of Divinity.

The first among the interpreters of the Vedas to found a school of philosophy and lay down the path of spiritual discipline to benefit from that school is Sankaracharya, born in the Kerala State; during his very short life, he established on secure foundations of logic and intuition, the truth that there is only One and that all else is an appearance on the One reality. This is the 'No-two' or Advaita philosophy and faith, that explains the Individual, Nature and God in perfect harmony. The Vedic axioms—Ekoham Bahusysam (I am One, let me become many), Iswara-sarva-bhoota-naam (God is immanent in all), Isa-vaasyam-idam Sarvam (All this is enveloped and penetrated by God)—are thus illumined by the intellect of Sankaracharya into patent truths.

Monism as propounded by Sankaracharya on the basis of Vedic texts was of course too simple a solution to satisfy the inner urges of the majority of individuals. They had in them the yearning

to worship; to dedicate themselves to a higher power; they could not grasp the truth of their inner Reality being the One and Only. Their emotions and activities had to be sublimated by disciplines of devotion. Therefore, Ramanujacharya commented upon the Vedic texts and religious scriptures from a new point of view. This made the Advaita take on a special outlook. So it was called Visisht (Special) Advaita. The path of devotion was laid down to take man to the mergence with God. The goal is mergence, as the rivers know and strive for. The waters of the sea are raised by the Sun up into the sky as clouds and the clouds pour them as rain on highland and lowland, to flow back into the Sea through many a ravine, stream and tributary-fed river. Merging in the Source from which one took name and form is the ultimate destiny. The river has the passion of overwhelming Love which leads it down the slopes until it reaches the Loved one, where the Lover, Loved and Love all three merge in one Illuminating Ecstasy. Prema is the attachment to God, that, does not allow anything to interfere or diminish its quality or depth. God is loved by the Bhakta, for His sake, and not for any incidental benefit or blessing. It is spontaneous, sustaining and sublime, like a child before the mirror, enjoying the reflections of its own pranks and gestures.

Complete surrender to the extent of the annihilation of one's own individuality is also beyond most aspirants. Sugar cannot be tasted and enjoyed by sugar; you have to, be an ant, so that you can revel in the sweetness of the stuff. This craving of man was sought to be satisfied by Madhwacharya, who declared that the Jivi or Individual will ever remain separate from the Universal and there can be no merging. In Advaita, a flash of intellectual illumination reveals that the Atma alone exists and that all else is deluding appearance. The Visisht-Advaita posits that the river is an integral part of the sea. Dvaita points out that the joy derived from adoration and worship is enough to draw the fulfilling Grace of God.

There were other seers too who laid down paths towards the same goal. He announced that the Universe belongs to God and man should not desire to accumulate or appropriate any portion of the Divine Treasure. He advised that the sapling of devotion must be protected from the pests of sloth, doubt, and fanaticism by the cultivation of valour and vigilance.

Of the major religions, I may mention one, namely, Buddhism. He was so agonised by the suffering that haunts the life of man that he investigated the behaviour of the mind and intellect of man and discovered remedial disciplines. He analysed the vagaries of the mind, which leads man into the whirlpools of desire; he analysed the ways of reason, too, and spotted the areas where prejudice takes root. He required surrender to Dharma (above all, the virtue of compassion), and to Buddha (the enlightened individual). The religion that was rendered an all-India movement by Mahavira, Jainism, extols the Jina or the heroic conqueror of the senses, the emotions and the stratagems of the intellect. He called upon all to carry out the duties inherent to their status and profession with steady faith and enthusiasm. He declared that all things and beings are holy in their own right and are but pilgrims on the road to Realisation. Any injury inflicted on any of them is an intervention in that sacred journey and so has to be scrupulously avoided.

Zoroastrianism or the Parsi religion was founded by Zoroaster, who wanted that man should ever have the Fire of wisdom, blazing in his consciousness, so that evil thoughts and tendencies might be reduced to ashes. It has to infuse all thoughts, words and deeds with the illumination of

virtue and vigour. The fire of wisdom must destroy all worldly desire and render man pure for entry into the heaven of freedom. Adoration, meditation and acts of self-less service are essential for the dawn of enlightenment.

The Sai Religion, if the name of religion in its literal sense of binding man to God is accepted, is the essence of all faiths and religions, including those I had no time to dwell upon, like Islam, Christianity and Judaism. The motive behind the formation and propagation of all these different faiths is the same, in all cases. The founders and propagators were all persons filled with Love and Wisdom. Their goal, their target their purpose, their aim were all the same. No one had the design to divide, disturb, or destroy. They attempted to do good, see good and be good. They sought to train the passions and the emotions, to educate the impulses and instincts and direct the faculty of reason to paths beneficial to the individual and society. They knew that the mind which is the breeding ground of desire and attachment, ambition and aspiration, has to be cleansed and properly oriented.

Sai considers that practice of these disciplines is much more essential than the blind faith in a bunch of philosophical theories. No one has right to advice others unless he is already practising what he preaches. First, establish the reign of Love in your own home, between the various members. Let the family become a centre of harmonious living, of sympathetic understanding, and mutual faith. The holy duty of man is to be ever aware of the Atma that is installed in every living being; this will make him conscious of the kinship he has with all. This is the basis of the Brotherhood of Man and the Fatherhood of God. Cast away the, vice of egoism, the evil of greed and the poison of envy. When you seek joy from something outside you, remember that far greater joy lies in wait in your own inner consciousness; when you are afraid of some thing or situation outside you, remind yourself that the fear is born, fed and fertilised in your own mind and you can overcome it by denying it. How can fear counter the path of a spiritual aspirant? It can hide in no shadow, it can pester no Sadhaka, who has God in his heart. Faith in Almighty God is the impregnable armour the Sadhaka can wear, and men in all lands are Sadhakas, whether they know it or not. Be steady, do not waver. Keep straight on. Hold fast to the ideal; do not despair. Pray until God relents; do not turn away sadly, if God does not shower Grace, when you expect it.

When each. Religion plans to extend its influence, it has to resort to vilification of others and exaggeration of its own excellences. Pomp, and publicity become more important than practice and faith. But, Sai wants that the votaries of each must cultivate faith in its own excellences and realise their validity by their own intense practice. That is the Sai Religion, the Religion that feeds and fosters all Religions and emphasises their common Greatness. Take up this religion boldly and joyfully.

—Bhagavan's Discourse; Dasara; Prasanthi Nilayam: 1-10-76

Nowadays, many aspirants are giving up Namasmara and resorting to Yoga and Pranayama. But, these two are fraught with great dangers. To follow Yogic practices and rules is a very difficult task, especially when the teacher is not vigilant and skilled. When the rules are observed fully and the promised fruits obtained, it becomes a hard job to protect and preserve the beneficial effects. They are easily frittered away or turned into wrong paths. If the Name is

adopted as the support and the refuge, He can be realised tomorrow, if not today. If the name of a thing is known, the thing itself can be acquired easily.

—Baba

Who are you? The Atman. Whence did you come? From the Atman. Whither are you bound? To the Atman. How long can you be here? Until you merge with the Atman you really are, from which you have departed. Where are you now? In the unreal, ever-changing world of appearance. In what form are you now? As An-atma, as a person who considers himself to be the body. What are you engaged in? In evanescent tasks that bind you more and more. Therefore, what is the work you have to do from this moment? Enter the –Eternal, engage in the never changing task, and enjoy the Bliss of the Atman.

—Baba

The Synthesis

Every one's life is governed by three urges: (1.) Achara or Action; (2) Vichara or Thinking and 3. Vikaara or Emotion. In the ideal human life, all these three get sublimated and are cultivated as means for self-realisation. They are the Yogas, known respectively as Karma, Jnana and Bhakti. Most Jnanis and Yogis do not concern themselves with human misery, not do they preach the ways of overcoming it. Godmen on the other hand are immensely interested in the elevation of man and the redressal of his sorrows. Jnaneswar evolved a unique means of solving the problem of human misery which maybe called Jivan-yoga, as different from Karma Yoga, Jnana Yoga or Bhakti Yoga. This Yoga is a harmonious synthesis of the three traditional Yogas.

According to my understanding, after years of intimate contact and conversation, discussion and observation of Sri Sathya Sai Baba, is that the Truth propagated by Jnaneswar is the core of Sathya Sai Baba's Message to humanity, today. I request you to pay special attention to this significant fact. When do the three Yogas get synthesised? The answer in the words of Jnaneswar is, "When one worships the Easwara dwelling in the hearts and offers Him, with love and compassion, blossoms of service." Then, the devotee gets boundless joy. Here, in one breath, so to say, Jnana, Bhakti and Karma are taught as the one means to attain boundless happiness, the true fruition of life.

Bhagavan lays stress on this same synthesis. Faith in the omnipresent and omniscient Got, the Indweller in all hearts, in all beings, is the basis for worshipping Him in all; this is true religion—service done as worship. Mere faith cannot be named religion. He who kills a goat as an offering to God may have `faith'; but, the act cannot be religious. Even human lives are offered to deities, in `faith'. That cannot be religion, the act of bringing God and man together. Again, there are people who are as gentle and good as Pandavas when they visit a temple or holy place, on pilgrimage: but, once they come back and resume their normal avocations, they become as selfish and harsh as their opposites, the Kauravas! How can we call such people religious? Many a war has been fought to spread or support religion; how can the faith that revels in bloodshed be called religion?

So, the crucial point is that unless one admits the existence of God in all hearts and conforms his behaviour and actions to this faith, he cannot be called a religious person. This Universal Truth is stated in numerous places in our Upanishads e.g. “Eshawasyam idam Sarvam”, the World is filled with God. Realization of this truth would remove barriers between different religions and make them all facets of one and the same religion, of Universal Love. This realization alone can open the eye of wisdom and lead us to the vision of God in all.

We have a number of Saints who teach us to love God as Father, Mother, Friend, Master and so on. But the faith and devotion which Sri Jnaneswar and Baba are preaching embraces the Universal God and has to be prized far higher, as it leads to the betterment and welfare of society. In this religion, service of man becomes the worship of God. It raises all activities that come to one's lot to the level of Bhajan, Kirtan, Puja and so on.

I must say that of the numerous saints and seers I have come across in my life, none has made such deep impact on me as Sri Sathya Sai Baba, whose mission and message is Universal Love. The divine attributes which are indications of Divinity are Chamatkara, Sakshatkara, Nirahankara, Upkara and Sanskara. Usually, a saint has only one or two of them. But Baba manifests all of them. His miracles "Chamatkara" which he calls "Visiting Cards" are well-known and manifests His Omniscience Omnipresence and Omnipotence. His giving spiritual guidance, help and experience (Sakshatkara) has been acknowledged by large numbers of devotees. Baba is asking nothing for Himself (Nirahankara) nor accumulating anything for Himself. All that He does, is for the good of the humanity (Upkara). His sole objective is to confer good on other. Important is Baba's mission of "Sanskara" or transforming the heart of mankind, particularly through the value oriented education programme. This system of education will lead to the moral, cultural spiritual blossoming of the child's personality and give it a balance of growth of scientific knowledge, as well as spiritual wisdom.

—*T. S. Bharde*

Baba

Angels harped in the realms of glory
Within the legends of my childhood days;
Little thought I to come to this strange land
And in a strange tongue give praise.

Little thought t of Indian roads
Of pilgrims trudging under starry skies;
Earthly choirs on heaven bound journey
Singing away all worldly ties.

Generations of singers pass—
But the song is ever the same;
All dissonances happily merge
In the melody sweet of Thy Name.

—Carol Turner

Festival at Kadugodi

On 21-10-76, Bhagavan proceeded to the village of Kadugodi, adjacent to Brindavan, and inaugurated the Seva Dal Training Camp of the Bangalore (Rural) District that was arranged to be held there for seven days by the District President of the Sathya Sai Seva Organisation, Karnataka State. The occasion was the happy climax of a continuous programme of village service by the students and members of the Staff of the Sri Sathya Sai College of Arts, Science and Commerce, Brindavan.

Bhagavan had Himself most graciously visited many of the villages around Brindavan in order to inspire and instruct the students and also infuse into the simple folk of the rural areas a spirit of enthusiastic self-help, self-confidence and mutual love. He has often said that the villages still cherish the spiritual ideals of service and mutual cooperation and that the villages have to lead the revolution which can transform the desiccated culture of the cities into a culture of humans aware of their real goal in life. He laid the foundation for a High School in the village of Kalkunte, about twelve miles away and visited the ancient Chola temple there of the deity, Ranganatha. He encouraged the villagers of Kannamangala to repair and reconstruct the Somesvara Temple situated there and blessed the Seva Samiti, Mahila Vibhag and Bal Vikas that the villagers formed and conducted. He installed the idol of Venugopalaswami in a temple at Seegehalli. In the village of Sorahunse, He visited the Rama Temple and exhorted the people to give up factions and develop brotherhood and tolerance. He was present when the villagers celebrated their traditional Festival, marked by mass feeding of all pilgrims. In the village of Whitefield, Bhagavan has established a well-equipped Women and Children's Hospital with about 20 beds, for the benefit of the rural folk of the region, who did not have any source of medical relief, especially in maternity complications. Bhagavan has also been sending the

Easwaramma Medical Van into the villages and the doctors accompanying the Van diagnose and treat thousands of people every month. Bhagavan has visited even ordinarily inaccessible villages like Panathur (where He installed an idol of Hanuman) since the boys from those villages are students of His College and therefore, He desired to bless the homes from which they were coming. He has arranged mid-day meals at College for students from villages who are obliged to leave home after a very early morning meal, on account of the distance which they have to traverse in order to reach College. The College itself was started by Bhagavan in the midst of a circle of villages, so that rural youth can receive good academic education and along with it, education on the cultural heritage of India and the Sadhana required for mental equanimity and spiritual striving.

It was therefore the desire of the villagers that they should be allowed to share in and benefit by the Training Camp and that Bhagavan should grace the Camp as often as He can. And, Bhagavan did not disappoint them. Students of the College who belonged to the villages of Muthknr, Kunchena, Agrahar, and Samethanahalli also persuaded their parents and others to offer their labour and resources just as the other villagers did and so, it was possible to provide accommodation, boarding and training to more than 128 trainees without any one feeling the burden irksome. Seva Dal members from the villages of Chennapatna, Mangadahalli, Magadi, Nelamangala, Doddballapur, Vijayapuram—44 in number—were selected for the Camp. Besides these, several students of the College asked to be admitted so that they too could be fit for rendering Seva according to the ideals of Sai and so, 44 of them were selected for the Course. The Camp was held in the building of the Rural Service Centre, where village girls are trained in weaving, tailoring etc, and many of the girls were eager to attend the camp and be instructed in the principles and practices of Seva. 20 of them joined the women trainees selected by the Samiti, and were grateful for the opportunity.

Bhagavan inaugurated the Camp when He lighted the Lamp and unfurled the Flag. He spoke to them on the significance of Deepavali, the Festival that was then being celebrated all over the country and, told them that Narakasura who was supposed to have been killed on Deepavali Day by Krishna and His Consort was no other than the evil tendencies in man that lead him Inevitably down the slopes of sin into Naraka (Hell). He exhorted them to purify their hearts by means of introspection and reliance on systematic Sadhana.

Hon'ble the Revenue Minister of Karnataka Sri Huchmasti Gowda, who presided, congratulated the trainees and the villagers on the Grace they were receiving from Baba and emphasised that the Message of Love that Baba lived and propagated was the only saviour of the world from fear and anxiety. Dr. V. K. Gokak who addressed the gathering stressed the various programmes of rural service that the Sathya Sai Seva Organisation had taken up all over the country.

Bhagavan gave the trainees the pleasure and inspiration of His Presence at Dinner one night; he addressed them on the final Day also. He called them into Brindavan, before the Camp broke and after distributing the Certificates to each of them Himself, He blessed them individually and granted them the precious Prasad, of Vibhuti. Moreover, He had permitted the Trainees during the seven days to proceed on Nagarsankirtan to Brindavan and when they reached the Presence, He blessed them with Darshan.

These rare contacts and this gracious stream of Grace transformed the trainees and the villagers into a well-knit group of devotees, set on the path of Seva and dedicated work. Bhagavan said on the Inaugural Day that God is the Supreme Flame from which all individuals derive their little Flames of Awareness. Every individual who participated in the Camp—as trainee, helper, lecturer or observer—realised that Bhagavan had lit the Lamp of Love in their hearts.

Eminent persons like Dr. R. R. Diwakar, Dr. V. K. Gokak, and Prof. G. P. Rajanathnam took delight in coming over to far away Kadugodi and imparting instruction to the trainees. Dr. P. V. Hegde taught them the elements of First Aid. Dr. Narasappa and Dr. Bore Gowda gave them valuable guidance to make their Seva useful and timely. An Artiste from one of the villages, Malur Sonnappa, gave a Harikatha Performance which was highly inspiring. Organisers had arranged one evening a Programme of Poetry Reading and many eminent Poets of Karnataka participated. There was also an Exhibition of Photographs on the various aspects of the Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organisation and its activities in furtherance of its objectives of Service to Mankind (in the fields of Health, Hygiene, Education, Uplift of the Handicapped and the Socially and Economically Backward) which was highly illuminating,

Since the Camp was held in such close proximity to Bhagavan's Brindavan Residence and since it bore the characteristic marks of rural simplicity and devotion, it was an eye-opener to other Units of the Organisation also. Jai Sai Ram.

—Prof. R. G. Kalkarni

Global Bhajan

Prologue

"Shravanam (Hearing the glory of the Lord), Kirtanam (Singing the Glory oneself) Vishnusmaranam (Allowing the mind to dwell on that Glory), Padasevanam (Adoring the Feet of the Lord), Vandanam (Experiencing Gratitude and joy at His Grace), Dasyam (Feeling oneself as His Instrument), Sakhyam (Awareness of His Being one's constant and closest Companion) and Atmanivedanam (Dedicating one's full being to Him)—these are the Nine Steps in the Path of Devotion."

"Listen O People. Like this Iron Kali Age, there is none so propitious for human liberation; for, the mere remembrance of the Name of the Lord and adoring Him with the name are enough to win His Grace and set you free."

"This is bad; this is good—can such judgements be ever made about any thing in God's creation when all are manifestations of His Will."

Akhanda

Embodiments of the Pure Atma Principle! Last November, on the 23rd, people from all parts of the World had assembled here to celebrate the Golden Jubilee and Office bearers of the

Centres were here, for the II World Conference and other Functions that took place. Later, they expressed their desire that they may be allotted a date before the close of the Jubilee Year when they can, in their own places, celebrate the happy occasion. In order to overcome their disappointment it was decided that, all over the world, in all centres, Bhajan (Namasankirtan) be held for full twenty four hours, beginning with 6-30 P. M. on Saturday (yesterday) and ending with 6-30 P. M. today (Sunday). Therefore, in 42 countries round the globe, more than 7000 Centres have enthusiastically taken up this pleasant assignment.

This has been named an Akhanda-bhajan, that is to say, Bhajan done without any break. But, was it really an Akhanda-bhajan? It is begun at 6-30 on the evening of one day; it is closing at 6-30 on the evening of the next day. Can we call it 'unbroken' Bhajan? What is a period of 24 hours, when we consider the vastness of the Universe and the eternity of Time? It is just a wink, a minute part of the life of man on earth. By engaging yourselves in the recitation of the Name of God for one single day you claim to have done Bhajan "without break"! Akhanda bhajan must be as continuous as breathing itself, if it must deserve the name.

Purification

And, you must probe into the real significance of the Sankirtan that you are engaged in. Kirtan is "singing aloud the glory of God." Sam-kirtan is the "process of singing, that originates in the heart, not from the lips or tongue. It is the expression of the joyous thrill that wells up from the heart when the glory of God is remembered. It is the spontaneous manifestation of inner ecstasy. No attention is paid to the blame or praise that others may give. It does not seek the admiration or the appreciation of the listeners. It is sung for one's own joy, one's own satisfaction, one's own delight. Kirtan of this supreme type alone deserves the name: Sam-kirtan.

Singing this intense yearning for God, for enjoying the experience that adoring Him brings, helps to purify the atmosphere. Man is today forced to breathe the air polluted by sounds that denote violence hatred, cruelty and wickedness. Therefore, he is fast losing the high attainments that are in store for him. The vibrations of the Nama-sam-kirtans can cleanse the atmosphere and render it pure; calm and ennobling. It is with this high purpose in view that this programme of global Sam-kirtan was designed.

No man can escape the influence of the pollution in the air he breathes. The sounds that we produce—with good intent or bedspreads throughout the air around us. This is our daily experience. The sounds produced at Radio Stations pass through the atmosphere and reach our homes when we tune in. The vibrations travel vast distances and affect the nature of those who inhale them. The atmosphere affects also the food man consumes. The pollution in the atmosphere is imbibed by the plants, the plants supply the grain, the grain is the basis of the meal and the meal shapes the character and behaviour of the person. When the environment is clean and free from evil vibrations food is pure and the person develops a tendency to be loving and simple. It is to ensure such an atmosphere that this Sadhana was laid down, all over the world.

Loud Singing

When a man falls into a well, of what use is it if he controls his voice and his emotions, and whispers quietly, "I have fallen into this well; I have fallen into this well. I am in great danger. Please save me"? No one will be able to hear and rush to save him. He must shout, full-throated,

with all the anguish he is experiencing and with the extreme desire to be saved, "I HAVE FALLEN INTO THE WELL: SAVE ME! SAVE ME! SOME ONE" Then he can hope to get succour.

So too, when you are caught in the coils of this world, when you have fallen into this deep well of worldly misery, shout with all your might, with all your heart, that you may be saved by God. There is no use muttering faintly and half-heartedly, "Save me; save me; I am floundering in this Samsara." When the prayer comes shrieking through the heart, help is assured.

The Name

Sam-kirtan or Bhajan can be of four types: Guna-sam-kirtan, Leela-sam-kirtan, Bhava-sam-kirtan and Nama-sam-kirtan. By Guna is meant the 'attributes' of God. So, Guna-sam-kirtan is the adoration in song of the manifold attributes of God—Omnipresence, Omniscience, Compassion, Majesty etc. Leela means 'sport'; therefore, Leela-sam-kirtan means, the adoration in song of the various expressions of these attributes, as evidenced by the accounts of such recorded by sages -and seers of all lands. Bhava means, the attitude of the mind, its aptitude. So, Bhava-sam-kirtan means the adoration in song of God, pictured and contacted under various relationships. Some may prefer to adore Him as the Grantor of Equanimity (Santham), others as one's closest Friend, guide and guardian (Sakhya), some others as the Child one loves anti tends (Vatsalya), and a few as the Lover whom one loves with sovereign Love (Madhura). Nama means the Name of God and so, Nama-sam-kirtan means the adoration of God, calling upon Him by Name after Name, each describing His Glory, His achievements, His relationship with the individual.

The Names are many and even countless; it is so in all languages. We have many groups of 'thousand and eight' Names which can be used. For, God, as the Vedas declare, has a 'thousand heads, a thousand eyes, a thousand feet'. Devotees can adore Him and derive bliss through that adoration, filling each Name with the meaning and significance it carries.

By whatever means God is adored, the path of Devotion is the easiest and the most effective, for, it is a Sadhana of the heart and it results in Love and Service to all as fellow pilgrims to the same Divine Goal.

Some people do question the propriety of calling on God by means of such a multiplicity of names. But, each Name is indicative of only one aspect of Divinity. It denotes a single part of the Supreme Personality. The eye, the nose, the mouth the hand, the finger may be denoted by distinct words; but, they all belong to the same individual, don't they? So too, one must remember that every Name is but a facet, a part, a ray, of the Supreme, The Sadhana consists in recognising and becoming aware of the One that supports and sustains the Many. That is the precious gem of wisdom that one must secure and treasure.

Inner Thieves

There is, however, a thief that lurks in the inner consciousness of man, planning to rob us of this gem. He is called Kama or Desire. When what we desire is gained, Lobha or Greed, the accomplice of the thief steps out and prods us to desire a few more objects. When what is desired

is not gained, another accomplice, called Krodha or Anger steps out and prods us to hate and harm those whom we suspect to be the foes who stood in the way of the gain.

Of course, you cannot completely eliminate Desire or Kama from the mind. But, you can nourish one Desire yet. The Vedas lay down Four Goals before Man: Dharma (Righteousness) Artha (Wealth) Kama (Desire) and Moksha (Liberation). Since the first and the last are difficult to attain without detachment and deprivation of sensual pleasures, man has given them up as impracticable and he is struggling in all lands and climes with the middle two, Wealth and Desire. All the fear and misery of life can be traced to this dire mistake. What has to be done is: take the Four as two inseparable pairs, Dharma-Artha and Kama-Moksha. That is to say, earn wealth through righteousness; use wealth for the promotion of Dharma. The means should be right; the ends should also be right. So too, desire, first and last, Liberation.

Release

Liberation means, getting rid of bondage, release. Many people give up hearth and home, wife and children, property and possessions and escape into the Himalayas or forest retreats and pride themselves on their praiseworthy 'renunciation'. But, this act of fleeing cannot be honoured by that name. That act may not confer release; the mind will remain bound. The fundamental bond which has to be got rid of is the Bondage of Ajnana, or Ignorance. Death is sweeter than the bondage that Ignorance can impose on man. Cast away Ignorance; you are free, liberated from all bonds, that very moment. All spiritual disciplines have this Liberation as their goal. This Nama-samkirtan too helps you to get rid of this basic Ignorance.

Sound And Mind

Those who rely on reason alone or on the limited laws of science argue that the repetition of the Name, which is after all Sound, cannot cleanse or correct the mind of man. But, the Name is not just 'sound'. You are sitting quiet there, listening; but, if some one says, "Scorpion" you get frightened and start trying to escape it. The mere sound creates so much of reaction. Or, when some one says, "The juice of a lemon," your mouth starts watering. You may be sitting before a plateful of delicacies, but if some one speaks of something dirty or disgusting, you are tempted to refuse the food; you may even vomit the food.

A certain officer was inspecting the work of a teacher in the school. He had a hearty contempt for mere talk; so, he asked the teacher, "How can you ever transform the nature of these children by the words you utter? Show them by deeds; act, don't speak." The teacher protested and argued that words have a profound effect on the mind. The argument continued for some time. At last the teacher resolved upon a plan to convince the Officer of the correctness of his view. He told an urchin of his class, "Here! Catch this officer by the neck and push him out of the room." Hearing those words, the office flew into great rage and started pouring abuse on the teacher. The teacher said, "Sir. I only made some sound, shaped into a few words. No one pushed you or hit you or touched you. It was all mere sound. But, see how the sound affected you and enraged you. Words, Sir, do help in modifying character and shaping nature." "Words have vast power," he said.

When words referring to worldly situations have such transforming effect on the mind of man, certainly words conveying spiritual and elevating meanings, packed with significance, will

certainly help in cleansing and correcting the mind of man. When we fill the air with harshness, we become harsh in nature; when we fill the atmosphere with hatred, we too have perforce to breathe the air and we are hated in return. When we saturate the air with sounds full of reverence, humility, love, courage, self-confidence and tolerance, we benefit from those qualities ourselves. The heart has the film and the mind is the lens; turn the lens towards the world, worldly pictures fall on the heart. Turn it towards God, Divine Pictures of Goodness and Love fall upon it.

Prayer

So, decide always to do good, am good, remember good, and be good. Do not seek to discover or discuss the evil in others. For, the attempt will tarnish your own minds! When you are engaged without intermission in searching for the faults and failings of others, you are paving the way for developing those faults and failings in yourself. Dwell on the good in others; then, some time or other, it will prove an asset to you. The goodness latent in you may be urged to sprout and bloom.

When you pray, for example, "Swami! Appear in my dream this night. Give me Darshan in dream," there is a chance that you may be lucky to visualise Swami in your dream. But, if you pray, turning your attention to bad things. "Swami. Let not a pig, let not an ass appear in my dream this night," in all likelihood, the pig and the ass will present themselves in your dream! Why pay undue attention to things you do not need, and do not benefit from? Every thought leaves an impression on the mind; so, be ever alert that contamination with evil is avoided. Ideas which are opposed to spiritual tendencies, that narrow the limits of love, that provoke anger or greed, that cause disgust—these have to be shut out; for the Sadhaka, this is a very essential discipline. He must sublimate such thoughts before they cause an impact on the consciousness; he should be concentrating on the very source of the thinking process. This can be achieved by the practice of "equanimity" "unaffectedness" or "balance." This attitude is the mark of the Jnani; it is called Jnana-Shakti, the Power of Wisdom. Of course, it is not easily acquired. The Path of Devotion and Dedication, the Bhakti-marga is easiest for most. It is attainable by Love; Love leads you quick and fast to the Goal.

Jnana; Bhakti

Once upon a time, Namdev (noted for his mastery of the Bhakti-marga through the constant recital of the Name) and Jnanadev (noted for his mastery of the Path of Wisdom) were together crossing a thick jungle. They were both afflicted with severe thirst, but, could not find water anywhere, in spite of tiresome search. At last they came upon a ruined well, with a few feet of water far down its depth. They had no means of going down the steep sides. But, Jnanadeva used his power and transformed himself into a bird. The bird flew down and drank its fill and flew up, to change itself into Jnanadev again! Namadev relied upon the power of the Name. He sat on the edge of the well and called, Narayana, in great anguish. God responded to his prayer. The water rose up to where he sat and he could gather it in his palms and slake his thirst. He had no need to embody himself anew and disembody himself again, for the satisfaction of a physical thirst.

The Heart

When God is invoked by prayer that emanates from the heart, let it be but once, He responds 'O' immediately. But, now the call emanates only from the lips, it has not the ring of sincerity and faith. From the lips, it must roll back on the tongue; from the tongue, it must go deep into the

throat, from the throat, it must reach down into the heart. Continuous Sadhana, genuine yearning—these alone can grant success in this endeavour. You must become an infant, with no inhibitions and stratagems. The mother may be attending to her daily chorea on the first floor of the house, leaving the infant in the cradle on the ground floor. But, when the child, sends up a loud wail—either through fear or hunger—she rushes down the steps to lift the child, fondle it, feed it and comfort it on her lap. She will not stay away, because the wail is not musical or melodious or because the cry has no proper sense of time in its up and down notes-what are called in Sanskrit, Raga, Tala and Laya! She is moved by the agony the wail expresses, that is all.

So too, the Mother of the Universe will not weigh the quantity of Yoga that you have practised or calculate the number of japams you have rolled on the rosary or the time taken by you for Sadhanas of various kinds. She can be moved, Her Grace can be won, by genuine anguish emanating from the heart. Men are finding it increasingly difficult to call upon the Supreme Source of Power and Grace with this genuineness. Their lives have become pathetically artificial.

For You, By You

Kamadhenu, the Wish-fulfilling heavenly Cow can be drawn and tied to a post by means of a rope—God too can be drawn towards you by the rope, the Name composed of Love and tied to the post, the Tongue. Then, His Name will be dancing upon the tongue forever, conferring on you the sweetness of His Majesty. The Name has to be sung for your own delight, to slake your own thirst, to appease your own hunger. No one eats, to appease another's hunger; nor do they swallow drugs to alleviate another's illness. So, do not care for what others feel about your Dhyana or Bhajan. Do not seek the approval, appreciation or admiration of others; nor refrain from Dhyana or Bhajan because others dislike it or ridicule you. Be self-reliant, self-confident. See through your own eyes; hear through your own ears. Most people today believe their ears and deny their eyes; or they use the eyes and ears and even the brains of others! And, so they fall into error and fear.

Food, Head, God

Consider this: Here you do Bhajans twice a day. But, Bhojans (meals) are taken four times a day! Physical exercises are resorted to in order to make the body strong and fit. Dhanya (Grains, Cereals) is grown and stored and used to strengthen the body. Dhyana (Meditation) is equally necessary for strengthening the mind so that in its weak state it may not yield to the viruses of lust, greed, anger, hatred, pride etc. If the body is well-developed and the head is weak, it is a fit case for the Mental Hospital. Food should be for both body and head, and both these should be dedicated to the realisation of the Truth behind and beyond all Truths, God.

Seeking good company and spending all available time in that comradeship called Satsang will help the aspirant a great deal. You are shaped by the company you keep. A piece of iron turns into rust and dust, if it seeks the company of the soil. It glows, it softens, it takes on useful shapes, if it enjoys the company of fire. Dust can fly if it chooses the wind as its friend; it has to end as slime in a pit, if it prefers water. Though it has neither wing nor foot, it can either fly or walk, rise or fall, according to the friendship it selects

Knowing this truth. Kabir, the great mystic-poet, sang, "Here are my prostrations to the bad. Here are my prostrations to the good." When asked why he offered prostrations to the bad, along with the good, he replied, "I prostrate before the bad so that they might leave me alone; I do the same to the good, that they might not leave me alone'."

Near and Dear

Here is a burning coal; here, at some distance, is a mere piece of coal. When they come near, and contact each other, the heat spreads to the piece of coal and the part that is in contact is rendered hot and red. If you take hold of a fan and vigorously sway it over the contact area, soon, the entire coal becomes another burning ember of coal. 'Near' alone is not enough; one has to make it 'dear' by a little Sadhana. This is the secret of Sadhana, by which the human becomes Divine. The Vedas say that he who knows Brahma becomes Brahma. The coal knew fire and became fire. The Sadhana is the cultivation of Love, Prema. Be full of Love, taste the exhilaration that Love can confer. Man is Love embodied; he thirsts for Love and he finds real joy in loving and receiving selfless Love. You have forgotten your real Nature—which is Love—and so, you exude misery, hate, jealousy. Never be morose or melancholic. Let all see you exuberant with Love and Light and Joy. Do not entertain passion or prejudice, anger or anxiety. Take the Sadhana of the Name, the Namasankirtan, and the path will be smooth.

Message of Love

This programme of Bhajan for 24 hours, continuously done, all round the world in all lands has therefore spread the message of Love through the Names of the Embodiment of Universal Love; it has saturated the atmosphere with the thought of God and of the Peace and Joy that He showers. The Bhajan that you have done here has affected not only this particular area and its environment, but, it will transmute the entire atmosphere. Continue this attitude of devotion and humility, of service and tolerance and the atmosphere will not be polluted by hatred. Do not contaminate the air by voices of acrimony, scandal, insult or slander. Keep silent, when you feel like expressing such ideas; that itself is service to yourself and others.

The Eternal Song

Life is a song; sing it. That is what Krishna taught through His Life. Arjuna heard that song, on the battlefield, where tensions were at their highest and when the fate of millions was to be decided by the sword. Krishna sang the Gita, for Arjuna to listen. Gita means 'Song', He sang, because He was Ananda, wherever he was in Gokulam, on the banks of the Yamuna or at Kurukshetra between the warring armies.

You too must pass your days in song. Let your whole life be a Bhajan. Believe that God is everywhere at all times and derive strength, comfort and joy, singing in your heart in His Presence the Glory of God. Let melody and harmony surge up from your hearts and let all take delight in the Love that you express through that song.

*—Bhagavan's Discourse, at the Conclusion of the Global Bhajan,
at Prasanthi Nilayam-14-11-76*

Ramakatha Rasavahini

Sri Sathya Sai Baba

83

The Queen Laments

That instant, a host of heavenly drums resounded from the sky. The splendorous spirit of Ravana merged in Rama. Struck by that vision, the Vanara warriors were aghast with wonder. They were amazed at the valour and heroism of Rama in the battle against Ravana which lasted full 18 days. They exclaimed with one voice, "Victory, Victory to Rama."

Hearing that Ravana had died, his queen Mandodari flopped on the floor. She hastened with her maids to the corpse, and wailed aloud. She collected the heads and was stricken with grief at the tragic fate of her lord. She recited with fond reminiscence the exploits of Ravana in the past. "Lord! You had overwhelmed and subjugated the entire creation. The Rulers of the eight directions had fallen at your feet, praying for protection. Of what avail was all that glory? Of what avail were the austerities and asceticism that you underwent? This fate you had to endure, in spite of all the might you had won. This blow fell upon you since you turned away from Rama. You could not conquer the promptings of lust; he who becomes a slave to lust cannot escape dire punishment, be he as powerful as even the God of Death, gala. Blinded by lust, you could not avoid this tragic end. Lust led you to ignore Rama and invite this calamity on your head.

Ravana! Rama has incarnated with the purpose of destroying by the fire of his anger the forest of Rakshasa vice. I disclosed this to you many times over; but, cruel fate rendered you deaf to my importunities. I told you that he is no mere man. Destiny pursued you even unto death. You relied foolishly on your physical prowess, your clever intellect, your vast treasures and the vast numbers of Rakshasas you ruled over. Did I not plead with you, holding your feet in my hands, to surrender to Rama, the Ocean of Mercy, and thus save the Rakshasas from annihilation? My pleadings were not welcome to you. You were engaged constantly in inflicting injury on others, a task which gave you great joy. You seldom attempted to confer benefits on others. Your urges were ever towards sinful deeds and thoughts. In spite of this, Rama has conferred his blessings and your spirit has merged in him. What great compassion is this! You died at his hands; this is a fortune that few can achieve. Why, Rama came into this world in human form for the special purpose of killing you.

The royal road to the destruction of the Rakshasa race was laid by the Rakshasa Ruler himself! This will be known as your greatest achievement! This is the supreme example of your protective skill! Is this the final result of all your austerity and spiritual Sadhana? Rama! Have you done thus, to prove that no one can escape the consequences of his deeds? What greater example for that law can there be? This calamity brought about by him is here for all to see and learn from." Mandodari wailed for long sitting by the side of her lord.

Mandodari had realised through wisdom that Rama was Parabrahma Itself, the Universal Oversoul, the Absolute. The gods watching her from heaven were elated at her outlook and attitude at this hour of grief. Vibhishana was moved by the wailing of Mandodari. He agreed that

what she said and felt were correct. Rama and Lakshmana approached Vibhishana and consoled him.

The Last Rites

They directed him to perform the funeral rites for his deceased brother. And, according to that order, he too carried out all the prescribed rites and rituals, in due time, at the proper places and with correct ceremonial. Mandodari and other women also offered water offerings, sanctified with mantrams and til. Every item of the funeral rite was gone through in correct order, without any hitch or disturbance, by Vibhishana who was all the while comforted and consoled by Rama. Rama said that when the curses Ravana had invoked on himself by his sins had ripened and fulfilled themselves he was killed, and, so, there was no reason why the death should be lamented.

Rama called together in his presence Lakshmana with Sugriva, Jambavanta, and Angada, and asked them to go into Lanka with Nala, Nila and others for installing Vibhishana as the Emperor of Lanka. He directed them to proceed without delay, for the fourteen years' exile which the father prescribed for him will end the next day. But, Vibhishana protested and pleaded, "Why do I need an empire? Please place me instead in the immediate presence of your Lotus Feet," he prayed "From this day, Lanka is yours; treat Lanka as a part of Ayodhya," he insisted. But, Rama did not agree. He elucidated many political principles for a long time and declared that his order was irrevocable. Then, Vibhishana prayed that he should be entrusted with the Empire by his own hands. Rama replied, "No. Having observed and followed my father's command for thirteen years, eleven months and twenty nine days, it is not proper that on the very last day, I should go against it. I am on exile as he desired and an exile should not enter any town or human settlement. You are not unaware of this rule." Thus saying, he blessed Vibhishana and instructed Lakshmana to go into Lanka and install the new Emperor on the throne of Lanka.

The Coronation

Bowing their heads in acceptance of this assignment, Lakshmana, Sugriva, Angada, Nala, Nila and others started towards the City and reached the palace. They placed on the head of Vibhishana the crown and put on his forehead the suspicious mark of authority. Vibhishana prostrated before the assemblage of Vanaras and acknowledging their friendly help, promised to fulfill the real purpose of his life through following their example and benefiting by their help. "I shall rule over this land as Rama's agent; I shall not accept it as mine. I have already dedicated all of myself to Rama."

He suffered great grief when he reminded himself of the cruelties and injuries inflicted by Ravana, his sons and his warriors on the Vanara hordes; but, he consoled himself by the thought that everything that happened had been the 'sport' of the Supreme Will, Rama. Soon, they all proceeded to where Rama was and fell at his feet in reverential homage.

Sita To The Presence

Then, Rama called Hanuman near and told him, "O Mahavira, Incomparable Hero! Go into Lanka on my errand once more and communicate to Sita all that has happened and return with authentic news about her condition." Accordingly, Hanuman entered Lanka, went to the place where Sita was and fell at her holy feet. She immediately recognised him as a messenger from

Rama. She asked him, "Are Rama and Lakshmana safe, with their Vanara forces? Is Rama, the Ocean of Compassion, safe and happy?" Hanuman replied with folded palms and bowed head. "Rama Is safe and happy, in all respects. He has killed Ravana and installed Vibhishana as the permanent Emperor of this land." Sita was glad at the news of Rama's victory and Ravana's downfall. Her face brightened with joy; she felt a great thrill of delight. Tears of joy streamed from her eyes. "O Leader of Vanaras! What can I offer you as a gift for conveying to me this best of news? Nothing can equal in value the comforting words you have spoken," she said.

Hanuman replied, "Mother. The bliss you evinced, the blossoming of joy—they have given me as much joy as the gift of the three worlds. What more can I crave for? What greater fortune can one need than the fortune of seeing Rama victorious over the enemy and happy with his brother?" With these words, he prostrated once again at the feet of Sita.

Sita said, "O Best among Vanaras! I was sunk in agony these ten months at separation from my Lord, and hence I could not see or know anything about the external world. I do not know which day of the week it is today, nor whether it is the bright or dark fortnight, or which day it is in that fortnight. Whatever it is, you have given me the most welcome and the most auspicious news; so, I shall name it the Mangala Day, though it is generally named otherwise (as Tuesday) meaning the Day that brought Mangala or suspiciousness and joy. May this Day be held sacred and may you, the bringer of this news, be adored specially on this day, more than on other days of the week." At this, Hanuman fell at her feet and stood with folded palms.

Sita pleaded with Hanuman, "Try your best to get me the boon of meeting the Embodiment of charm and compassion, my Lord, Rama. Do you not know that all this fighting and killing in war was for my sake, for the sake of restoring me to my Lord? Take me soon to the Lotus Feet of Rams," she said plaintively. Hanuman could not bear the anguish that was patent in the words of Sita. He leapt into the sky and reached Rama in a trice. He narrated all that happened during the meeting before Rama. Rama gathered Angada, Vibhishana and others and told them to proceed to the place where Sita was and directed them to bring Sita respectfully to his presence.

They went to the Ashokavana where she was so long interned; Vibhishana directed that Sita may take bath wear fine silk clothes and be decked in jewels, when she is led out of the Ashokavana. But, Sita cast aside the suggestion; she said, "Rama is the most precious jewel I have; that one jewel is enough for me. Seeing him is the bath. I shall be satisfied with. The prostration I shall do for him is the silk cloth for me. I do not like to wear anything that was once Ravana's property." Vibhishana was moved by the depth of her yearning. He asked the maids to respect her wishes; they also said that Sita was desperately wishing for the re-union.

Soon, a palanquin was brought and Sita was seated in it. The Vanaras bore the palanquin on their shoulders. The Rakshasa women who had survived, the Vanara warriors, and others were jumping with excitement, on both sides of the road, when Sita passed through. They stood on tiptoe and even jumped high to get a clearer and nearer view. But, Sita did not turn to right or left; she bent her head and was sunk in one single thought—Rama.

When a little distance had yet to be covered, Sita came down from the palanquin, for, she felt that she should go to her Lord in humility, walking the distance. She walked slowly towards

Rama; as she neared Rama, the Vanaras standing along the path, fell at her feet and cheered, 'Jai, Jai Seetharam'. When she came within a short range; Rama declared that she should not be brought to him immediately, but that she has to go through the Ordeal of Fire!

The Fire Ordeal

At this, the Vanaras were stunned into silence and despair. But, they had to go and collect dry sticks and fuel for lighting and feeding the fire for the rite of ordeal. The Vanaras had carried on their shoulders huge mountain peaks and rocks before and during the war with Ravana; now, those very Vanaras were finding little sticks of dry wood too heavy for their strength, for, their hearts were heavy at the thought of Sita being put through this new trial!

Of course, Rama knew that Sita had spotless character and, was the very embodiment of virtue. And, Vibhishana, Angada, Sugriva and others knew that the fire ordeal was only to convince the world. The fact was, the Shakti that was Sita was transposed and installed in Fire, when they were in the Dandaka Forest. The Sita who was in Lanka was but the Body, the Shakti or the Vital Core was all the while fostered in Fire and by Fire. She had now to pass through Fire, so that she might emerge as the Full Sita.

Sita welcomed the rite; for, the world will be convinced that her heart was pure and unblemished. She was happy to see the flames leap up. Lakshmana, however, was overcome with grief, for he had himself to supervise the rite. Sita consoled him with her soft counsel. "Lakshmana! When I was married, the Brahmins lit the Fire on the wedding day and sanctified the function. Today, Fire will give me new birth; after that, I will wed the Lord again. Feed the fire well, for, that is the right thing to do." Lakshmana was visibly moved by her pang of separation, the yearning for re-union, the loyalty to righteousness, the attachment to justice and the intelligent analysis of the situation that her words communicated. He shed tears and folded his palms in reverence and stood silent. For, he could find no words to express his feelings. Fixing his gaze on the face of Rama, he piled firewood on firewood and lit the fire till it blazed.

Sita was elated when she saw the leaping flames. She had no trace of fear in her mind. She walked towards the fire and standing before it said, "O Receiver of Sacred Offerings! By word or deed or thought, I have not dwelt in my mind on any one other than Rama, my Lord. O Purifier. You reside in the hearts of every living being. Become as cool as sandal paste to me, when I enter you." She prostrated before Rama and moved into the Fire. The God of Fire, Agni, appeared in the form of a Brahmin bringing with him the real Sita, and offered her at the feet of Rama, just as the Lord of the Ocean of Milk offered Lakshmi at the feet of Lord Vishnu. She shone on the left of Rama, like a golden lily by the side of a full-blossomed blue lotus. The gathering of gods expressed their joy by sounding heavenly drums and trumpets.

Homage From All

Vibhishana hurried into the City and brought clothes and jewels fit for Divinity in the aerial chariot named Pushpaka, he placed them before Rama. Rama asked that the chariot be taken high up in the sky and the valuables be showered from there on the people below. Vibhishana did as directed; the Vanaras grabbed whatever fell on them or near them. They mistook the gems to be fruits that were red and ripe. When they found from the taste that they were stones, they cast them away in disgust. Rama and Sita enjoyed this fun and laughed in sympathy.

Many Vanaras and Bears wore the clothes they secured and approached Rama in gratitude. Dressed in multi-coloured costumes, they danced about in ecstasy. Rama appreciated them and addressed them most graciously: "O Vanaras. Through your prowess and valour, I was able to destroy Ravana and place Vibhishana on the throne of Lanka. Now, you can all return to your own homes. I shall always be with you. You need have no fear hereafter." Rams consoled and comforted them all by the gracious gesture promising his eternal protection and assuring them that there will be no occasion for them to fear any one or any calamity.

The Vanaras and others were overwhelmed by gratitude for the love he showered on them; they lost all moorings of their minds; they stood folding their palms in reverential homage and said, "Lord. Your words are most appropriate for you alone; they make us powerless to speak; they confuse us and render us dumb. We are weaklings; you are our Protector, our Guardian. You rule over the three Worlds. Can a fly ever claim to have given help to the eagle? Can a tiny lamp claim to reveal by its light the Sun?" The Vanaras fell at Rama's feet, and stood with tear-streaming eyes.

The Rama Story: Stream of Sacred Sweetness (To be continued)

Signs and Wonders

The conflict between persons who accept God and deny God and those who declare that God is to be found in this place and those who affirm that God can be found nowhere is never ending; it has continued throughout the ages. While considering this situation, one has to remember that while it is unnecessary to awaken a person already awake and easy to awaken a person who is asleep, we cannot awaken, however much we try, a person pretending to be asleep! Those who know can be taught, by means of simple illustrations, what they do not know. But, those afflicted with half knowledge and proud of that acquisition are beyond any further education.

The two eyes give a picture of a vast expanse of space; but they cannot see the face to which they belong! They are important instruments of the body; but, they cannot see the entire body; the back is beyond their view. When you wish to see your face and back, you have to keep a mirror in front and another mirror behind, and through the front mirror, you can see the reflection of your back. So too when you desire to know your reality (face) and your future (back) you have to adjust the mirror of "Self-Confidence" (confidence that you are the Self) in front and the mirror of Divine Grace behind. Without these two, to affirm that you are aware of your Truth or of your destiny is sheer fantasy.

The Divine is now denoted by various words, that are common currency in limited human vocabularies. They name evidences revealing the Divine, "Miracles", "Magic," "Wonders" etc. Of course, men cannot contain in their minds more than they can hold. They cannot express in words the in-expressible. Only those who have dived deep and contacted the underlying principle of Love can picture Divinity with some clarity. The Divinity that is Me has not been acquired or

earned, nor has it been added or evinced after the lapse of some years, in the middle of this career.

The Divine has to reveal itself through these manifestations, largely shaped and modified by the nature of the times, the region and the cultural environment. The signs and wonders that I manifest are given names that do not connote the purpose or effect. They can be classed as Chamatkara, leading to Samskara, which urges one on to Paropakara resulting in Sakshatkara. Chamatkara is any act which attracts on account of its inexplicability. This aspect of attraction is inherent in the Avatar. The very name, Rama, means, He who pleases or causes, delight. Krishna means He who attracts, draws towards Himself (Karshathithi-Krishna). This attribute of attraction is a characteristic of Divinity.

Why does the Divine attract? Is it to deceive, or mislead? No. It is to transform, reconstruct, reform—a process called Samskara. What is the purpose of the reconstruction? To make the person useful and serviceable for society, to efface his ego, and to affirm in him the Unity of all Beings in God. The person who has undergone Samskara becomes a humble humane servant of those who need help. This is the stage of Paropakara. Service of this kind, done with reverence and selflessness prepares man to realise the One that pervades the Many. The last stage is Sakshatkara. The Vedas proclaim that Immortality (the stage when one is merged in the Birthless Deathless Universal Entity) is feasible through Renunciation and Detachment only, and not through Rituals, Progeny, or Wealth. When one renounces selfish desire, his Love expands unto the farthest regions of the Universe, until he becomes aware of the Cosmic Love that feeds all the four processes mentioned above. It is important that you know this underlying urge in all that I do.

Let us consider the Chamatkara, acts that attract and cause wonder. You see a flower. You long to hold it in your hand only when its colour or fragrance is attractive. You enter the market and see heaps of fruits. If the fruits are not attractive, you have no urge to possess them and benefit by them. Attraction is the very nature of the Divine.

When the person is drawn near, the process of Samskara starts. Without this, man remains fallow and feeble. He has no dignity or personality. Two-annas worth Stainless Steel lump is transformed by skilful manipulation and reconstruction into nuts screws and springs into a watch that is worth two or three hundred rupees. This is the result of Samskara, which turned it into a useful tool for indicating time. So too, man can be transformed into a noble, efficient, happy, and disciplined member of society, by the implanting of good thoughts, good feelings, good deeds and good emotions. Man can be transformed into a Mahatma. Such transformed persons will spontaneously engage themselves in the task of promoting human welfare. They will be promoters of the ideals of the Brotherhood of Man and the Father-hood of God.

Now, persons who have no experience or knowledge of spiritual science or no conception of the Divine make pronouncements on subjects into which they stray. The eye can see, but, it cannot hear; the tongue can talk, but cannot hear. The ear can hear but cannot either see or talk. Each has to accept its limitations and be content. The Divine can be grasped only through Love, through Faith and Sadhana surcharged with Universal Love. Reason is too feeble an instrument to measure it. Denial of the Divine cannot negate it. Logic cannot reveal it. All the tirades now

being made on the Divine are from atheists who are opportunists. So, your duty is to preserve your equanimity. Be true to yourselves and do not waver. I am unaffected by praise or blame. My Love and Compassion envelop all; My grace can be shared by all. I am declaring this so that you may face all this with fortitude. The more you dig—the deeper the derision—the higher the mound, the taller the praise. People with a disease in the nose cannot appreciate the fragrance of a flower. Those who cannot appreciate or recognise the Divine are suffering from illness which handicaps them.

—*From Discourse 23-11-76*

Every man is burdened with a human body and four births in one life. He is born a Sudra, for as a child he has no definite ideas of right and wrong, no conception of the direct path to God. He is under tutelage of others. When he is initiated into moral and spiritual life by his parents or by a Guru or Preceptor, he becomes a Dwija, the twice-born, set on the road of self-realisation. When he has finished the disciplines of the student and his study of the scriptures of his religion he becomes a Vipra. That is his third birth. When as a result of his own spiritual achievements, he visualises the One as immanent in all, he takes birth as a Brahmana. No human being can avoid any of these four births; they are stages in his evolution into the God he is.

—**Baba**

For leading a life of Shanti, you should keep your promises and never forget the least of them. You should be courteous and well-mannered to all. You should believe that all that God grants you is for your good; He knows best. Remove from the garden of your heart the thorny bushes of greed, anger and jealousy. Uproot them even when they raise their heads as tender saplings. Give up the belief that you are but this body and nothing before and after. Hold fast to the yearning to realise the Reality that is the Motivator in you.

—**Baba**

Spiritual Regeneration in National Programme

—*Ambica Soni, M.P., President, National Youth Congress*

I am extremely honoured to be associated with this Function this evening and also with the Inauguration of the Photographic Exhibition portraying the enormous and highly important work being carried on by the three frontal Organisations of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai. There is no doubt that the work the Organisation with which I am associated stands for and is committed to, is similar to this work. I would like to say our work will be strengthened—and I hope, it would achieve total success—through the activities undertaken by the Seva Dal, by the Bal Vikas, and by the Mahila Samiti. The activities of the Sathya Sai Organisation are basically related to "Service to Mankind."

Indeed, this is a very big phrase to the average young man. Most often, he thinks it is far beyond his reach. What can one single youth do for the upliftment of mankind, he asks? What can one individual contribute for the removal of backwardness, for the removal of poverty, for

the removal of ignorance, for the large sea of poor ignorant people? But as the saying goes, "Every drop makes the ocean."

Today, in the entire country there is a new atmosphere; not only of political advancement, of economic achievement; but, we find a transformation of society, a deep yearning in the minds of all young people to do something in the fight for bringing up the standard of living to a level befitting human dignity.

For the creation of this new level, it is very important to understand the environment in which we live, the circumstances which very often motivate us into action—many of which we might (and very often do) regret at a later moment—and to know what exactly is advancement or progress. We have to understand the circumstances, not only in our country, but also in the rest of the world.

There has been tremendous progress, indeed. Science and technology have taken us to the moon and other planets! But, we have to ask, 'Has science given us happiness? Has science achieved modernisation in all things? Has science given us peace of mind, has it built in us a deeper appreciation of spiritual values?

What is the cause, today, for young people to feel restless? What was the cause, yesterday, for people from foreign lands to come to our country, when we imagined that they had everything in their own land? They are much more developed and have achieved much more progress, in limited fields. I say, 'limited' because it has only created tensions, jealousy, and depressions and brought about a 'world' living on sleeping tablets and heart attacks.

When this is the world we live in, how can young men or women—basically and spontaneously rebellious against all that is unfair and unjust—how can they remain quiet? What happens? There is bloodshed, there is violence and life gets disturbed. The elders in our society feel more and more depressed, when they contemplate the future.

Is this the country we want, these the generations which we produce? Is this to be the future of our own children? It is indeed at this juncture of deep questioning that Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai gives us the hope of liberation, the only hope of peace of mind, of character and spiritual liberation. Swami speaks to us that the smallest act when done well transforms a man into a big, a great human being. Swami explains to us that it is not the accident of birth which makes you big or small, which makes you high or low, but, it is your work, your karma, your action, your fault. It is with a sense of pride—though with all humility—that we young people feel that this Message of Swami has been incorporated in the National Programme.

Youths of this country are saying, that we do not respect caste or creed; we respect a human being for his good actions and not for anything else.

It is again Swami's Message that there are millions and millions of people, our own countrymen, who are definitely more unfortunate than all of us sitting here. It is true each one of us has some personal problems, some score to settle, some complaints in life, irrespective of the status in society; but, there are millions and millions of our countrymen, our brothers and sisters

who have not even had so much. Swami says to all of us, to the entire Sai family, and even to those who have not tasted the happiness which is there in the Sai family, His call, His warning is "Think of those less fortunate brothers and sisters; adopt villages; give them medical help, if they are unwell; if you have more in life than they, share it with them; if they have not had the privilege of reading and writing, teach them. This Voice of Swami is being heard by millions of Youth in this country today. The Youth Congress has taken up the programme by which young people will go out into the villages and work for the upliftment of the backward, and the illiterate people of this country.

I realised at the Exhibition, this morning, that the Bal Vikas has 23,030 members. Those 23,000 members are the torch-bearers; they have the personal guidance of Sri Sathya Sai. These 23,000 torch-bearers will go to the remotest corners of the country; they will raise loudly the Voice of Swami through their innocent hearts and pure minds so that our country (the House of Swami) will be cleaned and cleansed and the voice of these enlightened and very fortunate young men and women and children will be heard in the different corners of the World.

Our Family, the Sai Family, will not be limited to just 45 countries; I do hope with each of you that our family will spread to the remotest corners of the World, and will bring Humanity which is in the throes of fear, which today longs for spiritual guidance, which hopes and strives ceaselessly to achieve for itself that elusive goal namely happiness, under the benign influence of Sri Sathya Sai Baba.

Today when we think of happiness, we probably think in terms of material comforts, by and large. We think—as Swami often tries to warn us—in terms of things which satisfy our ego, the I-ness and the My-ness in every individual. But we are all striving to follow his teaching. It is this constant struggle where we face life with equanimity and humility and definite courage that gives, to those who have had the blessings of Swami, both hope and faith.

Whether through the Science and Arts Colleges which have been opened under his guidance or through the Mahila Samitis, or through Bal Vikas or through Seva Dal, a definite Mission, a definite Message, a definite Objective in life is encouraged—a Mission, not in the limited term of fanaticism, no, that spoils half the things which we want to tell our countrymen, to our bigger brothers and sisters. No matter what work we are doing, no matter what activity we may be involved in, if we put into practice what we have learnt at the Lotus Feet we will be performing our greatest Sadhana.

I happened to read this morning, when I went to the Exhibition, a few lines spoken by Swami on Sadhana. And, I think, as a young person. I would feel highly pleased and very happy and contented—and most young people would feel the same, and, if they have not joined the Family they would be eager and anxious to join it—because Swami says, "The highest form of Sadhana is not done when we sit in temples or churches or masjids, or when we spend long hours in prayers and japam; the highest form of Sadhana is, when we bring a ray of happiness and light in the life of a man who had only darkness around him, in the life of a man who is so impoverished that he cannot even think of higher values. I read that: it is the highest form of Sadhana,

He has invoked in his disciples ideals which concern the future of the nation—strength, unity and discipline. When there are strikes in the country, he would like members of his Seva Dal, members of his Bal Vikas to replace nurses, railway employees and others so that the work of the country is not paralysed. When a spiritual leader, an Avatar, speaks to humanity in this rational manner, it is obvious that those who sling all kinds of words and phrases on Divinity are doing so only out of ignorance. We do not need to have contempt or hatred for them, but, we shall just hope that they will also be as fortunate as we are, and—sooner rather than later—come under his Divine influence.

We, disciples and Bhaktas, are not capable and we are not in a position either, to praise him or decry him. Because, he is beyond all that. But, it is within our limited capacities—with all our drawbacks and failings—to speak (and we cannot help but speak) of his greatness, his benign influence and his extreme kindness for every individual.

So, whatever I have said I have said with deep humility, hoping for Swami's Grace not only for myself, but, for all of us, all the young people of this country, for the sake of the future of our country and all mankind.

I thank you all very much for giving me this opportunity of seeing this Exhibition and talking to you. I do hope that this Work will achieve more and more success, involving millions and millions of people more and more. OM SAI RAM.

—Speech: Bhulabhai Desai Auditorium Bombay 28-10-76