

Overcome Jealousy with Love

Forbearance is the real beauty in this sacred land of Bharat. The nectarine feeling in this country is the feeling towards one's mother. Character is valued far higher than the very life itself. People have forgotten the basic principles of this great culture and are imitating Western culture today. The Bharatiyas are not aware of the greatness of their own cultural heritage just as a mighty elephant is not aware of its own strength.

(Telugu Poem)

Embodiments of Love - Boys and Girls!

Since ancient times, this land has been the birthplace of sages, seers and saints who propagated the sacred culture of Bharat to the rest of the world and earned name and fame; but such noble souls are forgotten today. You should recognise the basic truth that Bharat relies on its spiritual wealth and nothing else. Just think for yourself the plight of present day Bharat, which once upon a time spread the light of divinity to the rest of the world. In this sacred land, many men of nobility and virtue had to face hardships and criticism, yet they remained firm in their resolve to set an ideal to humanity.

Jesus was the Victim of Jealousy of the Wicked

Today you have to remind yourselves of the ideals Jesus stood for. From time to time, many noble souls, endowed with immense spiritual power, have taken birth to propagate sacred teachings to the world. They struggled hard to make the world a good place to live in. But without understanding their noble intentions, foolish people tried to ridicule and persecute them. Right from his birth, Jesus had to face many trials and tribulations. When the name and fame of noble souls spread far and wide, many people become jealous. The history of Bharat is replete with many examples that bear testimony to this truth. Asuya and Anasuya are sisters. Asuya (jealousy) has three sons, viz. kama, krodha and Dwesha (desire, anger and hatred). The Divine Trinity of Brahma, Vishnu and Maheshwara are the sons of Anasuya. The evil forces of desire, anger and hatred put the people to a lot of trouble. Jesus was also put to suffering in every possible way, though he strove tirelessly for the peace and welfare of society. He was the epitome of compassion and the refuge of the poor, needy and forlorn. But many people tried to create troubles for Jesus as they did not like his sacred teachings and activities. Their hatred for Jesus increased day by day. Even the priests turned against Jesus as they became jealous of his growing popularity. But the fishermen held Jesus in high esteem. They started following his teachings and became his followers. As he became more and more popular, many people out of jealousy raised obstacles in his path and even tried to kill him.

Jesus had twelve disciples. Judas was one of them. But he betrayed Jesus. At that time, there was only one Judas, but today there are many such 'Judases'. Today the world is engulfed in unrest because of the rise in the number of treacherous people like Judas. They are mean-minded and are easily tempted by money. Judas betrayed Jesus just for a few pieces of silver. Even two thousand years ago, money was the primary temptation of man. Because of their greed for money, people resorted to evil and unjust ways, distorted truth and indulged in false propaganda. This was the case then, and it is the same even today. No one needs to be afraid of such false allegations. Why should one be afraid of the mistake that one has not committed? In the past, many evil-minded people were jealous of the divine personalities who attained worldwide fame

through their teachings of truth and righteousness. Even today there is no dearth of such wicked people.

Bhagavan's Resolve to Serve Humanity is Unshakable

Today many people are jealous of Sai as His name and fame are spreading far and wide. Neither they undertake any good activity themselves nor they tolerate if someone else is doing good. The Rayalaseema region suffered from scarcity of drinking water right from the time of the British rule. There were many leaders and wealthy people, but none of them took up the task of providing drinking water in this region. It is Sai Baba who has supplied water to lakhs of people of Rayalaseema. (*Cheers*)

Today the cost of heart surgery runs into lakhs of rupees. Again, it is Sai Baba who has established Super Speciality Hospitals, where most expensive heart surgeries are done totally free of cost. The field of education is corrupted by money to such an extent that one has to pay Rs. 20,000 as donation to admit a child in a primary school. But Sai Baba is providing free education right from kindergarten to post graduation. No other individual or government for that matter has been able to provide free education or free medical care to the people.

Some people are so mean-minded that they do not want to understand and appreciate the sanctity associated with these activities. Have any of them been able to accomplish even one-thousandth part of what Sai Baba is doing? No, no, no! It is only Sathya Sai Baba who has undertaken such noble tasks without a trace of selfishness. (Loud applause) Sai's heart is pure, His feelings are sacred, and He is totally selfless. Sathya Sai Baba stands for three P's, viz., Purity, Patience and Perseverance. There is no trace of selfishness in Sai Baba from top to toe. He is rendering totally selfless service. Why are those with a modicum of intelligence unable to recognise this truth? Why are they indulging in false propaganda? They are doing so due to their greed for money. Not merely that. Money is the basis of conversion of people from one religion to another. Even those who wear ochre robes become jealous of the prosperity of each other and indulge in false propaganda. *One does not become a saint or develop devotion just by donning ochre robes. One does not become free from sins merely by holding the Gita in one's hands.* (Telugu Poem) What to talk about the *Peethadhipathis* (heads of big religious establishments), even some of the so-called Sadhus are indulging in this wicked activity. We should not criticise anybody. But I am forced to tell you all this, as it has now become the demand of the situation. Do not be afraid of any false publicity.

Another Super Speciality Hospital has been built in Bangalore at a cost of Rs. 300 crores. (*Cheers*) In this vast land of Bharat, do you find any politician in power associating himself with such noble causes? On the other hand, rather shamelessly, they go on talking ill of others. People who try to obstruct sacred activities are no human beings at all. They are verily demons. Even if the whole world were to be filled with such demons, Sai's resolve will never change. (*Cheers*) Some people out of their mean-mindedness are trying to tarnish the image of Sai Baba. I am not after name and fame. So, I do not lose anything by their false allegations. My glory will go on increasing day by day. It will never diminish even a bit if they were to publicise their false allegations in the whole world in bold letters. Some devotees seem to be perturbed over these false statements. They are not true devotees at all. Having known the mighty power of Sai, why should they be afraid of the 'cawing of crows'? One should not get carried away by all that is

written on walls, said in political meetings or the vulgar tales carried by the print media. Let us firmly resolve to propagate the principles of truth, righteousness and love. Sathya Sai Baba has no trace of selfishness in Him. I am spending crores of rupees to alleviate the suffering of the poor and downtrodden. My resolve is to feed the hungry and impart education to poor children. There are many millionaires in this world who are so mean and narrow minded that they set their dogs on the beggars who come to beg alms at their doorstep. It is shameful to consider them as human beings.

These persons are unable to do even one thousandth part of what Sathya Sai Baba is doing for society, but shamelessly indulge in false allegations. Instead it would be better for them to follow Sathya Sai Baba and set an ideal to the rest of the world. I have no desires or ambitions. There is no trace of jealousy in Me. I am love personified. Love is My very life. Wisdom is the fruit that I grant. These two form the basis of My life.

Recall the Fate of those who Opposed Divinity

People who indulge in false allegations are bound to come to woe. Those who instigate such false publicity too will meet their doom. Money should be utilised to undertake righteous actions, not for evil purposes. Serve your fellowmen with all love and compassion. Put them on the right path and make them happy. I am not afraid of any false propaganda that people may do. Why should I be afraid when I follow the path of truth, righteousness and love? Let people say what they want; I am not perturbed.

Today I am explaining to you in detail the principle of love that I stand for. During the time of every Avatar, wicked people did play their tricks. During the time of Krishna, there were evil-minded people like Kamsa, Shishupala and Dantavakra, who tried their best to harm Him. When Rama incarnated for the establishment of Dharma, He too had to face stiff opposition from evil forces. He was exiled to forest for 14 years where He had to undergo a lot of suffering. Even His consort was separated from Him. Ultimately, what happened to all those who tried to create trouble for the divine personalities? Those who accuse them and put them to suffering commit the worst sin. If one cannot undertake meritorious deeds, it would be better one keeps quiet instead of indulging in such sinful deeds.

There are some people who claim to be devotees and take to evil ways. They feel that their physical appearance will earn them respect. Not at all. It is one's sacredness that makes one a good person. So, one should lead a life of truth and righteousness. The principle of love is the same in one and all. All should stand united by the bond of love. Then the entire world will become one family. We can never attain happiness if we contract and fragment love and develop hatred.

I lead a life suffused with love from dawn to dusk. I am providing high quality free education to thousands of students. Not merely free education, I am showing them by My example the way to lead an ideal life. When these students go out, some people try to pollute their minds with wicked feelings. Whatever others may say, our students are like gold. The very dust of the feet of our students will prevent wickedness in others. The alumni, both boys and girls, of our institutions are leading sacred and exemplary lives.

Betrayal of God is the Worst Sin

The Messengers of Sathya Sai, Association of alumni of Anantapur College, are undertaking various service activities in many countries. They are encouraging their husbands also to take to the path of service. Our old students are working in various countries like Switzerland, America, Japan, China, Russia, etc. Some foreigners are trying to bribe them, asking them to fabricate stories against Sathya Sai Baba. In Switzerland, when one of our girl students was approached by someone asking her to concoct stories against Sai Baba, she got so enraged that she immediately took out her shoe to teach a lesson to that person. She asked him, "Is this what your religion teaches? Is this the ideal that your religion propagates? Fie on you! Get out!" But there are some traitors like Judas, who are being bribed to level false charges against Sai Baba.

Ultimately, what happened to Judas? He felt miserable for having betrayed Jesus for monetary gains. He shed tears of repentance. He hit himself saying, "Fie on me! I am a traitor. I betrayed my own Master and God." Betrayal of God is the worst of all sins. Such betrayal can never be atoned for in any number of births. So, never try to betray God. Love all. Salute even those who criticise you because divinity is present in all. Do not spoil your mind by harbouring the feelings of anger, etc. Pray to God with love. All noble souls and incarnations in the past had also to put up with criticism. You may ask why at all such criticism should arise? Criticism, in fact, adds to their glory. Pleasure is an interval between two pains. Shadow follows light. One should not be afraid of shadow. There is light even in shadow. Light and shadow cannot exist separately. There is a principle of unity between them. So, do not react to any criticism levelled against Swami or any other elder for that matter. Just brush it aside, saying, you have nothing to do with it. If someone points out mistakes in you, you can certainly rectify them. But if someone levels false charges against you, you don't need to be worried over it. Be happy. If the criticism is made in a loud voice, it goes into the thin air. If it is made within oneself, it goes to oneself only. Such being the case, why should you be perturbed? Let anyone say anything; remain calm. Consider whatever happens as good for you. With such equal-mindedness, carry on your good work.

Love alone can Sanctify your Life In future, you are going to witness many more glorious events. There is nothing that Sathya Sai cannot accomplish. (*cheers*) In fact, people would be struck with awe and wonder by His deeds. But His only aim is to make everybody happy. *Loka Samastha Sukhino Bhavantu* (May the entire world be happy!) Those who aspire for the well-being of others will never be put to difficulties. No obstacles can ever shake them. A small example. Once Buddha encountered the demon of jealousy, which said, "Buddha, I am going to devour you." Buddha smiled and said sweetly, "O demon of jealousy, I love you too." On listening to the loving words of Buddha, the demon immediately turned into a dove that symbolises love and peace and flew away.

One becomes a devotee in the true sense only when one cultivates patience and conquers the evils of anger, hatred and jealousy with love. Don't be elated by praise or depressed by blame. It is not proper on your part to love only those who praise you and hate those who criticise you. Be equal-minded in both praise and censure. Criticism will only help you to progress. So, do not harbour hatred towards those who criticise you. Accept everything good that comes your way. Ignore all that is bad. People may praise or criticise, but none can shake Sai. (*Cheers*) Sai lives in truth. None has been able to shake truth at any point of time. Lead your lives with such strong conviction. Increase your faith in God day by day. As faith increases, all the wickedness will

perish. Do not give up the spiritual practices that you have been doing all along. Since Jesus bore all the difficulties with fortitude, he is being adored and worshipped to this day.

Once a young disciple asked Jesus, "O Master, when I am faced with some problems, how am I to solve them?" Jesus replied, "O simpleton, do not seek solutions to your problems. Love God, who is installed in your heart. Love even those that hate you because God is present in them also. How can you ever have suffering when you love all? Your heart will be filled with bliss when you love everybody." Similar was the answer which Lord Krishna gave to Arjuna when he asked Him, "Swami, is there anybody who is very dear to You?" Krishna replied, "O simpleton, I have neither friend nor foe. I am present in every heart. I reside even in the hearts of those who criticise Me. One who sees God in all and loves them is very dear to Me. One is intimately related to Me not by birth, but by one's intense love for Me. Having been with Me for so long, it is rather surprising that you have not understood this basic truth. O Arjuna, you have made Me sit in your chariot, but not in the chariot of your heart: One should install God in one's heart. In fact, you don't need to install Him; He is already there. It is enough if you know the truth that God is present in your heart. Once you recognise this truth, you will become God yourself.

What you have to propagate to the world is love alone. Nothing exists other than love in this world. Love is God. Love is life and love is everything. So, cultivate love more and more. Let your mind not waver under any circumstances. A wavering mind becomes unsacred. That is why once Thyagaraja sang, "O mind, do not waver and do not get deluded. You suffer because of delusion." Consider love as your very life. Love alone makes one's life sacred. One is a true human being only if one has love in him. Love is man; man is love. Man is God and God is love. It is love that unifies all. So, develop love. Tread the path of truth and righteousness and lead a peaceful life. There are no greater powers, no greater ideals and no greater supports than these human values of Sathya, Dharma, Santhi and Prema. These four values are the life supporting principles. Adhere to these four values and sanctify your life.

Embodiments of Love!

Be fearless. Do not be afraid even if a thunderbolt were to land on your head. Death comes only once and not twice. It is bound to come one day or the other. So, do not be afraid of death. Be ready for anything. Do not be afraid to follow truth. Fill your life with love. Only then will your life be sanctified. No spiritual practice like Japa and Dhyana can redeem your life if you do not adhere to truth and love. Let anything happen, hold on to these values. These values alone can give happiness and prosperity to the entire world. Develop love more and more. Do not pay heed to the criticism of others because you are not committing any mistake. What mistake can there be if one loves God? Have unflinching love for God till your last breath. Do not entertain conflicts or doubts.

Everyone has to face the consequences of his actions. None can predict when and how, but you are bound to face them. However, when you constantly think of God, you will never be put to suffering. God will protect you from all suffering. He will always be with you, in you, around you, safeguarding you. You may worship God by any name—Jesus, Rama, Krishna, etc. But remember that God is one, goal is one, truth is one and love is one. Love is God. Enshrine this unity principle in your heart and have firm faith in it. *"Then God will certainly take care of you wherever you are—in a forest, in the sky, in a city, in a village, on a mountain top or in the*

middle of deep sea." (Telugu Poem) No one has the right to deny your God. Due to the impact of Kali Age, people are taking to evil ways in pursuit of money. They even go to the extent of killing others for the sake of money. For them money is everything. One should not struggle to earn money. Rather, one should strive to earn the wealth of love. When you have wealth of love in your possession, you will never suffer.

Sacred Bond of Love between Swami and His Students

Embodiments of Love!

I hope I am not causing you Badha (trouble) by speaking for a long time. In fact, I am giving you a great Bodha (illumination) and not Badha. People who are feeling discouraged should be given the tonic of courage, so that they do not entertain any weakness whatsoever.

The Messengers of Sathya Sai are rendering yeoman's service to society. Sometimes, they even forego their food while participating in service activities. But that is not a good practice as it can spoil their health. They wanted to make their contribution for the Super Speciality Hospital that has been constructed at Bangalore. Being ladies, they felt sad that it was not possible for them to take up any manual service activity at the construction site like carrying bricks, etc. They collected 75 lakh rupees from their own small savings and sent the amount to Sri Sathya Sai Central Trust without informing Me. (cheers) Moreover, there are many old boys of our college. Though they are working outside, they belong to Swami. Some of them wait here for months together without even taking food properly. They have also saved some money to contribute for the hospital. They have sent 45 lakh rupees to the Central Trust for this purpose.

We don't want your money. We want your love. We want your welfare, progress and happiness. Wherever you are, lead ideal lives. Some people are under the impression that some big people are contributing crores and crores of rupees for this hospital. We are not asking them. They are not giving us either. I am happy with even a small contribution offered with love. Many people offered Jesus precious gifts; he did not accept any of them. But when an old lady offered him a small coin, he accepted happily and kept it with him till his last breath as the offering was made with love. Similarly, what I want is love, not money. Like this, many more hospitals will be coming up in future. I do not ask anybody for any help. It is *Sathya Sankalpa* (Will of Truth); what I am doing is good. If one undertakes any good work, it is bound to fructify. It is My goodness that attracts all the help.

Students! Boys and Girls!

Take back the money that you have given us. Not only now, I never wanted money at any time in My life. Your love, progress and well-being is what I want. I will be pleased if you lead ideal lives with good conduct. Earn a good name that Sathya Sai students are well behaved. Money comes and goes, morality comes and grows. Develop your morality and character. Be courageous. Share your love with others. Outsiders are not aware of the love and devotion that the students and devotees have for Me. They do not even care for their health when it comes to serving Me. But I don't want such service. You should eat well. Do not put yourself to trouble. Do not put the body to any harm as God is its indweller (*Jiva is Deva*). Make yourself happy and then serve the community. You have been going to various villages and serving the poor. There is no greater service than this. This wealth of service is much greater than crores of rupees. Go to each and every village, serve the poor and feed the hungry.

A New Scheme to Help the Poor and Needy

As I mentioned to you recently, I came across a news item in a small piece of paper, which I happened to find one day. There was a poor mother who did not have the wherewithal to feed her son. Her husband was no more. Everyday she used to beg for alms in order to feed her son. Some time back, there were heavy rains continuously for many days. Consequently, she could not go out for begging. One morning her son started crying, "Mother, I am hungry. Give me something to eat." In such a situation, what could she give him? She felt helpless and shed tears. She thought within herself, "Son, God has not given me the strength to feed you." In that moment of helplessness, she somehow managed to get poison, mixed it in water, gave it to her son and drank it herself. Both of them died. I felt very sad that in this land of Bharat, which is known as Annapoorna (goddess of food), there are some people who are unable to feed their own children. From that day onwards, I have taken up a firm resolve. Children should be fed properly and given proper education. So, I have made a scheme of fixed deposits of one lakh rupees for each family of such helpless mothers and their children. They will get an interest of more than one thousand rupees per month to fulfill their needs. But there may be some cheats who will try to exploit their innocence. They may mislead them to invest those one lakh rupees in a business for their own selfish ends. That is why the bank manager would be given strict instructions in this regard to give only the interest to the parent concerned every month.

It is not possible to provide education to the children if they are living in a different village. We wanted to keep them nearby and asked the government to allot a suitable piece of land. But they have not given this to us and I have stopped asking them. We have got our own orchard. I have decided to use that piece of land to construct houses for these poor families. I thought that instead of utilising the land for growing fruit trees, it would be better to utilise it for the sake of poor children. We are going to construct houses with two rooms, a kitchen and a bathroom for every mother and her children. They can live lifelong in these houses and look after their needs with the interest they get from the bank. I will take the responsibility of providing education to these children. We have many students, both boys and girls, who can teach them and train them.

Our boys and girls are ready to render any service. I do not want to praise My own students, but you cannot find students like them anywhere else. They are highly virtuous. I want My students to render service to the poor and needy and alleviate their suffering. Students, you do not need to pay heed to what others say. Take a firm resolve to serve society and sanctify your life.

Shortly, I am going to Puttaparthi. Very soon the students' Sports Meet is going to be held. The students need to be encouraged. The construction of houses for the poor has also to be started. Then, by 19th I will be back here (Brindavan) for the inauguration of Super Speciality Hospital, which is going to benefit the entire State of Karnataka. All the heart patients in the State of Karnataka should be cured of their ailment. Everyday 30 to 40 operations will take place. For this purpose, 30 surgeons will be employed by paying them high salaries. There will be 8 to 10 operation theatres. At least 25 to 30 heart surgeries should take place everyday. No patient should suffer from heart failure. That is My strong determination. I don't want to make any distinction between States. All States are Mine. All belong to Me and I belong to you all. Do not entertain any doubt or weakness. I am ready to give whatever you require. Be courageous. Why fear when I am here?

Boys and Girls!

Follow the commands of your parents and make them happy. Get married if they want you to, and lead a life of an ideal householder. I bless you all and bring My Discourse to a close. After a short while from now, the Messengers of Sathya Sai are going to present a drama. It is an ideal drama unlike the dramas that you see on television. Today TV has become very common. Young minds are being spoiled by watching the TV. There is no harm if good programmes are shown, but the government is encouraging programmes which are not good for children. We do not want such a government. We want a government, which will make the people tread the path of truth and righteousness. 'God-ment' is the real government. There are people who are working for their selfish ends. Do not follow them. Selfishness has become their way of life. Let it not become your way of life. Do not join politics. Take to the path of service. Go to each and every village. Serve everybody. The best way to love God is to love all and serve all. Learn this art of service. *Chala Santosham* (very happy).

Bhagavan concluded His Discourse with the Bhajan, "Hare Rama Hare Rama, Rama Rama Hare Hare..."

—From Bhagavan's Christmas Discourse in Sai Ramesh Krishan Hall, Brindavan on 25th December 2000

AVATAR VANI

LADIES DAY DISCOURSE

Impact of Mother's thoughts on Children

In this world, wife, children and other relations are not permanent; they come and go. Truth alone is permanent. Worldly power, high status and even kingdoms are transitory; the only eternal reality is truth. The path of truth bestows all prosperity and auspiciousness. There is no greater opulence than truth in this world. (Telugu Poem)

Embodiments of Love!

This day of 19th November is celebrated as Ladies Day in order to delve into the sacred qualities of women and disseminate them. Women are the repositories of truth and culture. Though the earth is one, the plants vary depending upon the seeds sown. The womb of the mother symbolises the mother earth. As is the seed of thought sown in it, so is the fruit that it yields. You cannot expect mangoes by sowing a Neem seed. So, the mother should foster good thoughts, good words and good deeds. Only then can she beget virtuous children. Today we find many children having bad qualities and wicked conduct. The reason for this can be attributed to the bad thoughts of their mothers.

Aryamba was born in Kerala. She was a paragon of virtues. She spent all her time in the contemplation of God and in undertaking noble deeds. As a result, Sankaracharya was born to her. Sankaracharya could become Jagadguru (world teacher) because of his mother's virtuous thoughts. Noble souls like Vivekananda and Ramakrishna Paramahansa could attain exalted positions in their lives only due to the sacred feelings of their mothers. Putlibai, the mother of

Mahatma Gandhi, spent her life in the contemplation of God. She used to observe a vow wherein she would not partake of food unless she heard the singing of cuckoo. One day it so happened that the song of cuckoo was not heard. Gandhi, who was a small boy then, could not bear to see his mother fasting for a long time. He went behind the house and mimicked the singing of cuckoo. Then he came inside and told his mother that she could have her food as she had heard the song of cuckoo. Putlibai felt very sad as she knew that her son was uttering a lie. She cried, "O God! What sin have I committed that I gave birth to a son who speaks untruth?" Realising that he had caused immense grief to his mother by uttering a lie, Gandhi took a vow that he would never indulge in falsehood thenceforth. So, it is imperative that the mother gives training in moral values to her children right from their childhood. She should not overlook the mistakes of her children. She should punish her children whenever they stray away from the right path and reward them for their good deeds. It is because of the feelings of the mother that the children become good or bad.

Gandhi's mother was a strict disciplinarian and pure-hearted. As the saying goes, "*Yatha Raja, Thatha Praja*" (as is the master, so are the followers), she had a maid-servant named Rambha, who used to look after the children with love and care. One day, Gandhi came running to her and told that he was haunted by fear. Rambha told him, "My dear one, where is the need to fear when all-protecting Ramchandra is with us always. Recite the Name of Rama whenever you are fear-stricken." From then onwards, Gandhi chanted the Name of Rama till his last breath. Can we find such noble-hearted women today? It is because of such women that the children take to the path of righteousness.

Here is a small example. After the war for the liberation of Rangoon, a mother and her son somehow managed to reach Chennai having lost their near and dear ones. They had no shelter over their head nor any food to eat. The mother would go begging for alms from house to house, give most of it to her son and partake of whatever little was left. When she would not get enough, she would give the entire food to her son and would herself go without food. She was put to many difficulties, but she bore everything for the sake of the wellbeing of her son. Consequently, she became weak day by day. One day the son, unable to see her suffering, told her, "Mother, it is not proper on your part to feed me and starve yourself. From today, you take rest and I will fetch food for both of us." But the mother said she could not bear the sight of her son begging for alms. However, on a certain day, the mother was too weak even to walk. So, the son went to beg food. He stood in front of the house of an officer and cried, "O sir, I am hungry, I am hungry." The officer, who was relaxing in an easy chair in the verandah, brought food on a leaf and told him to sit and partake of it. But the boy said that he would take it home. The officer said, "I don't think you are really hungry, otherwise why should you take it home." When the officer was uttering these harsh words, the boy felt giddy and fell down. He was trying to say something, but could not say it loudly as he was very weak. The officer went close to the boy and tried to hear what he was saying. "Sir, I would like to give it to my mother first, only then I will eat. First, to my mother, to my mother..." saying so, he breathed his last. Can we find such noble sons today? We cannot find such mothers and sons today. It is not merely the effect of Kali Age, but also the result of modern education system. Today's education is meant only for earning a living. The educated do not think of the welfare of society and the country at large.

Great Merit in Fulfilling your Mother's Wishes

You all know the story of Ishwarchandra Vidyasagar. He was living with his mother in a village near Kolkata. They were very poor. She used to feed her son with whatever she could earn everyday and did not care much about herself. Her son's well-being was uppermost in her mind. She wanted him to lead a peaceful and sacred life. Being a hard working student, Vidyasagar used to study under street lights. He completed his post graduation and took up a job. Initially, his salary was very less, just enough for his mother and himself. Gradually, he attained good position. Once a fair was held in the village. Vidyasagar's mother went to the fair wearing an old Sari as she had no other good Sari to wear. Seeing this, Vidyasagar felt very sad. That very evening, he bought a good Sari for her. Once during the course of their conversation, Vidyasagar asked his mother if she had any desires. She said, "Son, the people of our village are facing hardship due to lack of drinking water. I feel pained to see them trekking long distances to fetch water. I will be happy if you can get a well dug in our village." Vidyasagar immediately got a well dug and fulfilled his mother's desire. Her joy knew no bounds. She said, "Son, water sustains life. You have quenched the thirst of the villagers. I am extremely happy that I have given birth to a noble son like you."

On some other day, Vidyasagar asked his mother if she had any more desires. She said, "Son, the children of our village are going to the neighbouring village to attend school. I am pained to see children walking such a long distance everyday. So, please construct a small school in our village." Accordingly, Vidyasagar established a school in the village, giving immense joy to his mother. She said, "Son, you have set an ideal not merely to our village but to the entire nation. Your life is sanctified."

After a few days, one evening, when Vidyasagar returned home from office, he found his mother in a pensive mood. On being asked for the reason, she said, "Son, you have provided water to the village and also established a school for children. But, it is the lack of medical facilities in our village that is troubling my mind. Please build a small hospital here." As per her wish, he constructed a small hospital which had one doctor and one nurse. His mother was overjoyed at this. The reason for My telling you all this is to emphasise that the feelings of mothers are noble. Each one has to resolve to fulfill the sacred desires of his mother. One should never act in such a way as to cause pain to one's mother.

Like the mother of Ishwarchandra Vidyasagar, Swami's mother had also some sacred desires. One day, while I was having My food upstairs, Griham Ammayi (mother of Swami's physical body) came to Me. I asked, "Amma, what is the reason for your coming here?" She said, "You finish Your food first, then I will tell You." After I finished My meal, she said, "Swami, ours is a very small village. Here people are put to a lot of suffering due to the absence of medical facilities. They have to run to Bukkapatnam even for a small problem." Then I assured her that I would build a hospital in the village. As promised, I got a small hospital built immediately. On some other day, she again came upstairs and said, "Swami, please don't think otherwise, I have one more desire." I asked her not to have too many desires. She said, "Swami, You are fulfilling the desires of thousands of people who are coming to You. Why can't You fulfill my one desire?" Then I said, "Tell Me your desire." She said, "Swami, the wells of our village have dried up. Please get a well dug in our village." As per her wish, I got a well dug in our Mandir itself. All the people of the village used to take water from this well. She said she was extremely happy but added that she had one more desire. She said, "Swami, the children of our village are

going to Bukkapatnam for their studies. Poor children, they don't have the strength even to walk such a long distance. Please construct a school here." I fulfilled her that desire also. She felt very happy and said that she had no more desires left. Just as a small seed becomes a huge tree, the small school I established then has become a big university now. (Cheers) At that time, I constructed a small hospital. But now here is a big Super Speciality Hospital. The small well that I got dug here in, the village has assumed gigantic proportions of a water project for the entire district. If the feelings of the mother are sacred, so too will be the feelings of the children.

Chaitanya Mahaprabhu and his Noble Mother

If the thoughts are sacred, they will certainly fructify. One need not think that one does not have enough money or resources. If you resolve to do something good, you are bound to succeed. The power of noble thoughts will give you the necessary strength. Once Chaitanya Mahaprabhu went to a temple along with his mother Sachi Devi. He prayed, "O Lord, You are the master of the world. You are the master of the body, life and soul. You can grant any wish that I ask for. But I don't have any worldly desires. I do have one desire. You are the embodiment of love. Love is our life. So, please grant me the strength to love You. I don't want anything else." Chaitanya Mahaprabhu developed such noble thoughts because of the noble feelings of his mother Sachi Devi. She always taught him that all the needs of a person were automatically taken care of once he became the recipient of God's grace.

Chaitanya used to go round the streets singing the glory of Krishna. Good and bad, auspiciousness and inauspiciousness co-exist. Where there is light, there is bound to be its shadow. Likewise, good people are bound to face difficulties. But those difficulties will enhance the goodness in them. *"Pleasure and pain, good and bad coexist, none can separate them. You cannot find pleasure or pain, good or bad to the exclusion of the other. Pleasure results when difficulties fructify."* (Telugu Poem) Once when Chaitanya was singing the glory of Krishna in the streets, some evil-minded people snatched away the cymbals from his hands. But he was least perturbed. He continued to sing the glory of Krishna with firm faith and devotion. Seeing Chaitanya, the children would get inspired and they too would join him in singing the divine name. Chaitanya used to make children sit around him and impart sacred teachings to them. Chaitanya became a noble soul because of the noble feelings of his mother. So, the mother should have pure thoughts and good conduct. Only then will she be blessed with ideal children.

Service to Villages is dear to Swami

Since time immemorial, Bharat has been Punya Bhumi (the land of merit), Yoga Bhumi (the land of spirituality) and Tyaga Bhumi (the land of sacrifice). The greater the sacrifice you do, the greater will be the Tejas (effulgence) around you. I am giving you a small example. I always have Tejas around Me. But some people who came during the last fifteen days said, "Swami, Your Tejas is ever increasing."

Right from the beginning, welfare of the villagers has been dear to Me. But as I got involved with education, health and water projects, I could not pay much attention to this work. A month ago, while I was sitting in a chair, I happened to see a small piece of paper. When I picked it up, I found the photographs of dead bodies of a mother and her son. The mother could not bear the sight of her son suffering from hunger. Neither could she go out for alms as it was raining heavily. Seeing no possibility of stopping of the rain, she felt very dejected, mixed rat poison in

water, gave it to her son and drank herself. As a result, both of them died. This incident took place last month only. This was published in a newspaper. Some newspapers usually ignore good news and publish such bad news items only. They are always in search of bad news. Their hands do not write and their intellects do not function when it comes to publishing good news. This is the effect of the sins accumulated over their past lives. I felt very sad that such an incident took place in this sacred land of Bharat which is known as Annapoorna (goddess of food). Immediately, I stopped all other activities and started village service programme. Food and clothes were distributed in various villages giving encouragement and happiness to people. Our students are like gold. They worked hard right from morning till night with enthusiasm. They went to each and every house in the villages and distributed food. I felt very happy. If anybody does any noble act of sacrifice, I am prepared to do anything for him. (cheers) The more one sacrifices, the greater will be one's Tejas. Though I eat very little, My Tejas is ever increasing.

Everyday after the morning Bhajan, I take a little *Ragi Sankati* (gruel made of coarse grain) and Chutney or curry made of leaves. This is what I used to take earlier and it is the same now also. There has been no change in it. I eat a little food, yet I have tremendous Tejas. The Tejas comes not because of food but because of the spirit of sacrifice. One gets a lot of strength when one involves oneself in social welfare activities. When I walk slowly among the devotees, some people wonder if I have pain in My legs. Neither I have pain in My legs nor I get any disease. I walk slowly among the devotees only to give them Darshan for a longer duration of time. (Cheers) I have no pain whatsoever nor any disability. I am always blissful. My bliss is ever increasing day after day. Consider service to humanity as your very life breath. Then you too will have divine effulgence.

Make God's Name as your Pulse Beat God is not separate from you. Do not be under the impression that God is present only in temples. *Deho Devalaya Prokto Jeevo Deva Sanathana* (body is the temple and the indweller is God). So, you do not need to go in search of God elsewhere. Turn your vision inward and you will find God. He is the embodiment of bliss. You are getting drowned in illusion on account of excessive attachment to the body. Get rid of body attachment and develop attachment towards God. Then you will become God yourself. God and man are not separate from each other. God is in everybody. This temple of body is able to move around because God is within. It is said, *Sathyam Jnanam Anantham Brahma* (Brahman is truth, wisdom and eternity). One has to tread the path of truth in order to understand the principle of Brahman. To know the principle of Brahman, you need not go here and there. Have total faith that the body is the temple of God. Then you will get infinite bliss and tremendous strength. Consider every work as God's work. Some people may wonder how going to office can be God's work. That is also God's work because God is all pervasive. *Sarvata Pani-padam Tat Sarvathokshi Siromukham, Sarvata Sruthimalloke Sarvamavruthya Thishthati* (with hands, feet, eyes, head, mouth and ears pervading everything, He permeates the entire universe). You may undertake any action but do it as an offering to God. Since ancient times, Bharatians fostered such noble feelings. That is why Bharat attained the exalted position of the teacher to the rest of the world.

This land of Bharat has given birth to many noble women like Savitri, who brought her dead husband back to life; Chandramati, who extinguished wild fire with the power of truth; Sita, who

proved her chastity by coming out of blazing fire unscathed and Damayanti, who reduced an evil minded hunter to ashes with the power of her chastity. It was because of such women of character that Bharat attained the reputation of being the land of plenty, prosperity and opulence, and became the teacher of all the nations of the world.

(Telugu Poem)

There are many scholars, intellectuals and educated people in this country. But all their learning and intelligence is proving futile because they are immersed in selfishness and self-interest.

Embodiments of Love!

Foster love, speak the truth. Do not waste time in acquiring merely bookish knowledge. One cannot be called educated in the true sense just because one acquires degrees. True education is that which confers good intellect and noble qualities like adherence to truth, duty, devotion and discipline. You have to sanctify your life with good thoughts, good words and good deeds. Only then will the ancient culture of Bharat be revived.

Chant the Name of God incessantly. It should be like your pulse beat. Body becomes lifeless if there is no pulse beat. Likewise, you will become a living corpse if you do not chant Divine Name. Consider whatever happens as good for you. When you foster such good thoughts, they will naturally turn into good actions, which will set an ideal to others.

Embodiments of Love!

Today people are prepared to undergo many difficulties in pursuit of Sri (wealth). But Chaitanya Mahaprabhu considered Hari (Lord Vishnu) as his only wealth. He gave up Sri and contemplated on Hari. That is why I often sing, *Hari Nama Bina Ananda Nahin* (one cannot have bliss without chanting the Divine Name). So, chant the Divine Name, take to the service of society. Do not make distinctions between your people and other people. Consider everybody as a member of the universal divine family. Experience bliss by cultivating the spirit of unity. Do not entertain any differences whatsoever. Treat each body as a temple and offer your salutations. Have the firm conviction that God is present in all. When you cultivate such noble thoughts, God will certainly become manifest in you.

Bhagavan concluded His Discourse with the Bhajan, "Hari Bhajan Bina Sukha Santhi Nahin ..."

—*From Bhagavan's Discourse on Ladies Day in Sai Kulwant Hall, Prasanthi Nilayam on 19th November 2000*

Avatar Vani

Inaugural Discourse: 7th World Conference of Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organisations

God Incarnates to Serve Man

Just as the birds have, two wings which help them to fly, love and service are like the two wings which enable man to reach his goal of life quickly.

(Telugu Poem)

Embodiments of Love!

Man is born to render selfless service and not to indulge in selfishness. Selfless service alone can achieve unity of mankind. Only through unity can humanity attain Divinity. Hence service is very essential to understand this unity in humanity. People are under the impression that service means merely to help the poor, the weak and the forlorn. It is a big mistake to think that you are rendering service to others. In fact, you are serving yourself because the same principle of the Atma, the same principle of love is present in all. All men are essentially one. The differences lie only in their feelings. So, man should change his feelings and try to recognise the truth that the same divinity is immanent in all. Only then can there be transformation in man.

Selfless Service Kills Ego

The hands do the work, the tongue performs the task of talking and the head enquires. All these limbs of the body may be different from each other but the divine power that exists in them is one and the same. Likewise, the same divinity exists in all beings. Once you understand this truth, the service you render will become divine. One should not become egoistic, thinking that one is doing great service. Actually, service is meant to kill ego. You cannot call it service if it is rendered with ego. First of all, ego has to be subdued. Body attachment is the root cause of ego. Ego will vanish once the body attachment is given up. The spirit of oneness will develop once the ego is annihilated.

Just as hands, eyes, nose, mouth, etc., are the limbs of the body, likewise, all human beings are the limbs of society. Society is the limb of Nature and Nature is the limb of God. Seeing this vast Nature, one should not think that it is different from God. One should understand the fundamental truth that Divinity pervades the entire creation. Bulbs, their colours and wattage may vary, but the current in all of them is one and the same. Likewise, names and forms of individuals may be different but the principle of the Atma that exists in all of them is one and the same. The service you render will become meaningful only when you understand this truth. You should not think that you are different from the one whom you are serving. This kind of dualistic feeling gives rise to evil qualities like hatred, jealousy, etc. In fact, all the evil qualities like desire, anger, greed, etc., are of man's own making. They arise out of the head, whereas noble qualities like love, compassion, forbearance, etc., originate from the heart. Head sees unity as diversity, whereas heart proves unity in diversity. Hence, head symbolises Pravritti (outward path) and heart stands for Nivritti (inward path).

Never think that society cannot progress if you do not render service. Society does not depend on you. If not you, someone else will do the needful. God governs everything. In the first instance, try to understand the meaning of the word "service". It is possible to understand this once you understand who you are. You are a Manava (human being). Manava does not mean the physical form alone. It is synonymous with the principle of the Atma. Human being is the manifestation of the five elements. The ancient sages had total control over the five elements and thus could enjoy peace and security. Man will shine forth as Atmaswarupa (embodiment of the Atma) once he becomes the master of the five elements.

Levels of the Mind

There are different levels of the mind, viz., Super Mind, Higher Mind, Illumination Mind and Over Mind. Man will reach the stage of totality only when he attains the level of Over Mind.

Super Mind is related to body consciousness. The source of body consciousness is the principle of the Atma that pervades the entire body. Body consciousness becomes thought consciousness when one reaches the level of Higher Mind. Body consciousness is limited to physical level, whereas thought consciousness has no such limits and can travel up to any distance. That is why thought consciousness is termed as Higher Mind. Higher Mind transcends the five elements. To reach this transcendental state, one has to begin with Super Mind. Higher Mind however does not signify the highest state. Illumination Mind is, in fact, beyond Higher Mind.

There is current in the human body from top to toe. The body itself is a big generator. Illumination Mind, which is related to the current in the body, is very powerful. When one attains this level, one will have current even in one's nails and hair. A worldly person will not feel any pain when his nails are clipped, but after attaining the level of Illumination Mind, one will get a shock when one tries to clip the nails. This is the reason why the ancient sages and seers used to grow their nails. Modern youth may attribute this to non-availability of nail cutters in those days. But one need not have a nail cutter to clip one's nails. One nail can cut the other. But the person at the level of Illumination Mind will feel the shock when his nails are clipped. The thoughts, words and deeds of one with Illumination.

Mind are suffused with Divinity. That gives rise to a very powerful three phase current in the body. Such people will have current even in their hair. You can feel the shock when you touch their hair. Even it an ordinary individual, there is electric current in the body.

The electricity present within spread: in the entire body because of the pumping of the heart. The doctors say that the lungs purify the blood with oxygen and send it to the heart. But actually, the lifeforce present in the lungs becomes current through vibration. This current can travel a long distance. Each time the heart pumps, the blood travels a distance of 12,000 miles in the body. How can we say this? When we join all the blood vessels in the body, both small and big (arteries, veins, capillaries, etc.), they cover a length of 12,000 miles. Just as a generator can illumine a bulb connected to it even at a distance of 100 miles, likewise the current originating from the sacred feelings in the heart can travel up to any distance. This is the power of Illumination Mind.

At the level of Illumination Mind, one's mind undergoes a great change and becomes the subtle force. This subtle force has three powers—Prana Shakti Mano Shakti and Vijnana Shakti. No scientist, doctor or engineer can understand this. You can give rest to any limb of the body but not to the heart. The heart continues to function even in your sleep. Which doctor or scientist can understand this? The eye looks so small but there are 13 lakh light rays in it. Who has made it? All this is God's creation. God's creation is the most mysterious, sacred and wonderful. All that is seen outside is nothing but the reflection, reaction and resound of the inner being. You go to a temple in order to have the vision of God. But when you stand in front of the idol, you close your eyes and pray. The inner meaning of this is that one has to see God not with the physical eyes, but with the eyes of wisdom. You will get the eyes of wisdom only when you turn your vision inward. That is the reason people meditate with their eyes closed and visualise God within. The whole world is just the reflection, reaction and resound. You desire for the reflection forgetting the reality.

The gross body is made up of food. The mind, the intellect, the Chitta and the Ahamkara constitute the subtle body. It is the subtle body that experiences pain and pleasure. The Illumination Mind comprises the causal body. It transcends worldly thoughts and feelings. There is no trace of desire, anger, greed, ego, pride and jealousy in it. The level of Illumination Mind is reached only when all the worldly thoughts are subdued. In order to control worldly thoughts, one has to reach the level of Super Mind. Super Mind is nothing but superior mind, that which transcends the ordinary mind. The fundamental basis to attain Super Mind is to cultivate super love, i.e., love without any desire. That is why I often tell you, love is God, live in love. Start the day with love, spend the day with love, fill the day with love and end the day with love. This is the way to God. When you wake up in the morning, do not think of your mundane activities. Wake up with the feelings of pure love. But today, man does not have such feelings of pure love. The reason for this, as I told you yesterday, is that the parents themselves have no sacred feelings. If the parents wake up in the morning abusing each other, the children go a step further and fight with each other as soon as they wake up.

At the time of birth, man has no desires. But as he grows up, he acquires many desires which lead to bondage. Man should fill his mind with love for God. He should forget all his worries and contemplate on Him. This is possible only through practice. Reading, writing, walking, talking, all these are learnt only through practice. Likewise, even in the path of spirituality, practice is very essential. Start practising love. That is the correct spiritual practice. Share your love with more and more people. You will experience oneness. Once you start sharing your love with everybody, then the whole world will become one family. After expanding your love in this manner, control your external thoughts and turn inward. Then you will attain the state of Illumination Mind where there are absolutely no thoughts and no action. Even the iron is melted by the power of electric current. Likewise, the duality of good and bad is annihilated by the Illumination Mind. In spiritual parlance, this is called Samadhi state. Samadhi means *Sama + Dhi* (equal-mindedness). The Illumination Mind unifies good and bad and develops the spirit of oneness. What is it that you have to do in order to attain this state? Serve all with love. Consider service to man as service to God. When it comes to rendering service, do not observe any differences. Do not consider that you are rich and the other man is poor. Who is the richest man in the world? The one who has contentment is the richest man in the world. Who is the poorest man? The one who has many desires is the poorest man. Cut short your desires. It is said, "Less luggage more comfort makes travel a pleasure."

You can have a comfortable journey of life only when you reduce the luggage of your desires. The lesser the desires, the greater will be the will power. The body has death but not the mind. The mind is responsible for everything. So, fill your mind with pure and selfless thoughts. Then you will attain the state of Illumination Mind. Gradually, you will cross Illumination Mind and attain Over Mind. In Vedantic parlance, this is known as the state of Amanaska (non-existence of mind). Once the mind is withdrawn, only the principle of the Atma, i.e., the Super-consciousness exists.

Develop Purity through Service Man has the capacity to attain any exalted position. Any task can be accomplished through practice. A small ant can travel hundreds of miles if it decides to do so. But even an eagle, endowed with strong wings, cannot move an inch without making effort.

Love and service are like two wings for man. He can attain any exalted position with the help of these two wings. The lives of many noble souls bear testimony to this fact.

Today man finds it difficult to sit quietly and steadily even for a few minutes. But our ancients could keep their body steady in one posture for any number of days. People think that the body is able to move because of the circulation of blood and the functioning of nerves. But when one reaches the state of Illumination Mind, blood circulation stops. You may think that the body becomes lifeless without blood circulation, but super blood starts circulating and makes the body function.

When super blood starts circulating in the body, it becomes superior in nature. In this connection, the Upanishads declare: "*Raso Vai Saha*" (God pervades the body in the form of essence). Then all that one sees, does and experiences becomes divine. Just as sugar is present in every drop of syrup, the Supreme Power (Divinity) is present in every cell of the human body. But today, man considers himself to be weak. He alone can experience bliss who understands the truth that everything is within. All that man learns from books is nothing but the reflection, reaction and resound of the inner being. Man's speech is decided by the feelings of the inner being. Speech is resound and heart is the real sound. This real sound leads to resound. In the path of spirituality, there are many such subtle secrets. Without understanding these secrets, man undertakes various spiritual practices and wastes his time. You need not undertake any spiritual practice once you understand the fundamental truth. *Neither by penance nor by pilgrimage nor by study of scriptures nor by Japa can one cross the ocean of life. One can achieve it only by serving the pious.* (Sanskrit Sloka) When you serve others, your power will also increase. The power of attraction is present in everybody. The purer you become, the greater will be your power of attraction and so, you will absorb more power. All the powers that are present in the earth are latent in man. Man, in fact, is the reservoir of all powers—electrical, magnetic and laser. Thus, man is very powerful. Then why should he consider himself weak?

Some people come to Me and complain that they are unable to control their mind. How can you control your mind? You can control your mind only through love and not merely by sitting in meditation. When you develop love, there will be no scope for evil qualities like anger and hatred. You will be able to love even your enemies. You will not consider anybody as your enemy; you will see oneness in all. That is blissful life. Bliss sheath is the last of five sheaths present in man, namely, Annamaya Kosha (food sheath), Pranamaya Kosha (life sheath), Manomaya Kosha (mind sheath), Vijnanamaya Kosha (wisdom sheath) and Anandamaya Kosha (bliss sheath). Today man is able to travel only up to mind sheath. Thereafter, he does not have the ticket nor does he have the chariot to reach bliss sheath. People are under the mistaken notion that Vijnanamaya Kosha is related to science. But, in fact, it has nothing to do with science. There is a gulf of difference between wisdom and science. Science is related to the power of the mind and machine, whereas wisdom originates from the power of the Atma. For everything service is important.

When the Pandavas were making arrangements to perform Rajasuya Yajna, Lord Krishna approached Dharmaraja and asked if everything was ready. Dharmaraja replied that all arrangements were over and he had allotted various duties to others. Then Krishna requested for an opportunity to render some service. He used the word service and not duty because duty

relates to duality, whereas service to oneness. Dharmaraja said, "Swami, what service can I assign to You? Instead give us an opportunity to serve You." Krishna said, "I don't require others' service. I serve everybody." God assumes human form to serve and sustain humanity. I am your servant, not the master. Understand this truth. I come to you to give Darshan, wherever you are seated. I never say that you should come to Me. It is said, God always stands at the entrance of your Puja room ready to give whatever you ask for. God is always ready to grant the wishes of His devotees. God is always with you, in you, around you. God renders service to man, so that he may serve his fellow beings. Dharmaraja asked Krishna as to what service He would like to do. Krishna said, He would remove the plantain leaves after everyone finishes partaking of food in them. By this act of His, Krishna demonstrated the ideal of service to mankind. Human body may be compared to a tender plantain leaf. The five senses of man are like the delicious items served on the leaf. One should offer the food to God before partaking of it. But man in his foolishness is offering the 'delicious items' to the demons of desire, anger, greed, pride and jealousy. After the demons consume the 'delicious items' and spoil the leaf, the leftover is offered to God! First and foremost, these 'delicious items' should be offered to God who is present within in the form of Vaishwanara. You offer food to God by chanting the Sloka: *Brahmarpanam Brahma Havir Brahmagnou Brahmanahutam Brahmaiva Thena Ganthavyam Brahma Karma Samadhina*. Immediately God replies from within: *Aham Vaishvanaro Bhutva Praninam Dehamasrita Pranapana Samayukta Pachamyannam Chaturvidham*. God is present in everybody in the form of Vaishwanara. So, whomsoever you serve, consider that you are serving God.

Experience Unity in Totality

Love has no form; it has only name. Gold by itself has no form. But people mould it in the shape of a ring or a chain, thereby giving it a form. Likewise, many forms are attributed to the formless Divinity. Divinity is pure, immortal, attributeless, formless, ancient and eternal. But people worship a form for their own satisfaction. That is why God incarnates. He is the creator, sustainer and destroyer. But you think different gods exist for creation, sustenance and destruction. They are all like ministers of God. Everything is under His control. So, when you offer something to God, it amounts to offering to all gods.

Easwara Sarva Bhutanam (God is present in all beings). Formless God can be visualised in the form of all beings. He is the Reality and all the forms are His reflections. He is one, but you see many reflections. You may find the projection of earthquakes, floods and volcano eruptions on the cinema screen but the screen is unaffected by all this. You may find a river on the screen but the screen does not get wet. Likewise, all the multiplicity appears only to the external vision; the Illumination Mind sees only oneness. That oneness is the Divine Power. It is present in one and all. You search for God at various places as you are unable to understand this truth. To know this truth, love all. Then you can visualise unity in diversity. Lord Krishna declared, *Mamaivamsho Jeevaloke Jeevabhuta Sanathana* (the eternal Atma in all beings is a part of My Being). Do not get deluded by the differences in physical form. Treat everyone alike. Consider all that you see as your own reflection. When you cultivate this feeling of oneness, you will attain the level of Illumination Mind. When you are at the level of Super Mind, you think that you are different from others. This is dualism. It is said, "A man with dual mind is half blind." Gradually, go up to the Higher Mind where you understand your true nature. Then you reach Illumination Mind. Once you experience this unity in totality, you attain Over Mind. That is your goal. That is

everything for you. All the spiritual practices are meant to attain this goal. Practices that are done with the physical body cannot improve the state of the mind. What is essential is the purity of the mind.

Speaking softly is also Service

Remember Swami's words whenever you participate in service activities. Some rich people feel that they are unable to serve the community and participate in service activities. Service does not mean helping with hands alone. Talk softly and sweetly. Speak good words. That is also a form of service. Give food and money to the needy and work for their welfare. That is also a form of service. Cleaning the streets or serving the patients is not the only means of service. But those who get the opportunity can certainly do it as per their capacity.

The other day, Anantapur College girls came to Me and said, "Swami, boys are going to each and every house in the villages distributing food packets. Once we finish packing the food, we have no other work. Please give us some work." I told them to go to the villages, clean the temples and whitewash them. Body itself is the temple of God. When you whitewash the temples outside, think that you are painting the temple of body with love. That is true service. Never use harsh words. You cannot always oblige, but you can speak always obligingly. Bodily wounds can be cured by the use of medicines. But the wounds inflicted by the tongue can never be healed. That is why I repeatedly tell you to cultivate love and talk with love. I never use harsh words even when I appear to be angry. I always speak lovingly. You too will become Divine when you cultivate such Divine Love.

Cultivate good thoughts. Good thoughts lead to good actions. Good actions lead to Sathsanga (good company). Cultivate love. Everything is based on love and love alone. Man is born in love, is sustained in love and ultimately merges in love. Love is the basis of human life. But you are forgetting such true love and are getting carried away by the worldly and physical love, which is not love in true sense.

Bhagavan concluded His Discourse with the Bhajan, "Prema Mudita Manase Kaho.. ."

—From Bhagavan's Inaugural Discourse at the 7th World Conference of Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organisations in Sai Kulwant Hall, Prasanthi Nilayam on 20th November 2000

Divine Blessings on Christmas and New Year

Christmas with our Beloved Lord Sai Baba is the ultimate experience of being with Our Lord Jesus Christ when He was on earth. Singing familiar Christmas Carols in His Divine Presence filled the hearts of the devotees with overflowing joy and bliss. The gift of Love from God in Human Form is a Christmas Gift that excels all others.

Christmas at Brindavan

Brindavan means "Garden of the Heart" and the stage in Sai Ramesh Krishan Hall in Brindavan was decorated with hundreds of fresh flowers. There were two peacocks carved out of greenery, and purple orchids placed as feathers. Columns draped with satin swags held large bouquets of flowers, too magnificent to describe. The pillars on the stage near Swami's chair were wrapped in fresh greens and hundreds of flowers. Sathya Sai, the Lord of Lords, sat in His Garden, as we sat in His Heart. The entire Sai Ramesh Krishan Hall was thus transformed into a Christmas Paradise.

On the Christmas Eve, Bhagavan came to Sai Ramesh Krishan Hall at 3.00 p.m. The adult choir as well as the children's choir presented a marvellous programme of carol singing. Afterwards, Swami came near the children and adult choir and gave them special Darshan, materialising Vibhuti for some of the children and saying how very happy He was with their singing. He was so pleased and when the Lord is happy with us, it brings us joy, the true joy of Christmas. Thus, the delightful carol singing programme came to a happy conclusion. Arati was offered to Bhagavan in the end and Prasadam was distributed to all.

On the Christmas Day, Nagarsankirtan Caroling began at 5:00 a.m. Hundreds of devotees with candles in hand and love in heart joined the morning Nagarsankirtan surcharging the entire milieu with divine vibrations.

Swami was led into Sai Ramesh Krishan Hall at 8.00 a.m. by the brass band of Brindavan Campus of the Institute when He came to give Christmas blessings to the mammoth gathering of devotees from all parts of the world. The programme commenced after Bhagavan inaugurated it by lighting the Christmas candles. The Institute students then presented a wonderful programme of carol singing. The words were especially moving and appropriate. To name a few: "Swami, I will Sing Your Praises Forever More." "Jesus is Alive Today." "The Father of Christ, His Name is Sathya Sai," concluding with "O' When the Saints Go Marching in." The students performed with much love and Swami's blissful face reflected rays of sunshine upon all the devotees. The morning programme came to a close at 8.50 a.m. with Arati to Bhagavan and distribution of Prasadam.

—Rita Bruce, USA

Messengers of Sathya Sai: Annual Meeting and Drama

On the afternoon of 25th December, the Messengers of Sathya Sai, Association of alumni of Anantapur College, held their Annual Meeting in the Divine Presence of Bhagavan Baba. At the outset, they offered their prayers and salutations to Bhagavan through a couple of beautiful songs. The deliberations of the Annual Meeting began by Veda chanting by a group of the Messengers. The President of the Association, Miss KR Sai Leela, then extended hearty welcome to all the Members and exhorted them to devote every minute of their time to Bhagavan's Mission. After this, two Members of the Association, Mrs. Gayatri Raja Venkataraman and Mrs. Shalini Srinivas, made brief speeches. Mrs. Venkataraman narrated the experiences of her student life and said that to be a student of Bhagavan is a rare fortune. Mrs.

Shalini Srinivas said that life with Bhagavan was endless learning and recounted the lessons she had learnt from Bhagavan. In the end, the Secretary of the Association, Miss Rajeswari Patel, presented the Annual Report of the Association for the year 2000, outlining briefly the service activities undertaken by the Members in India and overseas countries. After this, Bhagavan Baba blessed the huge gathering of devotees with His Divine Christmas Message (given separately in this issue). The programme came to a close with Arati to Bhagavan at 5.45 p.m.

On the evening of 25th December 2000, the Messengers of Sathya Sai presented an excellent drama entitled "The Divine Light of Compassion" in Sai Ramesh Krishan Kalyana Mantapam. The play depicted the life story of Buddha from birth to Nirvana with a very appropriate commentary.

New Year Celebrations at Prasanthi Nilayam

After celebrating the holy festival of Christmas on 25th December 2000 at Brindavan, Bhagavan came to Puttaparthi on the morning of 28th December 2000. As the news of Bhagavan's programme had already spread in Puttaparthi and adjoining villages, mammoth crowds of villagers lined the route of Bhagavan to accord Him a rousing welcome. Welcome arches sprang up overnight on the road which was decorated with plantain leaves, festoons, mango leaves and Rangoli colours. It was a unique sight to witness when Bhagavan's motorcade entered the precincts of Puttaparthi to the beaming faces and full-throated "Jai" of hundreds of thousands villagers—rich, poor, men, women and children who lined the entire route.

Bhagavan's arrival in Puttaparthi infused a new spirit in the New Year celebrations. On the morning of 1st January 2001, Bhagavan came to Sai Kulwant Hall from His abode at 7.00 a.m. and showered the bliss of Darshan on the devotees. The New Year function included excellent presentation of orchestra programme, group songs and Bhajans by Institute students. Bhagavan then showered His blessings on the devotees in His New Year Message. The New Year celebrations came to a happy conclusion with Arati to Bhagavan at 8.50 a. m.

The Way to Moksha

One desires to merge in God and achieve liberation (Moksha). How is this to be secured? God is formless. Eight kinds of potencies have been attributed to God. He is the source of all sound, all motion, all light, all speech, all bliss, all excellence, all illusion (Maya) and all prosperity. How is one to realise such an omnipotent Divinity? Water can integrate with water. Air can combine with air. Fire can merge with fire. As God is formless, to become one with God one has to become formless. What does this imply? It means that one has to get rid of the attachment to the body.

—Baba

Start a New and Divine in This New Year

*Happiness carries with it an undercurrent of sorrow;
none can separate sorrow from happiness.
It is sorrow that leads to happiness.
In fact, both happiness and sorrow are the effects of Kali Age.
(Telugu Poem)*

Embodiments of Love!

Ages have rolled by, but man has not developed noble feelings. A true human being is one who has a good mind. A good mind has the brightness of the sun and coolness of the moon; it makes one utter sacred words and brings peace in society. One with compassion, love, forbearance, sympathy and sacrifice alone is a true human being. But in modern man such sacred qualities have become scarce. How can one, bereft of human qualities, be called a human being? Bliss Originates from Sacred Feelings Man has his origin from Nature. The earth sustains life. The sun gives light. Trees give oxygen. Water quenches our thirst and air helps us to live. How is it that man, born out of the five elements and sustained by them, does not possess the sacred qualities of these elements? Having been born out of Nature and brought up by it, man should imbibe its qualities and propagate the ideals set by Nature. Birds, animals and trees follow Nature and lead a natural life. Trees absorb poisonous carbon dioxide and give out life supporting oxygen. Even animals discharge their duties and help man in many ways. But, having been born as a human being, why is it that man is not practising human values? He is unable to propagate human values in society as he himself has stopped practising them.

Embodiments of Love!

Everyone expects that the New Year would usher in peace, happiness and prosperity for him. The New Year does not bring happiness or sorrow with it. Yesterday is the same as today and today is the same as tomorrow. Days are the same, but one experiences pleasure or pain depending on one's own actions. Meritorious deeds would never bring misery and sinful deeds cannot give happiness. Everyone is bound to face the consequences of his actions. But one who becomes the recipient of God's grace would be able to maintain equanimity both in sorrow and happiness. God's grace destroys mountains of sins and bestows peace on man. But due to the impact of Kali Age, man has lost faith in God. He is after money and power. How can such a man attain Divinity? Man can rise from human to Divine level only by practising human values. So, man should cultivate human values.

Years come and go, so also do pleasure and pain. Nothing gives permanent bliss except the experience of the Atma. Man cannot attain peace and happiness from his actions unless he has sacred feelings within. Many people have a fond hope that the New Year will bring happiness and prosperity for them. But, in fact, the New Year only brings for you the results of your past actions. In order to atone for your past sins, you have to cultivate sacred qualities and involve yourself in sacred activities more and more in the New Year. In fact, bliss is within you; it emanates from your sacred feelings. So, you have to manifest bliss from within; it cannot be bestowed on you by others. None can take away the bliss from you and you cannot obtain it from outside.

New Year Brings the Results of your Past Actions

Heart is the centre of sacred feelings. It is filled with compassion. It is compassion that gives rise to sacred feelings. One has to develop compassion, spread the light of love and cultivate divine feelings. Without doing so, how can one expect time to confer happiness on him? One gets what one does. If one expects good results, one must cultivate good feelings. With purity of heart, steadiness of mind and selfless actions, one can become the recipient of Divine grace, which will remove any amount of suffering in a trice. One cannot achieve anything without Divine grace. So, one has to undertake such activities which will earn Divine grace. Peace and happiness cannot be obtained from the external world. You can attain them only through Divine grace. People celebrate the advent of the New Year with singing and dancing. That enthusiasm and happiness are momentary. What man needs is permanent peace and happiness. How can he expect to attain permanent happiness by indulging in worldly deeds? He has to undertake sacred actions in order to attain permanent happiness.

Happiness emerges only from difficulties. It is impossible to experience pleasure without pain. Pleasure is an interval between two pains. You may be a wealthy man or a spiritual aspirant; you get what you deserve. You cannot expect mangoes by sowing a Neem seed and vice-versa. As is the seed, so is the fruit. Similarly, as are the thoughts, so is the result. You are in delusion if you think that you get pain and pleasure from the external world. In fact, they result from your own thoughts. You should therefore bring about a change in your thoughts.

Embodiments of Love!

Years have gone by, but feelings of man have not become pure. He will attain peace only when there is a change in his feelings. He should fill his heart with sacred feelings. Under all circumstances, let your feelings be pure and ideal. Let all your actions be for the welfare of others. The Vedas declare: *Paropakara Punyaya, Papaya Parapeedanam* (one attains merit by serving others and commits sin by hurting them). When your feelings are sacred, you will get sacred results without your asking.

Due to the impact of Kali Age, man's thoughts, words and actions are not in harmony with each other. You may say or do anything, the result you get depends on your thoughts. So, make your thoughts sacred and become a good human being. One with good thoughts and good mind alone can be called a good human being. Sometimes, actions done with good intentions may yield adverse results. The results may appear to be unfavourable, but there is goodness latent in them. A good mind will never change because of such results.

Man is essentially good. So, he ought to lead a life of goodness. But today man wavers every moment. It is due to the lack of his will power. Man should have unwavering mind and steady vision. Then he will not be subjected to any hardships. Only God's grace can help man to overcome these negative tendencies. You may be a millionaire, but your wealth will not redeem you if your feelings are impure. Even if a man does not possess anything, he can still achieve the highest if he has purity of heart. Anything that a man of purity sees or touches will turn into gold. On the other hand, if he lacks purity and effort in the right direction, even a stick in hand will turn into a snake. *Sankalpamoolam Idam Jagat* (thoughts form the basis of the entire world).

Some people feel that their expectations are not fructifying in spite of their best efforts. This is mainly due to the lack of purity in their feelings and intentions.

Today marks the commencement of the New Year 2001. Next year, it will become 2002. Destiny does not change with the change in year. Along with the change in year, your actions too should change for the better. Only then will you get good results.

Students!

You will fare well in the examination only when you work hard throughout the year. As is the action, so is the result. Sometimes, you may question the adverse outcome of a good action. But, in fact, good actions will never yield bad results. Sometimes, they may appear to be adverse, but they are essentially good. It is a human weakness to see only the negative aspect and ignore the positive one.

"Pleasure and pain, good and bad co-exist, none can separate them. You cannot find pleasure or should therefore give up the outward path and direct his vision inward. Before entertaining any thought, he should discriminate whether it is good or bad. One can never attain permanent happiness if one follows the outward path. For example, you may be 20, 40, 50 or 80 years old. You have been eating food everyday all these years. But can your hunger ever be satisfied permanently? No. Only the taste varies but hunger is the same for everybody. Food may vary but hunger is one, Jewels are many but gold is one, The colour of the cows may vary but milk is one, Beings are many but breath is one, Forms are many but God is one. (Telugu Poem) Man leads a life of delusion because he sees diversity in unity. He faces many hardships during the course of his life. Life is transitory. To lead such an ephemeral life, why should one take to wrong path and get deluded? So long as one is alive, one should tread the path of truth and set an ideal for others. Only then can one's life be sanctified. Truthful activities alone can confer eternal peace. A poet may compose grand verses in praise of God and also pray for His protection. The feeling is important and not the manner in which the verses are composed. One may extol God according to one's own capacity but one should do so with pure, steady and sacred feelings. One may be doing Bhajans, offering worship and undertaking service activities for a number of years. But all this will prove futile if there is no transformation of the heart. The heart should be filled with compassion. Only then can it be called a temple of God. Otherwise, it becomes verily a devil's den.

Do not Allow Evil Thoughts to Enter your Heart

The New Year does not bring anything new with it. The day when fresh and sacred thoughts originate in your heart is the real New Year day. (Cheers) As you all consider this day as New Year day and welcome it with enthusiasm, I bless you all so that you may cultivate fresh, sacred and ideal thoughts. I want that you share with others all that you consider good. I bless you all to lead a peaceful and blissful life and become role models for the rest of the country.

At times, evil qualities like desire, anger and hatred may arise in you but they should not be allowed to enter the mind. Once they are refused permission, they will automatically withdraw. If they are allowed to enter the mind, they will remain in it. A small example: Suppose someone comes to your doorstep with his baggage. If you receive him and start exchanging pleasantries, he will immediately enter your house and settle down in it. On the other hand, if you ignore him

completely, he will go to a hotel or a lodge. Likewise, when evil qualities try to enter your mind, just ignore them. Then they will go back to the place of their origin. On the other hand, if you entertain them, they will rule over you. When you come across something evil, do not look at it, talk about it or listen to it. Just ignore it. That is the true human quality. You will allow only your friends and relatives to enter through the doors of your house. Will anyone allow the donkeys and pigs to enter the house just because it has doors? Your body has nine doors. You should permit through them only that which is sacred. Do not allow anything evil to enter. Only then can you attain eternal peace.

Human life is highly noble, valuable, sacred and divine. Do not put it to misuse by giving room to evil qualities. Use the power of discrimination and make proper use of the senses. Only then will your life be redeemed. You will attain immortality and infinite bliss. Start a novel and divine life in this New Year. Give up all old, unsacred thoughts. Cultivate divine thoughts. Once you have divine thoughts, no other thought can enter your mind. Install God within; then peace will automatically follow.

Embodiments of Love!

I bless you all to lead your lives with peace, prosperity and happiness. Thus, I bring My Discourse to a close.

Bhagavan concluded His Discourse with the Bhajans, "Hari Bhajan Bina..." and "Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare..."

—*From Bhagavan's New Year Day Discourse in Sai Kulwant Hall, Prasanthi Nilayam on 1st January 2001*

Experience of Oneness with the Divine

You are performing Bhajans, Japa, meditation, Yaga, Yajna or other spiritual practices. All these are external forms of worship which do not serve to promote the exploration of the internal spirit. They are good acts in themselves. But they are not directly related to spirituality (Adhyatmic discipline). Good acts yield good results. But they are only the stepping stones for the spiritual journey. You should not remain content with performing rituals and acts of worship (Satkarmas). When will you embark on the real spiritual adventure? You should go forward from dualism to non-dualism (Dvaita to Advaita). You become a Jnani (a knower of the Absolute) only when you have the Advaitic consciousness (experience of oneness with the Divine).

—*Baba*

*The moon is the source of light at night while the sun illumines the day.
For the three worlds, righteousness is the source of illumination,
and a good son brings light and brightness to the entire clan. (Sanskrit Verse)*

Embodiments of Love!

The moon dispels the darkness of the night and the sun shows the way and guides us to our destinations during the day. But it is righteousness that illumines the path of humanity in the three worlds. It is only the Suputra (virtuous son) who brings name and fame to his lineage. A good son is ideal in all aspects of life. Not only does he elevate his life by his noble conduct, but all others around him are also influenced by his nobility. Like a street light, he shows the way to others. With an unwavering mind and a steady vision, he perceives the Creator in the entire creation.

Cultivate Patience and Sympathy

In the days of yore, people did not have many material comforts, but they led an exalted life by cultivating firm self-confidence in the light of Atma Jyoti (radiance of the soul). In this Kali Age, science and technology have made great progress. Modern man has acquired wealth, comforts and prosperity. There is no dearth of people with riches, knowledge and intellect. But still there is no peace in the family and society. The reason for this is lack of patience and sympathy amongst the members of the family living in a house. These two values are not seen in any family today. Why does man lack these two qualities? Rise in selfishness and use of intelligence for one's own self-interest have brought about this decline. Because of this, man is ruining his sacred life. He is immersed in worries from dawn to dusk. There is no unity among the brothers in a family. They have no sympathy for each other. So, each one goes his own way. Though they are born as human beings, their conduct is worse than that of animals. In fact, animals have a reason and a season and they possess sympathy and patience while modern man is bereft of these virtues.

House and Home

Blatant selfishness of modern man has made him self-centred. He is concerned only with his own happiness and is totally unconcerned about the happiness of others. Having acquired a number of degrees and having amassed wealth, what has man really achieved? It is only misery. Patience and sympathy are like life-breath. These are the two virtues every man in a family should try to cultivate. As man cannot live without life-breath, similarly man is really lifeless without these virtues.

Today there is no love and sympathy among the members of a family though they live in the same house. However, it was not so in olden days. Five or six families lived together in harmony in a small dwelling unit and it became a home for all the inmates. There is a lot of difference between a house and a home. When there is tolerance and sympathy among the members of the family, it is a home. Absence of tolerance and sympathy reduces Bhavanam (palace) to a Vanam (forest). This was the situation in the house of Dasaratha. Though he performed many Yajnas, Yagas and other spiritual practices, there was no tolerance and sympathy among his three wives. Hence, he had to bear the agony of separation from Rama, and he met a miserable end. Uttanapada also faced a similar situation. There was lack of tolerance and sympathy between his wives. Dhruva was ill-treated by his stepmother when the king showed his affection for him.

This saddened the tender heart of Dhruva. After seeking the blessings of his mother, he left for the forest promising his mother to return after earning God's grace. He gave up all comforts, meditated upon God and earned God's grace. In every family, joy and sorrow depend upon the fact whether there are patience and sympathy in the family or not. The world is a combination of joy and sorrow; pleasure and pain; auspiciousness and inauspiciousness. Presence or absence of patience and sympathy are the basis of this duality in the world.

Control the Senses and Get Rid of Body Attachment

In this world, there are sons who show disrespect to their parents and make them unhappy. They do not recognise that their parents gave them birth and brought them up making many sacrifices and undergoing discomforts. They hurt their parents on the one hand and worship God on the other. This cannot be called true devotion at all. How can they attain Mukti (liberation) with this type of devotion? What is Mukti (liberation)? It is foolish to think that liberation is attained after death. Freedom from all worries and suffering is true liberation.

Liberation is a state of happiness, peace and bliss after one casts away one's difficulties, sorrows and worries. Satisfying the hunger of the poor, giving succour to the needy, removing the anxiety of everyone and filling their hearts with supreme peace leads one to the path of Mukti. Mukti, which is so simple, subtle and within the reach of everyone, is being ignored by man. He craves for Mukti after death. But Mukti should be experienced when one is still alive. In this world, only human beings have the opportunity to work for their liberation. Yashoda lamented at her separation from Krishna when He was called by Kamsa to his court. She was full of worries and anxiety when Krishna did not return soon. She felt that she could not bear the separation from Krishna and yearned for Him all the time. Such intense yearning for God itself is Mukti.

Man's life is sacred, virtuous, noble and praiseworthy, but it is short. In this limited life-span, man has to engage his body and senses in right thinking and good actions. Though the life is short, yet the tasks to be accomplished are infinite. With his intelligence, man can accomplish many mighty tasks. With determination, man can touch the sky and conquer the world. But today man is losing all his strength. What is the reason for this? The reason is that he has lost control over his senses and is not able to free himself from this weakness. The more he loses control over his senses, the weaker he becomes. With the loss of strength of the senses and the body, man gets old soon and his life-span is cut short. To attain longevity and retain youth, the power of the senses should be developed by controlling them. Give up body attachment. If man loses control over the senses and also develops body attachment, then what will be his plight? These two can be compared to two holes in a pot filled with water. Water filled in a pot with holes will get drained soon. Similarly, the pot of your heart is filled with the nectar of God's grace. The scriptures call man as *Amrutasya Putraha* (son of immortality). But as he has become a slave of his senses, man has degenerated as *Anrutasya Putraha* (son of untruth). God has given immense strength to man. But due to his these two weaknesses, he has lost all his strength and has cut short his life-span. In this limited life-span, what good deeds can he do? How can he work for the welfare of society? Man should utilise his God-given strength properly by engaging himself in Satsang (good company), Satpravartana (good conduct) and Seva (service to society). Only then can his strength improve. As he does not engage himself in these noble activities, he is overpowered by his senses which are very powerful.

God is the Witness of Everything Arjuna once asked Krishna, "How can I attain Divinity with my wavering mind?" Krishna told him that unflinching faith in God only could confer that firmness on him. An unsteady mind is full of doubts. When doubts increase beyond limit, the person becomes a 'dirty' fellow. A pure heart has no doubts. The heart becomes impure due to the dirt of doubts. A person with impure heart doubts anything he comes across. He starts doubting even his own mother. How can tolerance and sympathy grow in a person who is full of doubts?

Today every act of man is filled with selfishness. Selfishness has entered his thoughts, words and deeds. Man lives as a puppet in the evil hands of selfishness. Once under the control of selfishness, how can he ever progress? A selfless person is victorious in everything that he does. The Pandavas faced many difficulties and humiliations, yet they achieved victory because of their faith in Krishna. That is why people in olden days cultivated self-confidence, strong conviction, tolerance and sympathy.

In today's world, it has become a fashion to negate what others say. Debating to realise truth is good, but debating simply to negate everything what others say is foolishness. This is not good. Here is an example:

A great savant named Panchashikha came to the court of king Janaka. The king asked him to enter into a debate with a scholar of his court on the subject of the Vedas and Shastras. The scholar in the court of Janaka challenged that he would negate whatever Panchashikha said. Panchashikha laughed and took up the challenge. He thought, "It is not scholarship but utter foolishness to negate everything. Only one who has studied the Vedas and Shastras is a scholar and such a person is equal-minded. But since this mad person is telling that he would negate whatever is said, he is not fit to be in the court of king Janaka" Thinking so, he asked him his first question: "Sir! You are born of your mother, aren't you?" How could the scholar negate that? He kept his mouth shut. Then Panchashikha asked him his second question, "Are you a human being?" How could he say 'No' to this? When the arguments were proceeding like this, Janaka thought, "What a great scholar Panchashikha is! Only a person without any prejudices can argue like that. Such questions are the only way to set the foolish right." A person does not become a scholar just by reading the Shastras and reciting Slokas. He becomes a scholar only when he develops equal-mindedness. Tamil poet Nammalvar said the same thing: "The mind is the witness of one's own mind. Virtues are the witness of one's body, God is the witness of everything. And for a fool, his folly is the witness."

A king had a servant, whom he considered as a fool. Once the king, became seriously ill. The servant approached the king and asked him if he could do any service to him. The king replied, "The valuable life-span given by God has come to an end. I am ready to obey His command and leave this world." The servant requested the king to wait, and asked how he could go when he was so weak. Then he brought a horse for the king's journey! The king remarked, "Foolish fellow! Neither a horse nor a chariot nor any other vehicle can take me there." In reply to the king's remarks, the servant said, "You say that you are going; but you do not know where you are going and how you are going there. You do not know the answer to any question. At the same time, you are calling me a fool. Then who is a fool, you or I?" Foolish, people enter into

arguments like that. This kind of argumentation has become common in this Kali Age. Futile and unnecessary arguments are in fact destroying the intelligence of the people.

This morning when I was returning from Mandir, Ramana Rao of Hyderabad said, "Swami, when you speak about Your childhood days, we feel very blissful. Please narrate some incidents from Your life everyday in Your Discourse." This is the reason why I am telling you about My childhood.

Kondama Raju and Subba Raju were brothers. Subba Raju died young. He had two sons, Venkata Rama Raju and Venkata Subba Raju. After his death, both his sons lived with Kondama Raju's sons, Pedda Venkama Raju and Chinna Venkama Raju. One day Kondama Raju told Me, "Sathya, You have a sacred heart. Whatever you speak is full of truth. So, I want to ask you something. I am thinking of separating these four brothers. What is Your opinion?" I replied, "It is a very good decision because these four families are lacking forbearance and sympathy. So, it is better that they live separately." Kondama Raju asked Me, how I knew these things. I said, "I can hear their words, see their actions and feel their intentions. Is this evidence not enough?" Kondama Raju followed My words, called the four brothers and told them to live separately. He told them, "it will be good if you take up responsibilities and lead a happy life." They readily agreed, as the ladies of the house had lost forbearance and sympathy. Kondama Raju distributed all his property among the four brothers. They asked Kondama Raju, "Who would look after you and where would you live?" Kondama Raju said, "I don't want anything. Give me Sathya. He is my property! He will look after me."

I was then eight years old. I would cook food early in the morning serve him and run to Bukkapatnam with books. When the lunch bell rang, I would run back to the village, eat a little, and again run to Bukkapatnam.

Kondama Raju felt that I was straining Myself too much. So, he asked Me to carry food to the school and not to come back home in the afternoon. In those days, there were no steel carriers or plastic containers. Even aluminium vessels were scarce. I used to take Ragi balls wrapped in a cloth for My lunch in the school. When the lunch bell rang, all the students coming from different villages (Karnatanagapalli, Janakampalli, Puttaparthi, Kammavaripalli) would gather near Bukkapatnam tank. They would get rice in their carriers, whereas I was poor and I had only Ragi balls. In order to keep up the honour of the family, I used to move away from the group and eat separately. Everyone has to uphold one's family's prestige. If you behave in an ignoble way, your family will get a bad name. If other boys saw Me eating Ragi balls, they would think that I came from a poor family. I did not want to let down the name of My family.

Later, I told Kondama Raju that I would come home and eat even if it was a little difficult for Me. Even in difficulties, there lies happiness. Pleasure is an interval between two pains. Without pain, there is no pleasure. One has to work hard to enjoy happiness. To make an ornament out of gold, first it has to be put into fire, then hammered, cut, moulded and welded. Only then it becomes a jewel. So, I said, "Grandfather, I am ready for hard work. This is not a difficulty, it is also a good exercise for Me!" He told Me, "This exercise is too much for an eight-year-old boy." He had great love for Me. He would never trust anyone except Me. Whatever I said was truth for him. That is why he had a sacred death. Often Easwamma urged Kondama Raju to come and

stay with his four sons at least for short periods. She told him that they were all ready to serve him and asked him if they did not deserve to serve him. Even then, he rejected this idea, saying that he had Sathya with him and he did not need anyone else. He had such a firm faith in Me.

After the New Mandir was opened on 23rd November 1950, Kondama Raju used to come every morning and evening to see Me. I told him, "Why do you strain yourself by walking all the way? You can stay at home. I will come and see you!" He replied that this was an exercise for him at that age. He paid Me back in the same coin! He was 112 years old at that time. Even at that age, he could walk steadily. At that time, I had the habit of eating Paan from dawn to dusk. One day, I offered Kondama Raju betel nut and betel nut powder. He refused to take the powder saying that his teeth were strong and took the betel nut itself and chewed it up in no time. He never used spectacles. He could walk any distance.

Shun Artificial Speech

Old people of those days got strength through control of senses. They did not have body attachment. They lived in order to discharge their duties. Such great people were there in every family. Once Thyagaraja was invited to the court of the king of Travancore, and a great assembly was arranged. Thyagaraja sang his first composition thus: "*Endaro Mahanubhavulu. Andariki Vandanamulu*" (there are many great souls, my salutations to all of them.) In earlier days, they used to begin any programme by offering salutations to the entire assembly. But some of our students begin by addressing the audience as 'brothers and sisters'. How can old people become your 'brothers and sisters'? This is an artificial way of speaking. In one such gathering, some one got up and asked the speaker, "You addressed me as your brother. I am poor; so give me a share in your property!" Will the speaker share his property? He just calls them brothers and sisters without that intention. Then, why should you use the words 'brothers and sisters'? This has become an artificial usage. I do not like these artificial words. I always address you as 'embodiments of love'! Bhagavan is the embodiment of love. You too are endowed with love.

So, I call you embodiments of love. I am not at all a master. I am a servant, a servant of devotees. I am always with devotees fulfilling their wishes. You do not come to Me to take Namaskar. I come to you to give Namaskar. (Cheers) What does it mean? I am yours. You need not get up to come to Me; I will come to you. I will take over all your problems. In this way, I practise and demonstrate whatever I say. You too should do the same thing. That is called Truth. The proper study of mankind is man. There should be unity of thought, word and deed. Especially, the students should recognise this. It is not enough to praise Durga, Lakshmi, Saraswati in poems and songs. When you cultivate good qualities, you yourself will become Lakshmi. Once you control your senses and the mind, you will become Durga. When you speak words of truth, you will become Saraswati. The other name of Saraswati is Bharati. Some people say that our country Bharat is named after king Bharata or the brother of Rama. But who gave them this name? There should be a basis for all these names. That basis is the name of Saraswati, i.e., Bharati. Brahma is the creator but the one who sustains the creation is Saraswati. Bharati is her name. This country is named after her. But this is not very widely known. Indian culture has many such secrets. But few endeavour to know these secrets inherent in the Vedas, Shastras and Itihasas.

The quintessence of this Discourse is that you should cultivate patience and sympathy. A family lacking in these values is never peaceful. Some may claim that they are peaceful but it is only momentary peace. One who is patient and sympathetic is happy all the time. Desires, which take gigantic dimensions gradually, are the root cause of the decline of these virtues in man. An unfulfilled desire gives rise to worry that keeps on growing. It is said: *"To be born is a worry, to be on the earth is a worry; world is a cause of worry and death too; entire childhood is a worry and so is the old age; life is a worry, failure is a worry; all actions and difficulties cause worry; even happiness too is a mysterious worry."* (Telugu Poem) How can man get rid of anxiety when he is sitting under this tamarind tree of worries? By imbibing the virtues of patience and sympathy, you can sweeten your speech, vision and hearing. Then your life will become full of sweetness. It is said about Lord Krishna:

"Vachanam Madhuram, Nayanam Madhuram, Sravanam Madhuram Madhuradhipathe Akhilam Madhuram." (All that He speaks, sees and hears is sweet. He is the Lord of sweetness and sweetness itself too.)

Develop Inner Vision

If your inner being is full of love, the same principle of love will find manifestation in your speech, vision, hearing and actions. You should never harbour evil qualities like hatred and jealousy. I always feel happy at the happiness and prosperity of others. I never felt jealous even once in My life. How can jealousy enter My heart which is full of love? I do pretend to be angry sometimes, but it is only to correct you. If I tell you sweetly, you may not pay heed to My words. If I say sternly "Go back!" you get frightened and say that I am angry. But it is not anger, it is just a change of tone. I have no anger, no hatred, no jealousy and no bad qualities at all! If I had these bad qualities, how would so many people from so many countries come here? (*Cheers*) My love is the basis for all this. I am showering My love on you and am accepting yours; this is My foremost duty.

When I came to give My Discourse this evening, I was coughing all the way. The students wondered how I would speak. But the moment I started speaking, all My ailment was gone. (*Cheers*) I am always healthy, but such problems do occur in this material world. Man may be intelligent, he may be very learned and occupying a high position. But he is always engrossed in worldly affairs. Man's attachment to the body, absence of control over his senses and his limitless desires are the cause of his worldliness. A person with such feelings is subjected to many diseases and difficulties. Many people ask Me, "Swami, you are quite old now. Do you wear spectacles?" I ask them, "Have you ever seen Me wearing them? Then why do you ask Me?" I do not need spectacles as I can see perfectly.

Many old people pray to Me for permission to get their eyes operated. But I tell them that even one eye is enough to see the world! Similarly, one ear is enough to listen to everything. Man needs the eyes of wisdom to see God. Why do people close their eyes in front of the idols of deities in the temple? These physical eyes are not enough to see God; you need the inner eyes. The physical eyes help us to see the outer world. This is *Pravritti Drishti* (outward vision). The other is *Nivritti Drishti* (inward vision). When you live in the world, outward vision is essential. But see no evil, hear no evil, and never listen to the criticism of others. Criticising others is the worst sin. You indulge in the criticism of others because of the sins committed by you in your

past lives. Do not criticise, blame or ridicule anybody. And if you criticise God, nothing can be worse than this. Speak softly and sweetly to all. This is what you are required to do.

Tolerance and sympathy are essential for man. Only then can he attain enlightenment. When you have tolerance and sympathy make proper use of them in life. What is the use of having tolerance if you do not practise it in the right way? On the demise of someone in a house, people express their sympathy with the bereaved by asking questions about the deceased. If you speak pleasingly, they think you are gentle. But if you tell them the truth that everyone has to face death, they think you are harsh. When people report to Me about death and disease, I say, "Very happy". A man became angry at this and asked Me, "You say You are happy when I am dying?" "Death is inevitable, if not today, it will come some day or the other! Truth grants real happiness, so I speak the truth!" When I replied thus, he was pacified.

The student who spoke earlier said, "Follow the Master" Who is the Master? It is your conscience. Face the devil; distance yourself from evil. Fight to the end; keep trying till the end. Finish the game. Life is a game, emerge victorious from it. This is the true meaning. Different people interpret it differently. A doctor prescribes different medicines to different patients. When four different people with stomachache approach the doctor, the doctor prescribes four different treatments for each of them—hot water fermentation for one, soda bicarbonate mixture for the second, salt for the third and an operation for the fourth. The last person might think that the doctor is partial. But only the doctor knows what is to be done for each ailment. Who is the doctor? *Vaidyo Narayano Hari* (God Himself is the doctor). God knows the prescription for all your diseases and troubles. So, you should go to God only for relief from your suffering.

Some difficulties arise when the senses are impaired. Here is an incident. Once a boy, suffering from diarrhoea, went to Dr. Alreja. Dr. Alreja is a very good person and works very patiently. Even at the age of eighty-five, he goes to the hospital regularly. But he is hard of hearing. In spite of his hearing aid, his hearing is not proper. The boy complained of stomachache and dysentery. Dr. Alreja could not hear properly and thought it was constipation and prescribed a purgative. The condition of the boy became worse. Mistakes occur when doctors do not listen properly to patients. Since it was done with a good intention, the boy was cured immediately. Whatever is done with good intentions will yield good results.

Whatever I do, I do it for your good. I may get angry with you or scold you, it is for your own good and not for My sake. I have no desires of My own; whatever I do, it is good for you!

Bhagavan concluded His Discourse with the Bhajan, "Prema Mudita Manase Kaho..."

—*From Bhagavan's Dasara Discourse in Sai Kulwant Hall, Prasanthi Nilayam on 2nd October. 2000*

SSSIHL'S ANNUAL SPORTS AND CULTURAL MEET 2001

Magnificent Cultural Show and Daring Sports Events

Wonderful cultural items and daring Meats of the students in the Sports and Cultural Meet of this new millennium showed how integral education of the Institute was bringing about all-round development of its students.

The annual sports and Cultural Meet of Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning was held on 11th January 2001 in the Hill View Stadium, Prasanthi Nilayam in the Divine Presence of the Revered Chancellor of the Institute, Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba. It was one of the most spectacular shows of intelligence, skill, balance, courage and adventure by the students of the Institute.

Institute Sports Events

The Revered Chancellor, Bhagavan Baba, arrived in the Stadium in an open car at 7.15 a.m. and was led to Santhi Vedika in a grand procession. Exquisitely bedecked Sai Geetha, Institute band, students both boys and girls on motorbikes as escorts and slow march squad formed part of this magnificent procession. All along Bhagavan stood in the car and blessed the devotees. On His arrival at Santhi Vedika, the Vice Chancellor and senior staff members of the Institute offered their salutations to Him. Bhagavan then inaugurated the by lighting the sacred lamps amidst the thunderous applause of the audience which filled the entire Hill View Stadium.

Soon after this, the marching squads offered their salutes to the Revered Chancellor one after the other. The students of all the three campuses of the Institute, viz., Prasanthi Nilayam, Brindavan and Anantapur, Junior College, Anantapur, besides Primary School and Higher Secondary School marched smartly to the marching tunes of the institute band. The Primary School students led the March Past and the squad of athletes of the Institute formed its rear.

At 8.00 a.m. Bhagavan hoisted the Institute flag, lighted the Sports Torch and released a couple of white pigeons and a bunch of balloons. The participants were administered the pledge by the Institute captain to take part in the Sports Meet in the true spirit of sports. The Sports Torch carried by the sports mascot in the form of a tiger lit the Sports Meet Urn at the hilltop through a mechanical device.

The gala events of the Sports Meet started with daredevil stunts on motorbikes by the students of Prasanthi Nilayam Campus. Besides the various formations, the students on motorbikes showed their courage and control by passing through a flaming tunnel and wheel. This was followed by a magnificent display of rhythm, balance and skill by the students who displayed various feats of gymnastics, skating and martial arts. The audience was hilarious when giant puppets and men on stilts performed various feats like driving motorbikes, bicycles and car with consummate ease. A new item this time was 'Rhythm of Life'. The students produced beautiful tunes and rhythms not with musical instruments of an orchestra, but with materials of everyday use like buckets, plates, sticks, drums, etc.

The Brindavan Campus made a mega start of their sports events when two of their students flew over the Hill View Stadium in their para motor crafts. Bhagavan, obviously pleased with their display, gave them His blessings and trophies. He also materialised a bracelet for one of the students and a ring for the other. Brindavan Percussion Team consisting of 25 students then performed an impressive march. They also provided rhythmic support to all the Brindavan

Campus events. This was followed by a grand display of various formations on a 40 feet structure. A dance ballet "Harmony" showed how the five elements created by God conform to cosmic rhythm. Another beautiful dance showed with appropriate commentary how man should evolve from Trigunas of Satwa, Rajas and Tamas and attain God who is beyond these Gunas (attributes) and the embodiment of Sathyam, Sivam, Sundaram.

The Anantapur Campus students picturised in the Stadium the saga of 75 glorious years of Bhagavan in Puttaparthi through their programme "A Journey to Sai". It depicted how the advent of Bhagavan Baba had transformed this tiny village of huts and anthills into the spiritual capital of the world and a global centre of world-class health and education services. This was shown by replicas of village scenes, huts, anthills and Sri Sathya Sai Water Supply Project. The students enacted the life story of Bhagavan Baba remarkably well while an appropriate commentary enhanced its effect. Besides this, the girl students showed their power of concentration, coordination and balance by their feats on wheels, ladders and bicycles. Some daring girl students showed their skill by demonstrating rope-walking and rope-cycling. Another spectacular event of the girl students was the formation of human pyramid and a well-modulated rhythmic dance. With this, the morning programme came to a close at 10.30 a.m.

Sports Events for Staff

Following the success of the last year's sports events for teachers and non-teaching staff, staff sports were held this year also. Bhagavan Baba, the Chancellor of the Institute, arrived in the Hill View Stadium on the afternoon of 11th January 2001 at 2.30 p.m. and was escorted to the Santhi Vedika by a squad of motorbike riders. The staff participants welcomed Bhagavan and offered their salutations to Him. Bhagavan graciously showered His blessings on all of them. The participants in the staff sports were divided into three age groups - above 55 years, 40-55 years and below 40 years. But when the events started, age seemed to be no bar, as they participated in various events with full vigour and enthusiasm. The sports events for the staff included the following: obstacle race, balancing race with pot on head, walking on tiles, three-legged race, hitting the pot blindfolded, relay race, musical chairs, tug of war, etc.

Primary School Students' Events The grand finale of the Sports Meet came with a spectacular show of cultural and sports items by the Primary School children. This was, in fact, one of the most captivating shows of the Sports Meet. Apart from the rhythmic dances in which hundreds of children participated in their colourful costumes, the students presented gymnastic, acrobatic and bicycle events to demonstrate their skill, balance and courage. A noteworthy event to mention was the deft performance of scooter stunts by a small boy.

However, the most impressive item of the Primary School students' programme was the one which showed the creation of the universe and the five elements of earth, water, fire, air and ether. Not only the theme selected was lofty but also the execution of this item with appropriate dances and dresses was perfect.

Thus ended the day of wonderful cultural items and daring feats of the students in the Sports and Cultural Meet of this new millennium, showing how integral education of the Institute was bringing about all-round development of its students. On the conclusion of the day's events,

Bhagavan came down from the dais and profusely blessed all the participants by raising both His hands. The programme came to a happy conclusion at 4.45 p.m. with offer of Arati to Bhagavan.

Avatar Vani

Discourse on the Inauguration of SSSIHMS, Whitefield

Hospitals are meant to serve the Poor and Needy

*The motherland of ours gave to the world
Noble souls renowned in all the continents.
It is the land, which ousted the
Foreign rulers and achieved freedom.
This Bharat is reputed for its scholarship.
It is the sacred land, which stood, forth
As the exemplar in the realms of music, literature and sacred lore;
Born in the land of Bharat, noted for its fine arts and natural beauty,
Oh devotees! It is your bounden duty to foster
The glory and prosperity of the motherland. (Telugu Poem)*

Embodiments of Divine Atma!

In life, health is the greatest wealth. Since ancient times, many Yogis, sages and seers and men of excellence have been making deep investigations into the ways and means of keeping good health. They made great efforts in this direction as they were of the view that man could work for the peace and security of the nation only when he was hale and hearty. In modern times, some people repose complete faith in Allopathy while some others feel Ayurveda is also essential along with Allopathy. Allopathy only gives temporary relief; it does not have permanent cure of diseases. But Ayurveda can provide permanent cure of diseases.

Divine Grace Sustains Human Life The heart is the most important part in the body. If the heart goes on strike, the body becomes lifeless. What is the role of the heart in the human body? It pumps blood to the lungs where it gets purified and then it is supplied to all parts of the body. Each time the heart beats, the blood travels a distance of 12,000 miles in the body. Who has endowed the heart with such a capacity? Is it the scientist, the engineer or the Yogi or any man-made machine which makes it perform such a stupendous task? No., It is only the Divine power that is the basis for all this. Man cannot accomplish even a small task without the help of Divine power. Today man has lost self-confidence and does not have faith in God. So, first of all, man should foster self-confidence without which life becomes meaningless.

Allopathy cannot eradicate disease causing germs permanently. It can control them only to a certain extent for a certain period of time. There is always the risk of relapse. Though Allopathy has been progressing from time to time, the number of diseases too has been increasing. Dr. Samuel Hahnemann of Germany, who discovered homoeopathy, also made deep investigations into Ayurveda. Welfare of the whole world was his motto. But man today is not concerned with the welfare of the world.

Impart Health and Happiness to the Poor

These days heart diseases are widely prevalent in society. That is why we established a Super Speciality Hospital at Prasanthi Nilayam where 10,600 operations have been performed so far, totally free of cost. Many poor people have benefited from this. Heart surgeries have become very expensive. In such a situation, what would have been the fate of poor people? No one seems to be bothered about this. One has to work for the welfare of the poor, alleviate their suffering and set an ideal to the nation.

Service becomes truly meaningful only when it is rendered to the poor and needy. Today neither the doctors nor the politicians, not even the Government for that matter, are concerned about the welfare of the poor. If a hospital is constructed at a cost often crores, they expect a profit of 100 crores. Instead of being kindhearted, they have become business minded. Hence, the pathetic condition of the poor.

During the last three-four days, many heart surgeries have been conducted here in this hospital. Who are the patients? One is a carpenter, another is a Dhobi (washerman). Many such patients who are economically backward are being treated here. In this short period, as many as 50 heart surgeries have been conducted! One gets immense joy seeing their happy faces. Of what use is medical science if it does not bestow health and happiness on the poor and needy?

Today the educated do not care to spare a thought for the poor and forlorn. This hospital is dedicated for the welfare of the poor. I am happy only when the poor are served. I have dedicated My entire life for the uplift of the poor and downtrodden. In future, even the highly advanced surgeries like heart transplant and lung transplant will take place here. One may be wealthy and virtuous but without good health, one cannot lead a happy life. The late former Chief Minister of Karnataka, Patel helped us a lot in this project. The present Chief Minister, Krishna has also been of great help to us. Many noble people of Karnataka are also associating themselves with this project. So, we are determined to give happiness to the people of Karnataka.

Sai Institutions are Eternal

Disease has no distinction; it may afflict anybody, be it a pauper or a millionaire. We too have no such distinction. Here the treatment will be rendered totally free-of cost to the rich and poor alike. Not merely this, even the food will be supplied free. Our aim is to cure the patients of their ailments and send them home happy and healthy. This establishment will serve the poor forever. Some may have a mistaken notion that it will only be a temporary one. All the institutions established by Sai are eternal.

The other day, a washerman from Gulbarga underwent a heart surgery in our hospital. When he saw Me, his joy knew no bounds. He said, "O Swami, You are our God, I have undergone heart surgery in Your hospital: One needs to spend a lot of money to undergo a heart surgery. Even for admission, one needs to spend thousands of rupees. The poor washerman does not have even a fraction of the required amount. In this world, there are many men of affluence, but how many are showing compassion towards the poor? They may say a thousand things, but do they practise even one? Is there any rich person who is doing even one-thousandth part of what Sai is doing? We are spending crores of rupees to provide potable drinking water to the villagers, to render

free medical treatment and to give free education. But some people out of jealousy are indulging in false propaganda. The tongue has no bone, so people twist it in the way they want. Let us see, if any of those who indulge in false propaganda are prepared to feed the hungry and alleviate the suffering of the poor. In fact, such people set their dogs on the beggars who come to their doorstep to beg alms. Today all the fields like education, medicine, music, literature, etc., have become business oriented.

Sacrifice is the Hallmark of a Doctor

Embodiments of Love - Doctors!

Fill your hearts with compassion and serve the poor and needy. Don't be stone-hearted and money-minded. When the hour of reckoning comes, will you be able to carry with you the wealth you have amassed? No. Serve the poor with love. That alone can redeem you. Service to the poor is service to God. Sacrifice your life for the cause of the poor. Service to the poor is My only motto. I have no other desires. I am prepared to sacrifice even My life to serve the poor. (Cheers) Do at least one-thousandth part of what Swami is doing. Of what use is human life if it is not spent in the service of the poor?

"Neither by penance nor by pilgrimage nor by study of scriptures nor by Japa can one cross the ocean of life. One can achieve it only by serving the poor." (Sanskrit Verse)

It is your good fortune that you have become doctors. Sacrifice is the hallmark of a true doctor. So, doctors should have the spirit of sacrifice. They should be compassionate and considerate towards the poor. There are many poor people who are losing their lives as they cannot afford costly treatment. Your love alone can sustain such lives. The more you develop the spirit of sacrifice in you, the greater will be the world's progress. Hospitals are meant to serve the poor and not to earn money. What is the point in earning crores of rupees when one has to ultimately leave the world empty handed? So, spend all your earnings for the welfare of the poor. Dedicate your lives to the service of your fellowmen.

Prior to the establishment of this hospital, the land here had not much value. But after the hospital has come up, here the land value also has gone up. Now you find so many buildings coming up around. What is the use if one is merely interested in making profit? One should utilise it for the benefit of the poor. Your happiness will become manifold if you can make at least one poor person happy. Help ever, hurt never. Do not extort money from the poor. Do not put them to suffering for your greed for money. Remember it is not money that you are wresting, but their lives. Lead a life suffused with love, compassion and sacrifice. Tyaga (sacrifice) alone can lead to Yoga (spirituality).

We don't have any distinction of caste, creed, religion and nationality. We offer free treatment to everybody. We are determined to offer free treatment, come what may, even if we have to take loans. We are prepared to spend any amount of money; safeguarding the life of patients is our main objective. All of you, particularly doctors, should learn this lesson. Eschew greed for money; develop love and spirit of sacrifice. Then money will come to you automatically.

Divine Grace is Essential for Cure

Embodiments of Love!

Medicines on their own cannot cure diseases; it is Divine grace that cures. Only sacrifice can win God's grace. Do not be satisfied by merely filling your own belly, try to appease the hunger of others too. Undertake such activities which will benefit the poor. This hospital does not merely stand for architectural beauty. Andam (beauty) has no value if there is no Anandam (bliss). You can experience bliss only when you give happiness to the poor. The poor are suffering as they cannot afford to buy medicines. We will give all the required medicines free. Make every effort to give happiness to all.

Today, as the programme is already delayed, I do not have enough time to give you further details. Develop spiritual outlook and treat the patients with love and care and make them happy and healthy. Without God's grace, even the pulse cannot beat. You are under the mistaken notion that mere medicines can cure the diseases. If that were the case, what happened to all those kings and rich men who had access to best medical facilities? So, along with medicines, one should have Divine grace too. Medicine and Divine grace are like negative and positive respectively. Diseases can be cured only when both these come together. So, along with taking medicines, one should also pray for Divine grace. Without Divine grace, human body cannot be sustained. Human body is most wonderful and mysterious. Who is responsible for the pulse beat? Who is making the heart pump blood? All this happens because of Divine Will. Divine power is responsible for the growth of the body. There is no point in merely feeding the body and sustaining it unless it is used to serve the poor.

This hospital will surely attain exalted position. You may not understand it now, but you will realise it in future. People belonging to different parts of the world will come here for treatment. (loud applause) This hospital has such Divine potentiality in it. Do not entertain any wrong notions about this hospital. Earlier when the Super Speciality Hospital was established at Puttaparthi, people had their own misgivings about its functioning. Now, in the villages surrounding Puttaparthi, you don't find anybody suffering from heart diseases. Even small children are not afraid to undergo heart surgery in our hospital there. Likewise, we should see to it that no one suffers from heart diseases in the State of Karnataka. Villagers who are suffering from heart disease should be brought here for treatment. Anybody can come here for treatment. We have no objection. Everyone has equal right to get treatment here.

Leaders should Support Noble Causes Our Prime Minister Vajpayee took great pains to come here. Leaders like him are very essential for this world. He is a leader who supports and encourages noble causes like this. Ministers who extend their cooperation for good causes are very much necessary for the nation to progress. They should have noble feelings and love for God to attain Divine grace. There is nothing that one cannot achieve if one has Divine grace. *Loka Samastha Sukhino Bhavantu* (May the whole world be happy!) That is My desire. I am prepared to do anything for this. I am prepared to sacrifice even My life for the welfare of humanity. Of what use is the life of one who does not aspire for the welfare of humanity? I always wish for the well-being of others. My feelings are always pure and sacred. If your feelings and intentions are noble, you need not be worried about money; it will come to your doorstep.

Embodiments of Love!

We have caused great inconvenience to you by making you wait for a long time. You are all very tired having been sitting here patiently for the last three to four hours. Having taken part in this congregation, may you develop the spirit of sacrifice and spend your time, wealth and energy in the service of the poor! This is what I desire from you. I do not ask anything from anybody. Help the poor in every possible way. Feed the hungry. Food is God. Do not waste food. Do not waste money. Money makes many wrongs. Misuse of money is evil. The rich squander their wealth in drinking and gambling. Money should be put to proper use. One should not spend as one pleases. Do not waste energy and do not waste time. These are the four important principles which a man should adhere to. Time wasted is life wasted. Instead of wasting time in vain gossip, utilise it to serve society. Help everybody to the extent possible. This is what I expect you to do. Come and see it for yourself the work that is being done here with the spirit of sacrifice, and experience bliss. Here you will find the poor with happiness and joy on their faces. You should see to it that the poor lead a healthy and happy life. That should be your aim in life. *Paropakara Punyaya Papaya Parapeedanam* (one attains merit by serving others and commits sin by harming them). I bless you all so that you may attain the deservedness to see the happiness of the poor.

(Bhagavan's Discourse was followed by National Anthem.)

—*From Bhagavan's Discourse on the inauguration of SSSIHMS at Whitefield, Bangalore on 19th January, 2001*

Prime Minister Inaugurates Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Medical Sciences, Whitefield

A New Temple of Healing

“I have seen many hospitals in India and abroad. However, I can honestly say that I have rarely seen a hospital so magnificent, grand and breathtakingly beautiful as this,” observed Sri Atal Behari Vajpayee, Prime Minister of India while inaugurating Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Medical Sciences at Whitefield, Bangalore.

In a grand function held on 19th January 2000, the Prime Minister inaugurated this hospital in the Divine Presence of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba by whose grace this marvellous ‘temple of healing’ was built in a record time of about one year.

The huge monumental building was grandly decked up for the occasion, with coloured streamers from antique style lamp posts studded around the lush green lawns. The central fountain was jetting water around the idol of Dhanvantari, the god of medicine. The building itself was beautifully and spotlessly done up with the Dhaultpur sandstone-cladded lower floor and the antique white facade broken at intervals with pillars done in brilliant white. Atop the central dome was a golden Kalasham to crown the grandeur.

The function was held in the Central Lobby of the Institute. The huge central dome, the gigantic chandelier suspended from its top, and the ten majestic pillars supporting it provided magnificent

setting for the occasion. Needless to say, the guests filled up every seat in the vast hall. One could hear the repeated comment from every section of the audience that only Bhagavan could have constructed such a marvellous building for a hospital. This space and moment created feelings of awe and wonderment, and a sense of deep humility in the presence of the Divine. Besides Sri Atal Behari Vajpayee, Prime Minister, other VIPs who graced the occasion included Ms. Rama Devi, Governor of Karnataka, Sri S.M. Krishna, Chief Minister of Karnataka, Sri Chandrababu Naidu, Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh, Sri Vilasrao Deshmukh, Chief Minister of Maharashtra, Ms. Uma Bharati, Sri Ananth Kumar, Sri Dhananjay Kumar, Sri S. B. Chavan, Sri Shivraj Patil, Sri Ramakrishna Hegde, Sri Sunil Gavaskar and a host of other dignitaries. The function began with an inspiring invocation by the renowned singer, Srimati Kavita Krishnamurthy and chanting of Vedas by the Primary School students of Prasanthi Nilayam. After the Welcome Address by Sri C. Srinivas, Member, Sri Sathya Sai Central Trust, Dr. P Venugopal of All India Institute of Medical Sciences, New Delhi made a brief speech and stated that this was one of the biggest hospitals in the world providing free cardiac and neuro services to the patients. Ms. Rama Devi, Governor of Karnataka, in her speech thanked Bhagavan for this gift to Karnataka. The Chief Minister of Karnataka said that the execution of the Project in such a short time-span was possible only with the grace of Bhagavan. He went on to say that one of the hospitals of the Karnataka Government was being built for the last eight years and had not yet been commissioned. It was the Divine grace of Bhagavan that such a monumental building had been constructed in a span of about one year. He also promised all help and assistance in running the SSSIHMS.

The Prime Minister, in his Inaugural Address, called for revamping of the government's health care system to make it more effective, and criticised doctors and medical institutions for putting profits before service, and money before healing. Commenting on the beauty and utility of this hospital, Sri Vajpayee observed that this hospital looked like a palace, but a palace with a difference—a palace of healing that is equally accessible to the poor as it is to the rich. He ended his speech in Hindi by saying that in an ordinary hospital, one got Dawa (medicine), but in this hospital, one would get Dawa as well as Dua (medicine as well as Divine blessings and grace). The Prime Minister's speech was followed by Bhagavan's Benedictory Address, in which He stressed the value of service and the need for the medical profession to be service-oriented. Referring to the need for the spirit of sacrifice in the medical profession, Bhagavan observed, "Sacrifice is the true hallmark of a doctor. So, doctors should have the spirit of sacrifice. They should be compassionate and considerate towards the poor." (Full text of Bhagavan's speech is published elsewhere in this issue).

In the end, Bhagavan Baba blessed the architects, Sri Ravi Shankar and Sri Rajan Sood, and the Central Trust Member, Sri C. Srinivas, who were associated with this Project. Bhagavan also gave mementoes to them. The function came to a close with the singing of the National Anthem by all.

Guests leaving the venue were treated to a feast of delight for the eyes by the brilliantly and tastefully lit up building, which made one feel one was in divine fairyland. A Bhajan session was held after this function in Shantiniketan premises near the hospital. Devotees were offered a sumptuous feast at this premises after Bhajan. It was indeed a day to remember, one which one

would never forget in one's lifetime—all flowing from the Divine Grace and Sankalpa of our dear Lord, Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba.

—Satish Nayak

Message of Sivaratri

The message of Sivaratri is: discriminate between 'Siva' and 'Ratri' the Dehi (indwelling Atma) and Deha (body), the spiritual and material, the Kshetrajna and Kshetra (the spirit and matter with its evolutes). Relying merely on the literal meaning of the words, people wait year long for this holy day to miss a meal and call it an Upavasa (fast), to miss a night's sleep and call it a vigil! Upavasa means living with or near God. It means living in the unbroken constant presence of the Lord by Namasmarana (chanting the Divine Name). That is real fast—holding fast to Him.

—Baba

Make Proper use of Natural Resources

One may be able to learn the Vedas and Shastras by heart.

One may become the master of prose and poetry.

If one lacks purity of heart, one is bound to be ruined.

The word of Sai is verily the Truth.

(Telugu Poem)

Embodiments of Love!

If you lack purity of heart, you cannot have even an iota of understanding about the principle of the Atma in spite of your highest secular knowledge. You may be a very great scholar but you cannot see your own body once you close your eyes and go to sleep. But with open eyes, even an illiterate person can see himself and the surroundings. Just as ash covers the live embers, man's vision is clouded by delusion. Consequently, he is unable to realise his true nature. Man should understand the intimate relationship between himself and Divinity.

Ash Covers the Embers

You can acquire immense power and strength once you develop purity of heart, gain spiritual knowledge and understand Divinity. Sadhana or spiritual practice is not limited to practices like Japa and Dhyana. True Sadhana lies in removing the veil of illusion that covers the Antahkarana (inner motivator). It is said, *Pashyannapicha Na Pashyati Moodho* (he is a fool who sees yet does not recognise the reality). O man, is it not foolishness on your part to think that you have not seen God though you see Him in the form of the world? Fire is seen if you blow the ash away from live embers. You can see clear water only after removing the moss from its surface. A person's vision is clouded when he has cataract in his eyes, but when the cataract is operated upon, he gets back his normal vision. Similarly, as long as a person is under the influence of the mind, he identifies himself with the body and experiences pleasure and pain. Once he transcends the mind, the dualities of the world do not exist for him. He visualises Divinity everywhere.

Today man tries to know Divinity with his mind. In order to visualise Divinity, you should understand the principle of the Atma or `I'. The Atma is formless. So long as you are attached to your form, you will not understand what Atma means. Everyone introduces himself using the letter `I', which is nothing but the Atma. Right from his childhood to old age, man uses the letter `I' while introducing himself. Man passes through different stages of life, but the `I' in him remains the same. That changeless `I' is the Atma. Oblivious of the presence of such divine principle within, man is hankering after worldly and ephemeral pleasures. This corresponds to Pravritti. But the Atma is related to Nivritti. As man is engrossed in Pravritti, he is not able to realise his true nature.

Bhutakasha, Chittakasha and Chidakasha

Though not seen, the Atma is present in one and all. This Atma is all-pervasive and limitless. It manifests in the universe in its three aspects, viz., Bhutakasha, Chittakasha and Chidakasha. Bhutakasha is engulfed by Chittakasha which in turn is encompassed by Chidakasha. Bhutakasha which consists of the earth, the sun, the moon and the stars is very vast. The sun is much bigger than the planet earth and has a diameter of 865,000 miles. But it looks small to our eyes, as it is

at a distance of 9 crore miles from the earth. The stars are still farther away and are much bigger than the sun in size though they look like small diamonds adorning the sky. Light travels at a speed of 1,86,000 miles per second. Some of the stars are at such a great distance from the earth that the light emanating from them is yet to reach the earth. The stars, the sun, the moon and the earth form a part of Bhutakasha. All these are present in Chittakasha in a subtle form. So, Chittakasha is many times bigger than Bhutakasha.

You may think that the sun is self-effulgent, but in fact it is the Atma which illumines the sun. So, the Atma is the greatest of all. Its vastness cannot be described in words. All the five elements are made up of a combination of atoms and have a form, whereas the Atma is infinite and beyond all forms. The Vedas describe the Atma as Nirgunam, Niranjanam and Nirakaram (attributeless, pure and formless). What do you mean by the vision of the Atma? It is the visualisation of the all-pervasive effulgence. The Atma is present in every cell of the human body. In order to understand this, you have to transcend form. All the material objects have a definite form, but in due course of time they lose their identity and merge into the Atma. So, man should make an effort to go beyond the form to merge into the Atma. What is the nature of the Atma? The formless state of bliss signifies the Atma.

In the days of yore, many sages made concerted efforts to investigate into the nature of the Atma. Ultimately, they declared to the world, *Uedahametam Purusham Mahantam Adityavarnam Tamasa Parastat* (I know the Cosmic Being who shines with the effulgence of a billion suns and who is beyond Tamas, the darkness of ignorance). O people, the Atma transcends name and form. It is self-effulgent. In order to have the vision of the Atma, you don't need to go to the forest and undertake penance. You can see it everywhere once you dispel the darkness of ignorance from within. Efforts in this direction amount to true Sadhana. Divinity is latent in humanity, but you are attributing various names and forms to it and are trying to visualise it through rituals. As a result, you are subjected to frustration and depression. First of all, you should make efforts to realise divinity latent in Bhutakasha. But how can man understand Divinity when he fails to understand humanness? In the first place, man should understand what humanness means.

Only when you transcend Bhutakasha and Chittakasha can you understand Chidakasha. Bhutakasha is like a small star in the sky of Chittakasha. The same can be said of Chittakasha as compared to Chidakasha. Chidakasha is nothing but the Atma. There is nothing beyond this. To understand the formless Atma, you should go beyond the form. In the beginning, you meditate on a specific form, but gradually you should go beyond that form and realise the formless Divinity. So long as you are attached to the form, you are bound to experience pleasure and pain.

You get an experience of the formless Atma in deep sleep state (Sushupti) in which you lose the identity of name and form. In the deep sleep state, there are no feelings pertaining to Bhutakasha. So long as your mind dwells in Bhutakasha, you identify yourself with a form. Though the modern man is highly educated, he is unable to comprehend the principles of Bhutakasha, Chittakasha and Chidakasha. He is distancing himself from such enquiries, thinking them to be abstruse philosophical truths. They are not mere philosophy. They are the eternal truths which are to be understood and put into practice in daily life.

Act according to your Swabhava All that you see in the external world is nothing but the manifestation of God. All of you who have assembled here are the embodiments of God. Even this hall is a manifestation of God. Though you see God everywhere, still you search for Him. Here is a small example. The hostel boys see Sai Geetha everyday, so they are not excited about it. If they happen to see even the tail of an elephant in a wild life sanctuary, they feel thrilled. Likewise, though you see God in the form of people around you, you are not excited. But if you see a person with three heads, you will become ecstatic thinking that you have had the vision of Divine Cosmic Form. You should understand that Divinity pervades the entire Nature. Lord Krishna declared in the Gita, "*Mamaivamsho Jeevaloke Jeevabhuta Sanathana*" (the eternal Atma in all beings is a part of My Being). You and I are not separate. We are one and the same. Once you understand this truth, you will not go in search of God here and there.

Everything that you find in the world is nothing but Vishwa Viraat Swaroop (Divine Cosmic Form). All forms are His. But form is associated with Pravritti. It is the root cause of delusion. What is Maya? That which leads to mistaken identity is Maya. When you mistake a rope as a snake in darkness, you are scared. But when you flash torchlight on it, you realise that it is a rope and not a snake. It is the mistaken identity that has given rise to fear in you. Once you know the reality, you become fearless. Due to the Prabhava (influence) of worldly objects, you have forgotten your Swabhava (true nature). Once you recognise your Swabhava and act strictly according to it, there will be no scope for delusion. Here is a small example. An actor once came to the court of a king to give his performance. That day, he came to enact the role of Sankaracharya. He gave a scholarly exposition on the philosophy of Adi Sankara and chanted many Slokas: "*Janma Dukham, Jara Dukham, Jaya Dukham Punah Punah, Antyakale Maha Dukham, Thasmath Jagrata Jagrata*" (birth, old age and worldly life are full of misery. Death is the greatest misery. Be aware of this truth.) "*Matha Nasthi, Pitha Nasthi, Nasthi Bandhu Sahodara, Artham Nasthi, Griham Nasthi, Tasmat Jagrata Jagrata*" (parents, friends, relatives, house and wealth are like passing clouds. Be aware of this truth.)

The king was very pleased and offered him a tray full of gold. The actor said, "O king, a Sanyasi does not need gold. I cannot accept this gift." The next day, the actor appeared in the court as a dancer. He danced beautifully and pleased everyone present. At the end of the performance, the king offered a small gift of just a few coins. The actor said, "O king, this payment is meagre and not enough." The king was astonished and asked, "Yesterday, you refused a substantial gift but today you are demanding more. What is the reason for this strange behaviour?" The actor replied, "O king, an actor will not be true to his profession if his words do not match the costume he is wearing and the role he is enacting. Yesterday, I played the role of a Sanyasi and, therefore, spurned wealth. Today I am a dancer, and a dancer always expects a handsome reward! My conduct must be in consonance with my garb." Though man is invested with the garb of a human being, his conduct is not in accordance with his 'dress'.

Self-confidence is the Foundation of Self-realisation

Having been born as a human being, man should lead his life with self-confidence and uphold his self-respect. You are aware how Abraham Lincoln rose to become the President of America because of his self-confidence. He was born in a poor family. His schoolmates used to make fun of him for his dress and poverty. Lincoln, unable to bear this humiliation, approached his mother and said, "Mother, I am subjected to a lot of ridicule by fellow students. Please get me a new

dress." Then his mother told him, "Son, we are not well-to-do. You must act according to our family condition. Don't be deterred by other people's taunts. Develop self-confidence and uphold your self-respect." From that moment, Lincoln strictly followed the advice of his mother. After some time, his mother passed away, and his father married again. His stepmother was also quite affectionate towards him and encouraged him to persevere on the path shown by his mother. Lincoln first started his own business to earn his livelihood. Even there also he continued to uphold his self-respect. Seeing his good qualities, his friends encouraged him to contest the election. Lincoln stood for election and won with a thumping majority. Ultimately, he rose to become the President of America. Though he was born in a poor family, he rose to such an exalted position because of his self-confidence and self-respect.

Students! Uphold your self-respect. If you uphold your self-respect, you can then enjoy the bliss of the Atma. First of all, understand what Atma means. The principle of T that is present in everybody is Atma. The Vedas declare, *Aham Brahmasmi* (I am Brahma). But in My view, even this is not complete truth because the presence of `I' and Brahma shows duality. Truth is one, not two. Man should hold on to the principle of non-dualism and sanctify his life. Once you develop faith in this principle, you will have all the purity, fame and prosperity. So, lead your life with self-respect.

Cleanse your Heart of Evil Qualities

Today is the very auspicious day of Sivaratri. Siva stands for auspiciousness. We have Ratri (night) on each day. How is this night different from other nights? What is so special and auspicious about Sivaratri? The mind has 16 aspects, of which 15 are dissolved on this night and only one is remaining. Make proper use of this holy night by undertaking Sadhana with devotion and steadfastness. What sort of Sadhana you must undertake? Cleanse your heart of all evil qualities which overshadow your Antahkarana (inner motivator). Evil qualities arise in you because of the misuse of the senses. Misuse of the senses is the root cause of all sins. Sadhana does not mean doing Japa and meditation alone. You should foster pure and divine feelings. Consider everyone as divine. Respect and love all. Develop the feeling, "All are mine and I belong to everybody." Once you have such a firm conviction, you can enjoy immense happiness in life. There will be no trace of worry in your life. Worries and anxieties arise out of your narrow feelings and ignorance. Man's ignorance drives him into the unending cycle of birth and death as declared by Sankaracharya:

*"Punarapi Jananam Punarapi Maranam Punarapi Janani Jathare Sayanam
Iha Samsare Bahudustare Krupayapare Pahi Murare."*

The birth and death are an endless cycle. It is only the grace of God which can save man from this unending ordeal.

Once while Sankaracharya was going to the river Ganga with his disciples, he came across a Brahmin who was memorising a Sanskrit passage, "*Dukrun Karane*". Sankara asked him, what he was doing and the Brahmin replied that he was studying Panini (the great grammarian). "What do you gain out of this study of grammar?" Sankara asked. He replied, "I shall become a great scholar and go to a royal court and become an official scholar and earn all the wealth that I need. With that wealth, I shall lead a happy life." "How long will you live like that?" "I shall live

as long as I am alive." "What next?" asked Sankara. He replied, "I don't know." Then, Sankara-charya made his famous pronouncement, "*Bhaja Govindam, Bhaja Govindam Govindam Bhaja Moodhamathp, Samprapthe Sannihithe Kale Nahi Nahi Rakshati Dukrun Karane.*" (O fool, chant the name of Govinda. When the hour of death approaches, the nuances of grammar will not come to your rescue). Sankara said, "You can enjoy all the pleasures of the world as long as you are alive, but after this body is gone, what will you do? So, keep chanting the name of Govinda incessantly and don't waste your time in these mundane studies."

These studies are all related to Pravritti. It helps only for a very short time. You are proud of your youth. But how long does youth last? Soon you will become an old man. Do not put your faith in your youthful prowess, place your firm faith in God. Realise your self-confidence. Self-confidence leads to self-satisfaction and self-satisfaction leads to self-sacrifice which in turn leads to self-realisation.

Do not disturb the Balance of Nature

Students! 'I' is the permanent reality. Consider this Atma as Godhead itself. Without a substantial basis, there will be no manifestation. The basis for the waves in the ocean is the water therein. In the same manner, the Atma is the basis for the phenomenal world. Everything good and bad, praise and blame are mere passing clouds. The baby, the boy, the youth and the old man have differences in form but the Atma in the person is the unchanging entity. While travelling in a train, you see out of the window, trees, mountains and lakes, etc., fleeting past. This is an illusion. Sometimes, in the sky, you see as if the moon is moving fast, while the clouds are stationary. This again is an illusion. The moon is not moving at the same pace as the clouds. In the same way, the Atma does not change or move; it is only our feelings that change.

Embodiments of Love!

Today is a very holy day. From six o'clock in the evening, the time is highly sacred when Linga will be manifested. God is called Hiranyagarbha. The golden Lingas emerge from Hiranyagarbha Himself. Don't conclude that only Swami is Hiranyagarbha. All of you are manifestations of Hiranyagarbha. You are also eternal and self-effulgent. Hold this truth firmly in your heart. Keep this awareness firm.

We have 'Awareness Classes' in our Institutions. Knowing this or that bit of information is not complete awareness. Awareness implies total understanding. Having seen just the tail of a rat, how can you claim to have seen the rat itself? Today what the scientists have known is only a fraction of the total truth. But they think that they know everything.

First of all, you should try to understand what humanness means. In accordance with your form, you should have human qualities too. Of what use is human life if you behave like a monkey? Understand that you belong to mankind whose basic quality is kindness. Do not have a monkey mind. You are endowed with Hridaya (heart) suffused with Daya (compassion). One whose heart is full of compassion alone is a true human being. Today man talks of the need for compassion but has filled his heart with demonic qualities like anger, greed, jealousy, etc.

Man should put a ceiling on his desires. As man's conduct has become perverse today, we see natural calamities taking place. You are aware of the devastation caused by the earthquake in

Gujarat. Thousands of people lost their lives. The reason for this is that man has no contentment and is entertaining excessive desires. God maintains perfect balance in His creation. In God's creation, the earth and the oceans are endowed with balance. But man is indiscriminately exploiting the earth for extracting oil and other minerals. Everyday tonnes of fish are caught from the oceans causing imbalance in them. Indiscriminate exploitation of Nature results in imbalance on the earth, causing calamities like earthquakes which take a big toll of human lives. Only when man is free from Kampam (unsteadiness) within will he be able to avert Bhukampam (earthquake).

Not only the people of Bharat, but also the people of the entire world should strive to maintain balance. The five elements are nothing but the manifestations of the Divine. Earth is a manifestation of Divinity. That is why our ancients worshipped earth as Bhudevi (goddess earth). Similarly, the river Ganga was worshipped as Gangadevi and air as Vayudeva. In fact, all the elements were worshipped by the ancients. Man's life will be secure only when he realises this truth and acts accordingly. A few days back, I sent lorry loads of rice, grams, etc. for earthquake victims of Gujarat. Some people asked, "Swami, why should you take the trouble of spending so much money sending relief material to Gujarat? You could have as well averted the earthquake." I replied, "My dear, man has to blame himself for the earthquakes. Due to excessive greed for wealth, he is disturbing the balance of the earth. Hence the earthquake. That is the law of nature." Just as balance is very much essential in Nature, so also love is very much needed for man. You have to express your love for man by helping the needy. Love is your nature. Know that whatever God has created is for your welfare. You should utilise natural resources according to your need. You should not rob Nature of its resources to satisfy your greed. Here is an example. Once a greedy person owned a duck which used to lay a golden egg everyday. One day, he ripped open the stomach of the duck thinking that he would get many golden eggs at a time. Today man is indulging in such foolish and greedy acts. Instead of being satisfied with what Nature is giving him, he is aspiring for more and more, and in the process creating imbalance in Nature.

Today the scientists are interested in new inventions. The advancement in science and technology has also led to imbalance in Nature. As a result, there are earthquakes and no timely rains. Science should be utilised only to the extent needed. It should observe its limits. When it crosses these limits, it leads to danger. Man should maintain human qualities. He should adhere to truth and righteousness under all circumstances. Our ancient sages said, *Sathyam Bhruyat, Priyam Bhruyat, Na Bhruyat Sathyamapriyam* (speak the truth, speak pleasantly and do not speak unpalatable truth). Make proper use of the natural resources and do not put them to misuse. Students! You have a long life to lead. Make proper use of the opportunities that you get. Help everybody and make them happy. Share all the good things you have with others. This is your foremost duty.

—*From Bhagavan's Sivarathri Discourse in Sai Kulwant Hall, Prasanthi Nilayam on 21st February 2001*

Aspire for a Divine Life

*There is no disease more fatal than greed,
There is no foe more dangerous than anger,
There is no grief more tormenting than poverty,
There is no Joy greater than wisdom. (Sanskrit Verse)*

Embodiments of Love!

Everyone in this world is afflicted by the malady of greed to some extent or the other. Though man has got plenty, he is neither able to enjoy it himself nor share it with others due to his greed. Then what is the use of all the riches he accumulates? Greed is the cause of man's suffering. Though he is wealthy, for all practical purposes he becomes a pauper or a beggar because of his greed. On the one hand, man suffers from the malady of greed and on the other, from the acute misery caused by poverty, as there is no misery greater than poverty. A man of wisdom does not know what greed is. So, he is always in bliss. Today man may not be having any good qualities or thoughts, but he has anger in plenty. There is no greater enemy of man than his anger. When anger becomes more powerful, it robs man of his human quality and distances him from Divinity. Greed, anger, poverty and wisdom are the main factors which fashion the course of man's life on earth.

Have Steady Mind and Firm Conviction

Though modern man knows much, he does not practise it in his daily life and pretends to be totally ignorant. For example, yesterday in My Discourse, I said that students should not address the audience as `brothers and sisters' artificially without really meaning it. Today, speakers changed their way of addressing itself, and avoided the use of these words. They started addressing the audience as `devotees', `august assembly' and so on. This is a mistake. `Brothers and sisters' is the correct phrase. Every student considers Swami as his/her mother and father. When once Swami is mother for you, are not these people your brothers and sisters? It is not wrong to address the assembly as brothers and sisters. Vivekananda too addressed the gathering in Chicago as brothers and sisters in the true spirit of Indian culture. Indian culture does not consider God merely as father and mother, but preceptor, friend and Supreme Master also as the following Sloka declares:

*Tvameva Mathacha Pitha Tvameva Tvameva Bhanduscha Sakha Tvameva
Tvameva Vidya Dravinam Tvameva Tvameva Sarvam Mamadeva Deva*

So, when God is both mother and father, all are certainly brothers and sisters. You should have a broad mind and noble feelings. Then you will be able to understand the significance of these words properly. Had you understood this, you would not have changed your way of addressing today. Truly speaking, all are brothers and sisters. This is the truth. Let anyone say anything, never swerve from the path of truth. Today students are not able to understand the meaning of certain words. They blindly follow whatever is told to them. When you change your statement merely by the comments of others, it shows that you have neither a steady mind nor a firm determination.

Dear Students!

Consider all as your brothers and sisters. God is your father and mother. Let anyone say anything; never change your conviction. Have such firm faith and propagate this fundamental truth of brotherhood.

Evil Qualities Bring About Disaster The history of Bharat shows that greed has been the cause of many wars. In the Mahabharata, Duryodhana and Dussasana were very powerful and wealthy. Yet they were lacking in good qualities. Their greed was responsible for their ruin and that of their entire clan. So, wicked qualities not only ruin a person but also bring bad name to his kith and kin. We can derive happiness only when we share our love with others. The Vedas also proclaim this, "*Na Karmana Na Prajaya Dhanena Thyagenaikena Amrutatwamanus*" (immortality can be attained only through sacrifice, neither wealth nor progeny nor good deeds can confer it).

But today we do not find even an iota of sacrifice in man. What is the reason? He has become miser and greedy. The absence of the feeling of sacrifice is due to his greed. Krishna pleaded with the Kauravas to give at least five villages to the Pandavas. When he had this vast country of Bharat to himself, could Duryodhana not spare even five villages? What to talk of villages, he refused to give even as much space as would be required to place a needlepoint. How greedy he was! Actually speaking, the kingdom belonged to Pandu. Dhritarashtra considered the kingdom as his property though it did not belong to him. The Pandavas, who had every right to this kingdom, were driven out. Greed was responsible not only for the Mahabharata War, but also for many wars in Bharat.

The Ramayana also illustrates this. Ravana was fabulously rich. He lived in a golden fort. Lanka looked like a paradise. Because of this affluence, Ravana developed excessive desires. In spite of being the king of a vast kingdom and having a virtuous wife, he forcibly took away Sita who belonged to Rama, the God incarnate. Ravana tried to steal what was God's property. Did he have peace and bliss after taking away Sita? No. Sita was the daughter of Mother Earth and Rama, the fundamental basis of Earth. Ravana disregarded this fundamental basis and aspired for Sita because of his lust and greed. This evil quality of Ravana led to the loss of his life, kingdom and riches.

Hiranyakasipu and Hiranyaksha also were victims of anger and greed. What happened to them in the end? Not only did they bring about their own ruin, but they were also responsible for the downfall of the Rakshasa clan. Today man has lost his character by becoming a slave to evil qualities like lust, anger, greed, arrogance and desires. For a child, the Odi (lap) of the mother is its Badi (school). It is safe and happy in the mother's custody. Man starts developing worldly desires after he leaves his mother's lap.

Path of Virtues Leads to Bliss

Embodiments of Love!

In our daily life, we have to recognise the truth relating to happiness. Everyone aspires for happiness, but no one recognises that all that he aspires for is there already within him. Man today focuses his vision outward. He probes into the external world and is therefore not able to recognise what is within him. The source of peace, purity and bliss is there within him. But in his

delusion, he tries to find them outside. His outward vision is the root cause of his worries. Once he turns his vision inward, he can find everything within. Where is God? Man tries to search for God in temples. He thinks that God dwells in Kailash or Vaikuntha. But what is Vaikuntha? What is heaven? Man is not able to understand the real meaning of these terms. In fact, as it is said, one's own happiness is one's heaven, one's sorrow is one's hell. If such is the case, then why do you search outside? You say something and do something else. You do not practise what you say and think, because of which you suffer. Speak the truth; it gives you happiness.

God does not dwell outside. Your heart verily is His temple. But you neglect this temple and search for God in stones. You forget and ignore the God within you and go to places of worship outside to worship Him. This is due to your narrow-mindedness. The day you shed your narrow-mindedness, good qualities will blossom in you. These qualities will instill righteousness in your conduct. Righteousness confers unity. Unity is acquired by discipline and discipline in turn grants peace. Peace makes you virtuous and this truly is the royal road to bliss. Though you are in possession of virtues, you do not realise it. So, you lack peace. O man, bliss is acquired only by virtues and virtues are acquired by Dharma (righteousness). Hence, you should endeavour to be righteous and practise Dharma. Today man does not understand the true meaning of Dharma. You must know what is your Dharma. As you are all children, you should follow the Dharma related to your stage of life.

The best place for a child is its mother's lap where it learns its first lessons of Dharma. The child gradually grows to the stage of youth. As a young man, you should follow the Dharma of youth, crossing over the Dharma of your childhood. For each stage of life, there is a corresponding Dharma. Youth leads to adulthood, which in turn leads to old age. The old people should follow the Dharma pertaining to their stage of life. It is incorrect to assume that Dharma is the same for everyone. What is the Dharma of youth? It is the character which is important for youth. The end of education is character. Cultivate good thoughts in your heart and enrich your life with good conduct. Your heart and your actions are under your control. Both joy and sorrow are in your grasp. People with character enrich the country in values. If the citizens are good, the country will also become good. Youth should have a sterling character. Youth should conduct themselves with humility in the midst of elders. Humility should be reflected in your speech too. You should aspire to achieve that which befits youth. Discipline your Vision Control your vision. This was what Buddha achieved first and foremost. He preached Samyak Dristi (right vision). Right vision leads to right thoughts, right thoughts lead to right deeds and finally right deeds lead to right conviction. So, right vision should be cultivated first. Modern youth do not have right vision. They look at everything good and bad; they say whatever they like, eat whatever they like and do whatever they like.

Can they call themselves human with this type of conduct? You should see what is proper, listen to what is good and do what is appropriate. Only then can you call yourself a true human being. Unity of thought, word and deed is the hallmark of a true human being. Hence aspire for it. Though highly educated, the Kauravas, Ravana, Hiranyaksha and Hiranyakasipu lacked character. They could never live peacefully. In fact, Hiranyaksha and Hiranyakasipu were eminent scientists. No scientist of modern age can equal Hiranyakasipu. While the present-day scientists can reach only the moon, Hiranyakasipu could reach even the Pole Star. Though he was endowed with the power of the intellect and physical prowess, he lacked virtues. Prowess

without virtue is useless. The virtues, which we have to inculcate are good thoughts, good conduct, devotion, discipline and sense of duty. Start by disciplining your vision first.

Man today aspires for a long life but not for a divine life. It is a common practice among elders to bless younger people with long life when they offer their salutations to them. Of what use is such a long life if it is bereft of virtues? Modern man has meaningless desires. He aspires for a long life even when he lacks the basic necessities of life, viz., food, shelter and clothing. Long life is meaningful when one is endowed with the necessities of life. Moreover, it is virtues that give meaning to a long life. Instead of aspiring for a long life, you should aspire for good character and broad-mindedness.

Avoid Hypocrisy in Speech and Action

There is nothing wrong in desiring. But your actions should be in accordance with your desires. Do not waste time in ritualistic worship of God without understanding the underlying significance of the rituals. Extolling God in empty words without firm conviction is meaningless. The two speakers who spoke earlier were praising Swami. I dislike this and feel embarrassed by such praise. It gives Me happiness if you develop good conduct and inculcate virtues. Otherwise, your speech becomes a mockery and an attempt to mislead the audience. You describe God as your mother and father. Then, why don't you address the audience as 'brothers and sisters'? You said, "The devotees who have gathered here." How are you sure they are devotees? When you have considered addressing 'brothers and sisters' as wrong, then calling them 'devotees' amounts to an even worse folly. I address the gathering as 'Embodiments of Love' as everyone is endowed with the quality of love. This is the truth. *"God created everything on the basis of truth. The entire creation ultimately merges into truth. One can never find a place where the effulgence of truth is not perceived. This is pure, unalloyed truth."* (Telugu Poem) Only when you understand this principle of truth will the seeds of truthfulness germinate in you; otherwise all sorts of artificialities will take root. Matters which are relevant and which dispel the worries of people should be told in your talks. You may even narrate your own experiences with Swami. But mere praise is never to My liking. Your speech and your actions should project that you are a devotee of Swami. On the stage you are a hero, but in practice you are zero. I will be happy if you were a hero in all aspects of your life.

Embodiments of Love!

Unknowingly you make some mistakes. But you should see to it that you do not repeat them. Every act of yours should be righteous. All your thoughts should be truthful. You should broaden your vision and put an end to your selfish desires. God is happy when you lead your lives in this manner. At the same time, you should understand that God does not wait for you to give Him happiness, for bliss is His very nature. As it is said, *"He is Brahmanandam, Parama Sukhadam, Kevalam Jnanamurtim, Dwandwateetam, Gagana Sadrisham, Tattwamasyadi Lakshyam, Ekam, Nityam, Vimalam, Achalam, Sarvadhee Sakshibhutam"* (God is the embodiment of supreme bliss, He is wisdom absolute, the One without a second, beyond the pair of opposites, expansive and pervasive like the sky, the goal indicated by the Mahavakya Tattwamasi, the eternal, pure, unchanging, and the witness of all functions of the intellect).

Being an aspect of Divinity, you should also experience supreme happiness. Everything is present within you. Though your very nature is non-duality, you are unable to experience bliss. If

you are happy for a moment, the other moment you are miserable. What is the reason for this? It is because you do all forbidden things. Thus, sorrow haunts you. You should develop equanimity, which is the true sign of devotion. Also, tenderness and cooperation should permeate your life. Students say 'cooperation' but do only 'operation'. You should live with others in unity, patience and cooperation. Though you have studied for so many years here, where is the broadness of your feelings? Students are growing physically but not in terms of virtues! Only when you practise virtues will your education find fulfillment. Your education should mould you to be good; you need not become great.

Imbibe the Qualities of Hanuman

Rama had acquired mastery over all types of knowledge. Ravana too was a great scholar but he ultimately destroyed himself by treading the wrong path. Rama was good while Ravana was great. You should understand clearly the difference between goodness and greatness. Goodness lies in seeing divinity in all, even in a demon. Ravana saw man in Rama but Rama recognised divinity even in Ravana. He told Lakshmana, "O Lakshmana! Ravana is looking like Indra in his majesty." Rama felt sad that Ravana was ruining himself because of one bad quality. Even his wife Mandodari disliked his conduct. She advised him, "O Ravana! You are a great emperor, you have great strength but you are doing such a mean thing. Why did you bring Mother Sita here? It is the worst sin to abduct another's wife. Just imagine what will be your plight if somebody abducts me? Since you have abducted His wife, Rama has come to wage a war against you. It is His duty to do so. It is foolish on your part to consider Him as an ordinary person."

Students! You are the future citizens of the country. Hence, you should develop broad-mindedness and good qualities. Good qualities should also grow along with the body. Consider this real life situation. A calf is born to a cow. As the calf grows, it develops horns. In modern times, acid is applied to these horns to stunt their growth. Similarly, man today is restricting the growth of virtues by indulging in evil deeds. In this way, he is ruining himself. All sacred feelings are within man. There are no good qualities which are not in him. He should allow the good qualities to grow and try to control any ill feelings as soon as they arise. When a thought arises, question yourself whether it is good or bad, right or wrong. Do not be in a hurry to put it into practice. Haste makes waste, waste makes worry, so, do not be in a hurry. You should discard any evil thought by thinking, "I am a student. Being a student, how can I get such a feeling?"

Depending on the situation, you should lift up your head or bow down. When Hanuman went to Ravana, he held his head high and acted as he pleased. He said, "O Ravana! I will teach you a lesson. You think yourself to be very great but what you have done is very mean. I submitted myself to Indrajit in order to see your court. Since I am in front of you, I am lifting up my head. But when I am in Rama's presence, I bow down my head, since He is full of virtues. I do not care for strength, I respect the virtuous:" You should also teach truth in the same way. You are not monkeys, though your mind is like that of a monkey. Control this 'monkey mind' and have the true quality of 'mankind'. Only then will you become like Hanuman. You should try to uphold all that is good and eradicate all that is evil. You should become good students. In this way, you should reveal the truth to the world. You need not fear anything when you follow the truth. Live in love. Only then will you become good. Do not be deterred by anything.

God does not need your Praise

You should understand that God does not need your praise. God does not see your praise. He sees your conduct. Hence, your conduct should be good. Develop good qualities. Then you will be a good example to the whole nation. There is nothing wrong in desiring a long life but you should cultivate good qualities also. It is better to have a short and good life than a long and bad one. Long life and broad mind should go together. Only then will your long life be meaningful. Today every man prays for a long life when he gets up in the morning, but no one prays for a divine life. Divine feelings should be inculcated for having a long life.

Students! Youngsters!

You should proceed on the sacred path. Then you will have divine thoughts and feelings. You are young; you have a long way to go. Good and bad depend on you. The future of the world rests on your shoulders. You have the strength to bear this weight. You should pray for the welfare of the whole world and not merely for that of Bharat. *Loka Samastha Sukhino Bhavantu* (May all the people of the world be happy!) *Viswam Vishnumayam* (God pervades the entire universe). The whole world is divine. Hence, the whole world should be happy. You should not have any prejudices; you should not hate anybody. Follow Swami's ideals. Swami loves all. So, develop love for all. But sometimes, Swami pretends to be angry with you only to correct you. Sometimes, your conduct displeases Me and hence I do not feel like looking at you. If your conduct is good, I will look at you and talk to you. Hence, mould your conduct.

Do not indulge in excessive talk. Do not have too many contacts. They will bring harm to you. You have come here to study and acquire knowledge. Set your mind on your goal. If you do your duty sincerely, I will surely talk to you. Sometimes, I ignore you to correct and teach you. I do not have any hatred at any point of time. Education should inculcate humility in you. As it is said, "Education imparts humility, humility bestows deservedness and deservedness makes you wealthy. Wealth spent in charity leads to the path of Dharma and Dharma makes you virtuous" (Telugu Poem) That is the true quality of education. Be always humble, talk less. Lead a disciplined and sacred life.

Bhagavan concluded His Discourse with the Bhajan, "*Govinda Krishna Jai, Gopala Krishna Jai...*"

—*From Bhagavan's Discourse in Sai Kulwant Hall at Prasanthi Nilayam on 3rd October 2000*

Bhagavan Inaugurates Sathya Sai Samskruta Sadana

The day of 15th January, 2001 will remain forever etched in the memory of many fortunate devotees when Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba showered His love and grace on them as He came to inaugurate the newly constructed Sathya Sai Samskruta Sadanam on Hosur Road in Bangalore. Bhagavan was offered traditional welcome with Poorna Kumbham when He came to Sathya Sai Samskruta Sadanam at 9.30 a.m. After lighting the sacred lamp in front of the Vighneshwara idol installed at the entrance of the Sadanam, Bhagavan unveiled the plaque of the name of the building and inaugurated the Sadanam by cutting the ceremonial ribbon. Bhagavan

then offered Poornahuti in the Homam and also sanctified the kitchen by customary boiling of milk.

The programme began with Veda chanting and an invocation song. Thereafter, Sri Gangadhara Setty, an ardent devotee of Bhagavan and head of the Yadalam family, delivered his welcome address and offered this grand building at the lotus feet of Bhagavan Baba for utilising it for spiritual, cultural and educational activities. Expressing deep gratitude to Bhagavan for His grace and blessings on the family, Sri Setty stated that his ancestors had Bhagavan's Darshan in 1944, and since then Bhagavan's divine hand had protected and blessed the family and shown them the path of selfless service" by His own example. In particular, Sri Setty mentioned how Sri Sathya Sai Water Project, Sri Sathya Sai Educational Institutions and Sri Sathya Sai hospitals were rendering a unique service to the poor and needy. Explaining the salient features of Sathya Sai Samskruta Sadanam, Sri Setty said, "This imposing edifice has been conceived on the Greek architectural tradition. It has a fully air-conditioned auditorium with a seating capacity for about 600 people, a meditation hall, a prayer-cum-dining hall and a fully equipped kitchen, and also 20 residential rooms."

Delivering His nectarine Discourse on this occasion, Bhagavan Baba explained how God adopts various means to help and redeem His devotees. "God is omnipotent, omnipresent and omniscient. He does not need anything. He gives everything to everybody. But sometimes, He pretends to have worldly desires just to protect His devotees and to fulfill their noble aspirations." Bhagavan referred to the story of the Pandavas during their exile when Krishna came to demand food from Draupadi. Draupadi could offer only a small leaf which was still sticking to the cooking utensil after the Pandavas had finished their food. By partaking of this leaf, Krishna satiated the hunger of Durvasa and his disciples who were coming to the Pandavas for food when nothing was left with the Pandavas to offer them. Thus, Krishna saved the Pandavas from the wrath of Durvasa. Similarly, Rama went to the hut of Sabari and demanded something to eat just to grant liberation to Sabari. "God only saves and protects, He is not the cause of misery and suffering of man. Man suffers from his own Karmas, but due to his narrow-mindedness, he blames God for it," explained Bhagavan. Referring to the beautiful building of the Samskruta Sadanam, Bhagavan said that it would sure be used for good activities and for conducting Satsang, as Satsang leads man to Vimukti (liberation). Explaining the various meanings of Vimukti, Bhagavan observed that freedom from body attachment is true liberation.

So, man should pray for that freedom. Praising the religious and cultural contribution of the Yadalam family to society over the years, Bhagavan expressed happiness that the present generation of this family was also following the footsteps of their forefathers. Bhagavan observed that it was due to Sathkarmas of Sri Gangadhara Setty's family that such a grand edifice had come up. But Bhagavan cautioned that `Bhavanam' (edifice) was not that important. Rather it was `Anubhavam' (experience) that was important for which one had to fill one's heart with love. It was love alone, Bhagavan said, which could lead man to liberation, and not the rituals like Yagas and Yajnas, etc.

The function came to a close with offer of Arati to Bhagavan. The invited devotees were offered a sumptuous feast in the dining hall of the Samskruta Sadanam at the conclusion of this grand function.

Light of the Atman

—Indira Pradhan

What can be a more magnificent symbol of that Supreme Divine Energy of Love than this Golden Nugget called the Hiranyagarbha Linga, which is the only source of Supreme Consciousness and which our Beloved Swami alone can manifest?

From the very beginning of His Divine Mission, Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba has relentlessly and tirelessly been urging us to recognise the true purpose of our life on earth and the bond of love that exists between Him and us. After a hiatus of nearly twenty years, He once again granted to hundreds of thousands devotees the privilege of witnessing the emergence of the Hiranyagarbha Linga on the Sivaratri of the year 1999 and again of 2000 and 2001. Linga, according to Swami, is the symbol of "That into which all things merge, and out of which all things emerge." It is the Principle of Love, the I-Consciousness or the Light of the Atman, which is present in us and in everything around us. It is the only thing that binds us to Swami. This is the Light that shines in our hearts. He says, "This human form of Sai is one in which every divine entity, every divine principle, that is to say, all names and forms ascribed by man to God are manifest." What can be a more magnificent symbol of that Supreme Divine Energy of Love than this Golden Nugget, called the Hiranyagarbha Linga, which is the only source of Supreme Consciousness and which our Beloved Swami alone can manifest?

Swami has declared that whoever witnesses the Linga at the time of its emergence will have Moksha or liberation. Truly blessed are those whose good Karma from past lives enabled them to obtain Swami's grace to witness this unique phenomenon.

Spiritual Heart of Man

According to Swami, 'Hridaya' or spiritual heart is different from the physical heart and is located on the right side of the body. Sri Ramana Maharishi once had an experience which confirmed to him the location of the spiritual heart on the right side of the body. In this experience, he was engulfed by a white light, which spread all around him until his vision of the world was totally cut off.

Even though he could not speak, he could feel that his muscular heart had stopped functioning and his body was like a corpse in which the circulation of blood had stopped. Someone close to him at that time embraced him and wept thinking that Sri Ramana had passed away. At this time, however, Sri Ramana felt the spiritual heart on the right side working well. This went on for about twenty minutes. Then all of a sudden, he felt something like a shoot out from the spiritual heart to the left side where his physical heart was. Subsequently, the blood circulation was resumed and he returned to consciousness. "The spiritual heart," he said, "is quite different from the blood-propelling, muscular organ known by the same term. It is the very core of your being, that which you are identical with, whether you are awake, asleep or dreaming, whether you are engaged in work or immersed in Samadhi."

It is the pure energy within the spiritual heart that Swami is awakening in us in order to show that behind all the outwardly manifested form is the timeless realm of Divine Consciousness. Only when we recognise the reality that He is the very embodiment of love and we are sparks of that embodiment will His Form get firmly established within our hearts and harmonise our activities. The Greek philosopher, Plotinus said: "We make over our soul in trust to Nous (Eternal Mind) and set it firmly in That; then what That sees, the soul will awaken to see; it is through Nous that we have vision of the Unity."

Process of Liberation

The true home of the soul lies in the higher and purer spiritual spheres. But it incarnates in the world of gravity for the purpose of learning the lessons, which it had missed during its earthly sojourn in an earlier life. Each soul brings with it subtle thought forms or Vasanas of previous lives. It strives to be liberated from its binding thought patterns, which are detrimental to its progress. There are therefore different levels of consciousness evolving towards Godhead. Being born into a body is in reality a form of death, in which man forgets his true identity after incarnating into the densest matter from which he seeks release. All actions of a man in the world happen within a set divine pattern. In the process, he is subject to ordeals and trials, which are designed to make him stronger and avoid the pitfalls that can impede his progress to God. But being limited by his five-sensory personality, he ends up living to fulfill the needs of his individual personality and desires, thus creating more negative Karma for himself. That is why man needs to be ever watchful of his outer personality and tailor it to the needs of his soul. The Greek philosopher Heraclitus has said, "The content of your character is your choice. Day by day, what you choose, what you think, and what you do is who you become. Your integrity is your destiny.. It is the light that guides your way." Those who preserve their integrity or wholeness through love, kindness and compassion even in the face of external turmoil of the physical world will contribute towards the evolution of their soul. These are the people who understand the dynamics of spiritual transformation. That is why Swami says, "Old souls need a gentle touch with a hammer, young souls need twenty blows with a sledge hammer!" While not all of us can attain liberation in this life, but being firmly rooted in Swami's Love we can work for the future of our soul and much of our Karma and, therefore, Vasanas can be expunged.

`Moksha' or freedom from rebirth is the ultimate goal of man and is attained when the ego and its accompanying Vasanas are totally annihilated and are bound to the love of the Divine. Many births are necessary for man to be totally free from his earthly shackles. Sri Ramana Maharishi illustrates the process whereby his mother's soul was totally liberated at death: "Innate tendencies and the subtle memory of past experiences leading to future possibilities became very active. Scene after scene rolled before her in the subtle consciousness, the outer senses having already gone. The soul was passing through a series of experiences, thus avoiding the need for a rebirth and making possible union with the Spirit. The soul was at last disrobed of subtle sheaths before it reached its final destination, the Supreme Peace of Liberation, from which there is no return or ignorance."

Swami's Aura of Love

Swami says, "My affection and love for you is that of a thousand mothers." How can we fathom this most tremendous of all cosmic forces called love, unless we understand our own divine

nature? De Chardin, the French Jesuit priest, beautifully described Love as "the sacred reserve of energy and the blood of spiritual evolution." All of us possess this sacred energy deep within us, but only very few can reflect the aura of this energy. It is extraordinarily rare and only one whose love is absolute and boundless can emanate such an aura.

Professor Frank Baranowski, an American expert in bio-magnetic field radiation photography, has photographed and analysed the auras of countless men and women using the Kirlian camera. In 1978, when he visited Swami's Ashram for a week, he observed a unique phenomenon. That first morning when Swami came out for Darshan, this was what he saw: "The colour pink, rarely seen, typifies selfless love. This was the colour that Sai Baba had around him. The aura went beyond the building against which he stood; this energy field reached 30 to 40 feet in all directions." He also saw thick bands of white and pink flow out from Swami. Also, for the first time he saw a golden aura around Swami, shining like the rays of the sun on water. Baranowski says that there are five different shades of auras (Tejas in Sanskrit) reflecting the aesthetic, the spiritual, the intellectual, the physical and the moral aspects of a personality. But the aura around Swami was one beyond explanation. Every single day, year after year, Swami has given of Himself, His energy flowing out towards the thousands who seek His Love. It is impossible for an ordinary human to survive after so much energy has been drawn from him. Being the eternal and boundless source of Love itself, Swami is one with the Universal and Cosmic Energy; His aura of all embracing total love can never diminish. Dr. Baranowski concluded about Swami, "He is Love walking on two legs. Such unselfish love is nothing other than Divinity."

Swami says: "I have separated Myself from Myself in order to have somebody to love and someone to love Me." Do not the Upanishads teach us that the One desired to be many? They also declare, "it is not for the sake of the wife that the wife is dear, but for the sake of the Self. It is not for the sake of the husband that the husband is dear, but for the sake of the Self..." All of us have this desire to love and to be loved. Everybody yearns for the love of his/her mother, father and friends, little realising that these are imperfect reflections of love. Love becomes sacred only when it reflects compassion, unselfishness and asks for nothing in return.

How many of us truly crave for Swami's love? Swami says: "If a person reciprocates My love from the depth of his heart, My love and his love meet in unison and he is cured and transformed." But our worldly desires being limitless, we constantly pray for material wealth and progeny and are involved in spurts of worship (often propelled by guilt or fear) and loveless repetitions of sacred formulas in His name. Swami says, "You may do Dhyana, but your senses are so awake and active that even a tiny mosquito can arouse your passion and you swing your arm to slaughter it!" Today's society, according to Swami, lacks love for God and fear of sin, both of which have led to a decline in morality.

Cosmic Point of Convergence

All of us say that we "believe" in Swami, but do we have the absolute faith, which can make us surrender totally to Him? Belief is merely a reflection of our outward mental attitude, which is most often subject to emotional changes. But inner faith is a product of the Inner Self, resulting from the integration of our outer personality with our Inner Self. Tagore has beautifully described it: "Faith is the bird that feels the light and sings when the dawn is still dark."

In the Gita, Lord Krishna also tells us the same thing that even if initially we cannot be inspired to action through love, there is yet another way: whatever actions we perform, we must renounce the fruits of those actions to God. We are then performing through a sense of duty and are guided by the Buddhi or the 'voice of conscience', which helps us to develop a sense of detachment from "doer-ship", ultimately resulting in a sense of peace and happiness.

True happiness or Ananda is an attribute of the soul. Swami gives the example of little children, who He says, are like realised souls without attachment: "Examine the contents of a child's pocket. You will find a few pebbles, a piece of glass, or a twig or flower. The child gets from these more joy than an adult from a wad of notes. The child may have a dirt covered body, but its mind is free from dirt. The elders are scrupulous about physical cleanliness, but their minds are cesspools of desire, hate, envy and clogging slush." Have we ever wondered and sometimes perhaps been surprised as to why Swami says "Santosham" (I am happy) to those who seek consolation over the loss of a loved one? According to Him, 'Santosham' is not the common type of joy or happiness. It is not the transient, trivial pleasure one gets from worldly success or material gain. "It is the culmination of desire in full contentment and sacred satiety." He says, "I stir, I pound, I knead, I bake, I drown you in tears. I have come to reform you." Only when we totally surrender to Him will He reveal the Golden Nugget of Divinity within us. Swami by contrast is always happy and in a state of equanimity. Can we ever understand how, with limitless patience, He endures the sufferings of His devotees all over the world? "Only I know the agony of teaching you each step of the dance," He tells us.

It was predicted by De Chardin more than fifty years ago that society would be "propelled upwards" by Love to converge towards the Cosmic Point of Omega. This 'Cosmic Point of Convergence' obviously is the Kali Yuga Avatar, Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba. Through the energy of His Love, He is guiding the evolution of humankind towards its goal by instilling in them the spirit of service to their fellow beings and channelling their energies towards the realisation of unity of all life.

ANOTHER BLESSED SIVARATRI AT PRASANTHI NILAYAM

Divine Phenomenon of Lingodbhava

A wave of bliss ran through the mammoth crowd of devotees at Prasanthi Nilayam when Bhagavan granted them a vision of Lingodbhava on the Sivaratri night, 21st February 2001 at 6.55 p.m. This was the third consecutive Sivaratri of Lingodbhava after Bhagavan restarted Linga manifestation in 1999 after a gap of 22 years.

Sivaratri Celebrations

On the Sivaratri morning, i.e., 21st February 2001, Bhagavan came to Sai Kulwant Hall at 6.50 a.m. and showered the blessing of His Darshan on the assembled devotees for nearly 30 minutes both inside and outside Sai Kulwant Hall, every inch of which was occupied by eager devotees. After this long special Darshan, Bhagavan came to the dais and sat in His chair. Soon after this, the Institute students started chanting hymns and Stotras in praise of Siva and Sai, which

included Bilvashtakam, Vishwanathashtakam, Sivashtakam, Lingashtakam, etc. This was followed by Bhajans and distribution of Prasadam to all the devotees. To shower His love and grace on the devotees on this auspicious day, Swami Himself went in the rows of devotees, students and staff to distribute toffees and chocolates. Thus, the Sivaratri had an auspicious start with profuse blessings of Bhagavan on the devotees. The morning programme came to a close with Arati to Bhagavan at 8.45 a.m.

In the afternoon, Swami came to Sai Kulwant Hall at 2.30 p.m. to shower again His grace and love on the assembled devotees by going to each part of the Hall to give Darshan. Before Bhagavan's Sivaratri Discourse, four speakers addressed the devotees. The programme started at 3.05 p.m. with Veda chanting by school students.

The first speaker of the afternoon was Sri A. V. S. Raju, Chairman, Nagarjuna Construction Company, Hyderabad, who spoke in Telugu. Narrating his experiences of Bhagavan's grace on him, he said, "Though I had very little education, I started writing poetry after having Swami's Darshan for the first time in 1995. On the very first day, I wrote a poem of 116 lines." Sri Raju who has composed thousands of poems on Bhagavan Baba and on Pothana, the great devotee of Lord Rama, enthralled the audience with some of his poems on Bhagavan. Bhagavan gave His blessings to him and materialised a ring for him. The second speaker Sri Ryuko Hira of Japan offered hearty greetings to the assembled devotees on this auspicious occasion and expressed deep gratitude to Bhagavan, who like Siva, was consuming the deadly poison of modern man's jealousy and hatred and distributing the nectar of Sathya, Dharma, Santhi, Prema and Ahimsa to the entire world. Referring to Prasanthi Nilayam as the paradise of Siva, Sri Hira remarked that no other organisation in the world was so firmly based on the ideals of Prema and Tyaga as Sri Sathya Seva Organisation which has its branches in 165 countries of the world.

Quoting the well-known saying of Bhagavan "removal of immorality is the only way to immortality," the third speaker Dr. G. Venkataraman observed, "Siva stands for purity. We have to rid ourselves of the impurity of desires to destroy the bondage and achieve our goal of life, i.e., freedom from the cycle of birth and death. This is possible to achieve when we remember God constantly and follow His commands implicitly." The last speaker, Sri Shriram Parshurama senior student of the Institute, observed that Bhagavan Baba had incarnated on the earth to teach the erring humanity the path of love and righteousness by His own example. In this process, the Avatar had to undergo immense suffering. As Bhagavan was deeply devoted to the well-being of His devotees, He never cared for His suffering and pain, he said.

Bhagavan then gave His Sivaratri Message to the devotees in His Discourse which started at 4.15 p.m. (full text of this Discourse has been given in this issue elsewhere). Swami concluded His Discourse at 5.25 p.m., immediately after which the Institute students started Sivaratri Bhajans which were to continue throughout the night and conclude the next morning at 6.00 a.m.

Manifestation of Linga by Bhagavan

As the Bhajans progressed, Bhagavan moved in the rows of devotees. At 6.00 p.m., Bhagavan came back to the dais and sat in His chair. All eyes were fixed on Bhagavan as the devotees expected the divine phenomenon of Lingodbhava to take place any time now. The usual signs of Lingodbhava were quite perceptible when Swami started sipping water more frequently and also

started wiping the perspiration from His face with His handkerchief. At 6.25, Swami unfolded His handkerchief and spread it on the table obviously to hold the Linga when it emerged from His mouth. After 6.40 p.m., Swami drank water rather quickly and asked for more and more water. He now started perspiring profusely. So, the fan was brought closer to Swami. Sometimes, Swami placed His right hand on the chest or the neck as the Linga showed signs of emergence.

After 6.45 p.m., Swami drank water with more speed and perspired more profusely. All devotees had fixed their eyes on Swami. The Bhajans were being sung in chorus with great devotional fervour. Suddenly Swami stood up from His chair as the Linga was about to emerge, and out came an oval-shaped Hiranyagarbha Linga from His mouth with great force. The time was 6.55 p.m. and the Bhajan in progress was "Mrutyunjayaya Namah Om". As Swami stood at the time of Lingodbhava, devotees could see its emergence more clearly and easily even from a distance. The devotees heaved a sigh of relief as smile returned to Swami's face. Swami then held the Linga in His hand and went to several parts of the Hall to show the Linga to the eager devotees. After coming back to the dais, Swami placed the Linga on the lid of the tumbler to enable the photographers to take its close shots. While the Sivaratri Bhajans continued with great devotion and zeal after these ecstatic moments, Swami retired to His abode.

The next morning, i.e., 22nd February 2001, Swami came to Sai Kulwant Hall at 5.45 a.m. to deliver His second Sivaratri Discourse. The Sivaratri Bhajans concluded in His Divine Presence at 6.00 a.m., and immediately afterwards Swami blessed the devotees with His Divine Discourse in which He exhorted them to purify their senses because it was purity which attracted Divinity. Bhagavan concluded His Discourse with two Bhajans "Hari Bhajan Bina Sukha Santhi Nahin..." and "Subramanyam, Subramanyam..." At the conclusion of the programme, Bhagavan was offered Mangalarati at 7.00 a.m. Thus concluded the grand Sivaratri celebrations at Prasanthi Nilayam. Prasadam was offered to all the devotees in the end.

Siva Represents Auspiciousness

Whether one does good or bad acts, there is no escape from their consequences. Knowing this, our ancients always sought what was good and auspicious. This is the meaning of the worship of Siva. When we speak of Sivaratri, we refer to the night that is associated with Siva, that is an auspicious night. Sivam means that which is auspicious. The Siva principle is totally free from anything that is inauspicious or unholy in any circumstance. —Baba

Nectarine Showers at Alike

Answering the prayers of the students and staff of A Sathya Sai Vihar, Alike (Karnataka) and the devotees of Dakshina Kannada, Bhagavan paid a short visit to Alike on 31st January 2001, nearly 22 years after His first visit on 29th January 1979. Devotees started pouring in from all directions right from early morning on 31st January 2001. Their joy knew no bounds when they sighted, on the eastern horizon, the pure white helicopter exactly at 9.30 a.m., as if it was Garuda carrying Maha Vishnu from heaven to earth. Amidst cheerful shouting of Jaikar by thousands of people

and thunderous sound of 21 gun salute, Bhagavan came out of the helicopter, granted Darshan and blessed the gathering all around, showering infinite love and joy on all of them. After the offering of floral tribute by the Chairman of Sri Sathya Sai Loka Seva Trust, a grand welcome was offered to Bhagavan by various dance groups of students. As soon as Bhagavan entered the Mandir, Arati was offered to Him.

First, Swami inaugurated "Sai Vadan", the three-floored new hostel building for P.U.C. boys by lighting a lamp inside the small, beautiful Ganesh Temple facing the building. Swami then entered the office portion situated on the ground floor, lighted a lamp there also and unveiled a plaque. After this, Swami laid the foundation stone of "Akshaya Prasada", the kitchen and dining hall, complex of the hostel. Thereafter, Swami formally inaugurated "Sri Sathya Sai Vidyakendra" (C.B.S.E. pattern school building) by lighting a lamp and entering the room meant for Him in that building, thus fulfilling the promise given by Him way back in 1994, when he had granted a pair of Silver Padukas asking the Trust to enter the building with them, and promising to come and personally inaugurate the building later.

After a short break for lunch and rest, Swami proceeded to the Public Meeting Ground, where a mammoth crowd was waiting for Bhagavan's Darshan, Sparshan and Sambhashan. The meeting commenced with Veda chanting by the students (for whom Swami created Vibhuti Prasadam), followed by a talk by D. R. Raghavendra, a II F. U. C. student, on the topic of Swami's boundless love for students, the gigantic welfare projects undertaken by Him for alleviating the sufferings, miseries and hardships faced by man and the impact of Swami's message towards the establishment of world peace and coexistence of people belonging to different continents, countries, races, religions and languages. Swami blessed him by creating a gold chain, containing a pendant, enlarging it again by blowing on it and then tying the same around his neck. This was followed by a talk by the Chairman of the Trust, Sri U. Gangadhara Bhat. Recalling with gratitude the time of Swami's acceptance of these institutions when they were in a state of shock due to the untimely and sudden demise of their Founder President, late Sri Madiyala Narayana Bhat, Sri Gangadhara Bhat offered his devotion-filled Pranams to Swami for the continuous shower of His grace from time to time, thus ensuring the progress and development of these institutions over the last 23 years.

The Divine Discourse of Bhagavan in Kannada gladdened the hearts of the audience. Intricate spiritual matters were placed before the audience threadbare in a most simple and lucid way. Apart from giving a Discourse on spiritual matters, Swami expressed His happiness about the progress made by the Trust over the last two decades and announced that He would build here a "Superior Hospital" (not a Super Speciality Hospital), within one year, on the Vidya Giri Hill, and that He would come once again and inaugurate the hospital Himself. People were thrilled at this unexpected, surprise gift of Divine Love and Grace.

After showering His love and grace on the assembled devotees gathered around the helipad, Swami boarded the helicopter at 2.30 p.m. Swami's extraordinary shower of love, expressed by the continuous waving of His left and right hands alternatively and sometimes by waving His kerchief, visible through the glass window of the helicopter, even while its engine was warming up and rising to the sky, brought tears of joy in the eyes of all who gathered there. With their hearts filled with joy, they started leaving, carrying the loving image of Swami in their hearts

with the hope and expectation that Swami would visit this place once again after one year to inaugurate the new hospital.

The Wave and the Foam

Aham or ego is an appearance on the Atma as the foam on the edge of the wave, which is but the ocean itself. The Atma can well be devoid of ego, but ego cannot exist without the Atma as the reality underneath. However, man validates ego (Aham), giving it a form (Akaram) full of attributes and so, it gets polluted as egoism (Aham-karam). When ego is free from the status of 'ism', it is a facet or factor of the Atma. Attributes, modes, Gunas drag it into the tangle of dualities and so, it gets malefic and sheds its positive, purifying role.

—Baba

“Indiscriminate exploitation of nature results in the imbalance on the earth, causing calamities like earthquakes which take a big toll of human lives. Only when man is free from Kampam (unsteadiness) within will he be able to avert Bhukampam (earthquake).”

—Baba

Recognise Your Inner Reality

*I am neither merit nor sin, neither happiness nor misery.
I am none of these either—places of pilgrimage, scriptures or Yajnas (sacrifices).
I am not the food, the consumer of food or the process of eating.
I am the Atman, the very embodiment of Divinity.
I am Siva Himself.*

(Sanskrit Verse)

Embodiments of Love!

Right from the beginning, the Vedas have taught the principle of equanimity to mankind. It says that you are neither sin nor merit, neither happiness nor misery. You are neither Yajna nor charity. You are neither the ritual offering nor the process of worship. You are neither man nor animal. Then who are you? You are the principle of Siva (supreme consciousness).

`I' Represents Consciousness

Since man has not understood the fundamental principle of creation, he goes by name and form and distinguishes birds, animals, human beings, etc., from each other on the basis of their form. One should not go by name and form. Name and form correspond to Pravritti (worldliness). One should take to the path of Nivritti (exploration of the spirit) and understand the fundamental principle of creation. (At this juncture, Swami materialised a lemon). This is a lemon. We call it lemon on the basis of its form and taste. These reflect its Pravritti aspect and not Nivritti. In fact, it is nothing but a combination of cells constituted by molecules and atoms. In each of these cells, there is immanent potentiality of the whole lemon. The atoms have neither a beginning nor an end. They have immense power. This power is related to Aakasa (space) while Aakasa is related to pure consciousness. So, even the lemon is a representation of pure consciousness. The person who eats the lemon is also a personification of consciousness. Thus, consciousness pervades everything. Name and form are conditioned by Pravritti and are not related to Nivritti.

Every man uses the terms `I' and `mine'. Handkerchief, tumbler, body, mind, Buddhi, car, house, etc., are all related to the expression `mine' and not to the Atma-tattwa `I'. Thus, 'mine' relates to Pravritti while the Atma is related to Nivritti. `I' (Atma) is constant, unchanging and eternal. This `I' represents Constant Integrated Awareness. It is the embodiment of consciousness. As this principle is immanent in every person, everybody is the personification of consciousness. You have therefore to recognise the fundamental principle or Mooladhara Tattwa. It has three aspects. The first aspect relates to surrendering one's own self. Secondly, one has to surrender all that relates to 'me' and 'mine'. Thirdly, one must enquire about the Atma-tattwa from those who have realised it. To recognise that I am not the body, the mind or the intellect or any of these things that are manifest in the external world is the import of this enquiry. The Vedas have been teaching these eternal truths from ancient times.

Divinity is Immanent in Man

First of all, you must enquire into the nature of the Self. Cells are made up of atoms which have no beginning or end and have immense power. Wherefrom do the atoms and molecules get power? The Divine principle, which pervades the entire universe, is the source of their power.

Sarvata Panipadam Tat Sarvatokshi Siromukham Sarvata Sruthimalloke Sarvamavrutya Tishthati (with hands, feet, eyes, head, mouth and ears pervading everything, He permeates the entire universe). Consciousness is all-pervasive. Every object occupies space and space is pervaded by consciousness. Hence all objects are also pervaded by consciousness. There are two aspects to this—Asti (being) and Bhati (awareness). This Bhati is the Atmic principle, which is consciousness itself. It is this principle that is variously called Atma, Paramatma, Paramjyoti, etc. It is from the effulgence of this that the various objects of the world manifest. This is not created by anybody. It is self-manifest.

The eternal principle of `I' is present in each individual. That is why everyone calls himself `I'. `I' and effulgence are not different from each other. But the feeling of 'mine' relates to external objects. `I' is the Atma and `mine' is Maya (illusion). The changeless principle is immanent in all the objects of the world. But man falls into error due to his Vasanas (thought forms) and Abhyasas (habits). Man creates for himself manifold relationships like son, brother, etc. The body consciousness is the cause of these bonds. Who is the mother and who is the child before birth? Who is the husband and who is the wife before marriage? All these are transient relationships created by man and are as impermanent as passing clouds. Man gets lost in these transient relationships, and falls into delusion (Bhrama). When you are in deep sleep, you are not even aware of your own body. In Samadhi, similarly, the Sadhaka does not feel his body. Then how can you identify yourself with the body? You are not the body; but the body is yours.

People wrongly believe that what is perceived by the senses only is real. Actually, this is not so. The Atma alone is real but it appears as reflection, reaction and resound. None of these is your Self. The Atmic principle alone is your Self. Nobody else can create your inner reality nor can anyone deny it. This `I' is the true eternal principle, which is *Nirgunam, Niranjanam, Sanathana Niketanam, Nithya, Shuddha Buddha, Mukta, Nirmala Swarupinam* (attributeless, pure, final abode, eternal, aware, free, unsullied and embodiment of sacredness).

This Atmic principle is the very personification of divinity; hence, the expression Easwara Sarvabhutanam (God is the indweller of all beings). It is this principle of universal divinity that is emphasised by great sages. For instance, all of you know the story of Adi Sankara and the Brahmin who was learning Panini's grammar whom Sankara exhorted to concentrate on the Name of Govinda. In your daily life, you give different names to different persons and objects. If you just call, `hey boy', who will come? But if you call, `hey Rama', the boy named Rama will immediately respond. You are not born with any name. Names are imposed. Even the very body that you possess is not you. Whenever you are able to apply the expression `my' to any object, from your handkerchief to the various limbs, it implies that 'you' are different from the object denoted by the expression 'mine'. Then who are you? To explain this, Vedanta has given various expositions. If you find the real difference between `I' and 'mine', then the relationships in the entire world become clear. The sense of possession `mine' is entirely separate from your true Self. Your Self transcends all these. That is why the Upanishad makes the assertion, *Aham Brahmasmi* (I am Brahman). It does not say, all that is mine is Brahman. It says, I am the very personification of Brahman. Therefore, one should try to recognise this principle of `I'.

Know your Dharma
Embodiments of Love!

The confusion arises when you are not able to understand the difference between 'I' and 'mine'. Similarly, you confuse the reality of all objects. This lemon is a combination of atoms and not a lemon per-se. For your convenience, you have given it the name lemon. But this does not help you to understand the basic reality of atoms and molecules of which it is made up of. Names are given because of their utility in the world, not for the sake of knowing the basic truths. What is Jnana (knowledge)? *Advaita Darshanam Jnanam* (perception of the One without a second is supreme knowledge). This body has various systems like blood circulation, etc., in it. It is alive only so long as all these systems are functional. It becomes dead, the moment these systems stop functioning. The body is dead but the atoms are still there. Atoms get back to atoms. Hence, it is necessary, first of all, to recognise the *Mooladhara Tattwa* (basic principle). What is the basis for water? When hydrogen and oxygen combine, we get water and we can drink it. But can we drink hydrogen or oxygen when we are thirsty? For convenience, we postulate such variety. But all this variety is mere Mithya (relative reality). What is Mithya? It is neither truth nor untruth but an appearance of the non-existent as real. Such appearances are temporary and transient and change their form after some time. Truth is unchanging. *Trikalabadhyam Sathyam* (that which is unchanging in all the three periods of time alone is truth).

Due to his illusion, man today resorts to many evil ways to seek power and pelf. But how long do these last? They come and go. *Ma Kuru Dhana Jana Yauvana Garvam, Harathi Nimeshath Kalah Sarvam* (Do not be proud of your wealth, progeny and youth; the tide of time may destroy them in a moment). Presuming such a transient world as truth, you waste your life in such pursuits. From birth to death, you run after worldly desires. You are born so that you may fulfill the purpose of your life, i.e., liberation. *Sareeramadyam Khalu Dharma Sadhanam* (body indeed is the means for the pursuit of Dharma). You perform certain actions with the help of your body to undertake Dharma. To know your Dharma is the Marma (secret) of life. What is your Dharma? Does everything that pleases you constitute Dharma? Not at all. Adherence to your conscience is righteousness proper. You abandon the dictates of your conscience and become a victim of delusion. You see your reflection in a mirror, but is the image real? In fact, it undergoes lateral inversion. How can such erroneous images be real? In the same manner, the entire external world is a reflection of your inner reality. Your inner reality should be the basis.

When you realise this Mooladhara Tattwa, all external delusions and illusions will vanish. From birth to death, man neglects his inner fundamental basis (Mooladhara) and wastes his life and energy on the objects of the external world. This is not the purpose of life. Your Dharma is to know this eternal truth. After realising this truth of your inner being, you must try to attain it. You are born, you grow old and ultimately die, wasting all your time and energy in mundane activities. Is this the purpose of human birth? No, not at all. You must experience the life of man. However, modern man has been involving himself more and more in mundane activities of the world. That is why he has not achieved any spiritual growth.

Start a New and Fruitful Life in the New Year

The name of this New Year is Vrusha. Many people are making all kinds of predictions of the events in the New Year. What is bound to happen will happen. Carry on what you have to do. During all this, your mind should be centred on the fundamental principle (Mooladhara). If you neglect this, all your efforts are useless. Man faces many distressing and calamitous events when he neglects this. One should not say unpleasant things, but the truth must be revealed. In the

coming year, man is likely to face far more difficulties than those in the past year. The political arena is likely to have greater problems. There are likely to be more earthquakes. What is the cause? It is the consequence of man's wrong actions.

The good and bad events of the world are a consequence of the activities of man. Today there is conflict even among brothers; and in the field of politics, human values have been forsaken. It is not in any one country but all over the globe. One is bound to experience the reflection, reaction and resound of one's own actions, though none can predict when, where and how. But one thing is certain, good people will never be put to suffering and no danger can befall them. Think of God always and pray for peace and bliss which you cannot find in the external world.

In Gujarat, there lived a well-to-do businessman named Patel, who was also a great devotee. He had all comforts and conveniences at his disposal. He was a rich man. He performed regular Puja (worship) everyday. One day, one of his friends asked him, "Patel, you have got everything that one could ask for in life. Then what for are you worshipping God?" Patel replied, "I don't worship God for wealth and prosperity. I only pray to Him for peace and bliss which He alone can confer, as He is the embodiment of supreme bliss and peace." This is true devotion. Peace and bliss cannot be obtained elsewhere except from God. Happiness is union with God. Pray to God to attain bliss. No matter how much you try, you cannot attain peace from the external world.

Understand the Secret of Divinity

Many overseas devotees say, "I want peace." I tell them, "You are the embodiment of peace. What you get in the external world is only pieces. The peace you aspire for is within you." You are truth, peace, love, non-violence and you are verily God. When you have such a firm conviction, there will be no scope for misery; you will always be blissful. Do not think that God is separate from you. Have full faith that 'I am God'. Hanuman realised the unity of the individual and God. Consequently, he was always in a state of bliss. Once Lord Rama asked Hanuman, "How do you contemplate on Me?" "At the physical level, You are my Master and I am Your servant. At the mental level, I am a spark of Your Divine Self. At the Atmic level, You and I are one", said Hanuman. Lord Rama expressed His happiness at this appropriate reply of Hanuman.

Pleased with the devotion of Hanuman, Sita once presented him her pearl necklace which was given to her by her father, King Janaka, at the time of her marriage. Hanuman held this very valuable necklace in his hand, began to remove all the pearls one by one from the necklace, and kept them near his ear for some time and then after biting each one of them, threw them away. Sita was surprised to see Hanuman behaving like this. She thought that Hanuman had not given up his monkey traits. Rama knew the intention behind this act of Hanuman. But in order to make Sita understand this, He asked, "Hanuman, why are you biting and throwing away such precious pearls?" "O Lord, I am examining whether I could hear Your Name in the pearls. Since I couldn't hear, I am throwing them away. The pearl is no better than a stone if there is no Rama Nama in it. I want only You." On hearing this statement of Hanuman, Rama lovingly embraced Hanuman, saying, "Hanuman, I give Myself to you." The inner meaning of this is that Rama is where Hanuman is and vice-versa. Hanuman is given various appellations such as *Santhudu*, *Gunavanthudu*, *Balavanthudu* (one endowed with peace, virtues and strength). He derived his

strength from the Divine Name of Lord Rama. Many people confine the Divine Name only to the lips but Hanuman chanted the Name of Rama from the depth of his heart! That is true devotion. Poison will remain poison even if it is put in a precious vessel studded with diamonds, pearls, emeralds, etc. The divine ambrosia will not lose its taste even if it is put in a brass vessel.

Likewise, it is the purity of heart that matters, not the external appearance. Purity of heart is the purpose behind chanting God's Name. Chanting of God's Name should originate from the heart, not from the lips.

Similarly, when you practise charity, think that you are offering it to God Himself. That is true charity. Some people give money to the priest and ask him to perform worship on their behalf. Will your hunger be appeased if someone else eats on your behalf? Likewise, how can you get the benefit of worship performed by the priest? Any good activity should be undertaken by the concerned person himself in order to derive the benefit therefrom. Today people are unable to understand the secret of divinity. In fact, you are divinity personified. But you consider yourself to be the body which is ephemeral. Lord Krishna says in the Bhagavad Gita, *Anityam Asukham Lokam Imam Prapya Bhajasva Maam* (Having come into this world which is temporary and full of misery, contemplate on Me). *"This body is a storehouse of dirt, and prone to diseases, it cannot cross the ocean of Samsara. O mind, do not be under the delusion that body is permanent. Instead take refuge at the Divine Lotus Feet."* (Telugu Poem) So long as one is alive, one can aspire to lead a happy and healthy life. Healthy body leads to healthy mind. So, take proper care of your body and always contemplate on the selfless, pure, steady Atmic principle. You are a member of society. Your welfare depends on the welfare of society. So, aspire for the wellbeing of one and all. You should always pray: *Loka Samastha Sukhino Bhavantu* (May all the people of the world be happy!) Eschew narrow-mindedness, cultivate broad feelings in order to experience bliss. Develop equal mindedness.

Embodiments of Love!

Today starts a new year. According to the Indian calendar, there are 60 years in a cycle after which the cycle repeats itself. The names of these are *Prabhava, Vibhava, Sukla, Pramoduta, Prajotpathi, Angirasa, Srimukha, Bhava, Yuva, Dhathu, Easwara, Bahudhanya, Pramadhi, Vikrama, Vrusha, Chitrabhanu, Subhanu, Dharana, Parthiva*, etc. These, in fact, are the names of the children of Narada. As Narada desired that the names of his children should become eternal, the years have been named thus, Narada was a great devotee of Vishnu. He chanted His Name incessantly. Wherever he went, he kept chanting the Name of God.

The name of this year is Vrusha. It will give some good results. You should also develop goodness. You should develop sacred feelings. You should lead a blissful life. There lies the fulfillment of the celebration of the New Year. The New Year Day is not celebrated merely to eat delicious dishes. You have to imbibe sacred feelings and resolve to lead a fruitful life. The good and bad of the world depend on your conduct which in turn depends on your thoughts. So, develop good thoughts. Only then will you be able to lead a noble life. Set an ideal to your fellowmen. Give them happiness. Show compassion towards them. Talk to them lovingly. All this is possible only when you love God. Love God and chant His Name.

Bhagavan concluded His Discourse with the Bhajans, "*Hari Bhajan Bina...*" and "*Prema Mudita Manase Kaho...*"

—*From Bhagavan's Ugadi Discourse in Sai Kulwant Hall, Prasanthi Nilayam on 26th March 2001*

The Symbol of Self-Sacrifice

The symbol of self-sacrifice is Sai
This significant name is well-defined;
Knowing the secret of the letters three
For devotional chanting you get inclined.

'S' is the source of bliss divine,
Eternal saviour of all mankind;
The holy ocean of sublime grace
With glory of truth and virtue combined.

'A' is Almighty spirit divine
With boundless love ever so kind;
The absolute cosmic consciousness
Can be realised by the meditating mind.

'I' for immortality to embrace
With inspiring boon of intuition to find
Inherent wisdom's radiant glow
Bestowing the all-seeing vision benign.

—*Kalyan Chowdhury*

"Sathya Seva" in Gujarat

As a gesture of his compassion and love towards the unfortunate victims of the recent earthquake in Gujarat, Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba dispatched 33 lorry loads of articles of daily need for distribution on 8th February 2001. Bhagavan Himself was present to bless the convoy of lorries when it started its journey to Rajkot (Gujarat) via Hyderabad from Prasanthi Nilayam amidst the chanting of Veda Mantras and Bhajans. The articles of daily need included 1011 quintals of rice, 200 quintals of sugar, 9000 kg of refined oil, 75,000 Saris, 60,000 Dhotis, 7,000 stitched dresses for children, 1,80,000 plastic plates, besides blankets, utensils, wheat, Dal, etc. After reaching Hyderabad, the convoy was flagged off to Rajkot with adequate security by the Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh, Sri Chandrababu Naidu on the morning of 9th February 2001.

The convoy was received at Rajkot by the organisers who reached there in advance. The immediate problem was to find a secure place nearer to the distribution points for unloading and keeping the materials for distribution in the villages. It is only by Bhagavan's grace that at the last moment, a resident of a nearby village offered adequate rent-free godown space for storage of materials securely, as the original planned location was farther away from the distressed area. Bhagavan Baba had given specific instructions that the food-stuffs and other materials should reach the victims individually in their houses and should be distributed with the spirit of love. The volunteers should act sympathetically and lovingly and the distribution should be equitable keeping in view the family size so that the material should last for considerable number of days required for normalisation.

Our staff surveyed each village individually contacting the householders and enquiring about their welfare. The supply to the villages was made through lorries, vans and cars. The material was well packed quantity-wise and handed to the householders in a cordial way with love, the hallmark of Sri Sathya Sai Organisation. The manner in which the things were distributed was very much appreciated by everyone with full-throated "Sathya Sai Babaji Ki Jai."

The work of distribution of 33 lorry loads of material in every affected household in about 108 villages required working day and night and covering thousands of miles in vehicles on roads which were not good. Though a huge volunteer force (Seva Dal) from Hyderabad, Mumbai and Gujarat gave their help for this stupendous task, yet this work could not have been completed in such a short time and that too without any major dislocation of work without the Divine grace of Bhagavan Baba, who graciously made His presence manifest on many an occasion during this period.

In a particular incident, the driver of a car became sleepy due to overwork and the car went out of control. As the passengers sitting inside shouted `Sai Ram', the driver not only woke up, but controlled the car without causing any damage whatsoever to the car or the passengers. Many such incidents occurred in this huge task. But with the Divine blessings of Bhagavan Baba, Sri Sathya Sai Organisation successfully distributed the required material to the affected people in a most orderly and loving manner.

AVATAR VANI

SIVARATRI DISCOURSE - II

Divinity is Latent in Humanity

What can the evil effects of Kali Age do to a man whose heart is full of compassion, whose speech is suffused with truth and whose body is dedicated to the service of others?

(Sanskrit Verse)

All beings in this world are classified into four categories: (1) Andaja (born out of egg), (2) Pindaja (born out of mother's womb) (3) Uthbhija (born out of the earth), (4) Swedaja (born out of sweat). Under each category, there are 21 lakh species. Hence, it is said that there are 84 lakh

species in God's creation. These 84 lakh species are subjected to three types of afflictions, viz., Adibhouthika, Adidaivika and Adhyatmika. Adibhouthika refers to the diseases that are caused by attachment to the physical world. They also refer to the diseases that are caused by insects like mosquitoes, flies, etc. Adidaivika relates to the sufferings caused by natural calamities like earthquakes, floods, and epidemics, e.g., cholera, plague, etc. Adhyatmika refers to the sufferings that result from wrong food and bad habits. It also includes the sufferings caused by cruel animals and wicked people.

Faith in the Self Protects Man

What is the remedy for these three types of afflictions man has to undergo. Man should have strong faith in the Self. That is the panacea for all ills. One should strive to experience Atmic bliss for which nine paths of devotion are prescribed—Shravanam (listening), Kirtanam (singing), Vishnusmaranam (contemplating on God), Padasevanam (serving His Lotus Feet), Vandanam (salutation), Archanam (worship), Dasyam (servitude), Sneham (friendship), Atmanivedanam (self-surrender). Man can get rid of his afflictions by taking to any of these nine paths. One who forgets his source of origin and Dharma suffers in life. Here is a small example.

Before the commencement of the Kurukshetra War, Duryodhana and Dussasana went to offer their obeisance to their mother Gandhari and to seek her blessings. Gandhari had a pure heart, steady mind and selfless love. She was of the view that it was Dharma which protected man. So, she gave her blessings in these words: "*Yatho Dharma Thatho Jaya*" (victory is where Dharma is). Then they went to their preceptor Dronacharya to pay their respects and to seek his blessings. He blessed them saying, "*Yatho Dharma Thatho Krishna, Yatho Krishna Thatho Jaya*" (where there is Dharma, there is Krishna and where there is Krishna, there is victory).

What is the Dharma of man? He should remember the source of his origin. Fish is born out of water. It cannot survive even for a while without water. It is happy only when it is in water, the place of its origin. What is the source of man's origin?

Lord Krishna declared in the Gita, "*Mamaivamsho Jeevaloke Jeevabhuta Sanathana*" (the eternal Atma in all beings is a part of My Being). From this it is evident that man is a spark of the Divine. He has originated from the principle of the Atma. Having been born from the Atma, man should always contemplate on the Atma. He will become restless and face hardships if he forgets the Atma. So, never forget the Atma, the source of your origin. Have faith in the Atma. Treat the Atma as the basis of your life. This is the Dharma that man should adhere to. You may occupy positions of authority, you may have wealth and prosperity, but none of them can protect you. Only faith in the Self can protect you.

You may involve yourself in any work you like but you should have unwavering faith in the Atma. When a mother goes to the river to fetch water, she leaves her child in the cradle. On her way back, she may be conversing with other ladies while carrying a pot full of water on her head. But her mind is constantly focused on her child. She wants to get back home as quickly as possible, lest her child should wake up and start crying. Likewise, your mind should be constantly focused on the Atma in all your activities. That should be your aim. You participated in the Bhajan throughout the night. While doing Bhajans, you may sing various songs with different tunes and beats but your mind should be constantly fixed on the Atma. All your actions

must be done with the sole purpose to please God. Arjuna asked Lord Krishna as to how he could fight in the war if he had to constantly think of God. Krishna replied, "O simpleton, it is your body and the senses which are involved in the war. Such being the case, you can always focus the mind on God." Always Focus your Mind on God Direct your mind on God instead of directing it on the senses. As I pointed out yesterday, senses are responsible for both merit and sin. If you put them to misuse, you will incur sin. If they are used in a proper way, it results in merit. Speak softly and sweetly and cultivate good mind. Only then will you earn the respect of others. You cannot always oblige but you can speak always obligingly. Cultivate right vision. Evil vision will put you in danger. Keechaka cast an evil eye on Draupadi, which led to his death at the hands of Bhima. Do not listen to evil talk. Kaikeyi paid heed to the evil words of Manthara which ultimately led to Rama's exile whom she had loved much more than her own son, Bharata.

Do you find any woman having the name of Kaikeyi or Manthara? No. Society will not respect those who indulge in evil talk and listen to evil words. So, you should always speak what is good and listen to good words. If you happen to hear something evil, do not tell it to others. What is the purpose of making others restless by telling them something which has robbed you of your peace? Today there are people who not only lend their ear to evil talk but also spread the same to the rest of society causing a great deal of unrest. *Paropakara Punyaya Papaya Parapeedanam* (one attains merit by serving others and commits sin by hurting them). Let your tongue utter such words which will give joy to others. This is precisely what you have done the previous night.

You sang Bhajans to remember the Name of God which gave joy to one and all. When you think of God, there will be no scope for evil talk or criticism of others. But there is a type of prayer in which the devotee reminds God of those who tried to create problems for Him. Once Vidura prayed to Krishna thus, "O Krishna, why don't You come to my house? Never did I try to harm You the way Kamsa did. Never did I abuse You the way Shishupala did. Then why don't You visit my house?"

You may be aware of how Shishupala hurled abuses at Krishna in the open court questioning the latter's credentials to receive the chief offering of Rajasuya Yajna performed by the Pandavas. He said, "O Krishna, what makes you think that you deserve this grand offering more than the others in this court? Is it because you played pranks with Gopikas as you pleased? Don't indulge in self-aggrandizement, shut up." Thus, as Shishupala had crossed his limits, Krishna took the plate in which the offering was made and hurled it at Shishupala, which in a trice beheaded him. Krishna's act was appreciated by one and all. Many people are under the impression that Krishna used His Chakra (discus) to kill Shishupala, but, in fact, it was only a plate that beheaded him.

Purity Attracts Divinity

When the time is not favourable, even a stick in hand will turn into a snake. On the contrary, if your time is favourable, even if you step on a snake, it will remain harmless like a stick. In order to enjoy favourable time always, you must fill your heart with sacred feelings. The history of Bharat is replete with many examples which bear testimony to this truth. Such sacred history is being forgotten today and people are resorting to unrighteous means and setting bad examples. Learn the sacred lessons that the history of Bharat teaches. Cultivate sacred feelings. Let your ears listen to sacred stories. Let your tongue utter sacred words and let your hands perform meritorious deeds. You know why God has given you hands? Is it merely to feed your stomach?

No. They must be used in the service of society. You know why the feet are given? Not to wander in the streets like a vagabond, but to visit sacred places. *"Today people are prepared to listen to vain gossip but when the sacred stories of the Lord are narrated, their ears get clogged. People are never tired of going to cinemas but their eyes find it very difficult to concentrate on the beautiful form of the Lord even for a minute."* (Telugu Song)

Senses can lead you to both sin and merit. It is your duty to put them on the right path and earn merit. Then God will fulfill all your wishes. You don't need to ask Him. *"Do not ask, O mind, do not ask. The more you ask, the more you will be neglected. God will certainly grant you what you deserve without your asking. Did He not grant the wish of Sabari, who never asked? Did He not redeem Jatayu, who never asked but sacrificed his life for His cause?"* (Telugu Poem) So, first and foremost, make your heart pure. It is only purity that attracts Divinity. If the iron filings are rusted, even the most powerful magnet will not attract them. The iron filings may blame the magnet, saying it has no power. But the magnet tells them, "You may think as you please, I am not bothered. Get rid of the rust and become pure. Only then will I attract you." In the same manner, how do you expect God to attract your mind, which is rusted with evil thoughts? See good, hear good, speak good and pleasant words, undertake sacred activities. If you act in this manner, God will certainly bestow His grace on you without your asking for it.

Yesterday evening, the most auspicious time started from 6 o'clock, after which the Linga emerged. Why is Sivaratri considered auspicious? The reason is this. The moon has 16 Kalas (aspects) and so too the mind. On the day of Sivaratri, 15 are dissolved and only one remains. If the 16th aspect of the mind is also dissolved, one attains Divinity. This total merger will take place only when one chants the Divine Name continuously and wholeheartedly.

Of all the senses, the tongue is very important. *"O tongue, the knower of taste! You are very sacred. Speak the truth in the most pleasing manner. Chant the Divine Names of Govinda, Madhava and Damodara incessantly. This is your foremost duty."* (Sanskrit Verse)

The tongue observes the ideal of sacrifice. When it tastes sweet delicacies, it sends them to the stomach. But if the item is bitter, the tongue at once spits it out. Not merely that, the tongue conducts itself in the most respectful manner. It does not step out of its house (mouth) under any circumstances. It does all its work without crossing its limits. While all other senses do only one work each, the tongue alone has the capacity to do two types of work, namely, to taste and to speak. That is why one has to exercise proper control over the tongue lest it should indulge in sinful activities like talking ill of others. In times of anger, observe silence. Our ancients taught, Talk less, work more. The lesser you talk, the purer your heart remains.

Only Morality can Redeem Humanity

Contemplation on God is the only means to keep the senses pure. But today people have absolutely no control over their senses. Even the animals have a reason and a season but not the modern man. He is facing limitless difficulties as he has not kept his senses under proper control. All the spiritual practices are meant to exercise control over the senses. Eat to the extent necessary. Do not overload your stomach. Fill two parts of the stomach with food and one with water; leave the remaining part empty for air. But today, some people stuff their stomach up to

their neck. They find it extremely difficult even to get up after their meals. Such people are bound to suffer from indigestion.

You may exercise control over your eating but you need not set any boundaries for your love. It should not be restricted to only a few people. Love one and all. Love transcends the senses. You should think "All are mine. The life principle that exists in me exists in everybody." With this feeling of unity, share your love with everybody. Love alone can confer peace, which everyone aspires for.

Your Vasanas (innate tendencies) depend on the feelings you cultivate in your heart. Here is a small example. A paper has no smell of its own. If it is used for wrapping Pakodas or dry fish or jasmine flowers, it acquires the smell of the item wrapped in it. The heart may be compared to paper. If good feelings are `packed' in it, you will certainly develop good tendencies. See good, hear good, talk good and do good. Then the evil effects of Kali Age will have no impact on you. Do not allow the Kali Prabhava (effect of Kali Age) to overpower your Swabhava (true nature). Today man has forgotten his true nature. So, the practice of Dharma is fast declining. Consequently, the water level in the earth is also going down. Humanness has become scarce. There is no purity in society, no morality in politics. Neeti (morality) alone can sustain Manava Jati (human race).

Embodiments of Love!

When you sing Bhajans, take care that the words you utter do not convey negative meanings. Here is an example. Our boys sing many Hindi Bhajans, in which they often use the word 'Thu'. They sing 'Thu Rama', `Thu Krishna', `Thu Sai' which does not convey the respectful way of addressing the Lord. The Bhajans you sing must convey sacred meanings. You should not use any disrespectful words in Bhajans.

High Ideal of Potana's Devotion Yesterday Raju spoke about Potana, a great poet and devotee of Lord Rama. He had a pure and noble heart. He composed the Bhagavata in Telugu. He firmly believed that it was Lord Rama Himself who wrote the Bhagavata through him. His name Potana consists of two words—'Po' (leave out) and 'Tana' (self). He gave up the feeling of mine and surrendered completely to the Lord. Potana did really give up everything and adhered to the principle of the Self. That is how he became a great devotee and his name is remembered even today.

He struggled hard in life, but maintained his self-respect. Potana's son was married to the daughter of Srinatha, a famous poet at the royal court. Potana's family used to eke out their livelihood through farming. Once Srinatha was going in a palanquin. On the way, he found Potana's son ploughing the field. Instead of addressing him in an endearing way, he asked his son-in-law, "O farmer, how are you?" Potana's son was not upset by this sarcastic remark. In fact, he gave a fitting reply in the most loving manner thus, "Sir, it is better to take refuge in Bhumata (mother earth) and Gomata (mother cow) and lead a dignified life than to seek the refuge of a king, and be subservient to him."

Those who repose their faith in Bhumata and Gomata will never lack anything in life. Since times of yore, the Bharatiyas considered Bhumata and Gomata as the very basis of their life. But

today we find many people giving up agriculture and migrating to towns in search of money. They watch television day in and day out and aspire for a luxurious life. As more and more people are giving up agriculture and deserting villages, scarcity of food is increasing. Having given up farming, how can you expect the mother earth to feed you? Villages are the very life-breath of Indian culture. Even today, Indian culture is sustained only in villages, not in towns and cities. Only people of villages are aware of the greatness of Indian culture. As people have lost respect and reverence for the mother earth, we experience earthquakes and such other natural calamities causing untold destruction.

In Bhagavata, there is a story of Vishnu and His consort Lakshmi involved in a game of chess. Generally, women are more intelligent than men. Though men are also endowed with high intelligence, they can never make full use of it, as their mind always wavers. Lakshmi, being one of intelligence, was able to arrest the movement of Vishnu's elephant in the game of chess. Suddenly, Vishnu stood up and said, "O elephant, I will come to your rescue, don't worry." Lakshmi immediately said, "Impossible", thinking that Vishnu was referring to the elephant in the game. But, in fact, Vishnu's mind was on Gajendra (king of elephants), who by then had totally surrendered to Him as his desperate attempts to wriggle out of the crocodile's grasp proved futile. Gajendra, being highly egoistic, had utmost faith in his physical prowess. But as he got tired, he realised that God alone could save him. He cried out, "O Lord, I have no refuge other than You. I surrender to You completely. Please forgive my sins and come to my rescue." Lord Vishnu, being compassionate, rushed immediately and saved Gajendra. (At this juncture, Bhagavan recited a beautiful poem composed by Potana describing Lakshmi's plight, as she found her husband Vishnu rushing to save His devotee without telling her and without even taking any weapons with Him.) All the compositions of Potana are suffused with sacredness. He composed the Bhagavata with the sole purpose of describing the glories of the Lord, and not to show his poetic skills. Unlike many ordinary poets, he was never after name and fame. Potana's words contain the essence of the Vedas and show the royal road to liberation.

So, every word you speak should be pleasing to the listeners. You should not use such words which hurt others. If someone speaks hurting words to you, you should show perseverance; never react to such hurting words with anger. If you listen to the criticism of your friend, do not convey these hurting words to him as he would feel disturbed and sad. You should not carry tales which disturb and sadden others. Then your life will become ideal.

All the Bhajans you sang were without any blemish. There should not be any wrong word in Bhajans. If you sing in this way, every word that you utter would have sanctity.

(Bhagavan concluded His Discourse with the Bhajans, "Hari Bhajan Bina Sukha Santhi Nahin"... and "Subrahmanyam, Subrahmanyam...")

—*From Bhagavan's Discourse in Sai Kulwant Hall, Prasanthi Nilayam on 22nd February 2001*

God's Love for His Devotees is Limitless

*Bhakti leads man to his ultimate goal of life;
It destroys his malady of worldliness.
Bhakti fosters man's yearning, for Divinity,
And helps him to attain liberation. (Sanskrit Verse)*

Embodiments of Love! Students—Boys and Girls!

This land of Bharat has been spreading through the ages the message of Bhakti (devotion) to the entire world. Devotion does not merely mean the observance of rituals or the performance of penance and meditation. Devotion really means intense love for the Lord. It implies pure and steady love, untainted by any selfish desires. Such love knows no boundaries and is beyond all regulations. The spontaneous outflow of selfless love from man to God is true devotion. Love combined with worldly desires cannot be called devotion. The only desire one must have is for God, and all worldly desires must be set aside. Nothing should be allowed to come between oneself and God. The love coming from the devotee's heart must flow unimpeded to God. Love for God must be totally impervious to the ups and downs of life, like pleasure and pain, gain and loss, etc.

Constantly Meditate on the Lord Dharmaraja, the eldest among the Pandavas, is one example of a person who was able to achieve this kind of one-pointed devotion. He remained unruffled even when his wife Draupadi was being subjected to extreme humiliation in the royal court. Similarly, when Abhimanyu, the son of Arjuna, was slain in battle, Dharmaraja accepted the verdict of destiny with perfect equanimity. He remained equally calm when Ashwathama, the son of Dronacharya, mercilessly slaughtered all the Pandava children. Nor was he bothered when he and his brothers had to spend long years in exile in the forest, foregoing all the royal comforts they were used to. All this was possible for Dharmaraja because his mind was constantly absorbed in the contemplation of Krishna to the exclusion of all other thoughts, and he was chanting His Name at all times.

Dharmaraja was not alone in such one-pointed devotion. His wife Draupadi also thought of Krishna incessantly and chanted His Name constantly. After the gruesome massacre of the young Pandava children, Arjuna tracked down Ashwathama, the perpetrator of the atrocity, and dragged him before Draupadi. Instead of cursing the evil doer, she fell at the feet of Ashwathama and said: *"It is at the feet of your father, Dronacharya, that my husbands have learnt all that they know. Being the son of Dronacharya, was it proper for you to kill my children? How could you have the heart to kill them, who were unarmed, young, quietly asleep, were not having any grudge against you, and were not contemplating any harm to you?"* (Telugu Poem) When Draupadi was praying like this, Bhima could not bear to see this. Here was Ashwathama who had to be dealt with severely for his dastardly act, and Draupadi was trying to reason with this evil monster! Exploding in anger, Bhima roared: *"This Draupadi is a stupid woman, for she pleads for this wretch's freedom. She feels no anger against this murderer of her sons. This assassin Ashwathama is not a Brahmin. Do not release him but kill him. If you do not do that, I myself will hammer his head with my powerful fist, for you to see!"* (Telugu Poem) Consumed with fury, Arjuna was about to attack Aswatthama. Draupadi raised her hand and asked him not to kill him. She said: *"O Partha! It is not righteous to kill a person who is afraid or has lost*

courage, who is asleep or intoxicated, who seeks refuge or is a female. You should not kill Ashwathama, for he is your preceptor's son." (Telugu Poem) Arjuna paid heed to Draupadi's advice, and as a token punishment shaved Ashwathama's head and set him free. This is how Draupadi reacted to the situation; she did not have the slightest hatred for one who mercilessly wiped out all the Pandava offspring.

Among the Pandavas, Dharmaraja and Draupadi were two precious gems. It was their constant contemplation of Krishna that enabled them to face all odds with equanimity and display magnanimity as well as forbearance under the most trying circumstances. Draupadi always extolled Krishna's Divinity and constantly chanted: *Kleem Krishnaya Govindaya Gopijanavallabhaya Swaha!* This sacred chant has a deep significance. Kleem stands for Prithvi (earth), Krishnaya means Jala (water). Similarly, Govindaya refers to Agni (fire). Likewise, Gopijanavallabhaya and Swaha refer respectively to Vayu (air) and Aakasa (ether). In short, the words of this sacred chant refer to the five basic elements. Through this chant, Draupadi proclaimed her belief that Krishna was immanent in all the elements and was in fact the embodiment of all these. This was the profound way in which both Dharmaraja and Draupadi meditated on Krishna. No matter what the circumstance, Dharmaraja never blamed Krishna at any point of time and worshipped Him with one-pointed devotion. Such are the shining examples of devotion available to us in Bharatiya culture.

Ideal Offerings to God

True devotion is not limited to ritualistic worship of God or singing His glories in Bhajans. It truly manifests in the flood of tears that flow from the ocean of love in your heart. The Gita refers to the various offerings that are made to the Lord like Patram (leaf), Pushpam (flower), Phalam (fruit) and Toyam (water), These words should not be taken literally. By leaf, the Lord does not mean the Tulsi or the Bilva leaf normally used in ritualistic worship. Truly speaking, the human body is the leaf that must be offered to the Lord. Like the leaf of a tree, the human body too would one day wither and decay. No one can say when that will happen. Before such a fate befalls it, the body in its fullness, freshness and purity should be offered to the Lord with the prayer, "Oh Lord! This body given by You, I offer reverentially back unto You, treating it as a leaf, and in the spirit in which Tulsi leaves are offered." Why should you offer this special leaf of your body to God? Because it is not the sort of leaf that would dry up in just a day or two. You must say with feeling, "Lord, I don't know what kind of leaf would please You. I have this body, and I offer it to You. Please treat it as a leaf and accept it."

Next, flower. You must pray! "Oh God, You have given me this heart; that same heart I offer back unto You along with my humble salutations. What else is there to offer?" The flower of your heart is what would please the Lord most and not the flowers bought from the bazaar. The bazaar flowers fade in a few hours but the heart is not like that. Totally pure, fragrant, soaked in love and perfect, it does not wither easily. After this, fruit. What fruit would please God? Is it apple, orange, mango or something else? God is not interested in fruits that grow on trees. Your mind is the fruit that God likes and it must be offered to Him. Lastly, water. Is it tap water, well water or Ganga water that the Lord wants from you? None of these. God expects the tears of joy that flow when your heart is full of love for Him. These are the offerings that the Lord expects when you worship Him.

God can be attained with Love alone

Sathyabhama (one of the consorts of Krishna) once wanted to weigh Krishna with her wealth as part of a ritual by which she thought she could possess Him exclusively. Being very proud of her wealth, she forgot that no amount of money can buy God, love alone can. Sage Narada wanted to teach this lesson to Sathyabhama by enacting a drama. He asked for a big balance to be brought, and then invited Krishna to sit on one of the pans. Krishna of course knew very well what Narada was up to, and smilingly obliged the sage. Narada then asked Sathyabhama to place gold on the other pan. But to and behold! No matter how much gold was placed on the other pan, the scale would not become even. Sathyabhama felt utterly frustrated.

To seek help, she went to Rukmini (the other consort of Krishna) who at that time was engaged in the worship of Tulsi. After hearing what Sathyabhama had to say, Rukmini remarked, "God belongs to all and resides in every being as the Eternal Indweller. No one can have a monopoly of God, nor is it good to even entertain such a desire." The gold was then removed and Narada asked Rukmini to try and somehow match Krishna's weight. Rukmini replied, "O revered sage, I believe Krishna's form can be balanced just by uttering His Name, and that is what I am going to do" Narada was not prepared to accept such a scheme and said, "The form is visible and tangible whereas the Name is not. I want you to match Krishna's form with something that has a form." Rukmini agreed. She took a Tulsi leaf in her hand and prayed, "*O God! You are worshipped with leaves, flowers, fruits and water. If it be true that You submit Yourself when You are offered pure love instead of all these, I pray that You be balanced by Your Name, and then tilt the scale with this Tulsi leaf.*" (Telugu Poem) So praying, Rukmini said, "Krishna!" Immediately the scale became even, although one of the pans was totally empty. Rukmini then placed the Tulsi leaf on the empty pan, and the pan carrying Krishna went up instantly; the Lord had been more than matched!

This story teaches that the Lord gives Himself over only to pure devotion; He cannot be attained in any other way; least of all, by wealth and riches! There is nothing greater than pure Bhakti. That is why it has been given such an exalted status in Bharatiya culture. Our ancients considered devotion more precious and valuable than all the material wealth one can dream of. It is this wealth that man should really seek instead of gold. In fact, it is the bounden duty of man to acquire this wealth; and he does not have to go far to seek it, for this treasure is already locked up within him.

Prakriti and Paramatma

In every human being, there are seven Chakras or centres of psychic power which have been interpreted in various ways. Among these, the two most important ones are the Hridaya Chakra and the Sahasrara Chakra. Chakras are described as being special kind of lotus flowers with various number of petals, Sahasrara Chakra having one thousand petals. Each petal of the Sahasrara Chakra represents sixteen aspects of Divinity. Thus, one thousand petals of Sahasrara represent in all sixteen thousand aspects of Divinity. Sixteen thousand Gopikas that the scriptures talk about represent nothing but sixteen thousand variants of Divinity. Being aspects of Divinity, the Gopikas were the property of God. Through their lives, they demonstrated how God and His property become one. When the Master and His property are united, bliss, peace and piety reign supreme.

The Gopikas recognised Krishna as their Divine Master and described Him in numerous ways. When they were separated from Krishna, they became very depressed. Life without Krishna seemed totally empty and meaningless. In their hearts they prayed, "O Krishna, won't You come and visit us at least once?" Krishna eventually responded to their prayers and came. Pangs of separation had by that time reduced the Gopikas to mere skeletons. They had no hunger or thirst and no body consciousness. Krishna saw their pitiable condition and told them not to starve themselves like this. They replied, "Krishna, our food is the melody of Your flute. We do not know of any food other than this Divine music." Radha added, "*O Krishna! Sing please a sweet song, and fill our hearts with nectarine words and bliss. Distil the essence of the Vedas, transform it into divine music of Nada Brahma, play it on Your enchanting flute, and captivate us with Your melody. Sing, O Krishna! Sing for us!!*" (Telugu Song)

This is the way Radha appealed to Krishna. Krishna then picked up a bamboo twig, made it into a flute, and played for the Gopikas. Radha was transported to heights of ecstasy and said, "Krishna, this is the moment I have been waiting for so long. I am now in absolute bliss." So saying, she gave up her body and merged into Krishna. After this incident, Krishna never again touched the flute. Everything in the creation belongs to God. All beings are His property. The Ramayana provides an illustration.

Sita is the daughter of Mother Earth and the consort of Rama—this is as far as the Ramayana is concerned. In spiritual terms, Rama is Paramatma (God) and Sita is Prakriti (Nature). Nature has been created by God and belongs to God. In the Ramayana, this is symbolised by the marriage of Sita and Rama; this marriage represents the eternal unity and the inseparable nature of God and His creation. Ravana did not understand all these subtleties, abducted Sita and paid dearly for it. Towards the end, Ravana's wife Mandodari said, "Ravana, Sri Rama is God Himself and Sita is the embodiment of Mother Supreme. You have committed a heinous sin in abducting Sita. What right do you have to take away what belongs to someone else? Repent at least now for what you have done. Go to Rama, fall at His feet, seek His pardon and restore Sita back to Him." But alas, *Vinashakale Vipareeta Buddhi* (when disaster beckons, the mind gets perverted); so Ravana ignored Mandodari's advice and paid the price for his outrageous act.

Inculcate Deep Yearning for God

God offers Himself to His devotees in exactly the same manner in which the devotees offer themselves to Him. *Yad Bhavam Tad Bhavati* (as you feel, so you become). If you constantly cry out, "O God, O most loving God," He responds by saying, "O My devotee, My dearest devotee!" (applause) God has no thought other than that of His devotee. If the devotee always thinks of God, then God too will always be thinking of the devotee. No one can come between the two. The Pandavas demonstrated this sacred principle to the world. They had to face innumerable difficulties, humiliation and suffering but, in the midst of all their travails, they never forgot Krishna. They always said, "Krishna's glorious Name is our food, water and nectar." It is by such thoughts that they sanctified their time. For them, Krishna was always first; everything else came later. For the Kauravas, on the other hand, the priorities were radically different: themselves first, relatives next and Krishna last. They left Krishna, and in the process got lost! This shows the importance of having God as priority number one. In the priority list, the world must come only after God. How can there be a world without God? God is eternal whereas the world is ephemeral. That is why it is called Jagat; Jagat = Ja + gat; it comes and goes. But divinity is

eternal; it neither comes nor goes. Your focus must always be on the permanent and not on the temporary. Then alone can you become immortal.

Embodiments of Love!

It is not enough merely to do Japa (ritualistic chanting of the Name) and Dhyana (meditation). You must in addition have a deep yearning for the Lord for He alone is eternal and permanent. It is from Him alone that you can get eternal bliss. Do not go after ephemeral pleasures. Do not be deluded by false attractions. The world is transient and all the pleasures it can offer are fleeting too. That is why in the Gita it is said: *Anityam Asukham Lokam, Imam Prapya Bhajasva Maam* (having come in this ephemeral world which is full of pain and suffering, do always contemplate on Me). The world comes and goes whereas God is always there.

He neither comes nor goes; He neither makes an entry nor an exit, for He is ever present. That is why the Gopikas always thought of Krishna and were constantly praying to Him.

It is impossible for anyone to describe even in small measure the love of God or His sweetness. The more you describe, the more you feel that these are indescribable. How can anyone describe the infinite? One must instead be absorbed in the contemplation of the glory of God, which is what the Pandavas did; and that is why Krishna was prepared to do anything for them. Examples of Krishna's Compassion Once during their exile, Dharmaraja and Draupadi were walking through the forest. Draupadi saw a huge fruit on a tree. She wanted to have the fruit since it would make a sumptuous meal for all of them. Arjuna happened to come there at that time, and responding to Draupadi's wish brought the fruit down by shooting an arrow. He then tried to lift the fruit but could not; it was very heavy. Dharmaraja and Draupadi gave a helping hand but the three of them together still could not lift the fruit. Then Dharmaraja said, "*Oh Krishna, nothing can happen without Your Divine Will. Not a blade of grass can move without Your Will, is it necessary to mention all the details? From the tiny ant to the vast galaxies, it is You who pervade and prevail everywhere. The ignorant do not realise this, and arrogantly imagine that it is their intelligence that makes the world go. Clever and intelligent they might be, but can they tell what will happen when?*" (Telugu Poem)

Meanwhile, Bhima, Nakula, and Sahadeva arrived on the spot. The arrival of Bhima was greeted with joy for he was the mighty one and could be depended upon to lift the fruit. Bhima tried at first quite casually, using just one hand; but the fruit would not budge. Realising that it was not such a simple matter, Bhima then made a serious attempt using both his hands but no luck once again. All the six then tried to lift the fruit but still it was of no use.

As they were engaged in this endeavour, they saw something moving towards them. It was in fact the hair of Roma Rishi. It was he who had nursed this tree and was doing intense penance to attain the fruit. This fruit was known as Amrutaphala (fruit of immortality), and when eaten one would be free forever from hunger and thirst. That was the reason why the sage was keen on having it. Seated in meditation, the sage sensed that some intruders were trying to take the fruit away. His long sprawling hair then automatically started extending in search of the culprits; once the culprits were located, the hair would tie them down. Draupadi was frightened by the approaching coils of hair. She prayed, "Oh Krishna, You save us at all times. You must come to our rescue once more. We have no refuge other than You."

Krishna promptly arrived on the scene, smiling as usual. He enquired, "Sister, why are you crying? You wanted the fruit; you have got it; now go ahead and enjoy it!" Draupadi replied, "Krishna, I desired the fruit without realising the implications. We are human and cannot be expected to be aware of supernatural consequences. You must save us now." Krishna then said, "Draupadi, My hands are tied. The Rishis too love Me, and they are constantly thinking of Me. I am installed in their hearts, and so I am obliged to them also!" Though Krishna appeared to be wriggling out, was He to give up the Pandavas so easily? No, and He came up with a neat trick that would save the Pandavas from the wrath of Roma Rishi. Whatever God does or says is always for the benefit of His devotees; He is never driven by personal or selfish considerations. Krishna said, "Now all of you go to the hermitage of Roma Rishi and pay your respects to the saint. Don't be afraid. Just go there, and I shall follow soon. Whatever happens, remain tight-lipped, especially after I arrive. Be careful and remain silent throughout."

The Pandavas went to the hermitage in accordance with Krishna's master-plan. There they found that the Rishi was fuming and all set to curse. Angrily the Rishi asked the Pandavas, "Who are you and where do you come from?" Precisely at that moment, Krishna entered the but of the Rishi. Roma Rishi hastened to welcome Krishna and said, "Lord, how lucky and fortunate I am to have You visit my humble cottage!" The sage was bubbling with joy. Meanwhile, Krishna appeared to be surprised to see the Pandavas there. Instantly, He started prostrating most reverentially before them one by one. He even fell at the feet of Draupadi. The Rishi was stunned to see all this. He said to himself: "Krishna is verily God, and He is prostrating before these people. Does that mean that these people are even greater than God?" But he did not spend too much time analysing what was going on. Obviously, the visitors must be exalted ones. So, following Krishna's example, he too started falling at the feet of the Pandavas one by one. Having prostrated, he could no longer curse them! That was just not done—one does not curse those to whom salutation has been offered.

The Rishi's anger quickly subsided, even as Krishna was chanting Santhi. Incidentally, Santhi is always chanted three times. Do you know why? Because one wants peace at the level of the body, the mind and the soul. The Rishi then asked Krishna, "Lord, what is all this mystery? There is none greater than You and yet You are prostrating before these humans! What is the inner significance of this?" Krishna smiled and replied, "O noble one, I dwell in the hearts of My devotees. I am the captive of My devotees. These Pandavas have extraordinary devotion for Me. No matter what the circumstance, they never forget Me. I am under the control of such devotees!" The sage then realised the greatness of the Pandavas and said, "Please take this fruit; I do not need it." The Rishi then wished them all a long life; not just a long life but a long, happy and peaceful life! Sure enough the Pandavas were happy till the very end. God taught an important lesson to humanity through this story. If you have steady devotion for God, there is nothing that cannot be accomplished. God Himself would come running forward to help you. Numerous such incidents occurred during the incarnation of God as Krishna.

Here is another example of Krishna's limitless compassion. On the ninth day of the Kurukshetra War, Bhishma took a terrible vow to exterminate all the Pandavas before sunset the next day. Draupadi came to know of this and became highly perturbed. She said to Krishna, "O Lord, this must not happen. You have to do something. I don't know how but You must make sure that I do

not become a widow." Krishna smiled and was non-committal. He just said, "Wait and see what happens." God may appear non-committal but when you appeal to Him with deep sincerity, He will certainly respond.

Night came and quiet descended on the battlefield, everyone having withdrawn to their respective quarters. In his tent, Bhishma was restless and pacing to and fro. Meanwhile Krishna came to Draupadi and said, "This is the moment. Bhishma is unable to sleep and is pacing back and forth in his tent. He is regretting the vow he has taken. You must slip into his tent this very moment and throw yourself at his feet" Draupadi nodded and started moving towards Bhishma's tent. She was wearing special slippers used by royalty, that made a squeaking noise. The noise could be clearly heard in the stillness of the night. Krishna signalled to Draupadi to stop and said, "if Bhishma hears this sound, he would know that a lady is coming. He should not know about your approach. So remove your sandals and give them to Me" Draupadi did as instructed. Krishna collected the slippers, wrapped them in His Angavastra (upper cloth) and started walking behind Draupadi, some distance away.

Quietly, Draupadi slipped into Bhishma's tent. Absorbed as he was in thought, Bhishma did not notice her entrance. Immediately upon entry, Draupadi threw herself at the feet of Bhishma. As she did so, the bangles in her hand made a sound. Bhishma heard the sound and realised that a lady was prostrating before him. Without a second thought, he blessed the lady in the traditional manner, *Deergha Sumangali Bhava* (May you have a long and happy married life!) Draupadi was happy when she heard the benediction. She said, "This is enough for me," and rose. That was when Bhishma realised whom he had blessed. He exclaimed, "What! You, here, at this time! Who has brought you here?" Draupadi replied, "Who else but Krishna? He is the one who suggested this strategy to prevent the slaughter of my husbands. You have blessed me with a long and happy married life and so you now have to spare my husbands!" Precisely at that moment, Krishna entered. Bhishma was happy about the turn of events, though it meant going back on his vow. The Pandavas were ideal men and great devotees of the Lord. God in His infinite mercy had staged a drama as a result of which the Pandavas were now secure.

Bhishma was tired, having paced up and down for a long time. He sat down and said, "Krishna, have You brought any eatables for me? You seem to have a bundle slung on Your shoulder. Why don't You open it and give me some of the food it contains?" Krishna smiled and said, "Do you think it is My job to carry food during war? This bundle does not contain food but the sandals of Draupadi. I carried these so that there was no sound when Draupadi entered your tent." Krishna then opened the bundle and the sandals fell on the ground. Tears flooded Bhishma's eyes. In a voice choked with emotion he said, "Lord, there is no limit to the extent You are prepared to go in order to save Your devotees!"

The Avatar is beyond petty worldly considerations. No task is mean or lowly for Him where His devotees are involved. He will do what has to be done at any time, any place. Protection and welfare of the devotees is His priority number one. Krishna always protected the Pandavas and they, on their part, worshipped Krishna with singular devotion. Krishna's Name was always on their lips (*Sarvada Sarvakaleshu Sarvatra Krishna Chintanam*). The Lord was ever uppermost in their minds. Krishna too constantly concerned Himself with the welfare of the Pandavas (*Sarvada Sarvakaleshu Sarvatra Pandava Chintanam*). The feeling was mutual. As is the sound,

so is the resound. The Lord's yearning for the devotee matches the yearning the devotee has for the Lord. People think: "How can God do such lowly things?" God does not have such distinctions or gradations. For the welfare of His devotees, God is prepared to do anything. Without the devotees, where is God? God's greatness and noble acts are all due to the devotees.

Magnetism of Sai Prema

So many of you have gathered here. Why have you all come? There is only one reason for this. You have come for that which is not in you, that which cannot be got at home, that which is not available in your village or town, or even country. What is that? Pure Divine Love or Sai Prema! That is the reason why all of you have come, and not because someone invited you (loud applause). That which you don't have is Sai Prema or selfless love! That love is available only here and it is in search of that you all have come! In short, you have come here in search of something that you desperately want but cannot get anywhere else. Having come in such a quest, collect all you can before you return. Fill your hearts with this Divine Love. Without His devotees, where is Baba? And without Baba, where are the devotees? There is an unbreakable bond between Baba and His devotees. The two are inseparable and interdependent. Devotees are Baba's very life. Likewise, Baba is the very life of His devotees. Both have the same life-breath. If you thoroughly grasp this principle, then you will always enjoy Baba's protection wherever you are. Those who are firm and steadfast in their devotion will never face any troubles or difficulties. Surely, you must have heard or read many stories that illustrate that those who repose full faith in God never come to any harm. You must have a pure heart and unsullied, steadfast devotion.

There are rocks on many seashores. Huge waves constantly dash against these rocks but the rocks remain firm. You must be like those boulders. You may be constantly bombarded by worldly problems, but your faith in God must remain firm like a rock. That is true devotion.

Embodiments of Love!

You may give up everything but never give up God! Never forget God! Engrave this truth in your heart. That will protect you in every possible way.

At the conclusion of the Discourse, Bhagavan sang the lively Bhajan: "Subrahmanyam, Subrahmanyam..."

—*From Bhagavan's Summer Course Discourse in Sai Ramesh Krishna Hall, Brindavan on 19th May 2000*

Devotional Music Programmes at Prasanthi Nilayam

The staff and students of Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning and devotees of Prasanthi Nilayam had a feast for the soul when some of the renowned musicians of the country enthralled them with their beautiful melodies in Sai Kulwant Hall, Prasanthi Nilayam on 8th March 2001 in the Divine Presence of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba. The occasion was the meeting of the

Board of Studies of the newly-established Sri Sathya Sai College of Music at Prasanthi Nilayam which is due to start functioning from the ensuing academic year. The Board meeting having been conducted in the morning, this music programme was held in the evening.

The programme started at 4.30 p.m. with soul-stirring devotional songs by the renowned Hindustani music maestro, Pandit Bhimsen Joshi. Sri Joshi has been adorned with the title of Padma Vibhushan by the Government of India. Sri Joshi does pour his soul into music. That is what makes his music so absorbing. Naturally, his songs touched the softest chords of the devotees' heart. After this, renowned Mridangam maestro Prof. Yella Venkateswara Rao gave a scintillating performance on Mridangam and sent the audience into raptures time and again. Professor Rao is credited with producing and playing "Veda" on Mridangam and is the holder of Guinness Book of World Records for 30 hours of non-stop playing on Mridangam. The last artiste to give his presentation was Dr. Nookala Chinna Satyanarayana, famous Carnatic classical musician and impassioned teacher of music. Dr. Satyanarayana regaled the devotees with his masterly rendering of a couple of devotional classical compositions in Telugu. Bhagavan Baba honoured all the musicians with clothes and gave His blessings to them. The programme came to a close at 6.10 p.m. with Mangalarati to Bhagavan.

Another magnificent programme of devotional music was presented by Radha Jayalakshmi, renowned vocal duo of Carnatic music on 18th March 2001. The programme started with an invocation Sloka on Lord Vinayaka in the Bhajan Mandir of Prasanthi Nilayam in the Divine Presence of Bhagavan Baba. What followed was a variety of delightful devotional songs including a few Kritis of Thyagaraja, a Kannada song in praise of the Lord of Parthi, a Marathi Abhang (Bhajan) by Ganu Maharaj and a Hindi Bhajan. The artistes surcharged the entire milieu with Bhakti and piety by their devotional singing. At the end of the programme, they sang the famous composition of Tulsi Das "Sri Ramachandra Kripalu Bhaja Mana..." Bhagavan blessed the artistes and gave Saris to them. The programme came to a conclusion at 5.30 p.m. with Mangalarati to Bhagavan.

Ugadi Celebrations at Prasanthi Nilayam

The devotees of Prasanthi Nilayam had a rare good fortune this year when Bhagavan decided to celebrate the holy festival of Ugadi at Prasanthi Nilayam instead of celebrating it at Brindavan where it had continued to be celebrated for the last many years. On the auspicious day of Ugadi on 26th March 2001, Bhagavan came to Sai Kulwant Hall at 6.55 a.m. After showering the bliss of His Divine Darshan on the assembled devotees on this holy day, Bhagavan sat in His chair on the dais at 7.10 a.m. signalling the commencement of the Ugadi programme. As soon as Bhagavan occupied His chair, the Institute students started Vedic chants in chorus.

Before the Ugadi Message of Bhagavan, three speakers addressed the audience. This programme started at 7.15 a.m. after the usual Veda chanting by a group of Institute students. The first speaker of the morning, Sri Y. Arvind, a former student of the Institute and now serving in Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Medical Sciences, Whitefield, referred to the lessons he had learnt

as a student of Sai institution and observed that one's life acquired a new meaning when one put into practice the teachings of Bhagavan and realised His omnipresence and omnipotence.

The second speaker, Sri S. V. Giri, Vice Chancellor, Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning, referred to the informal but subtle ways of Bhagavan's teaching which transformed the lives of the students in His institutions. In this context, he mentioned a few very special programmes held during the last year, particularly the programme of Grama Seva, 75th Birthday Celebrations of Bhagavan and the programme of daily afternoon sessions of informal talks of Bhagavan in Sai Kulwant Hall, all of which Bhagavan utilised to provide opportunities of practical teachings to the students and devotees. Materialisation of the diamond which Draupadi wore and a fresh fig fruit in these afternoon sessions not only provided the glimpses of Bhagavan's Divinity, but reminded one of the old Chitravati days when Bhagavan used His divine play to infuse His divine message to the devotees, he observed.

The last speaker, Dr. G. Venkataraman, former Vice Chancellor of the Institute, observed that man's future did not lie in calendars and almanacs which people consulted on the new year day, but in the manner they acted in their 'present'. He emphasised the teachings of Bhagavan that one should always concentrate on the present without wasting time on worrying about the future and brooding over the past. It was prudent to do all work considering it as God's work and it should be offered to God without worrying about its results, he remarked.

After this, Bhagavan Baba gave His Divine Ugadi Message (full text of this has been given elsewhere in this issue). Ugadi celebrations came to a conclusion at 8.55 a.m. with Arati to Bhagavan. Prasadam was distributed to all the devotees in the end.

Experiencing the Formless in Form

An Avatar assumes the form that is beneficial to and within the reach of human beings. Men cannot comprehend the Formless and Attributeless Absolute. Unfortunately, even when the Formless Absolute assumes a form, there are persons, who impelled by their own attitudes, attribute their own human foibles to the Avatar. "When He has the same form as ours, the same physical features, and eats, talks and moves about like any of us, what is the difference between the Avatar and ourselves?" they ask. Because of this narrow-minded approach, these persons distance themselves from the Divine.

—Baba

"The entire external world is a reflection of your inner reality. Your inner reality should be the basis. When you realize this Mooladhara Tatwa, all external delusions and illusions vanish."

—Baba

The Ramayana is the Very Essence of Vedas

Just as the Viraat Purusha (Cosmic Being) was born as Dasaratha's earthly son, the Vedas were born to Prachetas (Valmiki) in the form of the Ramayana.

(Sanskrit Sloka)

Embodiments of Love!

The Ramayana is the very form of the Vedas that have come down to us from their divine origin. The Vedas are divided into four parts, viz., Rig Veda, Yajur Veda, Sama Veda and Atharvana Veda. Lord Rama is the embodiment of the Rig Veda, while Lakshmana represents the Yajur Veda. Similarly, Bharata and Shatrughna are the personifications of the Sama Veda and Atharvana Veda respectively. Thus, the four Vedas became the four sons of Dasaratha and played in his palace. The Rig Veda and Yajur Veda consist of Mantras which are related to Yajnas and Yagas. That was the reason why sage Vishwamitra took Rama and Lakshmana to his Ashram to safeguard his Yajna. While Rama was in exile, Bharata left Ayodhya and stayed in a village called Nandigram, all the time singing the Divine Name of Rama for 14 long years. It is for this reason that Bharata is described as the personification of the Sama Veda. It was Shatrughna who safeguarded the places of sacred rituals like Yajnas and Yagas from evil spirits and demons. This is why, he symbolises the Atharvana Veda. Do not think that the Ramayana is different from the Vedas. In fact, it is the very essence of the Vedas.

The Ramayana contains many Subtle Truths

Lord Rama exemplified three kinds of Dharma (righteous conduct), namely, the Dharma relating to the individual, family and society. To uphold these three aspects of Dharma, Divinity manifested on the earth in the form of Rama. The Ramayana gives Divine commands for the welfare of humanity and for the improvement of the conduct of man. The period of the Ramayana was well over 5000 years ago. Even after the passage of thousands of years, if the Ramayana still captures the hearts of the people, you can well imagine its sacredness and uniqueness. No other book has influenced the hearts of people so deeply as the Ramayana. The grandeur and glory of Rama has left an indelible mark on the hearts of the people. Two types of messages dominate the Ramayana: one pertains to Rama and the other to Ravana.

Man is the very form of Sathya (truth). Dharma (righteousness) is his Swabhava (innate tendency). Sathya and Dharma are the very essence of all the scriptures. They are verily the two eyes of man. Rama's message to humanity was to uphold Dharma and Sathya, to stay in the path of these and thereby attain fulfillment in life. On the other hand, these two principles of Sathya and Dharma were an anathema to Ravana. He neither adhered to Sathya nor followed Dharma. So, he had to repent in the end. Ravana gave the following message to his people when his end approached near, "Oh my people, do not follow my example. I gave no place to Sathya and Dharma in life. I am the personification of all evil qualities. Having become the victim of excessive desires, I have lost my entire clan. Instead of establishing a good name for myself, I have destroyed my entire kingdom. Ultimately, I have ruined myself. Rama achieved universal fame and I have ended up accumulating ill-fame."

Fame and ignominy go together. Good and evil are always present side by side. Pitch-black hair surrounds a moonlike face. What is the inner significance of this? The shining forth of righteous fame is intensified by the surrounding darkness of evil. There is no Rama without Ravana or Ravana without Rama. It is the bringing together of Rama and Ravana, that is the Ramayana. It is necessary for you to recognise the inner significance of the Ramayana. Unmanifest, immanent human values are the essence of the Ramayana. The Ramayana contains many subtle truths hidden in it. The epic, first and foremost, expounds the duties of the individual. The duties of the individual taught by the Ramayana do not relate only to the external form of the individual. The individual does not signify only the form. The inner reality and divinity resident in his heart constitute man's true individuality. This inner divinity manifests in the individual's conduct. Rama exemplified such individual values to humanity. To uphold the promise of His father, He went through the hardships of forest life, but He did not consider these as suffering. In this way, He upheld His family Dharma. He made it known that the scions of the Ikshvaku family keep their word at any cost and never deviate from the path of Dharma. How did Rama do this?

Rama is the Embodiment of Dharma Wearing the dress of a hermit, He came to the palace of Kaushalya to take leave of her. Kaushalya was astonished at the attire of Rama, who was going to be coronated as the crown prince of Ayodhya. Smilingly, Rama told Kaushalya, "Today I have been commanded by My father to become the ruler of the forests. To rule the forests is also a part of our family tradition." As this conversation was in progress, Lakshmana arrived there in a furious state. He said, "Mother, this is not what happened. Father, compelled by the words of Kaikeyi, has caused this situation. I am only waiting for Rama's command. Let Him just give me permission; I will go immediately and destroy Manthara and Kaikeyi and restore the throne of Ayodhya to Rama. I am not constrained even by the words of father." Rama closed Lakshmana's mouth and said, "Lakshmana, this evil way is not in keeping with our family tradition. Our family tradition is to uphold Dharma. We have to uphold the Dharma of the individual and the family. Nothing happens in this world without a cause. Father wouldn't give Me such an order without proper reason. Please keep your emotions under control and be peaceful."

On hearing Lakshmana's version, Kaushalya fainted. Later, she said, "Rama, is it not a son's duty to equally obey father and mother? Do I not have half of Your father's rights? Therefore, You have to obey your mother's orders also. So, I shall also come along with You to the forest." Then Rama appealed to His mother, "Father is highly distressed because of separation from Me. In this condition, it is not proper for you to desert him. You carry half his burden. It is your duty now to support, help and protect him. The duty of a Sati (wife) is to serve her Pati (husband), first of all." Sita, who was standing by, heard this conversation. She asked Him, "Rama, You seem to be changing words from person to person and place to place. You have asked me to stay back and look after father and mother, but to Your mother, You are telling that serving the husband is the prime duty of a wife. Is not my husband my God? Are the norms different for the wife and the mother?" Rama was pleased that Sita understood her duty well.

Rama adhered to the Dharma of the individual and upheld the Dharma of the family. When Lakshmana used harsh words against Kaikeyi, Rama advised him, "Kaikeyi loves Me even more than Bharata. Such a mother should not be abused like this. *Matru Devo Bhava, Pitru Devo Bhava* (revere the mother and father as God). This is our family tradition. I am obeying the

words of My father implicitly. I respect all My mothers." In this manner, Rama expounded Dharma to different people appropriate to the circumstances.

In the forest, Lakshmana cut off the nose and ears of Surpanakha. She went and complained to Ravana. At the behest of Ravana, a huge army of Rakshasas attacked Rama, Lakshmana and Sita. At that time, Rama called Lakshmana and said, "You have to support Me as per My instructions. I shall go and face this army of Rakshasas alone. You take Sita to a secluded place and keep her concealed in a safe haven." But Lakshmana refused to accept this. He said, "Is it proper for You to face this huge horde of Rakshasas alone? My duty is not to protect Sita alone. My prime purpose is to serve You. Being Your brother, can I stand by and safely preserve my life while You are in grave danger. So, I shall not go leaving You alone" Rama replied, "In the multiple duties of man, many such situations arise. You have to act according to circumstances without transgressing Dharma. Are you not aware that I can face any number of opponents singly? Therefore, you only take up the job of protecting Sita." In such soft words, He mollified Lakshmana and made him agree to stay back and look after Sita. He whispered the secret of the appropriate Dharma in the ears of Lakshmana. Then Lakshmana agreed and conducted Sita to a safe place. From their safe haven, Lakshmana and Sita could hear the loud clamour and bright flashes of the fierce battle. It was difficult for Lakshmana to keep his mind tranquil. Sita even used harsh words against Lakshmana in her anxiety and urged Lakshmana to go to the help of Rama. She said, "Lakshmana, why are you leaving your brother alone? You also go to His support," she insisted. Then Lakshmana said, "Mother, my prime duty is strict obedience of Rama's instructions. Rama is capable of winning over all the enemies by Himself. He is omnipotent and omniscient. What is my strength compared to His! I shall not leave you and go." He was pacifying her in this way and was waiting. Rama released a thousand-headed weapon against the enemy, and the Rakshasas were all destroyed. When Rama returned, He was happy to see that Sita and Lakshmana were safe and sound.

How is it that Rama could destroy the Rakshasa hordes singly? Really Rama is not a single person. He has got many forms. *Sahasra Seersha Purusha Sahasraksha Sahasra Pad* (the Cosmic Being has thousands of heads, eyes and feet). In fact, the Rakshasa hordes lost their consciousness at the mere sight of Rama. Recognising the omnipotence and Divinity of Rama, Lakshmana said to Sita, "Oh mother, it is possible to count the waves in the ocean, but there are no words to describe the powers of Rama. Rama's powers are immeasurable; they transcend the three Gunas (Satwa, Rajas and Tamas). We are mere instruments. Rama is omnipotent. His Name has immense power."

"Sweeter than sugar, tastier than curd, sweeter indeed than honey is the Name of Rama. Constant repetition of this nectarine sweet Name gives one the taste of divine nectar itself. Therefore, one should contemplate on this sweet name incessantly."

(Telugu Poem)

The concept of Dharma described in the Ramayana is no different from the Dharma enunciated in the Vedas. There are two aspects of Dharma contained in the Vedas. One is Pravritti and the other is Nivritti. All activities relating to the external world are Pravritti Dharma. When you are hungry, Pravritti tells you, "My child, eat" Nivritti tells you, on the other hand, "Child, merely because you are hungry, don't eat everything that you get hold of" Nivritti tells you what, when

and how you should eat. Pravritti confuses the mind. Nivritti purifies the heart. That which is pertaining to external objects is Pravritti and that which concerns your internal being is Nivritti. All that you experience through your sense organs, such as eyes, ears, etc., and the mind is related to Pravritti. Nivritti transcends these sense organs and takes you closer to your real Self. Rama taught the path of Nivritti. This is the main theme of the Vedas.

Rama was the son of Dasaratha. But it was not merely so. He was not born from the womb of Kaushalya. He was actually the gift of Yajna (sacrifice). The Vedas symbolise Yajnas, and Rama is the very personification of Yajna. The Rama principle transcends the mind and the intellect. It has nothing to do with worldly relationships. The four brothers, Rama, Lakshmana, Bharata and Shatrughna were no ordinary mortals.

The Story of Manthara

If one enquires deeply, one may find that the actions of Manthara also had an inner meaning. Once the king of Kekaya went out hunting. He saw a deer couple playing and aimed an arrow at them, which killed the male deer. The female deer went to her mother and said, "Mother, the king of Kekaya has killed my husband. Now, what is my fate?" The mother deer went to the king of Kekaya and told him, "Oh king, your act of killing the husband of my daughter is not proper at all. You should not have indulged in such a cruel action which separated my daughter from her husband. Just as I am suffering now due to the loss of my son-in-law, I will see to it that one day you will also suffer the loss of your son-in-law in the same way." That very mother deer was born as Manthara and was the cause of the death of Dasaratha, the son-in-law of Kaikeyi's father.

If you look closely at the various events in the Ramayana, you will discover several truths which are enshrined in the Vedas. The Vedas, Shastras and Puranas are all interdependent, interrelated and should not be considered separate from each other. It is not proper to separate them as unconnected works. The so-called scholars apply worldly standards to these works and make all kinds of studies by separating them as different, such as the Vedas, Shastras and Puranas.

Good and bad are intricately mixed and it is not possible for anybody to entirely disentangle them. The same kind of connecting and contrasting relationship that exists between a bright face and a crown of black hair exists between good and evil. If Ravana had never existed, Rama's name and fame would not have spread far and wide. Ravana was no ordinary person. He had studied all that Rama had studied, but he did not put his knowledge into practice. Hence, he suffered from indigestion of knowledge. Rama fully put into practice all that He studied, digested it properly and uplifted His people thereby.

There are two kinds of study: inward-looking and outward-looking. The stuff that you learn by rote and disgorge onto your answer paper is the outward-looking study. On the other hand, taking your study into your heart, feeling its fullness and experiencing its bliss is the inward-looking study. These have been differentiated by the terms: education and educare. Your aim should be to acquire educare and not mere education. This marks the difference between the study of Rama and Ravana; while Rama's study was related to educare, that of Ravana was limited only to education.

Manthara, driven by her past resolve, decided to poison Kaikeyi's mind against her natural affection for Rama and her duties towards Dasaratha. Outside Kaikeyi's palace, there was fanfare, trumpeting and joyous noise of a procession. It was actually Dasaratha coming with all his regal paraphernalia to inform Kaikeyi about his decision to make Rama the crown prince of Ayodhya. The hunchback Manthara looked out of the window to see what the noise was about. The glory of Dasaratha was extremely distasteful to Manthara. As Manthara was coming down, she encountered one of Kaushalya's maidservants. She was wearing the fine silk dress and jewellery that Kaushalya had given her. Manthara asked her wherefrom she had got all this finery. She replied, "In celebration of the coronation of Rama, Kaushalya has given to all her servants fine clothes and jewellery." Manthara was infuriated at this. She was even jealous of the fact that none of it was coming her way. Even that canker was persisting in her mind. Immediately, she went to Kaikeyi and asked her, "Wherefore are you decked out in all this finery?" Kaikeyi did not pay any attention to Manthara's words. Manthara went near Kaikeyi and told her, "You simpleton, you are under the false impression that Dasaratha loves you more than anyone else. But it is really a deception. You will see what happens to you in future. Just listen to me." So saying, Manthara tapped on Kaikeyi's shoulder. By this mere contact, all the evil seething inside Manthara entered into Kaikeyi.

It is very dangerous to cultivate association with people of evil traits. Even a little contact with them can pollute you with their evil qualities. Kaikeyi who was so fond of Rama till then turned against Him in a moment. Manthara told her, "Remember, you had rendered great help to Dasaratha in the battle between the Devas and Asuras (gods and demons). When the retaining peg of the axle of Dasaratha's chariot got loose and the wheel was about to fall off, you put your finger in the place of the lost peg and retained the wheel in place until Dasaratha was able to vanquish his enemy. At that time, Dasaratha in his joy, granted you two boons and you had told him that you would ask for the same at some future date, and the king had promised you that' he would keep his word. Now is the time for you to ask for the boons. So; you ask Dasaratha to exile Rama to the forest for fourteen years and insist on the coronation of Bharata immediately. See Dasaratha is coming. Take off all your ornaments, throw them pell-mell on the floor. Get into Kopa Griham (chamber of anger), lie down on the floor like a withered creeper." Kaikeyi followed her advice. The king came, asked where Kaikeyi was and got no reply. Manthara came forward and told him, "Go and see for yourself:' Dasaratha was horrified at what he saw inside the chamber. He asked gently, "Kaikeyi, why are you acting in this manner?" There was no reply. Dasaratha exhorted further, "Kaikeyi, this is not an occasion to behave in this manner. Rama is about to be crowned and this is a very important event in my life. On such a happy occasion, you should not put on such a sorry face. Whatever you want, palace or ornaments or anything else, just mention and it will be yours." Kaikeyi replied that she did not want any of these things. Then she expressed her demands as tutored by Manthara. On hearing this, Dasaratha fell unconscious. In a fit of jealousy, Manthara pushed Kaikeyi into this plight. Anyone possessed by the demon of jealousy will not be spared. Dasaratha pleaded with Kaikeyi, saying, "Why are you afflicted by this fit of jealousy? This will only bring you ill-fame." But Kaikeyi stuck to her stand. Bhagavan keeps telling you, *Tyaja Durjana Samsargam* (abandon the company of wicked people). Don't associate with anyone who is afflicted with jealousy even at the cost of your life.

Jealousy Afflicts the Entire Mankind

Manthara was jealousy personified. Her jealousy was so potent that it dried up the great motherly love that Kaikeyi had for Rama. Any amount of persuasion from Dasaratha was fruitless. Just then Rama entered to pay His respects to His parents. Looking at the situation there, He asked Kaikeyi. "Amma, what is the problem?" Kaikeyi did not reply, but Manthara told Him about Kaikeyi's boons. She told Him, "Your father granted two boons to Kaikeyi in the battlefield, but is now going back on his promise." Rama, after hearing everything in full, told Kaikeyi, "Mother, I shall uphold the words of father. One should never go back on the promise given. Such an act will bring great disrepute to the Ikshvaku clan. So, I shall depart for the forest immediately." At once, Manthara came in with clothes worn by hermits for Rama to wear. Jealousy is so ready when it decides to act. Rama changed His clothes right there and saluted His father. But Dasaratha was unaware of all that was happening as he had fallen unconscious. Kaikeyi did not want to lose any time. So, she told Rama, "Rama, do not look at Your father and mother differently As Your mother, I am telling You to go to the forest straightaway." Rama obeyed her order without demur.

The Ramayana gives examples of Ravana and Manthara as both having evil tendencies. Ravana was slain in the battle but Manthara is alive even today in the form of jealousy. There is none who can destroy this 'Manthara'. It is our duty to ignore it. Jealousy is the worst of all evil qualities. Three-fourths of the world is ruined because of jealousy. Jealousy has no limits whatsoever. People are jealous of others' prosperity, beauty and education, and try to cause their downfall.

One should not utter bad words, listen to evil talk or indulge in evil activities. This is the main teaching of the Ramayana. Manthara indulged in evil talk and Kaikeyi paid heed to her. What happened to them ultimately? They were put to disrepute. Today, do you find any woman bearing the name of Kaikeyi or Manthara? You come across women having the name Kaushalya, but not Kaikeyi or Manthara. Keechaka cast an evil eye on Draupadi, and consequently met his doom at the hands of Bhima. Do you find anybody having the name Keechaka? None. Names of all those who indulge in evil talk, evil actions or have evil vision do not find place in this world.

Purity of Heart is the Source of Bliss

The Ramayana shows us the way to lead an ideal life. That is why people of all countries, speaking all languages hold the Ramayana in high esteem. This sacred epic is ever new and ever inspiring. Its glory has not diminished even a little bit with the passage of time. The Bharatiyas have been preserving the Ramayana because of the sacred ideals it stands for.

Once Anjana Devi, mother of Anjaneya, came to the residence of Kaushalya. Kaushalya enquired who she was. Anjana Devi introduced herself, saying, "I am the mother of Anjaneya, who could cross over the mighty ocean in a leap." After some time, the mother of sage Agastya also came there. On being asked, she introduced herself, saying, "I am the mother of the one who swallowed the entire ocean in one gulp" Then Kaushalya said to them, "Your sons could accomplish such stupendous tasks because of the mighty power of the Name of my son, Rama." As they were conversing, Rama appeared there and asked, "Mother, what is it that you are discussing?" Kaushalya replied, "Son, we are discussing the glory of Your Name." Then Rama said, "Mother, it is not merely because of My Name that they were able to perform such mighty

tasks. Their purity of heart was also responsible for this. There are many who chant My Name, but are all of them able to reap its benefit? Purity of heart is very essential."

The one with noble qualities of purity, patience and perseverance is verily God. You should have the determination to uphold good and remain peaceful in the face of adversities. Don't aspire for name and fame. Keep your heart sacred. Have strong determination to do good. This is the Sadhana you are supposed to do.

Describing the greatness and grandeur of Rama's Divine power, Thyagaraja composed this beautiful song, "Oh Rama, without Your Divine power, could a mere monkey cross the ocean? Would Lakshmi Devi, the goddess of wealth, become Your consort? Would Lakshmana worship You? Would the intelligent Bharata be subservient to You? Words are inadequate to describe Your Divine power." People have been celebrating Rama's birthday for the past thousands of years, but they are not able to give up their evil tendencies. Celebration of any festival becomes meaningful only when there is transformation of the heart.

Students!

You are young and have a long way to go. Society is like a train and all elders are bound to get down soon at wayside stations. But you have yet to travel a long distance. So, keep your 'compartment' clean and have a comfortable journey. Keep your goal in mind and become deserving of Divine grace. Chant the Name of Rama wholeheartedly. Install Him in your heart and sanctify your lives. Rama is present in every heart in the form of the Atma. That is why, He is known as Atmarama. The Atma is changeless and that is your true form. Develop the faith that you are Brahman (Aham Brahmasmi).

Embodiments of Love!

As you are aware, Prasanthi Nilayam is a part of Rayalaseema region which is known for its hot summer. Though you are very happy here, your body may not be able to bear this summer heat. It is but natural in this season. So, those who wish to go to their native places may do so. Swami gives permission to all. Go happily and come back happily in the month of June.

Bhagavan concluded His Discourse with the Bhajans, "Rama Rama Rama Sita... "and "Rama Kodanda Rama..."

—*From Bhagavan's Sri Ramanavami Discourse In Sai Kulwant hall, Prasanthi Nilayam on 2nd April 2001*

Sri Ramanavami Celebrations at Prasanthi Nilayam

"The Ramayana is the very essence of the Vedas," said Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba while delivering His Divine Discourse on the auspicious occasion of Sri Ramanavami on the morning of 2nd April 2001. In a function marked with piety, solemnity and simplicity held in Sai Kulwant Hall at Prasanthi Nilayam, Bhagavan emphasised the importance of the Ramayana as a repository of all the sacred values enshrined in the Vedas. Dwelling on the relevance of the

sacred epic for modern life, Bhagavan cautioned that mankind was suffering today mainly due to the evil quality of jealousy represented by Manthara in the Ramayana. "While Ravana was slain in the battlefield, Manthara is still alive in the form of jealousy. Three-fourth of the world is afflicted by this evil today," He said. Unless mankind followed Sathya and Dharma exemplified by Lord Rama, there could be no peace in the world, He declared.

On the morning of Sri Ramanavami on 2nd April 2001, Bhagavan came to Sai Kulwant Hall at 6.50 a.m. and showered the bliss of His Divine Darshan on the assembled devotees. The programme of Sri Ramanavami began at 7.00 a.m. after Veda chanting by a group of Institute students. Dr. M. Sainath, a faculty member of the Institute, then introduced two speakers who were blessed by Bhagavan to make brief speeches before Bhagavan's Divine Discourse. Dwelling on the inner significance of the Ramayana, the first speaker, Sri Y. Arvind, said that Rama had been called the embodiment of Dharma, "Ramo Vighrahan Dharma". The same, he said, is true of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba whose life has become His Message of Sathya, Dharma and Prema to the world. Sri Arvind narrated the incident from the Ramayana when Hanuman prayed for a small service from Lord Rama and the Lord gave him the boon of His constant company.

The second speaker was Sri T. G. Krishnamurthy, State President of Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organisation, Tamil Nadu. Referring to the ideals shown by the Ramayana, Sri Krishnamurthy explained that love among the four brothers Rama, Lakshmana, Bharata and Satrugna was an ideal to be followed by all. Quoting an incident from the life of Shivaji when he gave all his kingdom to his Guru, Samarth Ram Das in Gurudakshina, Sri Krishnamurthy explained the value of dedication and sacrifice in life.

After these two speeches, Bhagavan gave His nectarine Discourse on this auspicious occasion explaining the deep and subtle truths contained in the Ramayana (full text of Bhagavan's Discourse has been given elsewhere in this issue). After Bhagavan's Discourse, Prasadam was distributed to all the devotees. This included the traditional summer drink "Panakam", prepared from jaggery and ginger. The solemn and simple function of Sri Ramanavami came to a conclusion with Arati to Bhagavan at 8.50 a.m.

AVATAR VANI

DASARA DISCOURSES - IV

Values in Children

In this world, our path is illumined by the light of Dharma. No other lamp or light can show us the correct path in life. Sai's word is verily the Truth. (Telugu Poem)

Embodiments of Love!

In this world, we can hardly find anyone who has not been subjected to misery and suffering at one time or the other. Whether he be a king, a farmer, a millionaire or a pauper, everyone has to face five types of Klesas (misereries).

Man's Five Afflictions

The first of these Klesas is Avidya Klesa, i.e., the misery of ignorance. Attachment to the body is the root cause of ignorance. Today man attaches undue importance to his body and makes a lot of effort for its maintenance and comfort. In order to sustain the body, man aspires for so many things. If he fails to get them, he gets frustrated which in turn leads to suffering and misery. In his struggle for existence, he loses self-control and hence suffers. That is why I have been cautioning you not to have too much body attachment. This body is responsible for both happiness and misery of man. First, develop attachment to the Atma or the Spirit and then think of the body. When you are not aware of the Atma, your attachment to the body leads you to misery. Attachment to the body is responsible for all desires and diseases of man. Education that is imparted today cannot be called Vidya (true education) as it aims at satisfying only the physical needs and ignores the spiritual needs. True education imparts the knowledge of the Self.

It is Atma Vidya.

The second Klesa that afflicts man is Abhinava Klesa or the misery that is caused because of the mind. The mind pervades everywhere in the world. That is why it is said, "*Mano Moolam Idam Jagat*" (this world is based on the mind). The mind aspires for so many things in life. When desires are not satisfied, man gets frustrated. So, from birth to death, man is suffering from problems arising out of the mind. In fact, except for these troubles of the mind and body consciousness, man is free from all worries. Man has to find out a way to get rid of these worries. He has to give up this delusion that body alone is the basis of life. He has to transcend body consciousness and frailties of the mind.

The third Klesa is the Asthitha Klesa. This is due to the limitless desires of man combined with his body attachment and fickleness of the mind. Today man is not able to understand what sort of desires he should entertain. He is not able to investigate and discriminate between good and bad, truth and falsehood, eternal and ephemeral, desirable and undesirable. He desires to possess whatever he sees and is dictated by his sensual cravings. In order to keep the body under control and tame the mind, our ancients pursued certain practices such as Dhyana, Yoga, etc. If body and mind are not kept under control, they behave as they like and ruin you. The best way to keep them under check is to chant the glory of God incessantly.

You all know that a horse cannot remain still. It keeps on moving some part of its body or the other all the time. It stands for instability. Then, how is the rider able to control such a horse? He puts blinkers on its eyes and holds the reins of the bridle put on its head. Even a strong and powerful horse will come under control in this way. Similarly, when man is able to keep his tongue under his control, half of his problems will get eliminated. That is the reason why the ancients practised Mounam (silence). They never indulged in meaningless practices. Their every activity or task had an inner significance. Silence helps you to control the mind, which in turn leads to conquest of desires and finally confers happiness.

The fourth affliction of man is Raga Klesa. Avidya, Abhinava and Asthitha Klesas join and give rise to Raga Klesa. Raga Klesa refers to excessive attachment to and craving for wealth and property. Because of Raga, man desires everything that is there in the world. This Raga (desire) is responsible for all Rogas (diseases) of man. A weak person who does not have the capacity to satisfy his desires hankers after rich and powerful people. If they do not fulfill his desires, he

develops hatred towards them. This gives rise to the fifth Klesa, Dwesha Klesa, i.e., misery due to hatred.

When man is bound by all these five Klesas, how can he be happy and peaceful? The root cause of all these Klesas is attachment to the body and lack of control over the mind. In order to get rid of this body attachment, sages in the past left their homes and led a sacred and peaceful life in the forest. There is minimal scope for the mind to wander in a forest. As worldly attractions are non-existent there, it is possible to keep the mind under control. However, leaving your home and family and living in the forest does not by itself conform to renunciation. Observance of silence is also one of the means of achieving this. Ancient sages gave utmost importance to Mounam (silence). Limited talk helped them to keep their mind under control. When you talk less, there is also less chance of telling lies. So, one should have limited talk, observe silence and check one's desires to achieve control over the mind.

Ideal Motherhood of Queen Madalasa

All actions done by the ancients had a purpose and meaning. They led by example. Man today is not able to recognise this. There was a queen by name Madalasa. She used to laugh when the king named her new-born children. When the king enquired the reason for this, she replied, "Can you ever give a name to the eternal Atma? Even if you do so, there is no guarantee that the child will conduct itself in conformity with its name. So, no name will ever be completely appropriate. Hence, do not attempt to name the child." Life in this world is a long sleep. All our experiences of the world are also like dreams. Therefore, she would put the children in the cradle and sing lullabies of wisdom, "You are ever pure, ever wise and ever blissful. But the illusion of the world has made you ignorant of your reality. Worldly life is like a sleep with deluding dreams. Once born, you are subject to the trials and tribulations of the world. Having taken birth in a mother's womb once, don't be born again."

Another of her songs was: "In the cradle of Omkara, on the bedspread of wisdom, with awareness as pillow, oh dear child, enter into the sleep of communion with your true Self." Thus, Madalasa moulded her children as embodiments of wisdom. Madalasa stands as an ideal for all mothers. She discharged her Dharma while remaining unattached to the world. In fact, she sent her children to the forest telling them, "Children! You are deluded in thinking that comfort and happiness are available only in palaces. But it is in the forests that you have true happiness and solitude."

The forest is a place of calmness and serenity. The trees in the forest take in carbon dioxide exhaled by us and give us oxygen, which sustains our life. There is no scope for diseases there as people talk less and have fewer desires. Thus, they have a longer life-span. Hence, forests teach us to lead a serene and secluded life.

Parents are Responsible for Children's Bad Conduct

In these days, mothers fill the minds of their children with worldly desires. Ponder over this lullaby sung by a mother today. The mother says, "Near the tank bed, your uncle is sowing green gram. Go and ask for a share, oh child Sankara!" When Sankara does so and demands a share, the uncle replies, "You were not there when I had sown the seeds or harvested the crop. Why should I give you a share in the yield?" Sankara argues, "Isn't my mother your sister? Come, let

us settle the matter in the village court." So, this is the substance of the lullaby of a modern mother who teaches her child to demand partition of the family property and go to court to settle the issue.

Boys today have girl friends. This only projects how unsacred is their conduct, how wicked and unjust! Is this what the boys should aspire for? You can always marry if you want to at a suitable age, when you are capable of living independently. Nobody will stop you. But how sinful is it to indulge yourself in love with a girl who is going to be someone else's wife? Later, she may even come as your sister-in-law. Parents today encourage and support such sinful activities. They think that thereby their son's marriage can be performed without spending even a single paisa. But are they considering the decline in the values arising therefrom? How can a man sustain a good character in such an atmosphere?

It is the duty of the parents to control their children. This control should be exercised in accordance with the child's age. Children should be moulded in such a manner that they bring name and fame to their parents. Madalasa exemplified this aspect. From the very birth, she guided her children on the right path. It is said, "Start early, drive slowly, reach safely."

A stone is tied to a growing snake gourd so that it grows straight. Similarly, parents should attach the weight of discipline to their children. Leaving them free without any restrictions would bring them a bad name in the long run. It may even affect the honour and reputation of the family. Freedom should be given wherever necessary, but not in matters which can bring down the prestige of the family. As our ancestors guarded the reputation of the family, Bharat today has such name and fame.

Idealism of King Harishchandra King Harishchandra was the very embodiment of truth. He was ready to give up his life to uphold truth. His wife Chandramati too followed him. Harishchandra had to sell his wife and son to keep up his word. Chandramati supported him, saying, "Lord! We may live or die, but let us never swerve from the path of truth. Let us never sully our reputation" They went to the city of Kasi and there too they were put to trouble. Helpless as he was, Harishchandra offered himself in auction. In this way, he sacrificed his entire life for the sake of truth. Ancient Bharatiyas, thus, lived up to their word. They dedicated their lives to uphold their honour.

However, people today do not realise the significance of values in life. They think that their purpose on earth is merely to earn money and lead a licentious life. But in reality, life is a challenge and one has to meet it. We will have to confront many problems in life. We have to overcome them and uphold our family name. We have to emulate the glorious example set by our ancestors. There should be mothers like Madalasa. We should consider her as an ideal and derive inspiration from her example. Nobody can ever match Madalasa in the way in which she moulded her children.

Why should you get deluded by desires? Just as the mansions seen in dreams are not real, the fruition of these desires too is transient. Hence, control your mind and reduce your body attachment. You should keep your body healthy and free from diseases. But keep your desires under check. *Bhikshannam Deharakshartham Vastram Sheetanivaranam* (food is to nourish the

body; clothes for protection from cold). Body should never be our focus. Man's goal is to realise the Atma. Without the Atma, where is the body? The Atma is the Master. When you attain this Atma, your life finds fulfillment.

Students!

You should achieve spiritual growth. Do not become miserable by developing unnecessary desires. You are the embodiment of bliss. You should never allow the worries to overwhelm you. Control of desires is very essential. You should not defile your culture. You should uphold the family honour. You ruin your family honour when you conduct yourself in an undignified way.

Uphold the Honour and Reputation of your Family

Nowadays parents are not advising their children correctly. You can learn so much in a joint family. The elders advise and keep the situation under control when there are any bickerings in the family. Today newly-wed couples demand to live separately. But why should you give them a separate house? You can give one of the rooms in your house itself. Then, you can check their petty disputes, if they arise. Family problems can be solved in the beginning itself.

Youth today lack patience. They quarrel over petty matters and then leave the home. In this way, life is becoming miserable. Human life is very valuable and highly ideal. Why should we spoil such a life? Whether rich or poor, the parents should retain their married sons in their own house. It is a different matter if the children are transferred to a different place, but when living at the same place, they should never think of a separate residence. If the parents are good, then there is hardly any scope for the children to go off the track. The parents should exercise control over their children. But this is not found today. Youngsters today are like brakeless cars. They do not know where they are heading to. It is the duty of the parents to act as brakes. Only then will their children be good and prosperous. Otherwise, the parents would be responsible for spoiling their children. Uncontrolled families are ruined.

You should have a check on your desires and attachments. Whenever a feeling of hatred wells up in you, do not react immediately. Take time to cool your anger. One who is angry will never be successful. He will always have problems. He would commit many wrongs and would be put to shame. He will lose property and respect. He will be a total failure in life. Soy among all the vices, anger is the worst. Therefore, control of anger ensures ideal and blissful life.

It is of no use if our students merely speak about devotion or the lives of Ramakrishna Paramahansa and Vivekananda in their talks without following their ideals. Students should speak what is relevant to the present-day world and suggest solutions to the restlessness and miseries of the world. Is it practical to do Bhajans and contemplate on the Lord when one is engulfed by sorrow and misery? First solve your problems. Only then can you do Bhajans. The concept of Bhakti itself is being distorted. First uphold the honour and respect of your family. Patience and sympathy among the members of the family alone can help in maintaining the honour of the family. There can be no peace in the family that is bereft of these.

Wealth can never give happiness to anyone. The educated lot and the city folk of modern times are obsessed with the desire to earn more and more money. How are they amassing this wealth? They barter their values for this. Of what value is money to man if he loses his virtues? An

honourable life is more desirable than that. This way you can endeavour to give happiness to the family. "Money comes and goes but morality comes and grows." Morality is most important in life. This is the highest form of education.

Mere lecturing on the lives of noble men is of no use. You should imbibe their ideals in your life. What is the use of naming a child Dharmaraja if his conduct is contrary to the name given to it? Today people choose the names of their children from novels and cinemas. The name is appropriate only when the conduct of the child matches it. Parents are responsible for the bad conduct of their children. If the parents are disciplined, their children will also be disciplined. The parents should set an ideal before their children. Peace and discipline in the family contributes towards the peace in the world.

The world today is troubled by agitations and disturbances. It is our duty to think about what ideal we should set to bring peace to the world. Being a member of society, it is a big mistake if you do not think about its welfare. You should act in a responsible manner in society as you have to bear responsibility of its development. Man is most important in society. If you give up human values and live like an animal, what will happen to society? You are a man and not an animal; act accordingly. Earn a good name wherever you go.

Students should Set Ideals for others

Wherever you are, you should conduct yourself in an ideal way. Speak nicely. Act appropriately. Amassing wealth is not very important. Hordes of people migrate to foreign lands to earn money. This amounts to mere begging which you can do in your country itself. Nobody obstructs you from earning money and living happily, serving your own country. But, have you taken birth just for the sake of earning? Of what use is money when there are no values to speak of? Highly educated people from our country go to other countries. Sometimes, they do odd jobs there and even wash cups in hotels, Can't they wash utensils in their own house here giving some happiness to their mothers? (Cheers) On the other hand, they pride themselves on their being in a foreign land and refuse to help their parents. Such people have no place in the home. Do earn money, but give respect to your parents too. I am deeply pained to see that this is not the case with the present-day youth. I, therefore, want to teach them the values needed for daily life. There is no use talking to them about devotion, wisdom and renunciation. In fact, these will follow on their own if goodness is imbibed by you.

Be a good student with an ideal conduct. This is the hallmark of your education. Make your life sacred by your ideal conduct. That is true life. Live with sacred feelings. Discard what is irrelevant to your life and society. Should your society degenerate, you too shall. It is said, "Tell me your company and I shall tell you what you are." As is the company, so you become. Be an ideal person. Then you will earn respect.

You are not making any effort to realise the greatness of Bharatiya culture. How sacred is this culture! You are carried away by the dazzle of foreign countries. You hanker after their permissiveness and wealth. But these are mere illusions. Youngsters today have no taste for homemade delicacies prepared lovingly by their mother. They eat rotten stuff outside. They do not give any thought to these matters.

Here is a small example. A medical shop and a hotel were situated adjacent to each other. The owner of the medical shop used to come to the hotel, saying, "I have a headache, would you give me a cup of hot coffee?" On the other hand, the hotel owner used to come and say, "I have got a headache, too; could I have a Saridon pill?" Both of them were suffering from headache, but they were not satisfied with what they had. This is the plight of today's students. They desire the colourful clothes that other children wear, discarding what their parents give them. In fact, these colourful clothes frighten cattle too! White clothes symbolise purity, steadfastness and love. Dirt is easily spotted on them and we can wash it off immediately. Colourful dresses hide the dirt. Students do not hesitate to wear such dresses continuously for any number of days at a stretch. Even if dirt is not visible, we have to wear clean clothes. Get away from dust. Then your mind will have rest and you will have mental peace. We should know the path leading to peace and the conduct needed for it.

Students!

You may relate incidents from the Ramayana and the Mahabharata in your talks, which project ideals to the people. But at the same time enquire into the causes of agitation and turbulence prevalent in present-day society. You become an ideal student if you work to improve the society in which you live. Only then can you call yourself an ideal student. Only ideal conduct can spiritualise the life of men. You become an ideal student by setting right the society in which you live.

There is nothing in the world that is not related to spirituality. Our conduct, our writing, our reading, our eating, in fact, everything relates to spirituality. God is latent in everything. Actions, which make you forget the latent divinity and focus outward, are not spiritual. You should have the firm conviction that God is with you, in you, around you, above you and below you. You should be at peace even when you are alone. Before undertaking any action, question yourself whether it is right or wrong. Correct your mistakes before someone points them out to you. Stick to the right path even if someone criticises you. For that, cultivate goodness and distance yourself from evil. When you lead such a life, you will be an ideal human being.

Embodiments of Love! Students!

You do not have any idea of the situation in the outside world. The conduct of the worldly people is very disgusting. Whatever others may think, you should lead a good life. Earn a good name for yourselves. That will make Swami happy. People should look up to you as a Sai student, who follows Swami's teachings and takes part in Sai activities and Bhajans. You should cultivate the qualities befitting a student. You may be anywhere, be an ideal person as a Sai student should be. If you follow Swami's teachings and develop inner goodness, then you need not be afraid of anything. Be fearless and take note of that which is essential for life. You will then earn the respect of all.

Bhagavan concluded His Discourse with the Bhajan "Govinda Hare Gopala Hare, Hey Gopi Gopa Bala....."

—*From Bhagavan's Discourse in Sai Kulwant Hall, Prasanthi Nilayam on 4th October, 2000*

The Epitome of Love

The moon whispered to the evening star, "Ah! I beheld upon earth That dazzling Lamp of Love, whose light is far more soothing than mine. They love to bask in His splendour blissful." A blithe cuckoo cooed to its fellow birds, "O! I listened the enchanting words Of that uncanny Apostle of Love, Whose nectarine voice is far sweeter than mine. . They love to listen to His words incessantly." An exalted bee mumbled to the fond flower, "Ah! in this world ridden with hate and greed, I spotted that moving Oasis of Love, Whose sight is far more comforting than thine. They love to glimpse His glorious form unendingly." The amused love that heard them all, announced, "**Lopk~'Ydia1 11** talk of the same Epitome of Love, _ That sweetens the drab life upon earth. The is Love Walking on Two Feet; He is the Beloved Baba of Parthi:' - Dibakar Sahu

AVATAR VANI

TAMIL NEW YEAR AND VISHU SANDESH

YY [Tf LOVE

*If you leave pride, you become dear to all;
If you conquer anger, you become free from worries;
You become prosperous when you control your desires;
You attain happiness only when you conquer greed. (Sanskrit Verse)*

Embodiments of Love!

So long as man is proud and pompous, none will love him including his wife and children. They may pretend to love him, but it is not true love. The reason is that pride and pomp come in the way of love. As long as man has anger in him, he cannot escape misery. If man wants to be away from misery and attain peace, he has to rid himself of anger. One with desires can never attain happiness. "Less luggage more comfort." In this journey of life, desires are your luggage. You have to reduce them in order to lead a comfortable life. A greedy man can never attain prosperity. He will be happy, prosperous and blissful on the day he gives up greed.

Welfare of the World Depends on Man's Thoughts and Actions

Today marks the commencement of the New Year. Many such New Years have gone by. Man expects the New Year to confer on him and the world at large peace, happiness and prosperity. But the welfare of the world depends on man's conduct and behaviour. Man's conduct depends on his mind. The nature of the mind depends on thoughts. Only when man's thoughts are based on truth will the world flourish. One who aspires for the welfare of the world should see to it that his thoughts and actions are in accordance with his aspirations.

Good and evil, happiness and misery, merit and sin depend on man's actions. As is the action, so is the result. But today man ignores the law of action and acts as he pleases. It is easy to indulge in sinful deeds but it is extremely difficult to bear the bad results they yield. The Upanishads say, "*Thasmai Namah Karmana*" (salutations to action). You should offer your salutations to the action you perform so that it becomes sacred, brings you good name and contributes to the welfare of the world. This is one of the primary doctrines of the culture of Bharat. Since time immemorial, the Bharatiyas have been offering respect to action, be it big or small, before undertaking it. A dancer pays her respects to the anklets that she wears before the commencement of her dance performance. Even Tabla players start playing on the Tabla only after offering their respects to it. Not only the educated people follow this practice, even an illiterate lorry driver offers his obeisance to the steering wheel before driving the vehicle. This is the sacredness that our culture imparts to action.

Offer your Namaskar (salutation) to the action you perform. What is Namaskar? It is giving up the sense of ego. But today this ancient culture is being forgotten and man acts as per his whims and fancies. Consequently, he is subjected to untold misery. He feels miserable when he has to face the consequences of his evil deeds, but he does not care to enquire whether it is good or bad before undertaking any action. You should use your sense of discrimination before performing any action. Never be in a haste. "Haste makes waste, waste makes worry. So, do not be in a hurry." Man attains happiness or misery based on the actions he performs. The New Year brings with it neither happiness nor misery. Man faces the results of his actions. So, he should perform righteous deeds. You should perform such activities which would benefit others.

Once when Emperor Asoka celebrated his birthday, all his vassal kings made their offerings of wealth collected through taxes from the people of their respective kingdoms. But the King of Magadha did not offer anything. So, the emperor asked the king as to why he had come empty-handed. The king replied, "O emperor, this year my kingdom passed through a terrible phase of drought, famine and floods. Consequently, my people suffered too much due to lack of food, water and shelter. In order to alleviate their suffering, I spent all the money that I had collected through taxes. I provided drinking water, constructed schools to educate the children and established hospitals to treat the sick. As a result, I am left with nothing to offer you." Emperor Asoka was immensely pleased with his reply. He called him by his side and said, "Oh king, what you have done is highly commendable. Water sustains life. Education develops the intellect and medical care is essential to maintain good health. You have done a great service to your people by providing these basic amenities. I am happy to note that you have done all this without any trace of selfishness and as an offering to God." Addressing the other assembled kings, the emperor said, "Many criticise the government for collecting taxes. But without collecting taxes, how can the government get money? Without money, how is it possible for the government to undertake social welfare projects? So, it is necessary for the government to collect taxes. But it should see to it that the money is spent for the benefit of people. That is true service."

Today people talk of devotion without really understanding its meaning. I don't want your devotion; I want your transformation. What is devotion? *Paropakartham Idam Sareeram* (this body is meant to serve others). You should understand that the body is the means to serve others and involve yourself in such activities which will benefit others and give them happiness.

Resolve to tread the path of service. Some people indulge in meaningless activities in the name of devotion and waste their time. True devotion lies in performing actions that will sanctify time. I am not asking you to serve the whole world in a big way. It is enough if you keep God in your heart and serve as per your capacity. *"Neither by penance nor by pilgrimage nor by study of scriptures nor by Japa can one cross the ocean of life. One can achieve it only by serving the pious."* (Sanskrit Verse) The path of service is superior to all the spiritual practices like Japa, Dhyana and Yoga. Only through service can you please God. *"Deho Devalaya Prokto Jeevo Deva Sanathana"* (body is the temple and the Indweller is God). So, treat every body as a temple. Have firm conviction that God resides in every body in the form of the Atma. There is no place where God does not exist. He pervades all names and forms. *Sarvata Pani-padam Tat Sarvathokshi Siromukham, Sarvata Sruthimalloke Sarvamavruthya Thishthati* (with hands, feet, eyes, heads, mouth and ears pervading everything, He permeates the entire universe). Whatever action you undertake, do it as an offering to God. Make Proper Use of your Senses The body is made up of five elements and is bound to perish one day or the other. But in such a transient body there exists the eternal divinity in the form of the Atma. The all-pervasive divinity is known as consciousness, the limited form of which exists in the body as conscience.

Consciousness and conscience are the same in terms of quality, only the quantity differs. You may collect water from an ocean in a pot and a tank. The water in these two differs only in quantity, but the salinity is the same in both of them. The body may be compared to the pot. All-pervasive consciousness exists in it as conscience. The whole world is pervaded by consciousness. On this basis, the Vedas declare, *Sarvam Khalvidam Brahma* (verily all this is Brahman). There is no matter in this world that is not pervaded by Brahman. You are all the embodiments of Cosmic Divine. Though you see God day in and day out, you feel you haven't. It is a sign of your weakness. Have firm faith that the body is a temple. Will anybody utilise a temple for unsacred purposes? So, make proper use of your body. This temple has many doors, but the doors of senses like the ears, the eyes and the mouth are very important. Do not allow any evil to enter your body and mind through these 'doors'. See no evil; see what is good.

Hear no evil, hear what is good.
Talk no evil, talk what is good.
Do no evil, do what is good.
Think no evil; think what is good.
This is the way to God.

The safety and sanctity of the body lies in making proper use of the five senses. The culture of Bharat has taught nine paths of devotion to sanctify the senses. They are: Shraavanam (listening), Kirtanam (singing), Vishnusmaranam (contemplating on God), Padasevanam (serving His Lotus Feet), Vandanam (salutation), Archanam (worship), Dasyam (servitude), Sneham (friendship), Atmanivedanam (self-surrender). Chant the name of God and perform all actions for the benefit of others. *Karmanubandheeni Manushya Loke* (in this world, man is bound by action). Your life is controlled by action. You cannot live even a moment without action. Let every action of yours be a prayer to God. This is the true and eternal path prescribed by the Upanishads, and contained in the prayer, *"Thasmai Namah Karmane."* You should offer your prayer to the God of action so that He makes you perform noble deeds that are beneficial for one and all and lead to world peace.

Recognise the Principle of Unity Human body is meant to serve others, not to indulge in selfish deeds. As selfishness has become part and parcel of your life, you indulge in many sinful activities. Eschew selfishness, take to selfless service. Give up attachment towards the body. Become attached to the Self. Understand that the same Self (Atma) exists in everybody. Though you find myriad bulbs glowing here, the current that is passing through them is the same. Bodies are like bulbs, the principle of the Atma is the current that is present in them. With such a feeling of oneness, make efforts to alleviate the suffering of your fellowmen.

Sage Vyasa has given the essence of 18 Puranas in the following dictum, "*Paropakara Punyaya, Papaya Parapeedanam*" (one attains merit by serving others and commits sin by hurting them). So, "Help ever, hurt never." There is no higher Sadhana than this. This is the basis for self-realisation.

Self is nothing but the principle of the Atma. There is only one Self. Hence, it is said, *Ekameva Adviteeyam Brahma* (God is one without a second). It is rather surprising that man is unable to believe this principle of unity. He has faith in what is broadcast on television and radio, but does not have faith in the Self. One without faith in the Self is verily blind. In this world nothing exists except the Atma.

Everybody is the embodiment of divinity. *Sarva Jeeva Namaskaram Kesavam Pratigachchhati* (whomsoever you salute, it reaches God). Likewise, whomsoever you criticise, it reaches God. So, do not criticise or hate anybody.

There are many people who undertake spiritual practices like Japa, Dhyana and Yoga. No doubt, these are sacred activities and one may undertake them. But it is very essential to recognise the principle of unity. There is only one God and He is omnipresent. Why are you not able to believe this all-pervasive Divinity? You are ready to believe those who put you on the wrong path. But you don't believe those who show you the right path. This is the impact of Kali Age and the result of modern education. Modern education is limited only to bookish knowledge which is nothing but superficial knowledge. There is one book that you have to study and that is this world. Instead of learning lessons from this big book of the world, you are confining yourself to your small textbooks. Of what use are they? Do not be satisfied with mere bookish knowledge. Try to acquire practical knowledge. Only then will your life find fulfillment.

Embodiments of Love!

There is love in everybody. Love is God, live in love. When you have such sacred love in you, why are you unable to translate it into action?

Start the day with love,
Spend the day with love,
Fill the day with love,
End the day with love.
This is the way to God.

Self-confidence is the Key to Success

There are some people who hate even their parents. It is a grave mistake. *Matrudevo Bhava, Pitru devo Bhava, Acharyadevo Bhava, Atithi devo Bhava* (revere your mother, father, preceptor and guest as God). One who cannot respect his own parents, how can he revere God? None can match the mother in imparting sacred teachings to the children. You might have heard the story of Abraham Lincoln. As he was born in a poor family, he did not have even proper clothes to wear. While going to school, his fellow students made fun of him. Lincoln could not bear the humiliation. One day he complained to his mother, crying, "Mother, my fellow students in the school make fun at my dress. They look down upon me and say that I am not worthy of their company." His mother then told him, "Son, you are aware of our financial condition. So, don't pay heed to what others say. Uphold your self-respect. Develop self-confidence, which alone can bestow all the wealth and prosperity on you." From that day onwards, as per his mother's guidance, Lincoln grew in self-confidence, upheld his self-respect and ultimately rose to become the President of America. Though born in a poor family, Lincoln could reach such an exalted position only due to his self-confidence and self-respect. Self-respect confers grace. Do not get dejected if others subject you to criticism and ridicule. Think that whatever happens is good for you. Once you develop such equanimity, there will be none greater than you.

Love is the Greatest Wealth

Embodiments of Love!

Respect and be respected. What you give to others will come back to you. You are bound to face the reflection, reaction and resound of your actions. Everything, including God-realisation, depends on your actions. Today the New Year has commenced, but it has not brought anything new with it. Today is in no way different from yesterday. If you do good now, you will reap its benefits in future. So, sanctify your actions. *Na Karmana Na Prajaya Dhanena Thyagenaikena Amrutatthwamanasu* (immortality is not attained through action, progeny or wealth. It is attained only by sacrifice). The bliss that you get out of sacrifice is eternal. That alone is the true wealth, and it can never diminish. In order to acquire such everlasting wealth, spend your time in the contemplation of God. Divinity pervades all that you see, hear and feel. Being in the constant company of such an all-pervasive Divinity, why should you worry and fear? Why fear when I am here? (loud applause) Never be afraid of anything because God is in you, with you, above you, below you, around you. He follows you like shadow. Never forget Him. Atheists may talk as they please. If you have faith, God will protect you wherever you are: in a forest or in the sky; in a city or a village; on a hill or in the middle of deep sea.

Today cities have become centres of pollution and unrest. There is pollution everywhere, as man's mind has become polluted. If mind becomes pure, everything else will become pure. So, cleanse your mind. Drive out all your worries. What is the use of brooding over the past? Past is past, forget it. Future is uncertain. What is the guarantee that you will be alive till tomorrow? Don't worry about your future. Present is very important. This is omnipresent, not ordinary present. So, make the best use of present and be happy.

Students and Devotees!

**Devotion does not merely mean reading sacred texts and undertaking ...
continued on page 157**

Tamil New Year and Vishu Celebrations at Brindavan

Bhagavan in His infinite grace blessed the devotees of Tamil Nadu and Kerala to celebrate their New Year day in His Divine Presence at Brindavan on 14th April 2001. The day started with thousands of devotees participating in the Nagarsankirtan. Sai Ramesh Krishan Hall was decked with colourful festoons, unique umbrellas from Kerala and flower decoration specially arranged for the occasion. An electronic display with the words "May Sai Be with us Forever" was installed atop the decorated dais. A typical Kerala Vishu decoration with flower petals, fruits from Kerala was displayed in front of Vinayaka idol in the Hall.

Bhagavan was heralded by Mangalavadyam of Nadasviwaram when He came out of Trayee Brindavan at 7.35 a.m. Sundaram Bhajan Group started Bhajans at the same time surcharging the entire milieu with reverberations of Namasmarana. Bhagavan moved along the rows of devotees showering His blessings in abundance on all. At 8.00 a.m., Bhagavan occupied His chair on the dais and remained deeply immersed in the Bhajans to the delight of all the devotees. Bhajans continued for

Seeking Indwelling Divinity

—Phyllis Krystal

He is so full of love and so powerfully wise and all-knowing that it is far too easy to become attached to His form and to crave constant attention and guidance from Him and to seek answers to all our questions personally.

I have had many experiences of the way Bhagavan Baba will teach us, if we are willing to allow Him to do so. But if we are not open to His divine hints, He will not force them upon us; instead, He will allow us to follow the dictates of our ego until we are ready to ask Him for guidance. That requires us to be humble and admit our own fallibility, which for most of us is a very hard lesson indeed. It often takes many failures to force us finally to surrender our own ideas and our own strong desires, to trust Him to give us what He knows we need for our spiritual growth and then be willing to accept whatever that may be, whether we like it or not.

"Find Me in your Heart"

One of His most often repeated exhortations is that we detach from His physical form and turn within ourselves to seek guidance from the inner Baba, the resident within each of us. But for many of His most ardent devotees that is very difficult. He is so very tantalisingly attractive in every way that we do not want to replace that delightful contact with a more nebulous one. From the very first time my late husband and I visited Him in January 1973, He made this message of detachment very clear to me. During that first visit, Baba was staying at Whitefield near Bangalore, instead of His Ashram at Puttaparthi. At our farewell interview, I asked Him if He wished us to return and if so, when, since we did not yet know the protocol. I shall always remember His answer to that question. He stared intently into my eyes and pointing His finger at

me, said, "First you must understand that you do not need to come back to see this little body," with which He pointed to His own chest. After a significant pause, as He watched my reaction, He continued "... find Me in your own heart!" Then, with a big smile He reassured me by saying, "But you will come back to be re-energised."

That early interaction set the stage for me on the following visits. I realised that in that brief communication, He showed me the eventual goal for each and all of His devotees. However, it is not all easy to follow this advice. He is so full of love and so powerfully wise and all-knowing that it is far too easy to become attached to His form and to crave constant attention and guidance from Him and to seek answers to all our questions personally. Even though common sense dictates that it is impossible for Him to give detailed advice to each of the many thousands of those who continue to journey to see Him and receive His Darshan, we all remain anxious to have Him personally reassure us on all the countless aspects of our lives, whether they be connected to health, marriage, children, occupation, financial situation or a host of other seemingly important and urgent matters in our estimation.

Process of Detachment from Form

In some cases, when He sees fit, He does seem to take us by the hand, like a loving parent with a child while it still needs helpful support as it makes its first, unsteady steps. But, eventually, as with a human parent, He starts to wean us from that support so that we can become strong and stand firmly and confidently on our own two feet. He is actually acting in a very merciful way in thus setting us free, even from relying on His form rather than on our own inner guide. He knows only too well that, like our human parents, He will not always be available in person. So, He prepares us to seek direction from within. This weaning process is by no means simple or easy to carry out and we often balk at the very idea, or doubt that we can receive authentic guidance from the invisible Baba who is our Real Self within every one of us. We fear that our ego may be getting in the way of this inner contact. This weaning process, as with babies, is a gradual one. But there comes a time when we arrive at a place where we are forced by circumstances to take a leap into the unknown and trust that we will be guided from within, otherwise we will flounder in indecision and defeat.

As I look back over the years since I first came to know Baba, I can observe His direction in my life, even when it was not apparent to me at that time. At first, He very patiently and painstakingly offered me much needed help and direction. Then one day without any previous warning, He looked intently at me and with great seriousness of tone of voice and facial expression, said, "You do not need to see Me, Mrs. Krystal." That was the beginning of the weaning process. Baba has given us all His teachings which are sufficiently clear and simple for even a child to understand and follow. He now expects us not only to listen to or read what He says, but be willing to put His teachings into practice in our everyday lives, in all our various activities when we are faced with the necessity of making a decision.

Channels of Divine Communication

I was present when He gave clear and helpful advice in answer to a question that had formed in my mind. This incident occurred during a meeting of some of the members of the U.S. Council that took place in the Ashram in His Presence. One of the subjects under discussion was the question of how to handle one of the officers who had a very strong will with which to control

others. The question that occupied my mind was, "How can we be sure in determining what is Baba's direction instead of our own ego or someone else's will?" With Baba's uncanny ability to read our thoughts, even when we have not voiced them, He turned to me, saying, "You have a question, Mrs. Krystal?" I replied that I was not an officer of the organisation (at that time), but as the wife of one I was not expected to speak. Drawing Himself up to appear very large and imposing, Baba said, "Swami gives you permission to speak; what is your question?" So, I asked the question.

His answer was helpful for everyone. He advised us to take one of his photographs to a quiet place and from the heart ask Him to provide an answer. He assured us that within twenty minutes an answer would be on its way to us. However, it may not become clear until some time later, as it needs to reach us by various channels and at the correct time. This advice is now becoming even more valuable, as more and more people flock from all around the world to visit Him. He Himself has warned us that one day, He will appear to us as a little orange dot seen from a distance.

The channels through which we may receive His answer to our requests are numerous. I liked the process of watching for signs and hints from many different sources. If we fervently ask for His help and let go our will and all our preoccupations for or against an outcome, we will receive indications. At first we may be nervous and doubt the signs, but with regular practice it will appear like a treasure hunt or an adventure, where we will never know when a sign will appear or what form it will take. Patience is the chief requirement, as the signs frequently become clear at the very last minute before a decision has to be made. They come in a dream, in a book we are currently reading, are spoken by a friend or an acquaintance, or in some other apparently coincidental way.

But with all these methods to help us to benefit from our inner Baba's guidance, regular practice is essential for success, just as it is for any other undertaking. Fortunately, as soon as we are willing to ask for help from the Baba within, it is forthcoming. It is our responsibility, first to ask for it and then to watch for it to be given to us. Then we need to accept it and let it help solve our problems.

Win the Grace of God

When God's grace is won, one need not pray separately for Moksha or liberation. He knows best what you should get and when. He will give what you deserve and can benefit from. Yearn for Him, suffer anguish for Him; there is no need to yearn for Moksha, then. If that is done with no second thought, He will destroy all your sins. Hold fast to Him; He can make you immortal. Those who seek to escape from this cycle of birth and death must obey the command of the Lord as laid down in the Gita and surrender to Him.

—Baba

Prayers of Mothers Sustain the World

*The more you grind the sandalwood, the more it yields sandal paste.
The more you crush the sugarcane, the more it yields sweet juice.
As the gold is heated more and more, it becomes purer and shines with added brilliance.
Likewise, the good qualities in a noble person blossom more and more as he passes
through the vicissitudes of life.*

(Sanskrit Verse)

Embodiments of Love!

The difficulties of life do not cause any hindrance to a person pursuing a noble course of life. In spite of these, he always remains at peace and contemplates on God constantly.

In Bharat, the relationship between the mother and the child has been considered highly sacred and nectarine since ancient times.

*Rama's Divinity blossomed under Kausalya's loving care;
Because of the tender feelings and austerity of Sita,
Lava and Kusha achieved name and fame,
Fostered with the love of his mother Putlibai,
Gandhi became a Mahatma;
The loving care of Jijabai made Shivaji a great warrior*

(Telugu Poem)

You cannot expect sweet mangoes when you sow Neem seeds. If you want mangoes, you have to sow the seeds of mango. The earth is one but the seeds are different. You must sow what you want to reap. The womb of the mother is like the earth. The children will be good or bad depending on the thoughts of the parents. *Janthunam Narajanma Durlabham* (out of all the living beings, the human life is the rarest). It is a great good fortune to be born as a human being. Having been blessed with human birth, man should develop noble thoughts and experience bliss within. Only then will he be called truly fortunate.

Sacredness of Mother-child Relationship

Putlibai, the mother of Mahatma Gandhi, used to observe a vow wherein she would not partake of food unless she heard the singing of cuckoo. One day, it so happened that the song of cuckoo was not heard. Gandhi, who was a small boy then could not bear to see his mother fasting for a long time. Out of love and concern for his mother, he went behind the house and mimicked the singing of cuckoo. Then he came inside and told his mother that she could have her food as she had heard the song of cuckoo. The intention behind this act was no doubt good. But Putlibai felt very sad as she knew that her son was uttering a lie. With tears in her eyes, she bemoaned, "What sin have I committed that I gave birth to a son who speaks untruth!" So saying, she reprimanded him for telling a lie. Gandhi took a vow that he would never indulge in falsehood thenceforth. As per the command of his mother, he adhered to truth till the very end of his life and attained good reputation.

Putlibai had a maidservant named Rambha. As the saying goes, "*Yatha Raja Thatha Praja*" (as is the master, so are the subjects). She was also pure-hearted like Putlibai. One day, Gandhi came running to her and told her that he was haunted by fear. She told him to chant the Name of Lord Rama whenever he was fear-stricken. From then onwards Gandhi chanted the Name of Lord Rama till his last breath. Thus, we see that when the mother and the other members of the household take to sacred path, the children would certainly emulate them and attain exalted position in life.

Aryamba, the mother of Sankaracharya, spent all her time in the worship of Easwara. Everyday she performed Abhisheka (sacred bath) to the Siva Linga, sipped the sanctified water and gave it to her son too. She constantly chanted the Divine Name of Lord Siva. Sankaracharya became a world teacher and attained great fame as he was born to such a noble mother.

After the war for the liberation of Rangoon, a mother and her son somehow managed to reach Chennai. They neither had shelter over their head nor any food to eat. The mother was concerned more about her son than herself. Such is the love of the mother. The love of the mother transcends all descriptions. A bus stand became their home. Everyday the mother would go for begging alms from house to house, give most of it to her son and partake of whatever little was left. When she would not get enough, she would give the entire food to her son, and would herself go without food. As a result, her health gradually deteriorated. One day the son told her, "Mother, you have been taking care of me all along. Now it is my duty to take care of you. From today you take rest, I will bring food for both of us." Everyday he would go for begging, give most of it to his mother and partake of whatever little was left. Consequently, he too became very weak.

One day he stood in front of the house of an officer and cried, "Oh sir, I am hungry, I am hungry." The officer was relaxing in an easy chair and was going through the daily newspaper. Hearing the pitiable cries of the boy, he went inside, brought food in a leaf and told him to sit and eat. But the boy said that he would take it home. The officer said, "Why should you take it home? If you are really hungry, sit here and eat." As the officer was insisting that he should eat the food there itself, the boy felt giddy and collapsed on the ground. He was trying to say something, but could not say it loud enough as he was very weak. The officer went close to the boy and tried to hear what he was saying. The boy was saying, "First to my mother, to my mother..." With these words, he breathed his last. Seeing this, the officer was moved to tears. He thought how lucky this boy was who had sacrificed his life for the sake of his mother. Blessed was the mother, who gave birth to such a noble son.

It is impossible to describe the love that exists between the mother and her child. The Bharatiyas consider the love of a mother as true love. But, unfortunately, modern youth do not realise the sacredness of mother's love. They keep their self-interest above their parents. They do not try to understand the love their parents have for them. He/she alone is a true son/daughter who gives happiness to his/her parents.

Noble Mothers have Noble Wishes

Ishwarchandra Vidyasagar lived with his mother in a village near Kolkata. Financially, they were poor, but they were endowed with the wealth of virtues. The mother often told her son, "My dear one, the education that merely caters to the needs of the stomach is no education at all. You should study so as to serve society. You should utilise your education for the emancipation of the country." Vidyasagar used to study under streetlights or at the bus stand because of his poverty. He followed the words of his mother in letter and spirit and put his heart and soul in his studies. Mother's blessings can make anybody great. The children may be good or bad, but the mother always loves her children and aspires to their welfare. The mother's heart is full of love and compassion for her children.

After completing his education, Vidyasagar took up a job. Once there was a religious festival in the village. The rich people of the village participated in the festival in their best clothes. But Vidyasagar's mother had to wear an old Sari even on the festival day, as she had no good Sari to wear. Seeing this, Vidyasagar felt very sad. When he received his first salary, he placed it at the feet of his mother and pleaded with her to buy a good Sari for herself. She said, "Son, I don't want you to spend your earnings on my Saris and jewels. Utilise it to serve society. All that I want is that you should come up in life and earn a good name." Then she added, "I have a few desires, but I will express them only at the appropriate time"

Gradually, Vidyasagar rose to a higher position and accordingly his salary too increased. Then he requested his mother to express her desires. She made him sit by her side and said, "My dear one, you are highly educated and are holding an exalted position. But as a mother I must tell you what is good for you. Whatever I tell you is only out of my motherly love towards you. I don't want anything for myself. Ours is a small village. The children of our village have no opportunity for education as there is no school in our village. So, I want you to construct a small school." Complying with his mother's wish, he established a small school in the village. After some time, he said to her, "Mother, as per your wish I have got a school constructed in our village. Is there anything else that you want?" She told him, "Son, in our village, people are suffering due to lack of medical facilities. There is nobody to treat them even for small ailments like cough, cold and fever. So, it would be convenient for everybody, especially the children, if you establish a small hospital here." Obeying the command of his mother, he promptly built a small hospital.

Easwaramma, the Chosen Mother

Mother Easwaramma too had such noble desires. As Sai's glory began to spread far and wide, she came to Me one day and said, "Swami, I am pained to see small children of our village walking all the way to Bukkapatnam to attend school. Please construct a small school." Conforming to her wish, I established a small school. After some time, she wanted a small hospital also to be established here. She said she could not bear to see the mothers taking the trouble of carrying their children to Bukkapatnam for medical treatment. Accordingly I got a small hospital built. The small school that I established has become a big university today. The small hospital that I constructed has become a super speciality hospital. (Cheers) These mighty tasks could be accomplished as a result of the Sathya Sankalpa (noble wish) of Mother Easwaramma and Nitya Sankalpa (Divine Will) of Sai. Her last wish was to provide drinking water to the village. She pointed out that the women had to take great pains to draw water from deep wells which had almost dried up. I immediately provided drinking water to the village.

Now under Sri Sathya Sai Water Supply Project, I have provided drinking water to the entire district of Anantapur.

Once you become the recipient of your mother's love, you don't need anything else. You may be aware or not, but even after 30 years of her passing away, Mother Easwamma continues to express her love for Swami in a number of ways. Even to this day, she moves around in her physical body. At times, she comes to Me and expresses her motherly concern for My well-being. Once she cautioned Me not to accept handkerchief from everybody. I told her that I had to accept when people offered it with devotion. She said, "Swami, no doubt there are crores of such noble persons. But there are also a few evil-minded persons who may smear poison on the handkerchief and offer it to You. This can prove dangerous when You use it to wipe Your lips." I promised her that I would follow her advice. Even to this day, she makes her appearance in My room. The boys who sleep in My room too have witnessed this. Whenever she comes and talks to Me, they sit up on their beds and listen.

One day, I asked the boys for a belt to keep the silk Dhoti tight around My waist. The belt that they gave Me had a shining buckle and would be seen through the robe I wear. I did not want to use it lest people should think that Sai Baba wears a golden belt. After this, one day Easwamma came to My room early in the morning and started talking to Me. Then Satyajit, Sainath and Srinivas woke up and wanted to know with whom I was conversing. They wondered as to how anybody could enter My room as the lift was locked and the key was with them. Then I told that Griham Ammayi (Mother Easwamma) had come. I showed them the belt that she gave Me. It had no buckle. There are many such noble mothers in this world. But Easwamma was the chosen one. I chose her to be My mother. (Cheers) That is the intimate relationship between Mother Easwamma and Myself.

True Devotion of Chaitanya Mahaprabhu

Once Chaitanya Mahaprabhu went to a temple and prayed, "Oh Lord, I know that You are the Master of the world. You are omnipresent, omnipotent and omniscient. You can grant any wish that I ask for. But I don't have any worldly desires. I don't aspire for money, jewellery and material objects. Neither am I interested in devotion or renunciation nor do I crave for liberation. But I do have one desire. Grant me the strength to love You. It is enough if I can love You. There is nothing superior to this." As Chaitanya Mahaprabhu loved God dearly, he propagated the message of love to the entire world. "Think of God incessantly. Chant His Name. There is nothing in this world except God." This was the message propagated by Chaitanya.

His mother wanted him to get married to a girl named Lakshmi, who hailed from a good family and was highly devoted. But Chaitanya was not interested in marriage. He said that he had dedicated his life to the Lord. His mother said, "You might have offered your mind to God, but what about your body? Life should have both spiritual and physical aspects." On the insistence of his mother, Chaitanya married Lakshmi. Immediately after the marriage, he set out on a pilgrimage. He wanted to propagate the Divine message. Chaitanya did not return home from his pilgrimage for a long time. His wife Lakshmi was a pious lady. She had a pure heart full of selfless love. She left her mortal coil while constantly thinking of Chaitanya. Chaitanya returned home after her death. His mother felt highly depressed at the turn of events. She felt that it was impossible to get another girl like Lakshmi who was pious and pure hearted. Then she got

him married to another girl named Vishnupriya. After his second marriage, he again set out to propagate the Divine message and in the process totally forgot his home. He considered God as His only refuge. He had no other thought in his mind.

Once when he was singing the glory of Lord Krishna in the streets, some miscreants, who were jealous of his growing reputation, snatched away the cymbals from his hands. Thereafter, he started playing on a drum while singing the Divine Name. Even the drum too was broken by the miscreants, but he was least perturbed. He felt that there was no necessity to use the musical instruments to sing the Divine Name. Then he started clapping and singing Bhajans. Now the miscreants beat him up mercilessly. His body started bleeding profusely, yet Chaitanya continued to chant the Divine Name. But when his mother came and saw, there was no trace of blood on his body. It had all disappeared miraculously because Chaitanya firmly believed that his body belonged to God and was not attached to it.

Wicked People do not spare even God

When the mother's heart is pure, her children too would be pure-hearted. One should respect one's mother and never hurt her feelings. When Swami was staying in the Old Mandir, one day there was an unusual crowd. Sensing danger, Easwamma came to Me and said, "Swami, these people seem to be having some ulterior motive. I am afraid they may try to harm You. I am unable to sleep peacefully." I infused courage in her, saying, "Be fearless. The body is bound to perish one day or the other. So, give up body attachment." Those days I used to sleep all alone in a thatched hut. That night, as Easwamma feared, some evil-minded people set the hut on fire from all four sides. There were raging flames all around. Seeing this, Subbamma and Easwamma came running. When they reached the spot, they found to their utter amazement, there was a heavy downpour on the hut. However, there was absolutely no rain in the surrounding area. (loud applause) When I came out of the hut, both of them were overjoyed to see Me safe and sound.

There is a similar incident in the Mahabharata. Lord Krishna went to the Kauravas as an emissary of the Pandavas to bring about a compromise and avert the war. Before going to the Kauravas, He approached the Pandavas one by one and sought their opinion. Dharmaraja was of the opinion that a person of Krishna's stature should not approach the mean-minded Kauravas in the role of an ambassador. Arjuna and Bhima who were filled with Rajo Guna (quality of passion) were in favour of Krishna going to the Kauravas, but they wanted Him to settle for war so that the wicked Kauravas could be punished. Then Krishna sought the opinion of Draupadi. Women are by nature tenderhearted. She did not want war as it would cause immense grief to both the sides. Then He went to Nakula and Sahadeva who did not say anything.

Krishna went to Hastinapur, spoke to the blind king Dhritarashtra and tried His best to bring about a compromise, but all in vain. When Krishna returned, Nakula and Sahadeva hugged Him and shed tears of joy. They said, "Krishna, it is enough for us that You have returned safe from the den of the wicked Kauravas. You had asked us what we wanted before setting out on Your peace mission. Your safe return is what we wanted. Your welfare is our welfare. You are everything for us."

Women are the Embodiment of Compassion

Draupadi said to Krishna, "Oh brother, I too was of the opinion that You should not go to the wicked Kauravas. People may say that women are weak-minded. But, in fact, women are highly courageous and when it comes to sacrifice, women stand first."

During the Mahabharata War, on a certain night, Aswatthama, the son of Dronacharya, slaughtered the Pandava children while they were asleep. Arjuna took a vow that he would behead Aswatthama. He told Draupadi that she could anoint herself with his blood as an act of revenge. He tracked down Aswatthama, tied him with ropes and dragged him before Draupadi. Will any mother forgive the one who has mercilessly slaughtered her children? But what did Draupadi do? Instead of cursing the evil doer, she fell at the feet of Aswatthama and said: *"It is at the feet of your father, Dronacharya, that my husbands have learnt all that they know, Being the son of Dronacharya, was it proper for you to kill my children? How could you have the heart to kill them, who were unarmed, young, quietly asleep, were not having any grudge against you, and were not contemplating any harm to you?"* (Telugu Poem)

Consumed with fury, Arjuna was about to attack Aswatthama. Draupadi raised her hand and asked him not to kill him. She said: *"Oh Partha! It is not righteous to kill a person who is afraid or has lost courage, who is asleep or intoxicated, who seeks refuge or is a female. You should not kill Aswatthama, for he is your preceptor's son.* (Telugu Poem) She said, "Arjuna, today I am crying over the death of my children. If you kill Aswatthama, just imagine what would be the plight of his mother! One should never cause grief to a mother. So, restrain yourself from killing him" But having taken the vow, Arjuna was bent upon killing him. She stood in front of Aswatthama and stopped Arjuna from going towards him. Bhima could not bear to see this. Exploding with anger, he roared: *"Do not release him but kill him. If you do not do that, I myself will hammer his head with my powerful fist."* (Telugu Poem) Draupadi pleaded with him to forgive him: *"Forgiveness is the highest virtue. It is the truth, righteousness, nonviolence. It is verily the essence of the Vedas. It is the heaven and everything in all the worlds."* (Telugu Poem)

Though the Pandavas were highly virtuous and brave, the spirit of compassion that Draupadi possessed was not found in them. The heart of a woman is highly sacred as it is filled with nectarine love and compassion. So, it melts easily. At times, women may also get angry, but they immediately repent and reconcile. Due to the impact of the Kali Age, modern women are sometimes found lacking in the spirit of love. But even today, there are many women of virtues and character. It is because of such noble women that Bharat is what it is today. The progress of a nation depends on its women. So, never look down upon them. Treat all elderly women as your mothers and the younger ones as your sisters. The country will remain safe and secure only when men have such noble feelings. When you understand this truth and act accordingly, you can attain even Divinity. Mother is not just an ordinary woman; she is verily God. Worship her and attain her grace. Once you have the blessings of your mother, you can achieve anything in this world. Never disobey or displease her.

Abhimanyu ventured into the battlefield against his mother's wish. His mother Subhadra said, "Son, your father Arjuna and uncle Krishna are busy fighting the enemies elsewhere. At this juncture, it is not proper for you to enter the battlefield." But Abhimanyu did not pay heed to his mother's advice and insisted upon going to the battlefield. She blessed him thus, "Son, you are

going against my wish. May victory be yours!" Then she prayed: "*May such blessings be with you and protect you which mother Gowri conferred on her son at the time of the killing of Tarakarasura and those received by Bhargava from his mother when he slayed Shambharasura!*" (Telugu Poem)

Love and Serve your Motherland

Even today, there is no dearth of noble mothers. They feel pained to see their children straying away from the right path. They leave no stone unturned to correct them. It is impossible to describe the love of a mother. The love of the mother is much more than that of the father. Once Mother Parvati and Easwara saw a person sitting on the branch of a tree which was about to break. Then Mother Parvati pleaded with Easwara to save him. Easwara teasingly remarked, "Why should I protect him? You have seen him first. It is your duty to save him." She said, "How can I protect him without Your grace. I am negative and You are positive. Unless You shower Your grace on him, he cannot be saved. Please do not delay any further." Then Easwara replied, "Is it not his duty to call Me for help? How can I go to his rescue without being called? As the proverb goes, one should not attend a function without being invited." Parvati, out of her motherly compassion, wanted to protect that person at any cost. So, she said to Easwara, "if that person, when he falls down, cries out Amma (mother), I will go to his rescue and if he cries out Appa (father), You should protect him." Easwara agreed to her proposal. Both of them eagerly waited, but the person fell down crying Ayyo! (alas!). The words Amma or Appa did not come to his lips as he never respected and revered his parents in his lifetime. Such was his fate. How can God come to the rescue of a person who has totally forgotten his parents? Mother is God; father is God. With such feelings, offer gratitude to your parents.

Today we are celebrating Easwaramma Day to propagate the glory of motherhood. The world is sustained by the prayers of mothers. A woman's prayer is more powerful than a thousand prayers of men because women are pure and tenderhearted. Never cause displeasure to your mother. Never hurt her feelings. Then God will help you in all your endeavours. One calls one's country motherland and not fatherland. Thus, mother is given an exalted position in the world. Consider your country as your own mother and work for its progress. Under any circumstances, do not cause any harm to your mother and motherland. This is the significance and main teaching of today's celebration.

In a few minutes from now, you will listen to a music programme presented by P. Susheela and others. She has been a devotee for the past 40 years. When she had no children, I blessed her with a son. I performed her son's marriage too. Her daughter-in-law is also a musician. They are all here today to sing a few devotional songs and give happiness to one and all. After this music programme, Bal Vikas children will present a drama in the Kalyana Mantapam. You know why these programmes are arranged? Man's mind is like a mad monkey. Discourses, music programmes and prayer meetings are meant to control the waverings of the mind. Body is like a water bubble; mind is like a mad monkey. Don't follow the body; don't follow the mind. Follow the conscience. Contemplate on what you have seen and heard here. Put it into practice and derive the bliss therefrom.

Bhagavan concluded His Discourse with the Bhajan, "*Hari Bhajan Bina Sukha Santhi Nahin...*"

*From Bhagavan's Easwaramma Day Discourse in Sai Ramesh Krishan Hall, Brindavan on
6th May 2001*

AVATAR VANI

BUDDHA POORNIMA SANDESH

Attain God's Grace through Sacrifice and Love

*I am neither merit nor sin, neither happiness nor misery. I am none of these either—places of pilgrimage, scriptures or Yajnas (sacrifices). I am not the food, the consumer of food or the process of eating. I am the Atman, the very embodiment of Divinity. I am Siva Himself.
(Sanskrit Verse)*

Embodiments of Love!

IN this world, there is nothing like merit or sin, happiness or sorrow. Mantras, Yajnas and Yagas are mere rituals. God alone pervades everything. You are the very form of the Divine. True humanness lies in understanding the significance of truth and righteousness and putting them into practice. Truth is referred to as Neeti (morality), righteousness relates to Reeti (procedure) and sacrifice confers Khyati (reputation). Manava Jati (human race) is the combination of Neeti, Reeti and Khyati. Unfortunately, these three are not found in the present day world.

First Step towards Nirvana is Samyak Drishti

Siddhartha, who came to be known as Gautama Buddha, undertook various spiritual practices in order to realise his true Self. He studied the Vedas and sacred texts. He met many elderly wise men and tried to know the truth from them. But none of these practices could show him the path to Nirvana. Ultimately, he realised that Nirvana lay in making use of the five senses of speech, touch, vision, taste and smell in a sacred manner. He understood that Japa, Dhyana, Yoga, Yajna, etc., were mere physical activities. These spiritual practices are needed for those who are attached to the body. One who is attached to the Self need not undertake any of these practices. Buddha taught that Nirvana could be attained only by cultivating Samyak Drishti (sacred vision), Samyak Vaak (sacred speech), Samyak Sravanam (sacred listening), Samyak Bhavam (sacred feeling) and Samyak Kriya (sacred action). Today man is polluting his mind because of his evil vision. Once the mind is polluted, how can he expect to attain Nirvana? So, first of all he should develop sacred vision. See no evil, see what is good. Man is subjected to hardships because of his unsacred vision. Evil vision is sure to lead to sinful acts. In fact, it destroys his humanness itself.

Buddha undertook various types of spiritual practices, but ultimately left all of them. He could realise the truth only by renouncing everything and by recognising unity in the plurality of the world. He could know the ultimate truth by sacrifice. This is what the Vedas say: *Na Karmana Na Prajaya Dhanena Thyagenaikena Amrutatthwamanasu* (immortality is not attained through action, progeny or wealth. It is attained only by sacrifice). This immortality is true Nirvana. Samyak Drishti is the first step towards Nirvana. Consider all that you see as divine. Let your vision be suffused with love. Vision filled with love is the hallmark of a true human being. *All are one, be alike to everyone.* You can understand unity in diversity only when you develop sacred vision. Samyak Drishti makes you realise the presence of divinity in all. The Vedas

declare, "*Ekam Sat Viprah Bahudha Vadanti*" (truth is one, but scholars refer to it by many names). See the world with the vision of truth. All are one; all are essentially divine. Give up multiplicity to attain unity. The Vedanta declares that the Atmic principle is the underlying unity in diversity. Bulbs are many but the same current flows in all of them. Likewise, the Atmic principle exists in all. Man's inability to understand this principle of unity is the cause of his ignorance. True humanness lies in understanding unity in multiplicity. You have to develop Samyak Drishti in order to develop unity. This was the first teaching of Buddha.

Fill your Heart with Love

Next, he stressed the need for Samyak Vaak (sacred speech). *Anudvegakaram Vakyam Sathyam Priya-hitham Cha Yat* (one should speak only those words, which cause no annoyance to others and which are truthful, agreeable and wholesome). Whatever you speak should not cause any disturbance to others. It should be truthful as well as pleasing. *You cannot always oblige but you can speak always obligingly*. Sacred speech is the manifestation of divinity. God exists in the form of Sabda Brahmam (sound principle). Divinity is represented in eight forms, viz., Sabda Brahmamayi, Characharamayi, Jyotirmayi, Vaangmayi, Nityanandamayi, Paratparamayi, Mayamayi and Srimayi (God is the embodiment of sound, mobility and immobility, light, speech, eternal bliss, supreme majesty, delusion and wealth). Under any circumstances, do not let your speech be tainted by harshness. Never become agitated. When you understand that all are one, there will be no chance to get agitated. All bodies are like mirrors. You are seeing your own reflection in them. How can you ever be angry with your own reflection? You should speak with love. There is no divinity greater than love. When you fill your heart with love, your thoughts, vision, words and deeds will be suffused with love. Because you are not filling your heart with love, many evil qualities are finding their way into it and destroying your very humanness.

How can you attain God's grace? Here is a small example. You toiled hard, earned money and deposited it in a bank for safety and security. No doubt that money belongs to you, but the Bank Manager will not give it to you on your mere asking for it. There are certain rules and regulations for the withdrawal of money from the bank. You can withdraw the money only when you sign the cheque and surrender it to the Bank Manager. Likewise, you have deposited the 'money' of meritorious deeds with God, the Divine Bank Manager. Affix the signature of love on the cheque of sacrifice and surrender it to Him. Only then will He confer the wealth of His grace on you. This is the royal path to attain peace and purity; it leads ultimately to Nirvana. Though God is the embodiment of sacrifice and the money belongs to you, there is a proper procedure to get it. God is the Manager of the Bank of Love. You have deposited your money in His bank. In order to withdraw money from this bank, you have to submit the cheque of sacrifice with the signature of love. Love is God; live in love. Anything may happen, your love for God should not change. Only through such love can you follow the path of sacrifice and withdraw 'money' from the Divine Bank. Here 'money' does not mean currency notes. It is the 'money' of grace, wisdom and righteousness.

Control your Senses to Attain Purity of Heart

Having undertaken various types of spiritual practices for a long time, Buddha felt sad that he had wasted a lot of time without attaining the desired result. He realised that one could attain divinity only by making proper use of the five senses. God has given the five senses equally to all, be they rich or poor. You can see the manifestation of God only when you use your senses in

a sacred way. Today man misuses the senses for the sake of comforts and worldly happiness. He uses the God-given faculty of speech to criticise and hurt others. Speak lovingly, softly and sweetly. That is known as Samyak Vaak.

Along with Samyak Drishti and Samyak Vaak, you should also have Samyak Sravanam (sacred listening). Why has God given ears? Is it to listen to vain gossip? Ears should listen to only those things which are related to the Atmic principle. Only the vibrations of the soul should percolate through the ears. Never listen to anything unsacred or evil. Your ultimate goal is to realise the innate Atmic principle, which is the same in all. There are no differences whatsoever. The Atma that is present in you is present in everybody. It is attributeless. In order to realise this Atmic principle, you should fill your heart with love. The heart is like a vessel. Fill it with the qualities of truth, love and sacrifice. Then you don't need to ask for peace; it will automatically manifest from within. In fact, love, truth, etc., are within you. You should manifest them from within. You cannot acquire them from outside.

Everything is the reflection of the inner being. Your innate nature is always pure. You pollute it because you follow the worldly path and fill your heart with worldly feelings. The heart is always pure, steady and selfless. It gets polluted mainly due to unsacred vision, unsacred listening and unsacred speech. You can maintain its purity only when you use the five senses in a responsible and sacred manner. Hridaya (heart) is that which is full of Daya (compassion). Just as one God is worshipped in many forms and names, the Atma has various names like Sathya, Dharma, Prema, etc. You have to make efforts to understand and experience unity in diversity. Buddha could experience bliss only after understanding this principle of unity. He sacrificed all sensual pleasures. He understood that all that we experience through the senses is useless and leads to bondage. He realised that misuse of the senses destroys the very humanness itself. He left his house and family and renounced the world. Ultimately, he realised Atmic unity and attained the state of Nirvana.

When Buddha was about to leave his mortal coil, his cousin Ananda was by his side. Ananda started shedding tears. Then Buddha said to him, "You are born to experience Ananda (bliss). It is possible only when you make proper use of your senses." *Brahmanandam, Parama Sukhadam, Kevalam Jnanamurtim, Dwandwateetam, Gagana Sadrisham, Tattwamasyadi Lakshyam, Ekam, Nityam, Vimalam, Achalam, Sarvadhee Sakshibhutam...* (God is the embodiment of supreme bliss, He is wisdom absolute, the One without a second, beyond the pair of opposites, expansive and pervasive like the sky, the goal indicated by the Mahavakya Tattwamasi, eternal, pure, unchanging and the witness of all functions of the intellect). Instead of experiencing such eternal bliss, modern man is getting carried away by sensual pleasures. What is the use of being born as a human being if you get carried away by sensual pleasures like dogs and monkeys? A monkey also experiences the same type of sensual pleasure that you indulge in. Then why should you be born as a human being at all? You should not behave like a monkey. You belong to mankind. You should have kindness and compassion. You are born to experience eternal bliss, not to indulge in fleeting pleasures.

At the time of birth, every human being cries, "Alas! I am born in this world again. I have become distant from Ananda due to my separation from God." What is the use of human birth if man cries at the time of both birth and death? First of all, man should understand the purpose of

life. What is it that he has achieved during the course of his life if he cries at birth, and also at death? Having been born crying, man should leave the world smiling. It is possible only when he puts his senses to proper use in the course of his life. What is death? It is just the change of dress. Death is the dress of life. Body is like a dress. After death, you change over to another dress. Every man aspires to attain Nirvana (liberation). What is the effort that he is putting in? He has deposited the merits accrued over the past lives with God. God even gives `interest' over the `principal amount'. All that you need to do is to submit the cheque of sacrifice with the signature of love. Sacrifice bereft of love is useless. Only when these two come together can man attain the desired result.

God is showering His love and grace on everybody, but the unfortunate ones are unable to receive them. What is the reason? Their feelings do not match with God's feelings. They do not understand God's Will. God is the embodiment of love and the ocean of compassion. But you are unable to receive God's love and compassion because you have filled your mind with worldly feelings. If you want to receive something sacred, give up all that is unsacred. If the head is empty, it can be filled with anything. But if the head is already stuffed with worldly desires, how is it possible to fill it with sacred feelings? First and foremost, empty your head of all worldly feelings. Only then can it be filled with divine love. For this, you have to cultivate Thyaga (sacrifice). That is true Yoga.

Today people are taking to meaningless practices in the name of Yoga. They are distorting the meaning of Yoga. What is Yoga? *Yoga Chitta Vritti Nirodha* (controlling the vagaries of the mind is Yoga). Without controlling the mind, if you merely perform physical exercise, it amounts to Roga (disease). Fill your mind with love. You become sacred when your mind becomes sacred. *Yad Bhavm Tad Bhavati* (as are your feelings, so will be the result). What is the spiritual practice required to purify the heart? It is neither Japa nor Dhyana nor Yoga. Yoga does not mean controlling your breathing process. You should inhale good feelings which are like oxygen and exhale bad feelings which are like poisonous carbon dioxide. `Oxygen' emanates from the heart and 'carbon dioxide' from the head. Head is the source of all poisonous feelings. Control them and inhale the nectarine feelings that emanate from the heart.

God is the Indweller of all Beings

You aspire to see God, talk to Him and touch Him. None can describe the bliss that one experiences when one has the Darshan, Sparshan and Sambashan (sight, touch and talk) of God. In fact, you see God in the form of people all around you. Your vision becomes sanctified only when you develop the feeling that all are the embodiments of God. Everything in this creation is sacred. All that you see is only the manifestation of God. You see God in the form of the world, yet you feel that you have not seen Him. God has no specific form or dwelling place. He is the eternal witness and is present in all forms. You can progress on the spiritual path only when you have such a feeling. Do not confine God to the form of Vishnu or Krishna that you find in Ravi Varma's paintings. They are all pictures born out of the painter's imagination. In reality, God has no form. He is the Cosmic Being. *Easwara Sarva Bhutanam* (God is the indweller of all beings). *Isavasyam Idam Sarvam* (the entire universe is permeated by God). *Sarvam Khalvidam Brahma* (verily all this is Brahman).

You can achieve anything with sense control. Today man has become weak because he lacks sense control. Instead of ascending to Daivatwam (Divinity), he has degenerated to the state of Deenatwam (helplessness). He gets angry even at the slightest provocation and becomes miserable at the smallest problem. Then, how can he expect to experience Divinity? He should treat pleasure and pain-alike. You are happy when you beget a son and become sorrowful when he dies. Who is born and who has died? What is marriage? Marriage is like a mirage. Can a mirage ever quench your thirst? Prior to marriage, who is wife and who is husband? Prior to birth, who is mother and who is child? Today man is developing undue attachment towards his family. "*Matha Nasthi, Pitha Nasthi, Nasthi Bandhu Sahodara, Artham Nasthi, Griham Nasthi, Thasmath Jagrata Jagrata.*" (parents, friends, relatives, house and wealth are all temporary. Be aware of this truth.) All the worldly relationships are like passing clouds. They come and go, but morality comes and grows. Do your duty sincerely. Duty is God, work is worship. Never differentiate between work and worship.

Embodiments of Love!

You have to recognise these three—first is that which once comes, then never goes; the second, once goes, then never comes back; the third, neither comes nor goes. The first is Jnana (wisdom), the second is Ajnana (ignorance) and the third is the principle of the Atma. The Atma is steady and eternal; it never changes. The knowledge of the Atma is nectarine. All your worldly knowledge is useless without the knowledge of the Self. All that you read in Pusthaka (book) comes from Masthaka (head). But the knowledge of the Self cannot be found either in Pusthaka or Masthaka. It originates from the heart. First of all, control your mind. Mind is like a mad monkey. It is nothing but a conglomeration of thoughts. The nature of the mind is determined by the nature of thoughts. So, have pure thoughts and hence pure mind.

What is Nirvana?

Today man aspires to attain Mukti (liberation). What is Mukti? It is not the attainment of a heavenly abode. Mukti means freedom from suffering. You need to have Mukti at three levels - body, mind and soul. For example, you are hungry. When you eat food, your hunger is satiated. This is also a kind of Mukti. You are suffering from a disease. You take a medicine and get cured. This is also Mukti. All this is related to the body. At the mental level, Mukti means controlling the vagaries of the mind. But true liberation lies in understanding the principle of the Atma which neither comes nor goes. This is termed as Nirvana.

One should have Daiva Preeti, Papa Bheeti and Sangha Neeti (love for God, fear of sin and morality in society). That is true Nirvana. Be away from sin. Understand that Daiva Sannidhi (proximity to the Divine) is true Pennidhi (wealth). But ignorant people are unable to understand the Divine principle. They feel that they can experience God through meditation. What is meditation? It is a way of life. While you are walking on the road or driving a car, if your vision is not focused on the road, you may meet with an accident. Concentration is necessary in all aspects of life. But concentration does not become meditation. One should go beyond concentration which means the mind should become still. You should be free from thoughts. That is true meditation.

One-pointed Devotion of the Gopikas

The Gopikas followed the same path and their mind was constantly fixed on Krishna. The Gopikas used to go to Yashoda's house to light their lamps. They had the belief that their families would be sanctified if they brought light from Yashoda's house, which was blessed with the advent of Krishna. Once a newlywed Gopika named Suguna went to Yashoda's house to light her lamp. As she was doing so, she had the vision of Krishna in the flame. She was so lost in the enchanting form of Krishna that she had no awareness of her hand getting burnt. Yashoda smelt that something was burning and came running to the spot. She immediately pulled Suguna's hand out of the flame. She was astonished that though her hand was getting burnt, Suguna did not feel any pain and was in a world of her own. When she was asked to explain her strange behaviour, Suguna revealed that she had the vision of Krishna in the flame and forgot herself completely. Hearing Suguna's words, all the Gopikas became ecstatic and started singing: *"Our Suguna saw Krishna at the residence of Nanda. He appeared to her in the flame."* (Telugu Song)

What does this mean? When you have one-pointed devotion towards the Lord, you see Him everywhere. When your thoughts, vision and words are sacred, you are verily God yourself. Then, you don't need to search for God. God Himself will come searching for you. God is everywhere; one need not search for Him. In fact, God Himself is in search of a good man. One who is a recipient of God's love is a good man. Such a good man is a godman. One should become a good man and a godman. There lies the fulfillment of human life.

Embodiments of Love!

The principle of love in you is highly sacred. But because of delusion, you are polluting it, and thereby diminishing your value. I want to give a small example before I close. Gold in its pure form is brilliant and highly valuable, but when you add metals like silver, copper, brass, etc., to it, its shine as well as value diminishes. Likewise, man is like pure gold, but as he is associating himself with worldly desires, he has lost his value as well as effulgence. When you develop the human values of Sathya, Dharma, Santhi, Prema and Ahimsa, you will attain exalted position and people will respect you wherever you go.

Embodiments of Love!

Do not pollute your mind with worldly desires. You have attained this human birth as a result of meritorious deeds done in past lives. Do not misuse it. Human life is highly valuable. Keep up its value by practising human values. This was the teaching of Buddha. People aspire to attain Nirvana. In order to attain Nirvana, one should have a pure heart. True Nirvana lies in having love for God, fear of sin and morality in society. Animals do not know what sin is. So, they do not have fear of sin. But you should have fear of sin, as you are aware of what it is. You should have control over your senses.

Recapitulate all that you have heard and experienced here. Charge your spiritual batteries by joining good company. Only then will you progress in life and become ideal.

Bhagavan concluded His Discourse with the Bhajans, "Govinda Krishna Jai Gopala Krishna Jai..." and "Vahe Guru Vahe Guru..."

*—From Bhagavan's Buddha Poornima Discourse in Sai Ramesh Krishan Hall, Brindavan on
7th May 2001*

EASWARAMMA DAY AND BUDDHA POORNIMA CELEBRATIONS AT BRINDAVAN

Spirituality Unites Humanity

Brindavan ashram of Bhagavan Baba witnessed a rare glimpse of unity of humanity when devotees from India and various other parts of the world congregated here in the first week of May 2001 to celebrate the two holy events of immense spiritual significance, viz., Easwaramma Day and Buddha Poornima in the Divine Presence of Bhagavan. As the two events fell on two consecutive days, i.e., 6th and 7th May 2001, their celebrations got synchronised in a very unique way. More than 1300 overseas devotees, who came to Brindavan mainly from Sri Lanka, Nepal, Singapore, Malaysia, Philippines, Indonesia, Thailand, Korea, Australia, the U.K., the U.S.A. and Japan, presented excellent programmes for both the events besides those organised by their Indian counterparts. Thus, the celebrations of these twin events organised at the global level not only made them most memorable, but also provided a glimpse of world unity, obliterating all differences of colour, creed, race and country, and exhibiting the true spirit of Brotherhood of Man and Fatherhood of God as envisaged by Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba.

Exhibition on "The Life of Easwaramma"

The celebrations started on the morning of 4th May 2001 when Bhagavan inaugurated the exhibition "The Life of Easwaramma" set up in a specially erected Pandal near Sai Ramesh Krishan Hall. The exhibition panels, prepared by the Sai Samithis of Singapore and Australia, depicted the life of the Divine Mother Easwaramma (1890-1972), highlighting the spiritual values of humility, compassion, service, sacrifice and love exemplified by Easwaramma in her life. Chosen by the Avatar Himself as His mother, she was blessed with the most prestigious crown of Motherhood like Kausalya, Devaki, Yashoda, Maya Devi, Gautami and Virgin Mary because of her piety, purity and innocence. Seeing this excellently prepared exhibition was, indeed, an elevating and rewarding experience.

Bhagavan Inaugurates the Celebrations

The Celebration of main events of these functions started on Saturday, 5th May 2001 with Buddhists chants by 50 Indonesian devotees in Sai Ramesh Krishan Hall as soon as Bhagavan came to grant the bliss of His Divine Darshan to the devotees at 7.15 a.m. Buddhists chants were followed by Bhajans as Swami went along the rows of devotees showering His blessings on the huge gathering both inside and outside the Hall. Bhagavan inaugurated the celebrations at 7.40 a.m. by lighting candles before the statue of Buddha and the portraits of the Divine Parents, Mother Easwaramma and Pedda Venkama Raju to the delight of the devotees who greeted it with a thunderous applause. The morning programme came to a close with Arati to Bhagavan at 7.40 a.m.

Earlier at night profuse decorations were carried out in Sai Ramesh Krishan Hall, which was the venue of the main events of the celebrations. The Hall and the Mandir premises were

aesthetically bedecked with colourful buntings, beautiful lanterns, cloth hangings, welcome gates and flower arrangements. Flower arrangements on the dais during these celebrations were exquisitely beautiful and magnificently attractive. Added to these decorations was the illumination of the entire Mandir complex at night. In addition to the display of the theme of the celebrations in beautiful lettering on a velvet gate, an electronic display atop the dais offered salutations to the Divine Mother Easwaramma and highlighted the main teachings of Buddha, e.g.,

"Salutations to Easwaramma, the Mother of Sayeeshwara"

"We Bow Down to Sai Buddha, the Eternal Protector of Dharma"

"Poornima Signifies Fullness. When the Mind is Filled with Love, it Achieves Fullness"

Symposium on Buddha Dharma and Bhagavan's Teachings

One of the unique features of this year's Buddha Purnima celebrations was a symposium which highlighted the similarities between the teachings of Lord Buddha and Bhagavan Baba. This symposium was organised in Sai Krishan Kalyana Mantapam in the Divine Presence of Bhagavan Baba on 5th May 2001 at 9.00 a.m. At the outset, Sri M. Wanniyasekeram, Central Coordinator, Sri Lanka extended a hearty welcome to all, introduced the speakers of the symposium and expressed his deep gratitude to Bhagavan for His gracious Presence.

This was followed by a scholarly exposition of the subject by Ms. Hema Weerakoon, Editor, Sai Marg (Sri Lanka). Introducing the theme of the symposium, Ms. Weerakoon said, "Lord Buddha prescribed the ten Paaramithas (perfections) of Dana (generosity), Sila (morality), Nekkhamma (renunciation), Panna (wisdom), Virya (energy), Khanti (patience), Sacca (truthfulness), Adhitthana (determination), Metta (loving kindness) and Upekkha (equanimity) for blossoming of human excellence and as preparatory steps to Nirvana. Similarly, Bhagavan Baba has given the five human values of Sathya, Dharma, Santhi, Prema and Ahimsa as the means to the goal of human life. So, both of them are complementary to each other." Four other learned speakers who spoke on this subject very aptly brought out the similarities between the teachings of Lord Buddha and Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba. They were: Sri Billy Fong of Malaysia, Sri Chandima H de Silva of Sri Lanka, Sri M. Samejima of Japan and Dr. Judo, Central Coordinator of Thailand. This programme came to a close at 10.15 a.m. with Arati to Bhagavan.

Easwaramma Day Celebrations

Easwaramma Day is celebrated on 6th May every year by Sai Organisations in India and all parts of the world in the memory of the Divine Mother Easwaramma. On this day, Bal Vikas children in Sathya Sai Centres in more than 165 countries of the world organise children's rallies and conduct cultural, social and educational programmes. The celebrations in Brindavan had great significance due to the Divine Presence of Bhagavan. Special decorations were made in Sai Ramesh Krishan Hall on this day. Sweet and sacred notes of Nadaswaram music heralded Bhagavan to the Hall when He came from His abode to grant the bliss of His Darshan to the huge multitude of devotees. As soon as Bhagavan arrived in the Hall, Bal Vikas children started Bhajans. After blessing the devotees with His Divine Darshan, Bhagavan came to the dais and inaugurated the celebrations of Easwaramma Day by lighting the lamps before the portraits of

the Divine Parents, Easwamma and Pedda Venkama Raju. The morning programme came to a close at 8.15 a.m. with the distribution of Prasadam and Arati to Bhagavan.

In the afternoon, Bhagavan came to Sai Ramesh Krishan Hall at 3.45 p.m. The day being Sunday, daylong Akhanda Bhajan was in progress as Bhagavan came on to the dais. Soon after this, the afternoon programme commenced with Veda chanting. Before the Divine Discourse, Sri Y Arvind, a former student of Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning and presently working in Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Medical Sciences, Whitefield made a brief speech. Prof. Anil Kumar introduced the speaker and paid tributes to the Divine Mother Easwamma in a Telugu verse. Sri Y. Arvind spoke about the glory of mother, who holds the future of the individual, society, nation and world in her hands. He referred to the motherly role of Bhagavan towards His students and gave instances as to how Bhagavan's love was totally selfless and limitless. After this, Bhagavan gave His Divine Message (printed separately) and concluded it at 5.15 p.m. with the Bhajan, "*Hari Bhajan Bina Sukha Santhi Nahin...*"

As a fitting finale to this day of immense spiritual significance, renowned singer P. Susheela and her troupe paid musical tributes to the Divine Mother Easwamma and Bhagavan Baba. At the end of this excellent programme, Bhagavan distributed clothes and Saris to all those who took part in this musical presentation and showered His blessings on them. The day's proceedings concluded at 6.05 p.m. with Arati to Bhagavan.

Buddha Poornima Celebrations

Buddha Poornima celebrations commenced on the morning of 7th May 2001 when Japanese youth dancers and Malaysian Kompang drummers zestfully led Bhagavan Baba to Sai Ramesh Krishan Hall. On the arrival of Bhagavan in the Hall at 7.35 a.m., the Indonesian devotees chanted Buddhist Stotras (sacred verses). Thereafter, Malaysian devotees led the morning Bhajans with their 50 strong choir devotedly singing Chinese and Hindi devotional songs. After Arati to Bhagavan, the Buddhist devotees proceeded to do Abhishekam to the statue of Lord Buddha placed on the dais.

The afternoon programme started at 3.30 p.m. after Bhagavan's arrival in the Hall. After Veda chanting, two singers from Philippines sang out their love for Bhagavan and enthralled the audience. Before the Divine Discourse, Sri Ryuko Hira, Zone 3 Chairman of the International Sathya Sai Seva Organisation, addressed the audience and introduced the speakers. Referring to the global impact of Bhagavan's values education programme, Sri Hira informed that the Asian Development Bank had recently conducted a seminar on Sathya Sai Human Values for improving the efficiency of their staff. He also informed that Philippines had declared Vesak-Buddha Poornima a public holiday from this year. Sri Hira, in the end, prayed to Bhagavan to release a book on 75 saints of the world prepared by the Japanese youth.

The first speaker who addressed the audience after Sri Hira's introductory speech was Sri Lachman Kiriella, Sri Lanka's Minister for Sports and Tourism. The learned speaker explained how Bhagavan Baba was bringing about unity in the world as people of all faiths were flocking to the Lotus Feet of Bhagavan. The next speaker Ms. Nandini Samarasinghe, a Sri Lankan diplomat, then related how Bhagavan Baba had lovingly led her to experience His teachings in her life. The last speaker, Sri V. K. Ravindran, expressed gratitude to Bhagavan for His blessings

on Buddha Poornima and hoped that Buddha Poornima would continue to be celebrated in the Divine Presence of Bhagavan year after year. Bhagavan then gave His Buddha Poornima Discourse (printed separately in this issue) and exhorted the devotees to imbibe the virtues practised by Buddha in his life. The Buddha Poornima celebrations came to a close with Arati to Bhagavan at 5.30 p.m.

Simplicity with elegance and devotion was the hallmark of the entire celebrations. Thus, the glorious celebrations of global magnitude came to a happy conclusion. Bhagavan gave a farewell lunch to all the overseas devotees on 8th May 2001 to shower His love and blessings on them.

Excellent Drama Presentations

Three remarkably excellent dramas were presented during these celebrations in Sai Krishan Kalyana Mantapam in the Divine Presence of Bhagavan Baba on the evenings of 5th and 6th May 2001. The first drama presented by the devotees from Malaysia on 5th May 2001 was titled "Divinity Brings Unity."

The story depicts the life of a modern man, Mr. Lee, who ruins himself and his family by excessive greed and needless pomposity. Finally, at the height of the crisis he listens to the wise counsel of his devout father, who introduces him to the teachings of Lord Buddha through beautifully enacted episodes from Buddha's life to save his family from disintegration.

The second drama "The Divine Life of Easwaramma" was also presented on 5th May by the devotees of Japan. This presentation was made in the traditional Japanese style in which the narrators were in Japanese costumes while the other Japanese cast presented the drama dressed in Indian costumes. It was really an amazing show of perfection with which the Japanese cast presented the life of Divine Mother Easwaramma in a remarkably realistic way.

The third drama "Krishna-Trishna" was presented by the Bal Vikas children of Bangalore on the evening of 6th May 2001. The drama, based on one the "Chinna Kathas" of Bhagavan Baba, showed the greatness of Draupadi's devotion to Krishna which even His consorts Rukmini and Sathyabhama could not match. Krishna made them fathom Draupadi's devotion when every hair of Draupadi produced the Divine Name of Krishna. The Bal Vikas children made excellent portrayal of all the roles earning the unanimous appreciation of the huge audience in Sai Krishan Kalyana Mantapam.

All the three dramas were well presented and delighted the devotees. Bhagavan was obviously pleased with the performance of the children and blessed them all. He also materialised gold chains for the children who enacted the roles of young Sai Baba and Draupadi.

Narayana Seva and Vastra Dana Narayana Seva and Vastra Dana always have a prominent place in the programmes conducted under the Divine benediction of Bhagavan Baba. So, no celebration is considered complete unless some work is done for the poor and needy. During the twin celebrations of Easwaramma Day and Buddha Poornima, Narayana Seva and Vastra Dana were conducted on 6th and 9th May 2001. Bhagavan Himself commenced the programme on both the days by distributing food and clothes. While the programme on 6th May was organised

by the overseas devotees, the one on 9th May was organised by the Bal Vikas Gurus of Bangalore.

Serve the Poor and down-trodden

Rich people and people in power will have plenty of servants. But the distressed, the poverty-stricken, and those who suffer have no one to serve them. Go to such people and be their friend, their kith and kin, their closest well-wishers. They welcome you as such. If you pour spirituality into the ears of those who are tortured by hunger, it will not be assimilated. First, quench the hunger.

Give them God in the form of food.

Give them God in the form of clothes.

- Baba

AVATAR VANI

DASARA DISCOURSES - V

Tread the Path of Truth

It is sheer selfishness to seek one's own liberation. The desire for one's individual liberation is not justifiable at all. One who works to alleviate the suffering of his fellowmen is a true human being.

(Telugu Poem)

Embodiments of Love!

Truth is the supreme goal of man. Truth is his primary objective of life irrespective of the land of his birth or the period of time in which he is born in this world. From time immemorial, man has been trying to know the real meaning of truth. The answers to such profound questions are found in the Vedas, which are the repositories of innumerable sacred secrets.

Man tries to seek peace, security and happiness in his daily life. But these are not to be found in the external world. The source of peace and bliss is man's heart. This is what the Vedas teach. That is why some people took up the task of chanting the Vedas and propagating their teachings for the peace and progress of the world. Divinity is the undercurrent in the Vedas. They contain many profound teachings, such as Matrudevo Bhava, Pitru devo Bhava (revere the mother and father as God). These are the main pillars of the Bharatiya culture. But such sacred teachings of the Vedas are being forgotten today. One can never correctly define what is peace and what is security. These originate from man's heart. The Vedas abound in such sacred secrets.

Attain God through Selfless Love

The Vedas provide the appropriate definition of the Atma. The Vedas proclaim that the Atma is subtler than the atom and vaster than the cosmos. Being all-pervasive and eternal witness, the Atma is Brahman and Brahman is the Atma. This is the very essence of the profound Vedic statement: Anoraneeyan Mahatomaheeyan. How can one ever describe so subtle a principle? How can one limit such an all-pervasive principle to one place? But the Vedas clarify the principle of the Atma for the common man. There is no question which is not answered in the Vedas. The Vedas contain the solutions to all the problems of man. For example, you can

identify the day and date by referring to the almanac prepared by an expert. Similarly, the Vedas provide the knowledge of Prakriti, Paramatma and Jivatma. Only on delving deep into the Vedic teachings can one comprehend such profound truths.

In spite of bright sunlight, a blind man cannot see anything. Similarly, an atheist refuses to see Divinity that is clearly manifest in the entire universe. The Vedas declare: *Yad Bhavam Tad Bhavati* (as is the feeling, so does it happen) and also *Yad Drishyam Tannashyam* (whatever you see is perishable). It is therefore essential for man to develop true love in his heart. One should try to comprehend the true nature of love. True love is not a delusion of the mind. It is a pure and unsullied principle. It is a natural feeling. You cannot create it in an artificial way. Just as it is natural for a river to flow towards the sea, for a creeper to cling to a tree, for the stars to glitter in the firmament, in the same way the spontaneous flow of man's love towards God is totally natural. Love has no reason and it is not bound by any rules and regulations. Selfless love that does not expect any reward directly reaches God. Worldly love does not arise from the depth of one's heart; it is the outcome of compulsion. True love flows directly from the heart which is its source; it cannot be created by force. Ritualistic spiritual practices cannot create true love in you.

True love is spontaneous and natural. Dharmaraja was the exemplar of true love. Even when his wife was humiliated in the open court, he fixed his unwavering mind on Krishna. Even when Aswatthama slaughtered the innocent Upapandavas, he continued thinking of Krishna with a steady, pure and unagitated mind. His brother Bhima was bound hand and foot and thrown into a river full of venomous snakes. In such situations too, Dharmaraja maintained his equipoise. This was possible for Dharmaraja because he was able to transcend both joy and sorrow and attain the non-dual principle of Godhead. Thus, it is only by the perception of the fundamental truth that one develops a steady mind.

Man defiles his Nature by associating himself with the World

The intellect transcends the mind. Purity of the intellect is reflected on the mind. It does not suffice if, in the name of Sadhana, you confine yourselves merely to Japa (chanting), Tapa (penance) and Dhyana (meditation). It is, in fact, Chitta Shuddhi (purity of the mind) that leads to Jnana Siddhi (acquisition of true knowledge). Cultivation of purity of the mind is therefore the true Sadhana you should undertake. With purity of the mind and attainment of wisdom, man achieves equipoise. Dharmaraja attained this state. There are innumerable devotees in this world, who become elated with joy and depressed with sorrow. To overcome this fickle nature of the mind, one has to realise one's divine nature. It is due to his wavering mind that modern man tends to be selfish. He should inculcate the feeling of equanimity and cultivate equal-mindedness. This should be the main objective of man. But today he has filled his mind with too many desires, because of which he is suffering.

One should realise that whatever one does and experiences in this world is possible due to the existence of the Atma in oneself. Hence, one should develop this knowledge. Only then can one endeavour to understand the Atma. The principle of the Atma is verily the power of consciousness. What is meant by consciousness? It is not partial knowledge of things; it is total understanding. When I show you this folded handkerchief, you say that it is a piece of cloth. But when I open the piece of cloth and show it to you, you recognise it as a handkerchief. Hence, one can decide conclusively that it is a handkerchief only when one has seen it completely. But man

today does not yearn for this total wisdom. Total wisdom is attained only by total faith. So, a devotee should develop total faith. But if you lack faith, how can you aspire to attain liberation? Is it not selfishness on your part to seek your own liberation? Do you consider yourself so important? All are equally important for God. God is Bimba (object) and Nature is His Pratibimba (reflection). Every being in this creation is a reflection of Divinity. So, one should see unity in all living beings.

The natural colour of this handkerchief is white. As you use it, it becomes dirty and stained. Its colour also changes because of the dirt accumulated on it. Similarly, when a child is born, he is pure and unsullied like pure glittering gold. Just as pure gold loses its lustre and value when metals like silver, copper and brass are added to it, man also gets defiled by associating himself with worldly desires. The principle of the Self in man is immortal, eternal, pure and blissful by nature. But it gets adulterated when man develops worldly desires, indulges in worldly activities and develops attachment to his kith and kin. Who is responsible for the erosion of values in man? He himself is responsible for his devaluation. Today we don't find any trace of human values in human beings. Human values do not come from outside. They are already there in every person. But man is not able to recognise this. He speaks untruth, undertakes wrong activities, looks at forbidden things and entertains wrong thoughts. He has lost his purity. How can we call a person a human being if he lacks human values?

Today, unity of thought, word and deed is absent in man. He does not implement what he thinks and says,

*"Manasyekam Vachasyekam Karmanyekam Mahatmanam
Manasyanyath Vachasyanyath Karmanyanyath Duratmanam"*

(Those whose thoughts, words and deeds are in complete harmony are noble ones; those who lack harmony of these are wicked.)

Oneness of thought, word and deed makes a person a great soul. If there is no unity in his thought, word and deed, he becomes a wicked person. Because of bad behaviour and bad conduct, man is becoming vicious (Duratma). He has lost his purity. But he blames the world. Many people complain to me, "Swami, the world is changing day by day and the wicked are multiplying. Is there no remedy for these problems of the world?" But I tell them that it is utter foolishness to blame the world. In fact, wickedness is there within man. If man becomes good, the world will also become good. In this world, evil follows good as its shadow. Goodness cannot be recognised in the absence of evil. "Joy and sorrow always co-exist. None can separate them. Joy can't be seen in isolation; when sorrow ceases, you experience joy." (Telugu Poem)

Modern man is succumbing to the pleasures of the world and losing his character. In the present age, it is not possible for anyone to decide what is good and what is bad. Many so-called good people have several bad qualities and many bad people have some good qualities. It is difficult to decide who is good and who is bad.

Ramana Rao tells me that the devotees are very happy when Bhagavan narrates the incidents of His early years.

A Hatha Yogi's Challenge to Bhagavan

Thirty years ago, I travelled the length and breadth of the country to propagate My message. I used to visit Mumbai four times in a year. Now, Mumbai has changed a lot. Sai institutions have multiplied. Sai's name is now heard in every nook and corner of Mumbai.

During those days, a Hatha Yogi challenged Me. Some leading newspapers carried it on their front page. The Hatha Yogi challenged Sathya Sai Baba to perform some absurd feats like swallowing a live fish, eating glass pieces, drinking acid and walking on water. He claimed that he would perform the above-mentioned feats with ease. This angered and pained the Sai devotees all over. The devotees requested Swami to give a fitting reply to the challenge. I answered, "Foolish fellows! It is not mandatory to reply to his challenge. In fact, replying only shows one's weakness." The devotees said, "Swami, if you don't reply, we shall do it." Ramana Rao said that he would reply to him.

I went to Chennai from Mumbai. At Chennai, the Raja of Venkatagiri was fuming and fretting. The Raja asked Me, "Swami, who is this wicked fellow? For earning his livelihood he is tarnishing the image of Swami. I shall reply to him." I said, "Raja, do not react to it." But he kept it in his mind. A week later, the Raja convened a huge gathering. The meeting was attended by many Sanyasins from Ramakrishna Math and Sivananda Ashram. The Sanyasins discussed this matter. They were convinced that only those people who were jealous of others' name and fame would indulge in such cheap activities. The Raja spoke in this meeting and expressed his anger vehemently. He considered Swami as his life-breath and loved Swami very much. I tried to pacify him, but he would not stop. When one of the Sanyasins asked Me, I told him, "Friendship or fight should be between equals. He should be My equal to challenge Me. I cannot accept challenges from every man in the street. My dear son, the cow eats grass, the pig eats excreta and man eats rice. It makes sense when a man challenges another to eat as much rice as he can. If a pig challenges a man to eat excreta, should he respond? Therefore, I will not respond to the challenge." This reply delighted the gathering.

The Hatha Yogi had announced that he would walk on water on a particular day. People flocked to buy tickets for this show. The people of Mumbai have too much money. I often say, "*Misuse of money is evil. Do not waste your money.*" On the scheduled day lots of people thronged the venue. Our Sai devotees too waited near the gate. Immediately, I sent a telegram telling them not to involve themselves in this matter. As soon as the Hatha Yogi placed his feet on the surface of water, he sank. The police fished him out and with great difficulty managed to take him home through the back door. For the sake of earning money, some people indulge in challenging highly reputed people. They think that they can attract the attention of the world by doing so. Everything in the world is governed by money.

A week later, the Hatha Yogi came to Bangalore. At that time, I was at Nandanavanam, Ooty. He wanted to meet Me and seek pardon. I sent word to him that he need not beg pardon or repent. I also advised him to tread the path of truth.

During the times of Krishna too, there was an imposter who dressed like Krishna and went around proclaiming that he was the real Krishna. The same was the case during the time of Rama too. Jealousy is the root cause of such perverted actions. Man should always follow truth.

Sathyannasthi Paro Dharma (there is no Dharma higher than Truth). Truth is invincible. Truth is My principle. None can make Me swerve from the path of truth. When I am the embodiment of Sathya, Dharma, Santhi and Prema, how can a person devoid of these values challenge Me? How can anybody approach Me if he is bereft of these values? Purity shines forth brilliantly in a noble person during testing times. The light of a lamp can be seen only in darkness. In every age, great souls and divine incarnations had to face praise and blame, adoration and ridicule. Pay no heed to these and remain steadfast on the path of truth and righteousness.

When you have divine qualities, you need not be afraid of demonic designs of others. Ravana, who was endowed with physical and intellectual prowess, ridiculed Rama. But Rama paid no heed to this. Lakshmana, angered by this, tried to attack Ravana. Rama pacified him, saying, "Lakshmana, this is but natural for Ravana. Allow his evil feelings to come out." During Dwapara Yuga, Jarasandha also mocked at Krishna for fleeing whenever he attacked Him. He also challenged Krishna to stay and fight. But Krishna knew that Jarasandha's main weakness was his anger. Whenever Jarasandha attacked, Krishna would deliberately flee from the battlefield. This angered Jarasandha and thereby weakened him further. Once weakened, it was a child's play to kill him. Pay no heed to the strange and crooked ways of the world. Stick to the path of truth and put into practice the words of Swami. Then no one can point an accusing finger at you. In every field you will be successful.

Today is Ashtami. Ayudha Puja is performed on this day. What is the significance of Ayudha Puja? After Mahishasura and other demons were slayed by Chamundeswari, there was no more use of Her weapons. So, the weapons were kept aside and worshipped. This Ayudha Puja is being celebrated since ancient times. But of what use are such weapons to us? In fact, our weapons are Sathya, Dharma, Santhi and Prema. Prema is more powerful than the hydrogen and atom bombs of today. Why worry when such power is within us?

Students!

Conduct yourselves in a righteous manner. Your white dress symbolises purity. People who see you should be able to recognise you immediately as the students of Sri Sathya Sai Institutions. Your dress should be neat and clean. Live a sacred life. Give no chance to anyone to point an accusing finger at you. The Wardens of the hostels at Prasanthi Nilayam and Brindavan should pay more attention to this aspect and should not turn a blind eye to any acts of indiscipline. Any lapses in discipline should be condemned at once. We can project sacred ideals to all only when our own conduct and behaviour are ideal.

Embodiments of love!

Love is immanent in you, but you have turned it into worldly love. This is the cause of all your difficulties and worries. Develop true and eternal love for God and enjoy limitless bliss. Bhagavan concluded His Discourse with the Bhajan, "*Prema Mudita Manase Kaho Rama Rama Ram...*"

From Bhagavan's Discourse in Sai Kulwant Hall, Prasanthi Nilayam on 5th October 2000

Seventeenth Anniversary of the Abode of Bhagavan

Sri Sathya Sai Baba in His Brindavan Ashram at Whitefield, Bangalore is known as Trayee Brindavan. This lotus-shaped building is in itself a piece of great architectural beauty. Bhagavan's stay in it for a few months, mainly during summer season, not only makes it bustle with activity, but also sanctifies it as a place of great reverence and blessedness for the devotees of Bhagavan. A function is held every year to celebrate its anniversary.

The Seventeenth Anniversary of its inauguration was celebrated on 26th April 2001. The entire Mandir complex was decorated with flowers, festoons and colourful buntings. Special decorations were done in Trayee Brindavan as also in Sai Ramesh Krishan Hall which was the venue of the function. Besides, illumination of the entire premises at night provided a festive look. Welcome gates and arches carried beautiful writings which reflected the feelings of the devotees appropriately, e.g. "*Iduve Brindavan Devadevana Anand Nilaya*" (this Brindavan is the blissful abode of God of gods). "*Om Sri Brindavan Nathaya Namah*" (salutations to the Lord of Brindavan).

An electronic display in Sai Ramesh Krishan Hall carried the following prayer: "May the Lord of Brindavan be with us Forever."

The function started in the afternoon with Bhajans soon after the arrival of Bhagavan in Sai Ramesh Krishan Hall at 4.00 p.m. At the conclusion of Bhajans at 4.30 p.m., renowned classical singer, Begum Parveen Sultana presented a magnificent programme of devotional music. At the very outset, she sent the audience into raptures by her excellent presentation of a Khyal (Dru.) composed by her mentor and husband Ustad Dilshad Khan. Thereafter, she enthralled the devotees with her masterly rendering of Mira, Kabir and Sai Bhajans for nearly one hour. At the end of the programme, Bhagavan blessed Begum Parveen Sultana and the Institute students, who provided instrumental support to her. Bhagavan also distributed Saris and clothes to them. This excellent programme came to a happy conclusion at 5.40 p.m. with Arati to Bhagavan.

Four Goals of Life

The Vedas lay down four goals before man: Dharma, Artha, Kama and Moksha. But they have to be pursued in pairs, Dharma and Artha together and Kama and Moksha together. That is to say, wealth (Artha) has to be earned through righteousness (Dharma), and desire (Kama) has to be for liberation (Moksha). But man takes these four separately and loses all. He puts them into separate compartments and adopts distinct plans to achieve them. He gives up Dharma and Moksha as beyond him and wastes his life pursuing only Artha and Kama. They lead him to ruin.

—Baba

Health Care is not a Business

Neither by penance nor by pilgrimage nor by study of scriptures nor by Japa can one cross the ocean of life. One can achieve it only by serving the pious.

(Sanskrit Verse)

Dharmarthakamamokshanam Arogyam Moolamuttamam. Health is the fundamental requirement to achieve the four goals of human life, namely, Dharma (righteousness), Artha (wealth), Kama (desire) and Moksha (liberation). Without good health, man cannot perform even a small task. Health is man's supreme wealth. It is much superior to the other types of wealth possessed by man.

Recognise your Innate Divinity

God is omniscient and omnipotent and is present in all beings. That is why Lord Krishna declared, *Mamaivamsho Jeevaloke Jeevabhuta Sanathana* (the eternal Atma in all beings is a part of My Being). God has endowed all beings with some power. But the power He has bestowed on human beings is much greater than that given to other living beings. Man's physical strength may be less, but God has blessed him with immense mental power. With his will power, man can achieve any mighty task. There is nothing in this world that he cannot achieve with his will power. He is spending all his energy to travel lakhs of miles into space, but is he making any effort to travel even half an inch into his heart? It is the power of the mind that helps man to go within. It is possible only when he makes proper use of this power.

Man is undergoing hardships in life as he is unaware of his immanent divine power. One needs to have a mirror to see one's own reflection. Likewise, when man looks into the mirror of his divinity, he can realise his true potential. When a small piece of wood comes into contact with fire, it becomes fire itself. *Brahmavio Brahmaiva Bhavati* (the knower of Brahman becomes verily Brahman). When you put a drop of water on your palm, it gets evaporated in no time. But when you put the same drop of water into the ocean, it assumes the form of ocean. Your position in life depends on the company you are associated with. Hence, it is said, "Tell me your company and I shall tell you what you are." When you develop intimate relationship with God, you become God yourself. There is none in this world who does not possess divine power. All powers are latent in man, but he is unable to realise them. As a result, he is leading a miserable life.

All Acts of God are to Help His Devotees

Divinity pervades everything right from microcosm to macrocosm. *Anoraneeyan Mahato Maheeyan* (Brahman is subtler than the subtlest and vaster than the vastest). Though God is omnipresent, omnipotent and omniscient, He sometimes pretends to have certain desires. Everyone should try to understand this. Lord Krishna, before conferring wealth and prosperity on His childhood friend Kuchela, asked him if he had brought anything for Him. All that Kuchela had with him was a small quantity of beaten rice. Krishna ate the rice brought by Kuchela. He did so only to confer His grace on Kuchela and redeem his life. In Vamana Avatar, the Almighty Lord approached Emperor Bali and asked for three footsteps of land in charity. Does it amount to

begging? No. Not at all. God does such acts only to confer His grace on His devotees and redeem their lives.

Once Krishna entered the house of a Gopika after a long walk and said that He was tired and hungry. He asked her to give Him something to eat. The Gopika wondered as to how the Lord of the universe could ever be hungry. She said in all humility and devotion that she did not know how to satiate the Lord's hunger. Krishna said that it was enough if she gave Him a glass of buttermilk. Then, the Gopika prayed to Krishna thus: *"Oh Lord! How is it possible for me to give You delicious food when You have the entire universe in Your stomach? How can anyone build a temple for You when You are all-pervasive? How can anyone light a lamp before You when You are shining with the effulgence of a billion suns?"*

(Telugu Poem)

When the Pandavas were living in exile and were undergoing a great deal of hardship, sage Durvasa along with thousands of his disciples went to their hermitage and asked for food. He told them that they were going for a bath in a nearby river and would come back to have food. The Pandavas were gripped by anxiety as to how to provide food for so many guests when they had nothing with them. Fearing the curse of sage Durvasa, Draupadi prayed to Krishna to save them from this predicament. Krishna promptly appeared on the scene and asked Draupadi to give Him something to eat. Then Draupadi replied, "Krishna, if we were living in Hastinapur, I would have certainly given You a sumptuous feast. But alas! We are living in a forest eating roots and tubers. In such a situation, what can I offer You?" Krishna told her to look into the vessel, which she had already cleaned, if there was any food particle left in it. She did accordingly and found a tiny piece of leaf sticking to the vessel. Krishna ate that leftover leaf. As soon as He did so, the hunger of Durvasa and his disciples was satiated and they went away without bothering the Pandavas. In this way, Krishna saved the Pandavas from the curse of Durvasa. Thus, sometimes God pretends to have desires, not because He lacks anything, but only to help His devotees.

Sacrifice is the Noblest Virtue

You might have heard the story of Laila and Majnu. Laila was a rich lady while Majnu was very poor. She wanted to know whether he really loved her because she wanted to marry him. She thought of a plan and sent two of her maidservants to him. They approached Majnu and told him that Laila was very sick and was in need of blood. Majnu said that he was willing to sacrifice his life itself for the sake of Laila and that her well-being was his prime concern. When this was conveyed to Laila, she realised how pure and selfless Majnu's love was. She repented for not having properly estimated Majnu's love for her. Likewise, some people do not understand Divinity and the inner meaning of God's acts. God does not desire anything for Himself. All His desires are meant to uplift and redeem the lives of His devotees. Whatever He does is only for others. You should understand this truth.

It was Dr. Rajeswari, the mother of C. Srinivas, who started this hospital. She was highly qualified and had worked in several countries. She would often tell Me, "Our Srinivas should become highly educated and get degrees from A to Z." I would reply, "Mother, don't worry about his studies. If he is interested, he will study." She was very loving and caring towards everybody. She started this hospital in a small room. Gradually, she expanded it and brought it to its present state. Every year she would add some new department to it. Though it is a general hospital, all

types of advanced treatments are now available here. One cannot say that treatment for a particular ailment is not available here. Then how can we call this a small hospital? It may look small in size but the service rendered here is great. (*Cheers*) In that sense it is, no doubt, a big hospital.

All the doctors who serve in this hospital are highly qualified and reputed. They come here from far off places and serve the village people with love and care. Bereft of all self-interest, they serve with a great spirit of sacrifice. Such sacrifice is very rarely seen among people today. *Na Karmana Na Prajaya Dhanena Thyagenaikena Amrutatthwamanasu* (immortality is not attained through action, progeny or wealth. It is attained only by sacrifice). Very few are blessed with such a noble quality. It is a great good fortune to be able to love and serve the suffering humanity. In the outside world, doctors crave for money, but here doctors aspire for the well-being of patients. They render service to the patients with noble feelings and purity of heart. With such dedicated doctors serving here, this has become an ideal hospital. In fact, the entire staff here work with total dedication. One may build big hospitals. We too have constructed a big Super Specialty Hospital in Whitefield. But its services are limited to only cardiology and neurology, whereas in this hospital, various diseases pertaining to lungs, liver, heart, etc., are treated. You can see it for yourself, most of the patients who come here are poor and helpless. They are the people who need our love and care most.

You should render service with the spirit of sacrifice. Sacrifice is the only way to immortality. Service is superior to rituals like Yajnas and Yagas. Enquire for whose sake you are performing Yajnas and Yagas. You are doing them for your own sake, not for the sake of God. God does not need them. You may say that you are performing Yajnas for the welfare of the world. But, in fact, you are doing it for your own welfare. It is God alone who looks after the welfare of the world. *Sarvata Pani-padam Tat Sarvathokshi Siromukham, Sarvata Sruthimalloke Sarvamavruthya Thishthati* (with hands, feet, eyes, heads, mouth and ears pervading everything, He permeates the entire universe). He alone can confer physical, mental and spiritual strength.

New Building for the General Hospital

He alone is a true human being who has the purity of thought, word and deed. Hence, it is said, "The proper study of mankind is man" The doctors of this hospital are rendering service with such purity and broad feelings. Dr. Rajeswari used to work day and night in this hospital. I often used to tell her not to exert herself too much. I would tell her, "Rajeswari, it is possible for you to serve others more and more only when you have good health. So, you should take proper rest." She would say that serving others was her way of taking rest. Her only wish was to leave her mortal coil while serving in the hospital. That is what happened ultimately. She breathed her last in this hospital itself while doing some work sitting in a chair. Dr. Savitri has been continuing the good work initiated by Dr. Rajeswari. Dolly is also rendering great service.

In addition to these doctors, there are some specialists who come from the city to serve here, e.g., an eye specialist, a dentist, a liver specialist and an orthopaedic surgeon. The doctor who is compering this programme is an orthopaedic surgeon. He worked in America before coming here. They are doing service with utmost devotion. All of them are highly dedicated and have love and concern for the patients. I want everyone to develop such love. Every doctor should

have such love for the patients. They should talk to the patients with love and make them feel comfortable. They should develop the noble virtues of understanding and adjustment. I wish to give you a small example to illustrate this. When I gave mementoes to the doctors, one doctor did not receive the memento as he came in the end. Immediately, one of the doctors offered the memento that was given to him. What a noble act it is! All these doctors are endowed with such selfless love. Love alone sustains the entire world. Love is God, live in love. Humanness cannot exist without love. God does not exist in the form of Vishnu, Siva, etc. He exists in the form of love. One doctor has practically demonstrated such spirit of love in action just now. None of you have taken note of it, but I noticed it. Only the fortunate few are endowed with such spirit of sacrifice.

There are many doctors in the world who are highly qualified and reputed, but they are after name and fame. They are interested in advertising their achievements, whereas our doctors do not care for name and fame. Service is their prime motive. It is because of such noble doctors that our hospital has earned good reputation.

I have noticed that the space available here is very less. There are four operation theatres here. Not an inch of space is left as all the five acres of land are occupied by this building. That is why before coming here, I laid the foundation stone of the new general hospital building in the ten-acre plot of land donated by our Adikesavulu. The Chief Minister of Karnataka also participated in this function. Actually, I am not interested in foundation laying ceremony. What I am interested in is the inauguration ceremony. I have already decided to inaugurate this new hospital on 23rd November 2001. (*Cheers*) Then what will happen to this hospital? This hospital is also very important. This was like a tiny Banyan seed which has now grown into a gigantic tree. It will continue to grow more and more. That general hospital is meant for treating ailments relating to disorders of lungs, bones, liver, etc. This hospital will be exclusively meant for the mother and child.

Hospital for the Mother and Child

My opinion is that the mother and child care should be given top priority. Without the mother, how can the world exist? One should become the recipient of one's mother's love and grace. Only then can one expect to win Divine grace. Here is a small example to illustrate this.

In the Mahabharata, Gandhari being a woman of chastity and virtue, blindfolded herself as her husband Dhritarashtra was blind by birth. She did not even see her own sons. After the Mahabharata War, when Krishna went to console her at the death of her hundred sons, Gandhari, in her moment of despair and anguish, severely castigated Him. She questioned Him, "Krishna, could You not save even one of our sons to perform our final rites? Why is it that Your vision of grace did not fall on any of them?" Krishna gave a fitting reply. He said, "Mother, did you ever see your own sons? How can My vision of grace fall on those whom their own mother does not look at?" One who cannot win one's mother's love cannot attain Divine grace. So, first of all one should try to become the recipient of one's mother's love. That is why the Vedas declare: *Matru Devo Bhava, Pitru Devo Bhava, Acharya Devo Bhava, Atithi Devo Bhava* (revere your mother, father, preceptor and guest as God).

It is because of men of sacrifice that our country Bharat has been able to enjoy peace and prosperity. The spirit of sacrifice, love and righteousness that are found in Bharat are not present anywhere else in the world. This is Tyaga Bhumi, Yoga Bhumi, Karma Bhumi and Yajna Bhumi (land of sacrifice, land of spirituality, land of action and land of Yajnas). Such a sacred land is being converted into Bhoga Bhumi (land of pleasure) by modern youth. The bliss that one experiences from Tyaga cannot be obtained from Bhoga. Bhoga leads to Roga (disease) and Tyaga leads to Yoga (spirituality). Imbibe the spirit of sacrifice and utilise your energy and education for the welfare of others. Understand that education is meant for serving society and not for doing business. There is no greater service than utilising your education for the benefit of others. Especially, doctors should make every effort to safeguard the health of the mother and child.

Selfless Service of the Hospital Doctors

The culture of Bharat teaches, "*Sathyam Vada, Dharmam Chara*" (speak the truth and practise righteousness). Humanness will blossom in the world only when this principle is put into practice. Truth is referred to as Neeti (morality), righteousness relates to Reeti (procedure) and sacrifice confers Khyati (reputation). Manava Jati (human race) is the combination of Neeti, Reeti and Khyati. But today morality is lacking in society. Of what use is education without morality? Life itself has no value without morality. Adhere to truth; practise righteousness; cultivate the spirit of sacrifice. There is nothing greater than this.

Embodiments of Love!

If you come across anyone who is suffering, make every effort to give him solace. This was the ideal demonstrated by Dr. Rajeswari. She spent all her earnings for this hospital. After her demise, Dr. Savitri has been working tirelessly day and night. At times, she even forgoes her food to serve the patients. I told her that it was not good for her health to work day and night without proper food and rest. I took a promise from her that she would take timely food.

All the doctors who work here, including the visiting doctors, do not take even a Naya Paisa from us. This has been the case for the last 25 years. They bring all the necessary equipment and medicines also with them and serve the patients here. There is no dearth of doctors in our country. But most of them are after money and fame. Doctors should have compassion and concern for patients. We have many such noble doctors coming from various places to serve in this hospital. He alone is a true doctor who serves patients in a selfless manner. *Vaidyo Narayano Hari* (doctor is verily God). What does Lord Narayana do? He helps everybody. Likewise, doctors should also help everybody. With such noble feelings, the doctors are offering their services here and it is because of them that this hospital has earned a good name for itself. Whenever the need arises, these doctors even go to Puttaparthi to offer their services.

In the Super Specialty Hospital at Puttaparthi, we have the departments of cardiology, urology, nephrology and ophthalmology. Dr. Hemanthmurthy, an eye specialist, goes every week to Puttaparthi to perform eye operations. It is no ordinary task to go to Puttaparthi all the way from here, week after week to render service. How many doctors in this world have such a spirit of service? Even the dentist and anaesthetist also go from here. In Puttaparthi hospital, sometimes we have to perform a large number of operations. Then there is invariably a need for more anaesthetists. We just make one phone call, and they immediately present themselves there. Very

rarely do we find such service minded doctors today. But in this hospital, we have many of them working tirelessly day in and day out. Dr. Hemanthmurthy is one among them who is performing eye operations with utmost care. I told him that I am ready to get all the equipment he requires to do his work more effectively.

I always encourage those who dedicate themselves to service. I am prepared to establish any number of hospitals like this and give all the help needed. I am not interested in money and I have nothing to do with it. You may wonder as to how Sai Baba gets money for His projects. You may think that He creates money. No, not at all. I don't indulge in such bad practices because money is related to government. I can create any object, but I don't create money. Whenever the need arises, someone or the other will get the noble idea to donate the required amount. Just one word from Swami is enough; there are many Indian and overseas devotees who will do the needful at once. So, you don't need to have any doubts whatsoever. We have to develop this hospital further. Yesterday, a liver specialist came to Me and expressed his willingness to work in Swami's hospital. He has worked in America before. He can perform liver transplant operations. I gave him permission, saying Swami is always ready for any good work.

Drinking Water Project in Karnataka State

Today the food you eat, the air you breathe and the water you drink have become polluted. Consequently, people are suffering from heart and liver disorders. In olden days, such ailments never existed. The pollution of food, air and water is the main cause of the diseases. That is why I have resolved to provide pure drinking water to the needy. First of all, I started educational institutions and hospitals as education and health care are very essential for one and all. Then I started Drinking Water Project. I provided water not just by getting bore-wells dug. Bore-well water may contain excess fluoride, which is harmful for health. So, I made arrangements to get water from natural sources like Krishna river spending crores of rupees. Now the Chief Minister of Karnataka has requested Me to provide pure drinking water to Bellary, Bidar and Bijapur districts of Karnataka State. I have agreed to do so. Wherever there is scarcity of drinking water, one should make every effort to provide it. We need not give money; it is enough if we provide safe drinking water to the people. There is no dearth of rich people in the country. But of what use is the wealth if it is not used for sacred purposes? No one can carry even a fistful of dust at the time of departing from the world. Otherwise, there would have been rationing even for dust in the country. So, money should be utilised for the benefit of society. *Hastasya Bhushanam Danam, Sathyam Kanthasya Bhushanam, Srotrasya Bhushanam Sastram ...* (charity is the true ornament of the hand, truth is the true necklace and listening to sacred texts is the true ornament of the ears).

What is most essential in life? It is essential to develop intimate relationship with God. You will be charged with Divine energy when you come into contact with Divinity. Living in the company of God is true Satsang (good company). *Satsangatwe Nissangatwam, Nissangatwe Nirmohatwam, Nirmohatwe Nischalatattwam, Nischalatattwe Jivanmukti* (good company leads to detachment, detachment makes one free from delusion, freedom from delusion leads to steadiness of mind and steadiness of mind confers liberation.) But today man does not have a steady mind. All the time his mind wavers like a mad monkey. When you say, 'my body', 'my mind', 'my Buddhi', etc., all these are different from you. Then question yourself, who am I? The same principle of 'I' is present in everybody, right from a pauper to a millionaire. In order to

understand this 'I' principle, you have to develop the spirit of sacrifice. Patients belonging to different religions, viz., Hindus, Muslims, Christians, etc., come here for treatment. All are treated alike. There are no differences whatsoever. All are the children of God. This hospital stands for the ideal, 'Brotherhood of Man and Fatherhood of God'. In all Sai Organisations, there are no differences of caste, religion, etc. Many Seva Dal volunteers from Sai Organisations come here for rendering service. There are at least 100 Seva Dal volunteers serving in the Super Specialty Hospital, Whitefield everyday. The youth of today should cultivate such spirit of sacrifice. As they grow old, their spirit of sacrifice should also grow.

Today we are celebrating the Silver Jubilee of this hospital, but I am not satisfied with this. We should develop this hospital further and celebrate its Golden Jubilee. Many more doctors should join this hospital and all should work in a spirit of complete unity. Anything can be achieved with unity. The small hospital started by Dr. Rajeswari has grown into a big one. I wish it grows further and serves the poor and needy. I bless you all and bring this Discourse to a close.

*From Bhagavan's Discourse in Sri Sathya Sai General Hospital, Whitefield (Bangalore) on
10th June 2001*

AVATAR VANI

DIVINE DISCOURSE AT DHARMAKSHETRA, MUMBAI

Cultivate Love and Become Divine

Embodiments of Love!

The all India president of Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organisations, Srinivasan, spoke about the Fatherhood of God and Brotherhood of man. But he did not speak about the motherhood of the mother. (Cheers) In this creation all are born to a mother, however great they may be or whatever they might have achieved. The mother's womb is like Bhumata (mother earth). The quality of the fruit will be the same as the quality of the seed sown in the earth.

Revere the Mother as God

In today's world, people lack purity and sacrifice. What is the reason? It is the lack of purity of the mother's womb. If the mother's womb is pure, the children born to her will also be pure. If there is peace in the mother's heart, the whole world will be peaceful. So, first and foremost, we need women of purity in this world. It is because of such pure women that Bharat became a Tyaga Bhumi (land of sacrifice), a Yoga Bhumi (land of spirituality) and a Karma Bhumi (land of action) and could set an example to the rest of the world. People say motherland and not fatherland. In every country, the mother is held in high esteem. The feeling of motherhood is far superior to all other feelings. The main flaw of today's children is that they are not concerned about the happiness and satisfaction of their parents. If you make your parents happy, the whole world will be happy. *Matru Devo Bhava, Pitru Devo Bhava* (revere the mother and father as God). You must understand that parents are verily God.

You have to make your mother happy. Only then will there be peace and happiness in the world. It is meaningless to worship God without revering one's own parents. First of all, offer worship

to your mother as she is the one who has given you birth. Only if the mother's heart is nectarine will the whole world be nectarine. Rama's Divinity blossomed under the loving care of Kaushalya. As He was born from the womb of Kaushalya, He got the qualities of Kaushalya. That is why He is worshipped as God. Shivaji could do so much sacrifice for the country because he was born to the pure lady, Jijabai. It is because of the nobility of the mother that the children attain good fortune. So, Premaswarupas (embodiments of love!) There is nothing beyond love. Only love is the mainspring of all your good fortune. A man without love is lifeless. You should therefore adore and worship the mother who is the embodiment of love.

You can Attain God if you Love God Where is peace in the world? When you do not make your mother happy, how can there be peace in the world? Peace cannot be bought in the bazaar. Every man's heart is the abode of peace. Only when you fill your heart with love will there be peace in the world. The world is in turmoil today as man lacks total love. Peace will reign supreme in this world only when man develops total love.

Embodiments of Love!

We have attained human birth. There is nothing greater than this. *Janthunam Narajanma Durlabham* (out of all the living beings, the human birth is the rarest). You are born and brought up in society. Then why do you not work for the welfare of society? All the wealth that you have earned has come from society. You should show your gratitude to society. The world is facing problems because man does not show gratitude to society. You should never neglect society. Society's well-being is your well-being too. But, is anybody looking after society? No. It is selfishness all around. Give up selfishness and work for the welfare of society. The world will enjoy peace and security only when you serve society and have devotion towards God. If you want that peace should reign in the world, then you should first develop peace in yourself. Where is peace? It comes only from our heart. Our heart is the source of peace, truth, righteousness and love. You have forgotten the heart and are searching for peace in the external world. You don't get peace in the bazaar, you get only pieces. Peace is only in your heart. Fill your heart with love. Whatever work you do, do it with total love. But now, wherever you go, there is only selfishness. Man has lost purity as his mind is polluted.

The food you eat is impure. The air you breathe is impure. Everything is impure. Then how can you escape disease? If you do not want disease, eat pure food, breathe pure air, drink pure water and be pure. But wherever one looks around, there is only impurity. When you are surrounded by impurity, how can you get purity? When purity manifests from within, you can experience its reflection, reaction and resound in the external world. First and foremost, you have to infuse purity in society. To whomsoever you speak, speak sweetly, not with hatred, anger and jealousy. First you have to learn this. *You cannot always oblige, but you can speak always obligingly.* Speak with love.

From head to foot, man is filled with anger today. He has become like an animal. Even an animal is better than man. An animal has a reason and season. Today man has no reason and no season. If you behave in this manner, how can you call yourself a human? To call yourself a human, first and foremost show humanness in action. Just because you have a human body, you cannot call yourself a human. The human body will have value only when you cultivate human values, viz, Sathya (truth), Dharma (righteousness), Santhi (peace), Prema (love) and Ahimsa (nonviolence).

Of what use is human birth if human values are absent? First demonstrate humanness, Develop love. By doing so, all will become your friends. What kind of friends? Those who are full of love. Your real friend is only God. God is love personified. He is full of love.

*"Poornamada Poornamidam
Poornat Poornamudachyate
Poornasya Poornamadaya
Poornameva Avashishyate."*

(That is full, this is full. When the full is taken out of the full, what remains is again full.)

God is the embodiment of love. If you want God, you should have total love for God. You should not love God for material benefits. Love Him for the sake of love. Only then can you attain Him.

Embodiments of Divine Atma!

The same Atma, the same love and the same God is present in all beings. *Ek Prabhu Ke Anek Naam* (one God has many names). With such feelings of oneness, develop love for God. Then your heart will also be filled with love. The heart is like a tank and all the senses are like taps. When the 'tank' is full of love, all that comes out of the 'taps' will also be love only. Whatever you see in others is only a reflection of your inner being. First of all, understand this truth. If you see evil in others, it is actually the reflection of your own evil feelings. All are one. That is Prema, that is God, that is Atma. That is everything.

Earn the Wealth of Merit

You have forgotten love and are hankering after all worldly things. Wherever you go it is only money, money, money. Money comes and goes but morality comes and grows. Everyone is interested in amassing wealth. But will the wealth accompany you when you leave this world? No. Only the results of your actions will go with you. Wealth is not going to protect you. Only the wealth of merit will protect you. *Paropakara Punyaya, Papaya Parapeedanam* (one attains merit by serving others and commits sin by hurting them). Earn the wealth of merit. Do not accumulate sin. Alexander ruled over a vast empire, but when he died what did he carry with him? He went empty-handed. You should carry with you only pure love when you leave this world. If you earn the wealth of pure love, you are the richest person in the world. He who has much satisfaction is the richest man in this world and he who has much desires is the poorest man in this world. Today man is filled with desires from top to toe. As long as you have desires, you will never be happy and peaceful.

Embodiments of Love!

Give up desires and see for yourself how much love and bliss you get. The bliss you experience will be far superior to all the happiness you have experienced before. All the bliss is within you. But you are imagining that it is outside. What is outside is only the reflection, reaction, and resound of what is within you. If you are a good person, you will see goodness all around. If you wear blue glasses, you see everything blue. If you wear red glasses, you see everything red. Good qualities are your greatest wealth. Cultivate them. Eschew hatred. Demonstrate Ahimsa. *Ahimsa Paramo Dharma* (Ahimsa is the greatest Dharma). Kill anger. Cultivate love. There is nothing sweeter than love.

Man is the Embodiment of Cosmic Form

Sage Narada went all over the world but could not get peace. He realised that peace could not be found in wealth and material objects. It is within one's own self. Peace and bliss are within, but man is unable to experience them. How can man, who is unable to understand the divinity within, experience God outside? Everything is within you. Man is Vishwa Viraat Swaroopa (embodiment of the Cosmic Form) but he is behaving like an ordinary person by developing attachment to the ephemeral body.

Embodiments of Love!

Give up body attachment. Cultivate the awareness of the Atma. Atmananda (bliss of the spirit) is Amritananda (the eternal bliss). That is within you. *Brahmanandam, Parama Sukhadam, Kevalam Jnanamurtim, Dwandwateetam, Gagana Sadrisham, Tattwamasyadi Lakshyam, Ekam, Nityam, Vimalam, Achalam, Sarvadhee Sakshibhutam, Bhavateetam, Trigunarahitam* (God is the embodiment of supreme bliss, He is wisdom absolute, the One without a second, beyond the pair of opposites, expansive and pervasive like the sky, the goal indicated by the Mahavakya Tattwamasi, the eternal, pure, unchanging, the witness of all functions of the intellect, beyond all mental conditions and the three Gunas of Satwa, Rajas and Tamas). Everything is within. All qualities are within you. So, you should try to bring out the love that is within you. You . will not get this love outside.

You are the embodiment of love. Do not develop attachment to the body. Body is bound to perish one day or the other. Why are you deluding yourselves with this impermanent body? That which is permanent is the Atma. In order to experience Atmic bliss, love is essential. If you cultivate love, you become divine. Do not think that God is different from you. Have the courage to say "I am God". You are not man. You are God. Have the firm belief that you are God. You must first love your parents. They have given you their blood, their wealth and have brought you up with love and care, taking great pains. So, be grateful to them. That is real Bhakti (devotion). There is no greater Bhakti than this.

Embodiments of Love!

Swami has just come for a short while. I have not got the complete satisfaction of coming to Mumbai. I will come again. (Loud applause) Cultivate love. Revere your parents. Make them happy. Then I will be with you always. Live a life of love.

Bhagavan concluded His Discourse with the Bhajan, "Prema Mudita Manase Kaho..."

From Bhagavan's Discourse at Dharmakshetra, Mumbai on 1st June 2001

SRI SATHYA SAI GENERAL HOSPITAL, WHITEFIELD

Silver Jubilee Celebrations

A grand function was organised at the premises of Sri Sathya Sai General Hospital, Whitefield on the morning of 10th June 2001 in the Divine Presence of Bhagavan Baba to celebrate the

Silver Jubilee of the hospital. The little hospital gifted by Bhagavan Baba to the local community for maternal and child health on 28th August 1976 has now grown into a multi-specialty hospital with practically all the specialties. A new out-patient block was added to it when Bhagavan inaugurated it on the morning of 10th June 2001. Bhagavan also opened an exhibition on health education set up on this occasion.

The function began with lighting of lamps by Bhagavan at 8.50 a.m. Thereafter, Dr. Hemanthmurthy extended a hearty welcome to Bhagavan and the invited guests in his Welcome Address. The Report of the progress of the hospital was then presented by Dr. Anantharam depicting how this "little hospital" had grown big with 63 doctors attending to nearly 400 patients daily from economically weaker sections of society completely free of charge. In the end, Dr. Anantharam paid glowing tributes to Dr. Rajeswari who did the pioneering work with single-minded devotion for the growth of this hospital.

Before delivering His Divine Discourse, Bhagavan released a souvenir entitled "Swami's Little Hospital" and felicitated the doctors and other staff by presenting mementoes to them. In His Discourse, Bhagavan emphasised the value of sacrifice in man's life and commended the exemplary selfless service done by the hospital doctors. (Full text of Bhagavan's Discourse has been printed elsewhere in this issue.) This grand function came to a conclusion with Arati to Bhagavan at 10.20 a.m. A sumptuous feast was offered to all the invitees in the end.

As a part of these celebrations, an excellent cultural programme was presented by the hospital staff and their families on the evening of 10th June 2001 in Sai Krishan Kalyana Mantapam, Brindavan in the Divine Presence of Bhagavan. The programme commenced with a welcome song and an invocation dance after the arrival of Bhagavan in Kalyana Mantapam at 4.25 p.m. Besides songs and dances, the programme included a beautiful tableau on "The Saints of India" by children and an excellent skit "Loving God at your Doorstep" by the ladies staff. The last item of the programme was the drama "Sai Vaidyanatheswara" based on the Discourses of Bhagavan Baba on the subjects of disease, doctors and holistic health. This superbly enacted drama shows how Manuja (man) caught in the stranglehold of diseases and confusing theories of cure loses his way in life's journey and is finally rescued by divine intervention when he surrenders to the Divine as his only refuge. At the end of this illuminating cultural programme, Bhagavan blessed the cast and also materialised a gold chain for the actor who played the role of Manuja. The programme came to a close at 5.45 p.m. with Mangalarati to Bhagavan.

A remarkable feature of these celebrations was the unanimous decision of the doctors and staff to rededicate their services to the hospital. They also resolved to maintain the Exhibition opened by Bhagavan as a permanent feature on health education and to start a "Village Outreach" programme to impart health education and awareness to the villagers for the prevention of diseases.

Students Should Help in Village Uplift

*Life in this world is transient,
Youth and wealth are ephemeral;
Wife and children are like passing clouds,
Only love and righteousness are eternal.*

(Sanskrit Verse)

Embodiments of Love!

Nothing is permanent in this world. Everything is temporary and short-lived - be it material wealth, your kith and kin or even life itself. Their end is only a matter of time. However, human life is highly valuable. Man is endowed with five senses and a powerful mind. In his journey of life, his body acts as armour of the mind. In fact, every life-form has body as its armour. Man has the false notion that his mind is imprisoned in his body and so he is in bondage. The mind is all-pervasive. *Manomoolam Idam Jagat* (the mind is the basis of the world). The mind is always free and cannot be bound. The body is, in fact, an instrument of the mind.

Everything is Lost if Character is Lost

Man should make efforts to put this instrument to proper use. He should cultivate good qualities and enjoy peace and happiness. Man is unable to recognise his divinity because he identifies himself with the body. Just as valuable ornaments are kept in an iron safe which has little value, precious virtues are treasured in this body.

"This body is a storehouse of dirt, and prone to diseases; it cannot cross the ocean of Samsara. O mind, do not be under the delusion that body is permanent. Instead take refuge at the Divine Lotus Feet." (Telugu Poem)

Man today is suffering from all kinds of miseries because of his delusion that he is the body. He undergoes innumerable difficulties to protect and sustain the body. But he forgets the truth of his latent divinity and involves himself in everything that is temporary and false. Because of this, he loses his character. Character is highly valuable.

Once upon a time, Indra lost his kingdom. So, he approached his preceptor, sage Brihaspati, for advice as to how he could get back his lost kingdom. The sage told him, "My dear son! King Prahlada is performing Vishwajit Yajna and is ready to give anything in charity. Go to him in the guise of a poor Brahmin and ask for his character in charity." Being advised by the sage thus, Indra went in the guise of a poor Brahmin and asked Prahlada for his character as alms. Prahlada smiled and enquired, "What is the use of taking such a small thing? You can ask for something substantial that may solve the problems of your life." In turn, the Brahmin insisted that he needed nothing but Prahlada's character. To satisfy the poor Brahmin's desire, Prahlada conceded to give his character.

Immediately, an effulgent entity emerged from Prahlada's body to enter the body of the Brahmin. As the effulgent body started leaving him, Prahlada enquired this entity about its identity. It replied that it was Prahlada's character and added, "As you have given me in charity to the Brahmin, I am leaving you." After some time, another effulgent form emerged from Prahlada. Upon enquiry the entity replied, "I am Tejas (glory). Once character leaves a person, I too leave him." After this, Dharma (righteousness), Sathya (truth), Parakrama (power) and Lakshmi (wealth) left Prahlada one after the other. Then Prahlada started worrying. He recognised the

value of character. He lost his kingdom after his character left him. Without character, man loses everything.

From that day onwards, Prahlada started propagating the importance of character. Hence, youngsters today should recognise that youth and wealth are not permanent in this world. Family and children are also impermanent. So, they should cultivate good qualities. This is their primary duty. Every man should have strong character. Otherwise, he loses his humanness. You should never trouble or hurt others. You should engage yourselves in serving the poor. Cultivate divine feelings. You should work for the progress of society. This Srishti (creation) has originated from Parameshti (God). God, creation, Samashti (society) and Vyashti (individual) are inter-linked with each other. All the organs that constitute the human body perform their functions in complete unity with each other. Similarly, all types of people should come together and work in unison for the welfare of society. This is the true meaning of humanness. The very birth of man is for the welfare of society and not merely for eating, drinking, sleeping and dying. The individual should never work for selfish ends. He should serve society and endeavour to uplift it. Only then can he visualise the Divine principle. How can you attain Parameshti without serving Samashti? When an individual forgets his duty, how can he realise Divinity?

Purity and Unity Lead to Divinity

Today you are afflicted by various miseries. How sacred and ideal the life of man is! Forgetting such a blissful nature of human life, man struggles in bondage. Elders, too, by leading youngsters into bondage, spoil their lives. The youth have to play a very important role in the world today. You should try to understand the present state of affairs of the world. Wherever we see, agitation prevails. There is no happiness anywhere. How can then you have happiness? For this, you should first develop the happiness within. You should inculcate good feelings. In fact, man's mind is very pure. As long as you are a student, you have pure thoughts. But as soon as you get into bondage, you lose your purity. Are those people who push their children into bondage happy? Not at all. When you are not satisfied and happy, how can you make others happy? Therefore, first develop self-satisfaction. Only then can you inculcate self-sacrifice. But self-sacrifice is possible only when you have self-confidence.

In one of My previous talks, I had emphasised the need for unity. However difficult a task might be, it can be achieved successfully by unity. When does this unity develop in us? Only when we inculcate purity, unity originates in us. And after we have developed purity and unity, we can attain divinity. How can man aim at divinity directly without developing purity? It is not possible.

Students! Youngsters! Devotees!

Everyone should essentially understand the principle of humanness. What is this human quality? The source of values like Sathya, Dharma, Santhi and Prema is not outside. They are born along with us. It is foolish to try to realise these values in the outside world. Human values lie within the individual. You can experience happiness in society and enjoy true bliss therefrom only when you cultivate your character.

Your Good Feelings Blossom into Peace and Bliss

Embodiments of Love!

The values of humanness should be understood well. Being a human does not mean just having a human body. One should realise the human values enshrined within and put them into practice. What is the outcome of putting these values into practice? Consider a matchbox. There are matchsticks inside this matchbox. The matchsticks do not burn the matchbox. But when you strike the matchstick on the matchbox, the matchstick catches fire. In the same way, the matchbox of the body contains matchsticks of human values. When you imbibe good thoughts and feelings and use this body for good actions, the good feelings within you develop and provide illumination.

You are a student. You are not a mere matchstick. You are like a street light. What are the functions of a street light? A street light not only lights up the path for the travellers, but also brightly shows the pole bearing it. In a similar manner, you should realise the human values latent in you and help others. It is in this context, I say: Help ever, Hurt never. But you are not true to yourself. Then, how can you lead others? It would be like one blind man leading another. People may not realise this, but they are committing a serious mistake. Even elders today lead the youth into bondage. There is no wisdom in it. This is only foolishness. True wisdom lies in taking to the divine path and trying to restore peace and happiness in the world. How can man attain peace? He cannot become peaceful just by repeating Santhi, Santhi, Santhi (peace, peace, peace).

"Holding an atom bomb in his hand, man cries for peace. Although he has successfully reached the moon, yet peace and happiness have eluded him." (Telugu Verse)

If you have evil feelings within, how can you attain peace? Evil feelings are the cause of your bondage. To overcome this bondage, you should get rid of all evil thoughts and engage yourself in the service of society and people. When once you start serving others, you will have peace and happiness. Share them with others and enjoy the happiness arising therefrom. The Vedas proclaim, *Na Karmana Na Prajaya Dhanena Thyagenaikena Amrutattwamanasu* (immortality can be attained by sacrifice alone and not by one's actions, progeny or wealth.) There is no spirit of sacrifice in students today. Then, how can they be happy? People today go on accumulating more and more wealth. But they have neither peace nor contentment. A discontented person is always miserable.

Man today is blinded by mean desires. He is causing his ruin like Bhasmasura who secured the boon that on whomsoever person's head he placed his hand, he should be reduced to ashes. But he didn't realise that at some time or the other his hand would find its place on his own head. Hands should be engaged in good actions. The hands have been given to man not to hurt others or to do wicked deeds, but to perform charity. The hands should be used in a sacred manner for helping others. When you harm others, you bring harm to yourself also. In this way, you not only destroy others' life, you wreck that of yours too.

Bhagavan's New Plan for the Poor and Needy Families

Students! Youth!

Take to the sacred path of service and earn peace for yourself and the world. What is the purpose of your education? Utilise your knowledge for the uplift of the country. If you indulge merely in selfishness and self-interest, you make your life demonic. This amounts to misuse of your

education. Use your education to help others. Today's students run to foreign countries as soon as they complete their studies here. But, what do they do there? Some of them even clean utensils in hotels. As I said yesterday, it is better to wash utensils in one's home than to wash tea cups abroad. One should declare with pride and self-esteem: This is my motherland, this is my mother tongue and this is my religion.

A student's life is meaningless if he does not help others. He should always be ready to help others without any trace of selfishness. That is why, from the 1st of November 2000, I am starting a new project. I am sending My students to the villages of Anantapur District. They would feed the poor, give them clothes, educate them and thus contribute to the uplift of society. (Loud applause) Your clapping alone does not make Me happy. I will be happy only when you put into practice what is said. You should do your duty first. You should go to every village. My new project will commence from the 1st of November. With truckloads of Saris, Dhotis and packets of food, visit every village and distribute them among the villagers.

I came across a tragic incident in a newspaper. It was about an uneducated and helpless mother and her three children. They were in such a pathetic state of poverty that the mother had to starve herself in order to feed her children. As their situation worsened, she took to the extreme step of committing suicide after poisoning her children. It's a shame on the Bharatiyas! Can we Bharatiyas be so stone-hearted and cruel as to allow such a painful event to take place? So, we should go to each and every village and provide food, clothing and education to the needy. In addition, we should make the villagers understand that before mothers act in such a desperate manner they should improve their lot.

We have started educational institutions where education is imparted free. In addition to the existing Super Specialty Hospital here, a new one is coming up in Bangalore, where treatment is available for hitherto incurable diseases. Everything here is free of cost. I have provided these three—health for the heart, education for the head and water for the body. Now I have a new plan.

It is My wish to see that the poor children are provided with sufficient food, necessary clothing and proper education so that they can lead their lives in society with dignity. One thousand such needy families shall be provided with a house and one lakh rupees each, which will be invested in a fixed deposit. The interest accruing therefrom will be used for the food, clothing and education of the children. Our students will take up the task of educating them. (Cheers) They are poor, but they too belong to the human race. Develop the feeling of brotherhood and love towards them. Treat the children of these families like your own brothers and sisters.

My will is invincible. Whatever I think or do, it is only for others. There is not a trace of selfishness in Me.

Do not Run After Money

The educated youth of our country should not go abroad in search of money. This amounts to mere begging. Having acquired education here free of cost, it is shameful to go abroad just to amass wealth. Wealth is not for hoarding but for helping others.

Engage yourself in service activities and I shall see to it that you lack nothing. God is ever ready to help those who come forward to help others. Develop broad-mindedness. Do not be narrow-minded. Only a person with expansion love can claim to be a human, not the one with contraction love. Do not limit your love just to your family. What happiness do you derive from your narrow-mindedness? Why do you run after mean worldly desires which put you in bondage? Why do you demean yourself by acting at the level of animals and birds? It is a matter of shame if educated people act in this way. After listening to the sacred ideals, you should not behave in an ignoble way. Always remind yourself that you are a man and not an animal. Get rid of your evil qualities and make your heart the source of all human values. You are no better than birds and animals if you conduct yourself like them. Animals have no education. Still they work hard and observe their time schedule. You should also work hard to uplift the children of the villages.

Teach the children of the villages proper conduct and good qualities. This will ensure their bright future. You should be ideal in every respect. It is My aspiration that every one of you should uphold human values and take part in the noble task of village uplift. Our students will undoubtedly participate in this plan of Bhagavan. Do not fall victims to vile desires, bad habits and bad company. Stand as ideals endeavouring on the right path. You are educated; do not conduct yourselves like animals. Never indulge in unjust and wrongful acts. Only then can you earn a name as an ideal student of a Sai institution.

I do not expect anything from you. Wherever you go, have good conduct, undertake good activities and earn a good name. Should anyone tempt you to take to wrong path, tell him, "You may say whatever you want, but I cannot take the wrong path. I am a human and not an animal. So, I should conduct myself as a human." One who has faith and sacred qualities is a true human being. Hence, one should live a sacred and ideal life. What should education confer on you? Vidya is that which bestows good thoughts, good conduct, devotion, discipline and a sense of duty. This is what the Vidyarthi (student) should aspire to acquire.

What is the use if you forget all that you learn here and lose such sacred qualities when you go outside? Whatever you have learnt here should be imprinted on your heart. Put all the teachings into practice. Have good company. Try to alleviate the sufferings of others. These are the ideals which Swami wants the students to follow. Your teachers will also help and guide you and set an ideal before you by their example. During vacation, they will help the children of the villages. They will take care of them like their own children. In any task you undertake, love is most important. You can perform any hard task if you have love. So, develop love without any trace of selfishness.

True love cannot be acquired. It has its origin in the heart of man. Propagate this principle of love in every nook and corner of the world. Fill your heart with love and conduct yourself in a loving manner. You can transform even a wicked person through your love. First be good yourself and then you can make others good.

True Education Leads to Immortality

Dear Students! Embodiments of Love!

How do you wish your future should be? You should lead a good life in a righteous manner. Don't run after riches and property. In this world, there have been great and wealthy persons. Where are they now? All of them left this world empty handed.

"Emperor Nala, who reigned over a vast kingdom, could not take with him anything when he passed away. Did King Mandhata, who adorned the Krita Yuga, carry any wealth with him when he left the earth? Even Lord Rama, who built the bridge across the ocean, is not to be seen on the earth today. Many kings have ruled over the earth, but none of them could carry even a fistful of dust with them. Oh noble one! Do you think you can carry the kingdom and its riches on your head when you leave the world?" (Telugu Poem)

When you leave this mortal body, your family members will not accompany you. Your life, youth, wealth, relatives and even the world in which you live are bound to perish. Only truth and love remain forever. Truth and love are with you, around you, above you, below you and will always protect you. Love is valuable and it has no trace of hatred in it. Why do you give up such sacred love?

Selfishness turns a man into an animal. Today many elders possess animal qualities and they encourage their children to imbibe these qualities. This is the worst thing they can do to their children. What for is your education and your degrees if you are not able to retain human character?

A foolish person boasts of high education and intelligence, yet does not know himself. What is the use of all the education he has acquired, if man cannot give up his evil qualities? All the worldly education will lead him only to vain argumentation, not total wisdom. It cannot lead him to immortality. So, man should acquire that knowledge which will make him immortal. (Telugu Poem)

This is true happiness. Love and joy are eternal. Love is always pure, truthful, eternal, ever blissful, selfless, immortal, and nectarine. What is the name given to man by the scriptures? It is Amrutasya Putra (son of immortality). If this son of immortality resorts to falsehood, then the education he has pursued becomes worthless. Education should lead to elevation of man. This elevating education is called Educare. Mere bookish knowledge or superficial knowledge is useless. You should possess practical knowledge. Only then can you uplift the world.

Embodiments of Love!

Love is your true nature. Fill your heart with love. Let there be no trace of hatred, jealousy and ego in you. Ego is very dangerous and powerful. It ruins your character. It is foolishness to consider yourself great in any aspect of life as there are always people greater than you. So, where is the scope for ego? Your true name is Love. Live up to your name. After receiving elevating education in Sai institutions and after listening to the sacred words of Swami, you should act in the noblest manner. Only then will Swami feel happy.

Students!

How many of you wish to take part in the service activities from 1st November? (All the students raised their hands.) Very good, very good. I am always happy. But your enthusiasm has made Me much more happy. (*Loud and prolonged applause*).

During this Navaratri festival, try to tread the path of devotion. Devotion is of nine types: Shravanam (listening), Kirtanam (singing), Vishnusmaranam (contemplating on Vishnu), Padasevanam (serving His Lotus Feet), Vandanam (salutation), Archanam (worship), Dasyam (servitude), Sneham (friendship), and Atmanivedanam (self-surrender). Follow these nine steps, cultivate good qualities and strive for the betterment of society. Students should try to understand the problems of society and help to solve them. Don't have a narrow mind. Bring a good name to your country. Consider the country as your own. You should always have the feeling of 'we' and not merely 'I'. All are brothers and sisters. When you consider Swami as your Mother and Father, are not these people your brothers and sisters? Work with such an attitude. You are not being asked to share your property with these brothers and sisters. Keep your property with you. But treat them like your own brothers and sisters. However, if need arises, do not hesitate to share your property with them. Be determined to lead a life of sacrifice, truth, sacredness and purity.

Students!

Today is an auspicious day. You are ready to go to villages and serve the people. Go to every person in the village. Distribute clothes to them. Give Saris to women, Dhotis to men, shirts and pants to boys and gowns to small girls. How can you wear good dresses when your brothers and sisters are in rags? Give them good dresses and keep them happy. You will derive great joy when you see happiness on their faces. Strive for equality in society and live together. Only then will society prosper. Of course, the government undertakes so many welfare activities. But we serve the poor for our self-satisfaction, which leads to self-sacrifice and ultimately to self-realisation. So, be ready to start service activities on the 1st of November.

Bhagavan brought His Discourse to a close with the Bhajan, "Hari Bhajan Bina Sukha Santhi Nahin..."

From Bhagavan's Discourse in Sai Kulwant Hall on 6th October 2000

MARIO MAZZOLENI

The Missing Link

On the occasion of various meetings, one question has been insistently asked from me, which is also a sign of amazement roused in many people due to the interest shown by a Catholic priest in the Person of Sai Baba: "How is it that you, who received the teaching of Jesus so closely, felt the need to approach another Master" It is a very interesting question, since it is the same as an examination of one's conscience which, at the same time, reveals a common mentality, even though full of confusion. In fact, at least two preconceptions can be deduced from that question, which are largely spread among the people with a Catholic upbringing.

Preconceptions Cause Misunderstanding

The first preconception is to believe that a priest, during all his theological studies, has received a doctrine devoid of conditionings. In two millennia of Christianity, the true teachings of Jesus have been handed down not without some kind of interpolations and the Catholic dogma has taken root among innumerable doctrinal controversies. In the dark periods of the past, the life of some men and women, who were shining with virtue and sanctity, was judged immoral and diabolic. Hence, discrimination between the doctrines supported by men of worldly mentality and the transcendental truth handed down by the words and deeds of Jesus would not be inappropriate.

The second preconception can be deduced from the idea that to turn to Sai Baba means "to turn to another Master." The term "another" here means "different" and consequently, as regards faith, it means "heterodox". We need to point out that this second opinion starts from an even more rooted prejudice: many think, without having studied the message of Sai Baba, that it should not be followed or that it is even dangerous. "Anything not belonging to our tradition is not good," they think.

The "scandal" of a Catholic following the Sai philosophy arises from these two preconceptions, if it involves a man who was part of the ecclesiastical hierarchy. Anyway, having made these preliminary remarks, which should already represent a sort of an answer, the question stays before my conscience as an examination I have to get through. Therefore, I will try to give an answer looking into the innermost part of my heart; that part which has not to give an account to anybody except to God of its own choices, disregarding public opinion.

Approaching and meeting Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba has meant to me the discovery of a revelation which still continues. It is as if the Holy Scriptures, which are available to the people of any culture and religion, had concluded only some chapters and written at the bottom, "to be continued", instead of "the end". If Jesus were still alive (I mean with His physical presence, such as that of any other human being), surely He would still have many things to tell men. "I still have many things to say to you but they would be too much for you now" (John 16:12), He said to His disciples a short time before leaving this world.

The Basic Truth

Yet, it is right to ask oneself what aroused in me such a great interest in Sai Baba that it could go beyond the one for Jesus. Of course, the figure of Jesus has not been forgotten nor declassified. One cannot throw a ruby away only because one has found a diamond; one cannot deny the Son after recognising the Father. But the question my conscience is being insistently asked is: "What more did I need?" Once more the answer is given by John the evangelist: "When the Spirit of truth comes he will lead you to the complete truth... He will glorify me since all he tells you will be taken from what is mine. Everything the Father has is mine; that is why I said: All he tells you will be taken from what is mine." (16:13-15).

Something had remained in the heart of Jesus and He was waiting for the right time it could be revealed. From my studies of theology, one part was missing, which would enlighten the truths as a whole. The Western doctrine, however interesting a mosaic, rich in colours and images, it may already be in itself, was yet incomplete and inadequate, with large parts bereft of tesserae, so that the whole, unitary meaning of the work was made incomprehensible. It needed to be

completed in order to identify the subject of the whole work. In my humble opinion, one of the purposes of Sai Baba's Mission is completing that "mosaic".

If I had more space, I would like to expatiate on all those missing parts, giving a clear vision of the whole picture and showing what was missing and I was looking for: the other half of heaven. Before knowing Sai Baba, I didn't give much weight to the power of the mind and to the importance of keeping it under control; I didn't know that the quality of the spiritual journey depended on the physiological and psychological food; I had never been explained the "subtle" influence of good or bad company.

Similarity between the Teachings of Jesus and Sai Baba

The teachings of Jesus, however, are in tune with Baba's. From the Gospels, we can synthesise the virtues necessary to live in purity, prudence, righteousness, fortitude and temperance. The Church has always proposed truth, hope and charity as theological virtues; has always promoted assistance to the starving, the wanderers, the sick, and so on; stresses the importance of comforting the afflicted, forgiving the affronts, being patient with the bothersome persons. I find that the seven deadly sins, listed by the Catholic doctrine, are nearly the same as the ones pointed out by Sai Baba: pride, avarice, lust, anger, gluttony, envy, sloth. All that is taught is undoubtedly good, but it is part of the unfinished piece of mosaic. In fact, if people knew the triple bodily dimension which constitutes the human being (physical, astral and causal) and the influence it exerts over the choices of life, the evangelical precepts would be much more understandable and there would be much more strength in putting them into practice.

Sai Baba Leads us to our Subtlest Dimension

I can say that Sai Baba brings us continually back to our subtlest dimension, that is the divine one: we are Atman, Spirit. The Atman is an invisible, elusive entity. It is not possible to immediately change from a gross and material dimension to the absolute, transcendent one. The way Baba shows is gradual: to change from the state of mortality to the state of immortality, first of all it is necessary to put aside one's material interest, then refine them and finally sublimate them up to the state that enables one to be continually blissful.

Sai Baba does everything in order to help us from any point of view: physical, psychical and even material. Furthermore, Baba is amidst us: He helps his devotees directly, without intermediaries, through a presence which ranges from a physical to a subtle dimension, from a real meeting in private to a meeting in a dream, from a monosyllabic answer to a sentence caught during meditation. Why ignore so great a fortune? Would it not be foolish to lose such an unrepeatable opportunity? Certainly Jesus is not jealous if a Christian loves Sai Baba; He will be happy to continue His Divine Mission even after two thousand years. He could see His prayer realised: "Holy Father, keep those you have given me true to your name, so that they may be one like us" (John 17:11b)

Will one life be sufficient to express gratitude to this Divine Doctor who gives life back? Bowing and kneeling down in front of the Goodness and Compassion of Lord Sai, I offer to the brothers this humble thought.

Divine Glasses

~Diana Baskin

Divinity is ever present but our awareness is always turned to the past or the future, blocking us from perceiving the grace of the Presence. We are rarely consciously aware and silent in the NOW.

Swami addresses us as 'Embodiments of the Divine' and tells us to see the Divine in everyone. I tried very hard to practise this teaching but the harder I tried, the more faults I saw and the guiltier I felt because I was not able to see the Divine in anyone except Swami.

Swami's teachings, like pure truth and beauty, are the maximum of simplicity and can easily be overlooked and passed over when heard, but when reflected upon deeply they will have a terrific impact; when practised, they change our lives forever.

Swami is our example. We notice how He encourages and gives comfort daily. Rarely does He point out faults, "Good boy", "good girl", "good devotee". If we look at the people He addresses as "good", often including ourselves, we certainly can't see what He sees. What does Swami see when He looks at us and how does He see the opposite of what most of humanity sees?

Change your State of Consciousness

He has given us a clue by telling us that the world we see will take on the colour of the glasses we are wearing. Change the colour of the glasses and everything you see will change colour. We can only come to the conclusion that when Swami looks at us, He is not looking through human glasses but divine spectacles.

Glasses represent a state of consciousness. To change our glasses and see the world in a finer, subtler light, we need to change our consciousness. How can a person governed by the senses looking through physical eyes, coloured by the mind see Divinity which is spirit, above the senses and beyond the mind? God is everywhere, we are told, above you, below you, around you; yet we do not see Him.

I would like to share with you a comparison to God which has helped me a great deal and clarified many things for me. I say comparison because the greatness and entirety of Divinity can never be described or fully understood by the human mind.

Think of God as a great force, like electricity. Invisible and imperceptible to the senses yet becoming a very real and mighty power when harnessed. Until we see the light, we are unaware of its source and for us it does not exist. We are so accustomed to looking at the visible that we ignore the invisible cause behind all phenomena. Electricity only becomes real for us when we experience it in a manifested form such as light. In the same way, we are all visible manifestations of the invisible divine energy but the invisible only becomes manifest through our contact with the divine source which gives us spiritual sight.

Silence is God's Abode

Divinity is within all of us but in order to perceive it we need to see with its light, not ours. Then the clear light filters the gross enabling us to see the finer subtle light of God. We need to wear; spiritual glasses to see the spirit. In essence, we are seeing our true selves reflected back to us. As Swami tells us, we are all the indivisible Supreme Absolute.

Swami tells us that grace is always present; we only need to turn the glass in a receiving position. But our glass is usually turned upside down. Divinity is ever present but our awareness is always turned to the past or the future, blocking us from perceiving. the grace of the Presence. We are rarely consciously aware and silent in the NOW. Our minds are always making so much noise regretting the past, hoping for the future, judging, desiring, wishing and spinning endless tales that God's gentle whisper goes unheard. With such a cacophony, it would take the sound of thunder for us to pay attention.

Many years ago, Swami wrote to me in a letter: "Sit in silence until God's name rings in your ears." At that time, I thought if I just sat quietly as long as possible I would hear Swami's name or the Om. Now I understand that silence is God's abode, His name is His Presence and the ringing is His boundless love. To make the contact, we have to go to God's territory and His dwelling place is the SILENT NOW where He is ever present and manifesting in full force as love. In that Presence we look at others and still see human beings, but coursing through them and the entire universe we perceive the invisible current of divine love.

Grand Welcome to Bhagavan on Return to Puttaparthi

Bhagavan returned to Puttaparthi from Brindavan on 11th June 2001. Before His return, Bhagavan paid a short visit to Mumbai and graced the Annual Day functions of Sai Gitanjali and Sai Darshan at Brindavan.

Annual Day Celebrations of Sai Gitanjali and Sai Darshan

These two Bangalore based Sai Samitis celebrated their Annual Days at Brindavan in the Divine Presence of Bhagavan Baba and rededicated themselves to the service of society. Sai Gitanjali celebrated its 4th Anniversary on 28th May 2001. As a part of these celebrations, a Bhajan programme was organised on the morning of 28th May in Sai Ramesh Krishan Hall, Brindavan and another special Bhajan on the same evening at the premises of Sai Gitanjali.

Sai Darshan celebrated its Annual Day on 3rd June 2001 and presented an excellent drama "Govardhan Giridhari" in Sai Krishan Kalyana Mantapam in the evening. The drama was based on the well-known incident from the life of Lord Krishna when He lifted the Govardhan Mountain to teach mankind that worship of Nature was worship of God as Nature was the creation of God. The play presented by the Bal Vikas children of this Sai Centre drew repeated applause from the audience and earned the blessings of Bhagavan who posed for photographs with them on the stage and also materialised a gold chain with a locket for the child who enacted

the role of Lord Krishna in the drama. The programme came to a close at 5.45 p.m. with Arati to Bhagavan and distribution of Prasadam.

Showers of Divine Blessings on Mumbai Devotees

The devotees of Mumbai were filled with immense joy and happiness to receive unexpected grace granted to them by Bhagavan Baba when He paid a short visit to Mumbai on 1st June 2001. Bhagavan not only gave the bliss of His Darshan to the devotees gathered at Dharmakshetra in Andheri East, but blessed them with a nectarine Discourse also. The programme commenced with Bhajans at 11.00 a.m. Bhagavan arrived at 12.30 p.m., gave Darshan to Bal Vikas children in the newly renovated "Shanti Deep" Hall and to the multitudes of devotees in Jalan Mandap. After a brief speech by Sri V. Srinivasan, All India President of Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organisations, Bhagavan delivered His illuminating Discourse (published elsewhere in this issue). Bhagavan returned to Brindavan the same evening.

Bhagavan Returns to Puttaparthi

After His stay at Brindavan for over two months of summer, Bhagavan returned to Puttaparthi on 11th June 2001. Bhagavan started from Brindavan early in the morning at 4.30 a.m. after acknowledging a most affectionate sendoff by the students and staff of the Brindavan College and a large gathering of devotees.

On His way to Puttaparthi, Bhagavan stopped at Sri Sathya Sai Nagar near Bagepalli. Here Bhagavan inaugurated the school building of Sri Sathya Sai Vidya Niketan which would impart value-based education totally free in accordance with Sri Sathya Sai Education System.

A huge multitude of devotees from Puttaparthi and adjoining villages lined the route of Bhagavan's motorcade to have Bhagavan's Darshan. The road was adorned with welcome gates, welcome banners and colourful buntings. When Bhagavan's motorcade came near the neighbourhood of Puttaparthi, a squad of 31 motorbike riders from the villages as also the squad of student motorbike riders escorted Him to Puttaparthi. All along the route, the devotees reverentially showed Arati to Bhagavan and broke coconuts as a mark of auspiciousness. It was indeed one of the most spectacular welcomes offered to Bhagavan.

Sathyannasthi Paro Dharma

The Swarupa (form) and Swabhava (essential quality) must be in agreement; that is to say, if a being has the Swarupa of a man and the Swabhava of a beast, it is false, untrue. In other words, conduct must be in consonance with claims. That is why the Shruti declares, "Sathyannasthi Paro Dharma" (be true; there is no Dharma higher than that). Decide your Dharma with Buddhi. Ask yourself, "What do I claim to be? What is the special quality by which that claim is established?" Then, direct the mind to the performance of the duties which will demonstrate and develop that quality. - Baba

"Imbibe the spirit of sacrifice and utilise your energy and education for the welfare of others. Understand that education is meant for serving society and not for doing business. There is no greater service than utilising your education for the benefit of others."

Sense Control is the Highest Sadhana

One who cultivates the crop of love in the field of one's heart is a true Christian, a true Sikh, a true Hindu and a trite Muslim. In fact, he is a true human being and a true Guru. (Telugu Poem)

God is all-pervasive and the indweller of all beings. Likewise, the five elements, which are nothing but divine manifestations, are also all-pervasive and all-powerful. The whole world is pervaded by the five elements, is bound by the five elements and it functions because of the five elements. It cannot function even if one of the elements is absent. Therefore, for every man, the five elements are like his Pancha Pranas (five life-breaths).

Understand the Mystery of the Five Elements

No one can comprehend the power of these elements. However, every man must necessarily know their significance. He alone is truly blessed man of merit who understands their significance and acts accordingly. One who does that achieves all the Purusharthas (objectives of human life). It is therefore the bounden duty of every man to recognise the import of these elements. These are the cause of man's pleasure or pain, good or bad, happiness or misery depending on how he makes use of them. Their names and forms may appear simple, but they are highly powerful. Man takes birth, lives for a few years and ultimately gives up his body. The five elements are responsible for man's growth and death. These elements pervade everything both in microcosm and macrocosm. They are present in man from top to toe. So, it is imperative for man to know the secret of these elements.

Unsacred Vision Causes Eye Defects

Having understood the significance of the five elements well, Buddha made concerted efforts to gain control over his five senses. He used his intellect to understand the truth and shared his wisdom with society.

First of all, he exercised control over his vision. Among the five senses of perception, the eyes are endowed with immense power. They have 40 lakh light rays in them. Today man is putting his senses to misuse and as a result his body is becoming weaker day by day. He shortens his life-span by his unsacred vision and by indulgence in sensual pleasures. Lakhs of light rays in his eyes are being destroyed because of his unsacred vision. That is the reason why man is developing eye defects.

All the evil you see enters your eyes and becomes the cause of eye defects. Today many people undergo cataract operations to set their vision right. The doctors may ascribe various reasons for eye defects, but in fact, it is the result of unsacred vision. So, one should have proper control over one's vision. Whatever spiritual practices one may undertake, one cannot derive their benefit without having control over one's vision. All the Sadhanas like Japa (repetition of God's Name), Tapa (penance) and Dhyana (meditation) give only temporary satisfaction. These practices do not hold guarantee for you to have complete control over your vision. In fact, the entire Srishti (creation) is based on your Drishti (vision). The Netras (eyes) are verily the Shastras (sacred texts).

Misuse of Senses Destroys their Power

Along with control over vision, one needs to have control over one's tongue. There are 3 lakh taste buds in the tongue. Man has become a slave of the sense of taste. By consuming various delicacies, he becomes addicted to them and in the process spoils his tongue. Not merely that, he uses his tongue to utter unsacred and harsh words which can hurt others' feelings. His lifespan is further reduced by the misuse of his tongue in this manner. Likewise, all the senses lose their power as they are put to misuse. Thereby man cuts short his life-span also. So, first of all, man should keep his eyes and tongue under check. When these two are controlled, man's energy is reinforced. The power that one cannot attain from years of penance is obtained when one puts one's eyes and tongue to sacred use. "*O tongue, the knower of taste! You are very sacred. Speak the truth in the most pleasing manner. Chant the Divine Names of Govinda, Madhava and Damodara incessantly. This is your foremost duty.*" (Sanskrit Verse)

Do not cause pain to others by using harsh words. In fact, others are not others but your own self as the same principle of Atma is present in all. The one who causes pain and the one who suffers from it are one and the same. So, never speak in such a way as to hurt others. That is why I tell you often, talk less, but you are not taking My words seriously. You are unable to understand what hazards excessive talk will lead you to in future.

Spiritual Practices without Sense Control are Futile

See no evil; see what is good. Only then will your eyes attain the sacred power by which you will be able to visualise the Divine Cosmic Form. Unmindful of the power of the senses and without making proper use of them, man is under the delusion that he can derive great benefits by undertaking various practices which are physical and worldly in nature. But in reality, one cannot get anything out of these practices except temporary satisfaction.

First of all, man should exercise control over his senses. Spiritual practices will yield greater rewards if senses are kept under control. Never listen to anything that is evil. If any such situation arises, leave the place immediately. Hear no evil, see no evil and talk no evil. Make every effort to be away from evil. Only then will spiritual power grow in you more and more. Why did our ancient sages and seers go to forests to spend their lives in solitude? It is only to control their senses. True Sadhana lies in controlling one's senses. Without sense control all spiritual practices will prove futile. Instead of using the tongue to utter evil words, why don't you chant the Divine Names like Rama, Krishna and Govinda? You are piling up sins because of the misuse of the senses. These sins may not be visible to the naked eye, but their consequences are sure to put you to suffering. You are not able to see the hidden consequences of your actions right now. O man! Understand this secret of Karma (action).

Embodiments of Love!

Senses are like life-breath of man. Once you control your senses, your life will be happy and peaceful. You should not only avoid evil talk, but should also talk less. Your speech should be short and sweet. Observe the sanctity of the spoken and written word. The sages like Valmiki, Vyasa and great devotees like Potana composed sacred texts and sanctified their lives. Emulate their ideals and make your lives exemplary. Read the sacred texts composed by such noble souls. Today people read books which pollute the mind. It is a very bad practice. Be it reading, writing,

seeing or talking, let everything be good. Do not commit any mistake knowingly. You can experience divinity in humanity by putting the senses to proper use. One can visualise the divine manifestations and become divine himself only through sacred use of the senses. Man, unaware of his innate divine potential, considers himself weak and helpless and leads a life of delusion. He thinks that there is some external power superior to him which he attempts to attain. But there is no power superior to him. *Ekam Sath Viorah Bahudha Vadanthi* (Truth is one, but scholars refer to it by many names). It is a sign of ignorance to think that divinity is different from you. Multiplicity is your own imagination. *Ekoham Bahushyam* (the One willed to become many). You can understand this truth once you control your senses.

Derive Bliss by Controlling your Desires

People are under the mistaken notion that they get happiness when their desires are fulfilled. In fact, happiness results not when desires are fulfilled, but when they are controlled. One can enjoy the state of bliss by controlling one's desires. One who craves for the fulfillment of desires is always restless. Desires correspond to Pravritti (outward worldly path) in which there is no happiness whatsoever. Deluded as you are by your wrong thinking, you imagine that there is happiness in the world. But in fact, you are thereby distancing yourself from Nivritti (path of exploration of the spirit).

Embodiments of Love!

Love is the life of everything. To attain the state of love, make proper use of your senses. Buddha visited many saints and sages, studied sacred texts and undertook various Sadhanas. Later, he understood that all those were related to Pravritti. Ultimately, he realised that happiness lay in making proper use of the five senses. He stopped reading sacred texts, discontinued going to saints and sages and gave up all the spiritual practices. He realised that human body was temporary and ephemeral, which could not give permanent happiness. True and eternal bliss would result only when Sadhana was done with pure and sacred feelings. He understood the sanctity of the five elements. When Buddha started exercising control over his senses, he experienced infinite bliss which he could not contain. In a state of ecstasy, he hugged his cousin, Ananda, who was by his side then and said, "Ananda, I am unable to contain the bliss within me and am ready for the state of Nirvana." On hearing this, Ananda started shedding tears. Then Buddha said, "Oh simpleton, instead of rejoicing over my attaining this state of bliss, why are you grieving over it?"

You are looking for fleeting happiness in worldly matters, whereas Buddha strived to attain bliss in the spiritual realm, which is true, eternal and immortal. As you are immersed in worldliness, you are distancing yourself from immortality. Though you are committing many sins, you do not consider them as sins. You think that they are quite natural to human beings. You keep committing mistakes, yet you pray for pardon. Actually, one should never seek pardon for the mistake committed. One should be prepared to undergo the punishment. Only then can one be free from defects. When a person commits a serious offence, he is put in jail. He is released only after he undergoes punishment for the required period. Likewise, if you want redemption, you should atone for your sins and be prepared to face punishment for your mistakes. You should exercise control over the senses and see that you do not repeat your mistakes.

By chanting Vedic verses which are very sacred, one gets immense bliss. That is why even Buddha, who did not believe in the Vedas in the beginning, started chanting Vedic hymns. People were under the impression that Buddha opposed the Vedas. Later, Sankaracharya tried to remove this misconception from people's mind, saying that Buddha was never against the Vedas. He said that people themselves were going against the Vedas out of their ignorance. Buddha respected the teachings of the Vedas. He conquered desire and attained the high state of desirelessness. *"Today man is prepared to stoop down to any level for money. He pretends to be a great devotee of the Lord and tries to cheat people."* (Telugu Song) Is this what he is supposed to do? No. He should conquer desire and control the senses.

God is the True Guru

Students!

You are young and yours is the right age to exercise control over the senses. You should make use of them in a sacred manner. Once you know the proper path, you will never give up. You can understand the teachings of the Vedas only when you cultivate good qualities. You can cultivate good qualities only through good practices. Never get disheartened by the obstacles in your path.

Embodiments of Love!

Today we are celebrating Gurupoornima. Who is a Guru? Modern Gurus whisper a Mantra into the ear of the disciple and stretch their hand for money. Such people are not fit to be called Gurus. *Gukaro Gunateeta, Rukaro Rupavarjita* (one who is attributeless and formless is true Guru.) A true Guru makes you realise the formless and attributeless Divinity. Since it is difficult to get such a Guru, consider God as your Guru.

*Gurur-Brahma Gurur-Vishnu
Gurur-Devo Maheswara;
Guru Sakshat Param Brahma
Thasmai Sri Gurave Namah.*

(Guru is Brahma, Guru is Vishnu, Guru is Maheshwara. Guru is verily the supreme Brahman. So, salutations to the Guru.) In this world, everything is the manifestation of Divinity. *Sarvam Khalvidam Brahma* (verily all this is Brahman). All are the embodiments of Divinity. In fact, all that you see is nothing but *Vishwa Viraat Swaropa* (Divine Cosmic Form). The Vedas declare: *Sahasra Seersha Purusha, Sahasraksha Sahasra Pad* (with thousands of heads, eyes and feet, Divinity pervades everything). This means all the heads, all the feet and all the eyes that we see in this world belong to God. When the Vedic pronouncement, *Sahasra Seersha...* was made, the population of the world was only a few thousands, but now it runs into hundreds of crores. In those days, people considered everybody as Divine. They believed in the Vedic dicta, *Sarva Bhuta Namaskaram Kesavam Pratigachchhati* (salutations to all beings reach God), *Easwara Sarva Bhutanam* (God is the indweller of all beings), *Isavasyam Idam Sarvam* (the entire universe is permeated by God). Divinity is not restricted to a particular place. God is here, God is there and He is everywhere. You are developing differences out of delusion, but Divinity is one and only one. It is the duty of the Guru to propagate this principle of oneness.

Today there are many good disciples, but it is very difficult to find a true Guru. We have many good boys among our students. However, even if one or two are bad, all of them will earn a bad name and will have to face punishment. Here is a small example. When you sleep at night, you are bitten by one or two mosquitoes. The next morning, you spray an insecticide and kill all the mosquitoes though you are bitten by only a few. So, those who join bad company are also punished. That is why it is said, *Tyaja Durjana Samsargam; Bhaja Sadhu Samagamam; Kuru Punyam Ahorathram* (run away from bad company, join good company and perform meritorious deeds day and night).

Sins of Parents Affect their Children

Whenever bad qualities like anger and jealousy crop up in you, do not be carried away by them. Control them. Keep telling yourself, "Anger is a bad quality. It will lead to bad actions and ultimately put me to ruin." Whenever you are angry, sit quietly at some place and drink cold water. Chant the Divine Name. Then your anger will gradually subside. If your anger persists, go to a place of solitude and walk briskly for half a mile. Thus, there are many easy ways to control one's anger. But the youth today are not making any effort to control their anger. Whenever they get angry, they take it as an opportunity to hurl abuses at others. It is the worst sin. Through prayer and contemplation on God, you should try to control the evil qualities in you.

Embodiments of Love!

First of all, control your vision and tongue. You commit sin by evil vision, and are bound to face its consequences. If you make use of your senses for evil purposes, the children born to you will also be evil-minded. So, see no evil, hear no evil and talk no evil. In olden days, people used to take care that pregnant ladies do not see or hear anything bad. They used to narrate to them sacred stories of the Lord, give them good food and convey only good news. They did so because they knew that if the mother had good feelings, then the children born to her would also be good.

The sins committed by the parents will certainly affect their children too. When Subhadra was in the family way, one day Arjuna was describing to her the intricacies involved in entering the Padmavyuha (lotus-shaped military formation). He described to her in detail how to enter the Padmavyuha and when he was about to tell her how to come out of it, Krishna appeared on the scene and told Arjuna, "This is not the proper time to talk about these matters. It is not Subhadra but the child in her womb who has been listening to you all along." That is the reason why Abhimanyu got trapped in Padmavyuha and died at the hands of the Kauravas as he did not know how to get out of it.

God is watching all that you do. You may think that others do not know what you are up to. You may hoodwink others, but can you ever hoodwink God? He knows everything. So, always do good. All your sins will be atoned for when you make proper use of your senses. When you become angry, you lose your power of discrimination and behave in an inhuman manner. So, whenever you are angry, leave the place immediately. It is better to be away from sin rather than commit it and repent later.

Do Padanamaskar to Swami

Mentally I want to tell you one more point. You may feel disappointed by what I am going to tell you now, but I am happy about it. From today onwards, I am not going to give Padanamaskar to anybody because you and I are one. *Easwara Sarva Bhutanam* (God is the indweller of all beings). The same Atma is present in you, Me and everybody. So, there is no need for anyone to do Namaskar to anybody for that matter. You may do Namaskar to your parents so far as you and they do not realise this truth. Since I know the truth, I shall follow it. If you still want to do Namaskar, do it mentally. Join the palms to bring your ten fingers together and pray, "Swami, I offer my ten senses to You." That is enough. You don't need to touch My feet to do Namaskar. If one person is given Namaskar, others feel jealous. I am stopping this practice of giving Namaskar to see that such feelings of jealousy do not arise in you. Wherever you are, offer your Namaskar mentally. That gives Me happiness. I have told you this many times, but you have not put it into practice. Do not feel dejected that Swami has spoken to you in this manner. Consider that it is good for you. Pleasure is an interval between two pains. When I am walking amongst you, others will find it disturbing if you fall at My feet. From today onwards, make proper use of your senses and follow what has been told about Padanamaskar.

From this Gurupoornima, develop sacred feelings and enjoy supreme peace and bliss. Every man aspires to attain Ananda. How can he attain it? There are five sheaths in man— Annamaya Kosha (food sheath), Pranamaya Kosha (life sheath), Manomaya Kosha (mental sheath), Vijnanamaya Kosha (wisdom sheath) and Anandamaya Kosha (bliss sheath). Make every effort to reach Vijnanamaya Kosha. Only then can you attain Anandamaya Kosha. Lead a happy and blissful life and share your happiness with others. You do not know how great this Ananda is. Just as a small piece of wood becomes fire when it comes into contact with fire, so also you become Divine when you are close to Me mentally.

Bhagavan concluded His Discourse with the Bhajan, "*Prema Mudita Manase Kaho Rama Rama Ram...*"

—**From Bhagavan's Gurupoornima Sandesh in Sai Kulwant Hall, Prasanthi Nilayam on
5th July 2001**

Gurudev Vani

*Valedictory Discourse: International Convention of
Bal Vikas Gurus on "Sri Sathya Sai Educare"*

Educare for Human Transformation

You may be highly educated but if you lack culture, you cannot earn respect in society. Even if you are highly intelligent, you cannot get adoration of people without morality. You may be occupying position of authority, but if you cross your limits, how can people respect you? Without charity and righteousness and without following the path of truth, how call you expect

people to honour you? It is a great mistake if you conduct yourself without fear of sin. What else is to be conveyed to this august gathering? (Telugu Poem)

Embodiments of Love!

If you enquire and explore, you will find that the water level in the earth is going lower and lower day by day. If you observe the present-day political scenario, you will find that morality and integrity are sinking deeper and deeper. The present day teachers lack the invaluable treasure of knowledge that the ancients possessed. Human values are becoming extinct in human beings.

Objectives of Human Life

In ancient times, teachers were regarded as Thyagarajulu, Yogarajulu and Yathirajulu (masters of sacrifice, spirituality and renunciation). But alas! modern teachers have become Bhogarajulu and Kamarajulu (men of pleasure and desire). Indian culture is the manifestation of the truth that does not change with the passage of time and is unaffected by changes in the world. The Sanathana Dharma of Bharat reflects the values of its ancient culture. Having forgotten this eternal truth, man is wasting his precious life in the pursuit of ephemeral pleasures. He is unable to understand his own value because he is totally engrossed in securing selfish goals ignoring his innate qualities and character.

Since time immemorial, the Bharatiyas have been treading the path of spirituality, deriving the bliss therefrom and sharing it with others. Today man is unable to experience and enjoy this eternal bliss. Man has been able to accomplish many mighty tasks, but he is yet to experience Atmic bliss. Human birth is meant to experience Atmic bliss. This truth is contained in the three letters of the word MAN, in which 'M' stands for overcoming Maya (illusion), 'A' for experiencing the vision of the Atma and 'N' for attaining Nirvana (liberation). But today modern man is unable to understand the truth that he is born to realise the Atma. He must strive to overcome Maya and have the experience of the Atma to attain Nirvana. One who ignores this eternal truth leads an unsacred life.

Embodiments of Love!

Once you recognise the goal of human life, you will be able to understand human values. Human values are born along with man, not before or after. Man has to question himself, "What is the purpose of life?" Once he finds the answer to this question, he will be able to understand everything else in this world. Man is endowed with intelligence and knowledge, but he keeps himself engaged in the pursuit of ignorance, without making any enquiry into the knowledge that is within him. It is necessary to correct the thinking of man. Therefore, there is an urgent need to propagate human values today.

Man is getting carried away by Prabhava (worldly influences), forgetting his Swabhava (innate nature) and is ruining himself. Today man has no desire for spirituality. There are no divine feelings in his mind. In such a situation, how can he remain unaffected by Prabhava? He has to transform Prabhava into Swabhava in order to change his Prarabdha (destiny). Swabhava refers to man's Atmic feelings as the two words Swa (Atmic) and Bhava (feelings) indicate. Truth, righteousness, peace and love constitute Atmic feelings. Where is the need to search for them when they are man's natural innate qualities? As he has forgotten his natural qualities, he is under the influence of Prabhava, craving for name, fame, wealth and comforts. He is interested in

Dhana (wealth), not in Guna (good qualities). Is this the purpose of life? No doubt, money is required but among the four Purusharthas (objectives of life), money comes only after righteousness. It means that money should be earned in a righteous manner. But today man resorts to unrighteous means to amass wealth.

Embodiments of Love!

Today man is overshadowed by Prarabdha as he has separated from each other the four objectives of human life. viz., Dharma, Artha, Kama and Moksha (righteousness, wealth, desire and liberation). Combine Dharma with Artha and Kama with Moksha so that wealth is earned in a righteous manner and you have Satwic desire for liberation. Only then will you be free from the influence of Prarabdha. You are unable to escape from Prarabdha as you have desire only for the world and not for liberation. Money is essential for a living in the world but it should be within certain limits. Man does not realise this. He keeps himself engaged in the mad pursuit of money till his last breath.

Where there is God, there is Bliss

Man aspires to attain bliss. What is the path to bliss? Can he attain bliss from material objects? No, not at all. Happiness related to the world is temporary. Only Atmic bliss is permanent. For this, man has to develop faith in the Self. You love your mother because you believe her to be your mother. A wife loves her husband because she has faith in him. So, where there is faith, there is love; where there is love, there is peace; where there is peace, there is truth; where there is truth, there is God; where there is God, there is bliss.

You may not undertake any worship or ritual to attain peace. There are many who say that they are undertaking a particular ritual for world peace. It is but a mere stunt! You can never attain peace by performing rituals. Peace is embodied in love. You can develop love only when you have faith in the Self. Today man has faith in all that is ephemeral and transient but he has no steady faith in God. He is filled with doubts. He should have total faith only in God and not the world because all that is seen in the world is bound to perish one day or the other. God alone can grant true and eternal bliss. One who experiences this bliss is a true human being.

Imbibe the Human Values before Teaching Others

Embodiments of Love!

First of all, you should understand the truth that the changeless and eternal bliss of divinity is within you. Divinity is described as *Nirgunam, Niranjanam, Sanathana Niketanam, Nitya, Shuddha, Buddha, Mukta, Nirmala Swarupinam* (attributeless, pure, final abode, eternal, unsullied, enlightened, free and embodiment of sacredness). The Vedas declare: *Sarvam Vishnumayam Jagat* (Divinity pervades the entire universe), *Sarvam Khalvidam Brahma* (verily all this is Brahman). In order to understand these divine statements, you should cultivate sacred qualities. One without noble qualities cannot understand them. Every individual, every living being, every object in this creation is a manifestation of 'Divinity'. All the five elements are the forms of the Divine. To understand this truth, you have to take to the spiritual path.

You are trying to understand the human values, viz., truth, righteousness, peace, love and non-violence. What is meant by truth? It is that which is changeless. *Sathyam Jnanam Anantham Brahma* (Brahman is the embodiment of truth, wisdom and eternity). It is a mistake to think that truth is related to speech alone. *Trikalabadyam Sathyam* (truth is that which remains changeless in all the three periods of time). So, truth is God. What is meant by Dharma (righteousness)? It does not mean only good acts of charity, etc., and rituals like Yajnas and Yagas. *Dharayati iti Dharma* (that which sustains is Dharma). True Dharma lies in putting into practice the truth that originates from the heart. When truth is translated into action, it becomes Dharma.

What is Santhi? It is the feeling one experiences when the mind is attuned to God. Peace is the crown that man should aspire to wear. Everybody wants peace in this world. Where is peace? It is within you. Keep reminding yourself, "I am the embodiment to truth, I am the embodiment of peace, I am the embodiment of love, I am the embodiment of righteousness. I am everything." Have total faith in the principle of the Atma without which whatever you say or do cannot be called truth or righteousness. So, first of all, develop faith that everything is within you. Without faith, man will come to ruin.

Today the education that students pursue is only worldly in nature. They study books, write examinations and get degrees. They do all this only for the sake of their livelihood. "*A foolish person boasts of his high education and intelligence, yet does not know himself. What is the use of all the education he has acquired, if he cannot give up his evil qualities? All the worldly education will lead him only to vain argumentation, not total wisdom. It cannot lead him to immortality. So, man should acquire that knowledge which will make him immortal.*" (Telugu Poem)

Man is specialising in various subjects not for the welfare of the world, but for his own self-interest. If you sincerely want world peace, undertake sacred actions. Love your fellowmen. Make them happy. Human values are not mere verbal expressions. They originate from the heart. People are mistaken as they go only by the letter without understanding the spirit.

Sai Stands for Service, Adoration and Illumination

There should be transformation at the three levels—individual, social and spiritual. This is what Sai is bringing about. The three letters in the word SAI stand for Spiritual change, Association change and Individual change, respectively. (*Loud applause*) SAI also denotes **S**ervice, **A**doration and **I**llumination which correspond to work, worship and wisdom, respectively. You have to understand the inner meaning of every letter of this word SAI to sanctify your lives.

Today thousands of Bal Vikas Gurus have gathered here. Worldly education is no doubt necessary, but children should be imparted spiritual education too from their early age. There is a lot of difference between our conference and the conferences held elsewhere. For example, in our conference all the delegates are actively taking part in the deliberations. Nobody gets up in the middle except a few who do so only due to physical constraints. You cannot find such conferences being held anywhere in the world. Though I know everything, sometimes ! watch the proceedings of the conference from behind the screen or from above. I find that all the delegates are attending the conference with utmost sincerity and devotion. Such conferences should

be held more frequently. Many more members should be trained and taught new procedures. Only then will the whole world benefit from it.

Yesterday, our Prime Minister Vajpayee sent a letter to Me through Indulal Shah. He conveyed his concern to Me that the government with all the power at its disposal could not undertake such noble tasks. He felt that it was not possible for anybody except Swami. (*Cheers*) He requested Me to take up more and more responsibilities and involve the government also in these tasks. They say such things out of love, but we do not involve ourselves in the matters relating to government because their temperament and way of working do not match with ours. So, we undertake such tasks without involving others. Many conferences are being held here, but do you find any collection of funds here? No. Everyone is taking care of his own requirements. All are coming here out of love and devotion and enjoying the bliss. Such conferences should be held not once but thrice a year. Each time new delegates should be given a chance. You should be prepared to put in any amount of effort for the sake of education.

Talk Less and Work More

Today students are acquiring various degrees. They are becoming doctors and engineers, but they are not doing the work that is expected of them. What is the use of their education? Can you call them educated at all? The field of modern education has become highly corrupt. Some institutes give even medical degrees without proper education! Even the engineering education has become a sham. In our institutions, you may call even a 1st Standard boy and ask him a question. He will give a correct reply.

In spite of receiving best education, some of our students do not put their knowledge into practice. Though they say, "Swami knows everything, whatever He tells is good for us," yet they fail to follow His commands. When you believe that whatever Swami says is good for you, then why don't you follow His commands? I do not want such people. One must practise what one says.

You are all teachers, but you should be good students in the first instance. If a student takes to bad ways, he ruins himself. But if a teacher takes to evil ways, he will be ruining the lives of so many students. So, teachers have to be very careful. It is not enough if you merely mark your attendance here and keep quiet. You should share with others all that you have seen and experienced here when you go back to your respective places. Share with others the bliss that you have experienced here. But at the same time, do not be heroes merely in platform speeches. You should be heroes in practice. Talk less and work more. A few narrow-minded people might feel that Swami is telling them to talk less, but He Himself is not following the same. That is why I am talking less these days. I am doing so only to teach such people. There is limitless bliss in limited talk.

Bliss cannot be obtained from outside; it comes from within. The good or bad that you see in others is nothing but the reflection of your own inner feelings. Once you understand this truth, you will never talk bad about anybody. All that you experience in this world is nothing but the reflection, reaction and resound of your own feelings. So, you should be good to everybody and work with the spirit of unity and love.

Have True Vision of the Atma

Embodiments of Love!

Many speakers have imparted various teachings to you on the basis of their experiences. I have been hearing them. Try to understand their experiences, put their teachings into practice and teach the same to others. I tell you only one thing. Having been born as human beings, you should overcome Maya, have the vision of the Atma and attain Nirvana. This is the purpose of your life. Where is the Atma? It is your very form. You are not the physical body. Body is temporary, it is like a water bubble. Mind is like a mad monkey. Don't follow the body, don't follow the mind. Follow the conscience. That is your true form. How can you have the vision of the Atma? You need not search for it outside. Turn your vision inward. Only then can you have the vision of the Self.

A noble person maintained silence when he was being criticised. When his friend wanted him to react, he replied, "The same Atma is present in me as well as in the person who is criticising. So, why should I be annoyed when he is criticising himself." A deep enquiry will reveal the truth that when you love or hate others, you love or hate your own self. In fact, there are no 'others'. You consider yourself different from others because of body attachment. Once you give up body attachment, you will realise that there are no others and all are one. That is the true vision of the Atma. The Atma does not have a specific form. Bliss is the Atma, consciousness is the Atma. Conscious is related to the senses; conscience is the inner witness and consciousness is the all-pervasive Atma. You should understand the unity of these three. Take to the path of service. Then you can proceed along the path of adoration and ultimately attain illumination. To the extent possible, serve everybody. True happiness lies in service.

Embodiments of Love!

You may be feeling disappointed that I did not speak during the last two days of the conference. But I have all along been with you and listening to you. (loud *applause*) It is not out of anger or dislike that I did not speak. But sometimes I get disappointed when some people do not pay heed to My words. In that case, how can they progress in life? What is the use of My talking when people do not act according to My words? But some people are unable to understand this truth. How can the narrow-minded people understand My broad feelings?

How can you attain God's grace? Here is a small example. You toiled hard, earned money and deposited it in a bank for safety and security. No doubt, the money belongs to you. But the Bank Manager will not give it to you on your mere asking for it. There are certain rules and regulations for the withdrawal of money from the bank. You can withdraw the money only when you sign the cheque and present it to the Bank Manager. Likewise, you have deposited the 'money' of meritorious deeds with God, the Divine Bank Manager. Affix the signature of love on the cheque of sacrifice and surrender it to Him. Only then will He confer the wealth of His grace on you.

Today man's mind has become polluted. This is the effect of modern education. When the mind is polluted, how can man progress in life? He may be highly educated and occupying high positions in society with name and fame. But all his achievements will prove futile if he does not know what he is supposed to know. What is it that he is supposed to know? It is the principle of the Atma. In order to lead a blissful life in this world, it is enough if you know that you are the embodiment of the Atma and everybody else is the same. You are subjected to misery as you are

unable to understand this subtle truth. Tomorrow I will tell you in detail about the truth of human life, the goal of human life and the pathway to bliss. (*Cheers*)

Bhagavan concluded His Discourse with the Bhajan, "*Hari Bhajan Bina Sukha Santhi Nahin...*"

—From Bhagavan's Valedictory Discourse at the International Convention of Sri Sathya Sai Bal Vikas Gurus on "Sri Sathya Sai Educare" in Sai Kulwant Hall on 4th July 2001

FESTIVALS AT PRASANTHI NILAYAM

Guru Poornima Celebrations

Virtually a sea of humanity converged at Prasanthi Nilayam from all parts of India and the world on 5th July 2001 to pay their respectful homage to their Sadguru and the Kali Yuga Avatar, Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba. A grand function was held on the morning of this auspicious day in the glittering Sai Kulwant Hall to celebrate this sacred occasion. Sri Sathya Sai Organisations of some overseas countries and States of India presented some excellent cultural programmes on the eve of this holy festival. Glimpses of these programmes are given here.

Ashadi Ekadasi Celebrations

The holy festival of Ashadi Ekadasi was celebrated at Prasanthi Nilayam on the morning of 1st July 2001 with deep devotional fervour in the Divine Presence of Bhagavan Baba. The venue of the celebrations was Sai Kulwant Hall which was profusely decorated with colourful bunting of various designs, beautiful festoons of many shapes and sizes and flower decorations of various hues. A beautiful idol of Lord Vitthal adorned the backdrop of the dais. Much before Bhagavan's morning Darshan, every inch of space in Sai Kulwant Hall and its adjoining areas was packed with multitudes of devotees. Bhagavan came to Sai Kulwant Hall at 6.50 a.m. and showered the bliss of His Divine Darshan on the devotees both inside and outside the Hall.

The traditional procession of Varkaris, called "Dindi", which had commenced a few days earlier, reached the Gopuram Gate of Prasanthi Nilayam early in the morning. As Bhagavan came to the dais and sat in His chair at 7.05 a.m., the Palki (palanquin) with the image of Lord Vitthal was placed in front of the dais. Thereafter, a group of Varkaris in their traditional dress performed the Pavali Dance and Fugdi Dance and sang Abhangs (verses) in praise of Lord Vitthal and Bhagavan Baba, surcharging the entire milieu with devotional fervour.

Dance Drama "Die Mind—Be a Diamond"

After the singing of Abhangs and the dance of Varkaris, Sri Sathya Sai Bal Vikas children and Youth Wing of Maharashtra State made an excellent musical presentation "Die Mind—Be a Diamond". This play was woven around Bhagavan's concept of "Sri Sathya Sai Educare" which

was also the theme of the ensuing (2nd - 4th July 2001) International Convention of Bal Vikas Gurus. The entire concept of Educare was brought alive in a most remarkable way by the children who showed graphically the interaction between man, his mind and five senses to show how to bring about purity, unity and divinity in man through controlling the mind, engaging in Namasmarana and earning Anugraha (Divine grace) by following the 5 D's—Devotion, Discipline, Duty, Discrimination and Determination. The cast of this superb presentation comprised nearly 250 Bal Vikas children and Youth Wing students of Maharashtra State. Pleased with the performance of the children, Bhagavan blessed the children, distributed gifts and sweets to them and posed for photographs with them. Prasadam was distributed to all the devotees at the end of this programme. The joyous function of Ashadi Ekadasi came to a close with Arati to Bhagavan at 8.40 a.m.

Drama on the Life of Sant Kabir

Bal Vikas children of Maharashtra State presented the drama "Sant Kabir" portraying the life of this famous saint of India who gave the message of unity of mankind and denounced the animosity between different religions. This drama was presented on the evening of 1st July 2001 in Poornachandra Auditorium in the Divine Presence of Bhagavan Baba.

The play portrayed the life of Sant Kabir to show how this saint of 13th century played the noble role of a bridge between the warring communities of Hindus and Muslims. Admirable acting of the children, appropriate dialogues with excellent rendering of Kabir's famous Dohas (couplets) made the play an appropriate presentation at the Lotus Feet of Bhagavan Baba who is Himself bringing about unity of all religions. Pleased with the performance of the children, Bhagavan went up on the stage at the end of the play, blessed the cast and also materialised a gold chain for the boy who played the role of Kabir. This programme concluded with Arati to Bhagavan at 7.30 p.m.

Drama on Srisailam

The drama entitled "Srisailam" was a remarkable presentation of Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organisation of Japan in which 14 Bal Vikas children along with their parents and elders relished their first opportunity to perform in the Divine Presence of Bhagavan Baba nearly 20 years after the inception of Bal Vikas in Japan. The drama was staged on the evening of 3rd July 2001 in the Poornachandra Auditorium.

Based on a real-life story narrated by Bhagavan Baba in His Divine Discourse on the Sivaratri of March 1980, the play depicted how the intense devotion and steadfast faith of the innocent child Ramanna pleased Mallikarjuna and Bhramaramba, the deities of Srisailam. The deities not only manifested before the child but came to his house as the child considered them as his brother-in-law and sister whom he wanted to bring home on the holy festival of Sivarathri as per the local tradition.

Realistic presentation, perfect makeup and superb acting of the cast in the play earned the appreciation of the audience and the blessings of Bhagavan. This programme came to a happy conclusion with Arati to Bhagavan at 7.10 p.m.

Krishnamritham—Dance Drama

This beautiful dance drama was presented by the children of Sri Lanka on the evening of 4th July 2001 in Poornachandra Auditorium, Prasanthi Nilayam in the Divine Presence of Bhagavan Baba.

Right from the first scene to the last, the portrayal of Sri Krishna's life was simply superb and flawless. Fine choreography, pleasing music, and remarkable dances by children earned the applause and appreciation of the audience and the blessings of Bhagavan Baba, who showered His benedictions on the cast and the organisers at the end of the play, posed for photographs with them, distributed clothes to them and also created a gold chain for the child who enacted the role of child Krishna. This beautiful programme ended at 7.05 p.m. with Arati to Bhagavan.

Drama on the Life of Narsi Mehta

Bal Vikas children of Gujarat State staged this drama on the evening of 5th July 2001 in Poornachandra Auditorium portraying the life story of Narsi Mehta whose intense devotion and total surrender to the Lord not only made him one of the greatest saints of India, but also earned him immense grace of the Lord. The play depicted the main events of the saint's life and showed how Lord Krishna Himself took over even the worldly responsibilities of His devotee because he was fully engrossed in Krishna Bhakti. The compassionate Lord not only performed the marriage of Narsi's son and daughter but also manifested Himself as Shamalsha Sheth to honour the letter of credit given by him to a group of traders by paying them seven hundred rupees. The climax of the play came when Lord Krishna manifested in jail and garlanded Narsi to protect him from persecution and to prove to his persecutors that Narsi was indeed a true devotee of the Lord. The programme concluded at 7.20 p.m. with Arati to Bhagavan.

Devotional Music by Denmark Devotees

Before this drama on Narsi Mehta, devotees from Denmark presented a grand musical programme at the same venue in the Divine Presence of Bhagavan Baba. They enthralled the audience with six selected Sanskrit, English and Danish devotional songs which earned the appreciation of the devotees and the blessings of Bhagavan who went up on the stage at the end of the programme, distributed clothes to the participants and also materialised a gold chain for the girl who sang all the six songs in her mellifluous voice.

Guru Poornima Function

"First of all, man should exercise control over his senses. Spiritual practices will yield greater rewards if senses are kept under control", said Bhagavan Baba while giving His Divine Message to the mammoth gathering of devotees who had come from all parts of the world to pay their reverential homage to Bhagavan on the holy festival of Guru Poornima. Sai Kulwant Hall, the venue of the Guru Poornima celebrations, looked enchantingly beautiful on the morning of 5th July 2001 with glittering chandelier lights and delightful decorations of buntings, festoons and flowers. In fact, the entire Mandir complex and the surrounding areas bore a festive look with all types of decorations. When Bhagavan came to Sai Kulwant Hall at 6.40 a.m. to shower the bliss of His Divine Darshan on the devotees on this auspicious day, a wave of ecstasy ran through the entire congregation.

The programme started with Veda chanting by students at 6.55 a.m. after Bhagavan came to the dais and sat in His chair. Sri V. Srinivasan, All India President of Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organisations, offered his greetings to all the devotees on this holy day and congratulated them on their great good fortune as Avatar Purusha Bhagavan Himself was their Guru. Exhorting the devotees to put Bhagavan's teachings into practice, Sri Srinivasan said that in Dwapar Yuga, only Arjuna received the wisdom of the Gita directly from Lord Krishna, but in this Kali Yuga, we all were receiving the Divine teachings from Bhagavan Baba. We should not allow this great opportunity to slip from our hands and should put Bhagavan's teachings into practice, he said.

Earlier, Dr. Jayalakshmi Gopinath, Principal, Anantapur College, made a brief speech narrating her experiences with Bhagavan who taught her practical lessons in spirituality even at His young age.

In the end, Bhagavan gave His Guru Poornima Message (full text printed elsewhere in this issue.) The programme came to a close at 8.40 a.m. with Arati to Bhagavan. Prasadam was distributed to all the devotees at the conclusion of the programme.

AVATAR VANI

DIVINE DISCOURSE AT CHAKUR

Love Can Unite the Entire World

God controls the entire world. He is the embodiment of Truth. (Sanskrit Verse)

Embodiments of Love!

The whole world is permeated with love. The world does not connote only the form but the people also. You are all the embodiments of love. You may or may not have any other quality, but every one of you does have love. In this world, there is nobody without love. There are, however, two types of love in this world - one is worldly while the other is spiritual or divine.

Have the Vision of God through Love

Divine love is totally selfless. It is love for love's sake; there is no other consideration. God has no selfishness whatsoever. He does not expect anything in return. But worldly love is tainted with selfishness, and it craves for material possessions. Where there is selfishness, there is fear. Where there is no selfishness, there is no fear. Man should have no trace of selfishness in his love. He can have even the vision of the Divine through selfless love. Love is selflessness; self is lovelessness. God has no specific form. Love is God; live in love. *Love is the form of God and God is full of love. It is necessary to connect love to love. You will have divine experience and wisdom when you strengthen love in you.* (Telugu Poem) Divine love is Nirgunam, Niranjanam, Sanathana Niketanam, Nitya, Shuddha, Buddha, Mukta, Nirmala Swarupinam (attributeless, pure, final abode, eternal, unsullied, enlightened, free and embodiment of sacredness). Such divine love is all-pervasive.

Love is the magnet that attracts everybody. Love is the cause of attraction between us. This magnet of love is present in every one of you. It is because of love that you have come here to see Me and I have come to see you. You are not merely human beings; you are *Viraat Purushas* (cosmic beings). Man is endowed with such tremendous power which none of the other denizens possesses. There is limitless power in each one of you, but you are unable to recognise it. When you love others, they will love you in turn. Therefore, first and foremost, you should love all. By experiencing love in this way, a human becomes divine. But man today is focusing his love on fleeting and ephemeral objects. He limits his love to his wife, children and material objects.

Here is a small example to illustrate the nature of worldly love. When a young man gets married, he considers his wife as his very life for the first two or three months. If he happens to find a thorn on the way while going out for a walk, he pulls her aside immediately with great concern, fearing that it might prick her feet. After a period of six months, if the husband finds a thorn on the way while walking together, he merely cautions her. After one year if the same situation arises, he will shout at her, saying, "Can't you see? There is a thorn on the road." Worldly love declines in this manner day by day, but divine love will never decline. It is steady and changeless. You should make efforts to attain such true and eternal love. You are not able to experience this love due to your limitless desires. Life is like a long journey and desires are the luggage. *Less luggage, more comfort make travel a pleasure.* You will be free from worries and problems once you reduce your desires.

There is nothing in this world that is not divine. Divinity permeates each and every object of the universe. Man commits mistakes as he is unable to recognise this principle of non-dualism. (Swami showing His handkerchief) What is this? It is a handkerchief. It is made up of a number of closely interwoven threads. The threads are made up of cotton. Therefore, the cotton, the threads and the cloth are one and the same. Likewise, Prakriti (Nature), Jivatma (individual soul) and Paramatma (God) are one and the same. You are not one, but three—the one you think you are (physical body), the one others think you are (mental body) and the one you really are (Atma). You are neither the body nor the mind; you are the embodiments of the Atma. The body and the mind are mere instruments.

Do not Forget your Divinity

Embodiments of Love!

You don't need to talk about spirituality which all cannot understand. It is enough if you hold on to the principle of love in your daily life. The principle of love is the same in everybody, right from a pauper to a millionaire. Even a millionaire has to live on food; he cannot partake of gold. Food is therefore necessary for man. It sustains his body. Food is God. The body is made up of food and the mind is a bundle of desires which are the root cause of man's delusion. Man's life today is full of delusion as he harbours limitless desires. You should have the firm conviction that you, being the embodiments of love, are basically divine. Your life will be redeemed once you know that you are the spark of the Divine. You forget your divine nature as you get deluded by various names and forms in this world.

Is it possible to build a temple for God who pervades the entire universe? Your heart is the temple of God. Turn your vision inward and find Him there. It is a very easy path to Divinity.

Embodiments of Love!

Love is the prime feeling of man. All other feelings originate from love. Once you understand the principle of love, you can understand the entire universe. First and foremost, man should have strong faith. Where there is faith, there is love; where there is love, there is truth; where there is truth, there is peace. You don't need to search for peace elsewhere. It is within you. Likewise, you are the repository of truth and love. In fact, the whole world is within you. Thousands have assembled here. Your names and forms are different, but the same five elements are present in all of you. In this world, you don't find anybody without the five elements, which are nothing but the forms of the Divine.

Truth is present in everyone. It is divine. But today man is ignoring this divine principle.

*The creation emerges from Truth and merges into Truth,
Is there a place where Truth does not exist?
Visualise such pure and unsullied Truth. (Telugu Poem)*

Understand the Principle of Unity in Diversity

Man's mind is the cause of his pleasure and pain. *Manah Eva Manushyanam Karanam Bandhamokshayo* (mind is responsible for both bondage and liberation of man). When you insert key into a lock and turn it to the left, the lock gets closed. When you turn it to the right, it opens. It is the same lock and the same key, but the side to which you turn the key matters. Likewise, the heart may be compared to a lock and the mind to a key. When the mind is turned towards the world, you are attached to the world and when it is turned Godward, you get detached and attain liberation. Today man is bound because his mind is turned towards the world.

Human life is divine. *Janthunam Narajanma Durlabham* (out of all the living beings, the human birth is the rarest). Man is wasting such a divine and auspicious life. Human body is a gift of God, which has to be utilised to realise one's Self. The body is an instrument for self-realisation. Just as ears, nose, hands, etc., are the limbs of the body, likewise body is the limb of society, society is the limb of Nature and Nature is the limb of God. Body cannot exist if the limbs are separated from it. Likewise, the country cannot exist if there is no unity among its 'limbs'.

In olden days, the Bharatiyas considered their country as their very home. They would proudly proclaim that they belonged to Bharat. Unfortunately, such patriotic feeling is lacking today. People identify themselves with their respective States, saying "I belong to Maharashtra, I belong to Karnataka, I belong to Tamil Nadu, etc." By thinking in this sectarian way, the spirit of unity is lost. When a limb is cut off from the body, it leads to severe pain and loss of blood. The country also suffers the same fate if the various regions are separated from it. You are all Bharatiyas. Develop the feeling of nationality.

Embodiments of Love!

You belong to the human race. So, develop human values. Today the world is fragmented as man has forgotten human values. Unity of the world can therefore be strengthened by developing human

values. He is a true human being whose thoughts, words and deeds are in perfect harmony. Your life will be wrecked if your thoughts, words and deeds are in disharmony. Develop the spirit of oneness. All are one, be alike to everyone. Different bulbs have different wattages and colours, but the current that flows through them is one and the same. Likewise, God is present in men of all colours, races and nationalities. *Easwara Sarva Bhutanam* (God is the indweller of all beings).

*Flowers are many, but worship is one,
Jewels are many, but gold is one.
Cows are many, but milk is one,
Beings are many, but breath is one.* (Telugu Poem)

Make every effort to recognise the divinity in everyone. Though God is present in everyone, you search for Him elsewhere and thus waste time. Wherever you see, there is divinity in this world. It is because of the divinity within that you are able to speak. Is it not sheer madness to search for God in the external world when you have divinity within you? You are the embodiment of truth and love. So, you should not hate or harm anybody. Hurting others amounts to hurting your own self.

You will become divine when you realise the oneness of all human beings. You belong to the same universal family. Such being the case, why should you give room for hatred and conflicts? Love everybody. Love is eternal, immortal and nectarine. However, it is being turned into poison because of evil qualities like hatred, jealousy and anger. Never allow such evil qualities to enter your heart for God dwells in it. God and the individual are not different; both are one. Lead your life with the feeling that you are divine. Truly speaking, man has no misery. He is the embodiment of bliss. But man subjects himself to misery because of his limitless desires. *Sukhadukhe Samekruthwa, Labhalabhau Jayajayau* (one should remain equal-minded in happiness and sorrow, gain and loss, victory and defeat). Your mind is responsible for both pleasure and pain. You feel elated when your desires are fulfilled; otherwise, you are depressed. You will be blissful only when you control your desires. Do not get carried away by pleasure and pain.

Power of Love is Immeasurable

Embodiments of Love!

Being the embodiments of love, you should not hate anybody. Only through love can you attain immortality. There is love in everybody, but it is used in a perverted manner. With love, one can achieve anything. One can even control the five elements. When you gain control over the five elements, the whole world will be under your control. It is out of ignorance that you consider yourself weak. In fact, all powers are in you. It is only love that can dispel the darkness of ignorance. Love is God. God is love. Love can unite the entire world. What is the relationship that exists between you and Me? This body was born in a remote village of Andhra Pradesh. You belong to the State of Maharashtra. What is the connection between you and Me? It is love and love alone. It is only out of your love for Swami that *you have all gathered here. Your love has made Me very happy. How much is the power of love? It is infinite. None can fathom its depth.*

Do not hate anybody. All are your brothers and sisters. Cultivate the spirit of Brotherhood of Man and Fatherhood of God. Serve all with love. *"Neither by penance nor by pilgrimage nor by*

study of scriptures nor by Japa can one cross the ocean of life. One can achieve it only by serving the pious." (Sanskrit Verse) No amount of money can procure the bliss that you attain by serving others. *Money comes and goes, but morality comes and grows.* There have been many men of affluence in this land, but what happened to them ultimately? They had to leave the world empty-handed. No one can carry even a fistful of dust at the time of departing from the world. Otherwise, there would have been rationing even for dust in the country. When you leave the body, you carry with you only the good and bad that you have done in your life.

Aspire to become good, not great. Ravana was great, while Rama was good. Why? Rama put into practice His innate noble qualities. Ravana also had noble qualities in him, but he did not make use of them. Greatness is like a passing cloud. You occupy an exalted position, you earn a lot of money, but nothing remains with you. Earn a good name for yourself. People should respect you because of your goodness. Only goodness gives true happiness. Do always good. Never indulge in evil. If you want to be happy in life, you should try to become a good man.

Take Refuge in the Divine Name

Embodiments of Love!

Today people fight for their rights, but do not carry out their responsibilities.

A true human being is one who has the noble qualities of adherence to truth, duty, devotion and discipline. These are the things that man should learn. Today man is filling his Mastaka (head) with all that is contained in Pustaka (books). First of all, he should cultivate noble qualities. Otherwise, all that he has learnt will prove futile.

Man can achieve anything with self-confidence. Therefore, it is necessary to cultivate self-confidence. It transforms man into divine. Why are you born in this world? What is it that you have achieved? What is the purpose of life? Is it Khana, Peena, Sona, Marna (to eat, drink, sleep and die)? No. Even birds and beasts do the same. At least they have a reason and a season, but today's man has no reason and no season. He misuses his senses. He should make proper use of his senses to become a good man.

There is nothing greater than having love for God. Love is God and through love alone can you merge in God. Mira was a great devotee of Lord Krishna. She used to spend all her time in the temple of Krishna singing His glory. When Maharana ordered her to leave the temple, she was shocked. She did not know where to go. She meditated on Krishna and sang, "*O mind, go to the banks of the Ganga and Yamuna. The cool waters of Ganga and Yamuna will make the body placid and serene.*" (Hindi Song) She considered Ida and Pingala as the rivers Ganga and Yamuna which meet each other at Sushumna. In order to reach Sushumna, all that one has to do is to sing the glory of the Lord. When one contemplates on the Lord incessantly, one will certainly attain Brahmhaloka. There are many noble souls in Maharashtra. In fact, they are everywhere. But how are we leading our lives? What is the use of having a tongue that does not chant the Divine Name and hands that do not serve others? Chant the name of Easwara with love.

There is Immense Strength in Unity

Embodiments of Love!

Each of you is a spark of the Divine. Lord Krishna declared in the Bhagavad-Gita: *Mamaivamsho Jeevaloke Jeevabhuta Sanathana* (the eternal Atma in all beings is a part of My Being). When you identify yourself with your body, you consider yourself as human being. But in reality, you are divine. *Prema Easwara Hai, Easwara Prema Hai* (love is God, God is love). Divinity is the same in everyone, be he a Hindu, a Muslim, a Sikh or a Christian. There is only one religion, the religion of love. There is only one caste, the caste of humanity. So, develop unity, chant the Divine Name. What an exalted position will the country attain if all its people were to chant the Divine Name unitedly! Once you take refuge in the Divine Name, the whole country will progress. Then you need not run after other countries for help. The greatness and grandeur of Bharat is unparalleled. Since ancient times, Bharat has been occupying the position of a leader to the rest of the world. What can be said of the great good fortune of Bharat for God incarnated in this land many a time to lead humanity to divinity! You may belong to any religion, but consider God as one. Do not have any differences whatsoever based on religion. You may be a Hindu, a Muslim, a Christian or a Sikh, but all are one in the eyes of God. One who cultivates the crop of love in the field of one's heart is a true Christian, a true Sikh, a true Hindu and a true Muslim.

Embodiments of Love!

I am extremely happy to see that so many people of Maharashtra have gathered here to express their love for Me. I bless you all to lead a happy, peaceful and blissful life. Unity and love are fast disappearing. It is only in villages that you find unity and love. If you all stand united, you can achieve anything. When you conduct yourself with the spirit of unity and love, the country can attain any height. It is not possible for a few ministers to run the whole country. All of you should stand united and extend your cooperation to them. A thread can be snapped with two fingers, but when many threads are woven to form cloth, it will be strong. There is immense strength in unity. When the people and the government work together, any mighty task can be accomplished.

Embodiments of Love!

I am very happy and I bless you all to lead a meaningful and purposeful life by working for the welfare of society. Pray to God for timely rains and good harvest so that all are blessed with plenty and prosperity. With these words, I bring My Discourse to a close.

Bhagavan concluded His Discourse with the Bhajan, "*Sivaya Parameswaraya Chandrasekharaya Namah Om.. .*"

—From Bhagavan's Divine Discourse in Sai Nandanvanam, Chakur (Maharashtra) on
16th July 2001

BHAGAVAN'S VISIT TO LATUR, CHAKUR AND NANDED

Showers of Divine Grace

It was a dream come true for the devotees of Marathawada when Bhagavan visited Latur, Chakur and Nanded from 15th to 17th July 2001 in answer to the prayers of the devotees of

this region. Bhagavan left Puttaparthi on the morning of 15th July 2001 for Latur by a special plane which took off from Sri Sathya Sai Airport at Puttaparthi at about 7.30 a.m. and landed at Latur airbase at 8.35 a.m.

Grand Welcome at Latur

Chief Minister of Maharashtra, Sri Vilasrao Deshmukh, his Cabinet colleagues, former Home Minister of India, Sri S. B. Chavan, former Lok Sabha Speaker, Sri Shivraj Patil and other dignitaries welcomed Bhagavan on His arrival at Latur. When Bhagavan's motorcade proceeded towards the town, massive crowds in their traditional dress lined the entire route of Bhagavan to offer Him their respectful salutations. Beautiful arches and welcome gates depicting Bhagavan's teachings in Marathi and English were put up all along the route of Bhagavan.

At Latur, Bhagavan addressed a congregation of intellectuals at the residence of the local M.L.A., Sri Diliprao Deshmukh. Bhagavan also gave Darshan to devotees at the residences of Sri Vilasrao Deshmukh, Sri Shivraj Patil and Sri Uttamrao Jhadav Patil, the devotee who built the magnificent Shivalaya (Shiva temple) and Sai Niwas in Sai Nandanvanam (a big orchard in more than 200 acres) at Chakur.

Inauguration of the Shivalaya

Bhagavan left for Sai Nandanvanam, Chakur on the morning of 16th July 2001. A magnificent golden Ratha (chariot) awaited Bhagavan's arrival at the gate of Sai Nandanvanam. A grand procession started from here after Bhagavan ascended the chariot. Mammoth crowds of devotees hailed Bhagavan with full throated shouts of `Sai ki Jai, Jai Jai Sai' on this entire three kilometre stretch of Bhagavan's route. The entire Sai Nandanvanam was decorated with colourful banners, flowers, torans, lanterns, garlands, flags and huge gates depicting Bhagavan's teachings in Marathi and English and welcoming all.

At the Shivalaya, Bhagavan was offered traditional welcome with Poornakumbham. Bhagavan lighted the sacred lamp to inaugurate the temple and placed His Divine hand on the Shivalinga to surcharge it with Divine energy. He also consecrated the other idols in the Mandir Hall and in the surrounding nine temples. After Arati, Bhagavan was led to Sai Niwas, the residential complex adjacent to the Shivalaya. Both the temple and Bhagavan's residence are buildings of great architectural beauty (shown in the picture on the opposite page.)

Bhagavan blessed the devotees with His Divine Discourse in Sai Nandanvanam at 2.00 p.m. Bhagavan's Discourse was preceded by Vedic chants by Pandit Sri Krishnamurthy and Bhajans and Abhangs by the renowned singer, Sri Suresh Wadkar. Then, Sri Uttamrao Jhadav Patil welcomed the gathering. Thereafter, Sri Vilasrao Deshmukh made a brief speech and prayed to Bhagavan for His blessings to this region which was in the grip of a severe drought. Sri S.B. Chavan and Sri Shivraj Patil also addressed the gathering. After this, Bhagavan gave His nectarine Discourse (full text given elsewhere). The meeting came to a close with Arati to Bhagavan.

Divine Discourse at Nanded

After blessing the devotees at about 7 a.m. in Sai Nandanvanam. Bhagavan proceeded by road to the city of Nanded, famous for the Samadhi of Sri Guru Gobind Singhji. The entire Nanded city presented a colourful look as profuse decorations were carried out in the city. At 8.50 a.m., Bhagavan reached the residential complex of Sri S. B. Chavan and showered the bliss of His Darshan on the devotees gathered there.

At 12.55 p.m., Bhagavan came to Sri Guru Gobind Singhji Stadium to bless the devotees with Darshan and Discourse. Before Bhagavan's Discourse, Sri Ashokrao S. Chavan, Revenue Minister, Govt. of Maharashtra welcomed the gathering. This was followed by a brief speech by Sri S. B. Chavan. Bhagavan delivered His Divine Discourse for about 40 minutes and after showering His benedictions on all left the venue at 2 p.m., proceeded to Nanded airbase and took off at 2.20 p.m. No sooner had Bhagavan's aircraft left the skies of Nanded than there was a heavy downpour as if Bhagavan willed to answer the sincere prayers of the devotees instantly!

INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION OF BAL VIKAS GURUS

Sri Sathya Sai Educare

An international Convention of Bal Vikas Gurus on the theme of "Sri Sathya Sai Educare" was held at Prasanthi Nilayam from 2nd to 4th July 2001 on the eve of the holy festival of Guru Purnima. More than 7,000 Bal Vikas Gurus from 44 overseas countries and all parts of India took part in this Convention to further reinforce the Divine Mission of Bhagavan Baba for imparting holistic and value-based education to children in all parts of the world as a means of transformation of mankind.

Inaugural Session

Bhagavan graciously inaugurated the Convention in Sai Kulwant Hall, Prasanthi Nilayam on the morning of 2nd July 2001 by lighting the sacred lamp. The proceedings of the Inaugural Session commenced with Veda chanting by school students. The first speaker to address the delegates was Sri V. Srinivasan, All India President of Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organisations. He extended a hearty welcome to all the delegates and expressed deep gratitude to Bhagavan Baba for His permission to hold the Convention during Guru Poornima celebrations. He then read out the Message of the Prime Minister of India, Sri Atal Behari Vajpayee in which he expressed his good wishes for the success of the Convention and appreciated the work being done by Bhagavan Baba in the field of value education: *"Bhagavan's profound understanding of the art and science of education has given Him the insight into converting syllabus and textbook-bound education into holistic Educare,"* said "he Prime Minister, and added, *"Truly the philosophy and practice of Educare needs to be integrated into the general system of education in India for our national regeneration."*

The second speaker, Smt. Sarla Indulal Shah, National Coordinator of Bal Vikas, traced the history of development of Bal Vikas during the last three decades and elaborated on the gradual unfolding of the Divine Plan of Bhagavan which had now blossomed into Educare, a system of

education which helped man to realise his innate divinity by ensuring a perfect balance of the five elements within and without.

After this, Sri Ryuko Hira, Zonal Chairman of Sri Sathya Sai Overseas Organisation, addressed the gathering. Referring to India as world's supreme source of spirituality, Sri Hira said that Bal Vikas was the movement of spiritualising the children of the world. It had its beginning in a small way in India in 1969. Bal Vikas was introduced to the overseas countries in 1975. Today after 25 years, Bal Vikas courses were being conducted in over 100 countries, Sri Hira informed the delegates.

The next speaker, Sri Art-ong Jumsai, Director, Institute of Sathya Sai Education, Thailand explained the theme of the Convention and said, "We must teach children to learn to manifest human values and realise the divinity that is within them all. We cannot teach values, we can only help children to learn to bring out the values. If we teach values, then the children will only memorise."

The last speaker of the programme was Dr. Michael Goldstein, Zonal Chairman of Sri Sathya Sai Overseas Organisation. Exhorting the delegates to realise first their own innate divinity, Dr. Goldstein said: "While we should be diligent in applying ourselves to all the tasks associated with this conference, we must be ever mindful of the spiritual nature of our lives and the power and love that we are now experiencing by being here, so near to the Embodiment of Divinity, our Beloved Swami."

The Inaugural Session of the Convention came to a close with Arati to Bhagavan at 8.25 a.m.

Plenary Sessions

Four Plenary Sessions of the Convention were held on 2nd and 3rd July 2001 in Poornachandra Auditorium. The following papers were presented by experts in these sessions: (i) "The Concept of Sri Sathya Sai Educare" by Sri V. Srinivasan (India), (ii) "Five Elements of Nature, Five Human Resources and Five Human Values-1" by Sri N. G. Pandya (India), (iii) "Five Elements of Nature, Five Human Resources and Five Human Values-2" by Sri B.G. Pitre (India), (iv) "Human Workshop— The Divine Instrument-1" by Dr. Art-ong Jumsai (Thailand), (v) "Human Workshop—The Divine Instrument-2" by Smt. Gana Jaga Deva (Malaysia), (vi) "Human Values—Purity of Mind" by Sri Robert Molloy (Australia), (vii) "Five Elements—Inner Balance Divinity" by Smt. Jayshree Singh (South Africa), (viii) "Devotion as Sadhana-1" by Smt. N. R. Shashikala (India), (ix) "Devotion as Sadhana-2" by Smt. Karunes Ratnasingam (U.K.), (x) "Discipline—A Habit Formation" by Smt. Pratima Patel (India), (xi) "Duty - Seva - Selfless Service" by Smt. Deepali Changakoti (India), (xii) "Discrimination—Ceiling on Desires" by Dr. Vijayalaxmi (India), (xiii) "The Inner Instrument" by Ms. Berniece Mead (U.S.A.), (xiv) "Determination—Sense Control-1" by Smt. Neeta Khanna (India), (xv) "Determination—Sense Control-2" by Smt. Venkatesh (Oman), (xvi) "Parenting—An Integral Part of Educare" by Dr. Pal Dhall (Australia), (xvii) "Briefing Gurus on Child Psychology" by Dr. T Judo (Thailand) (xviii) "Modification and Sequencing of Curriculum in three Groups of Bal Vikas Course" by Smt. Kamla Pandya (India), (xix) "Induction of the Life and Message of Sri Sathya Sai Avatar in Curriculum-1"

by Smt. Devi Rajgopal (India), (xx) "Induction of the Life and Message of Sri Sathya Sai Avatar in Curriculum-2" by Smt. Nimmi Kanwar (India).

At the end of the Third Plenary Session, Sri S. V. Giri, Vice Chancellor, Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning gave an illuminating and enriching talk explaining to the delegates how the system of Educare was being implemented in Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning under the loving care and Divine guidance of Bhagavan Baba. Sri Giri also emphasised the need for making Tyaga (sacrifice) and Yoga (spirituality) as the fundamental concerns in the curriculum.

Valedictory Function

The Valedictory Function of the Convention was held in Sai Kulwant Hall on the morning of 4th July 2001 in the Divine Presence of Bhagavan Baba. The programme commenced with Veda chanting by school students at 7.30 a.m. Thereafter, Sri Indulal Shah, International Chairman of Sri Sathya Sai Overseas Organisations, presented an overview of the deliberations of the Convention. Sri Shah informed the august gathering that in this Convention, 7,000 delegates from India and 44 overseas countries took part and discussed as many as 18 subjects in four Plenary Sessions with the help of 21 learned experts, both from India and abroad. Delineating the progress of Bal Vikas over the years, Sri Shah said that this programme started by Bhagavan in a meagre way in 1969 had expanded to all parts of the world and covered as many as 2,00,000 students and 10,000 Bal Vikas Gurus who were conducting training in the 9-year Bal Vikas and EHV programmes.

After this, Dr. Victor Kanu, Director, African Institute of Sri Sathya Sai Education addressed the delegates and narrated how he was called to present Bhagavan's Human Values Programme at the U.N. in New York. He also told that a U.N. team was due to visit the Institute to study this system of education.

After these two speeches, Bhagavan Baba gave His Valedictory Message to the delegates (full text published elsewhere). The Valedictory Function came to a close at 9.00 a.m. with Arati to Bhagavan and distribution of Prasadam to all.

The Recommendations and Action Plans of the Convention were placed at the Lotus Feet of Bhagavan on the morning of 5th July 2001, the holy day of Guru Purnima by Sri Indulal Shah and Sri Ryuko Hira. Sri Hira also placed before Bhagavan the pledge taken by all the delegates to the Convention to implement the programme of Sri Sathya Sai Educare.

Back Page

The Inextricable Link *The only easy and sure means for ordinary people to realise God, without regard to their caste, nationality, sex or any other qualification, and without their having to practise various austerities and penances, is intense devotion and love for God. The Gopikas experienced the continuous presence of God within and without. They showed that such sublime love was possible for ordinary persons with little knowledge of the scriptures or spiritual disciplines. They demonstrated the inextricable link between the Divine and the individual.*

~Baba

Goodness of Bharat will Achieve World Unity

*There is no disease more fatal than greed,
There is no foe more dangerous than anger,
There is no grief more tormenting than poverty,
There is no joy greater than wisdom.*

(Sanskrit Verse)

Diseases do not afflict only the body. The mind and senses are equally afflicted by diseases. History is witness as to how Duryodhana and his brothers met their nemesis because of their greed. Greed is one of the main diseases afflicting mankind. I do not suffer from any kind of disease because there is no trace of greed in Me. That is why I am always healthy.

There is no greater enemy than anger in the world. I do not hate anybody nor does anyone hate Me. I love all and all love Me. The life principle is the same in everyone. The entire world is a big mansion and human beings are like the members of a family. Anger is one of the fundamental causes of all differences. There is no trace of anger or hatred in Me and hence everyone loves Me.

There is no misery greater than poverty. I am not poor in any sense. Love is My wealth. Sacrifice is My opulence. How can poverty touch Me when I have immense wealth of love and sacrifice? It is essential for all to get rid of greed, anger and hatred. Since I am not afflicted by them, I am in eternal bliss. I enjoy perfect health. Worries do not bother Me at all.

Child Krishna Manifests His Divinity

Embodiments of Love!

Sage Garga was highly respected by both the Pandavas and the Kauravas. He was the Kula Guru (preceptor of the clan) of the Yadavas. He was a great scholar, having profound knowledge of the scriptures. He was endowed with great wisdom. Nanda and Yashoda invited him to their house for the naming ceremony of their baby.

I am not referring to Myself here. Incarnations usually are Shukla (white), Aruna (orange) or Pita (yellow). But here was a child who was black. Hence, Garga considered the name Krishna (black) as most appropriate for the child. After naming the child, Garga narrated several wonderful incidents that were to take place in the life of the child before departing from the house of Nanda.

After some time, Garga visited Nanda's house again. He strictly observed austerities; he prepared his food with his own hands. He would not eat food even touched by anybody else. Yashoda therefore provided a secluded place for him to prepare his food. He asked for a little flour, jaggery and milk. Sugar as a sweetener was not known then. Sweets were made with jaggery. Garga put the constituents into a vessel and prepared a sweet pudding. As he was a devotee of Lord Vishnu, he offered the pudding to the Lord before partaking of it. Suddenly, the child Krishna dashed into the room and started eating the sweet pudding kept in the vessel. Hearing the sound, Garga, who was praying, opened his eyes and found the child eating the pudding that

he had prepared for himself. He called Yashoda and told her, "Mother, do you see what your son is doing? I am hungry and your son has eaten the pudding before I could." Yashoda caught hold of Krishna and admonished Him for His action, saying, "Don't you know that the venerable Garga is the Guru of our clan and you have defiled his food? Is it not our duty to honour our guests in a befitting manner?" Krishna replied, "Mother, I have not done anything on My own. It was he himself who called Me to eat the pudding." Yashoda then asked Garga as to why he called Krishna whom she had kept safely away. Garga said that he had not called Krishna. Krishna protested, saying, "Oh sage, why are you telling a lie? To whom did you offer the food in prayer before partaking of it? Is it not Myself to whom you prayed? First you offered the food to Me and now you are complaining!" Garga was perplexed for a moment, but soon he recognised that Krishna was none other than Vishnu Himself. He had prayed to Vishnu and Krishna responded. With this realisation, Garga was happy to partake of the leftover of the pudding eaten by Krishna.

When was Krishna actually born? He was born 3228 years before the Christian era on the day corresponding to 20th July at 3 a.m. It is A.D. 2001 now. So, Krishna was born 5229 years ago. He was born on Ashtami (8th day of the moon) in Bahula Paksha (dark fortnight) of the auspicious month of Sravana under the star Rohini.

At that time, there was a demoness who was a Balahanthaki (killer of infants). Her real name was not known to anyone, but she was generally called Poothana. It was her practice to wander from village to village and kill infants with her poisoned milk. In the course of her wanderings, she came to Repalle. She assumed a beautiful form, entered Yashoda's house and started feeding her poisoned milk to the infant Krishna. The infant Krishna sucked out along with the milk and the poison her entire life-force until she fell dead. Yashoda came running to Krishna as she heard the thud of Poothana's fall. Seeing the dead demoness, Yashoda was frightened.

One day, a lady vendor came to sell fruit. In those days, there were no monetary transactions; only barter system existed. Fruit had to be bought in exchange for grains. She was immersed in bliss on seeing the beautiful forms of Balaram and Krishna. She called them near, selected a few good fruits and gave them. Krishna said that He had taken her fruits, so He had to give something in return. He went inside the house and brought some grains of rice in His baby palms. Some of it however got spilled on the way from His tiny palms. Krishna put the few grains left in His palms in her basket. She paid little attention to what she received from the Divine child. In her daily exchange of fruit for grains, she hardly noticed the little offering from the hands of a child. Lo and behold! When she went home and opened her bundle, all the grains of rice had turned into shining diamonds. Such is the nature of the marvellous acts of the Avatar. Their significance and mystery are beyond the grasp of the human mind. As the Upanishads say, *Yatho Macho Nivarthanthe Aprapya Manasa Saha* (whence the words along with the mind rebound in futility without comprehending Divinity).

As Krishna grew up, He started taking the cows for grazing everyday into the forest along with other cowherd boys. One day as they were lost in playing, the cows moved to another part of the forest. Suddenly, there was a big fire in the forest. Frightened by the fire, the Gopals started praying to Krishna to save them and their cows. Krishna dispelled their fear by assuring them that everything would be all right. He told them to close their eyes for some time. The Gopals

never disobeyed Krishna and did as He said. After some time, the raging fire was extinguished and the cows started returning safely. Amazed by this experience, the Gopalas went about sharing this miracle with others in the village. They said, "Krishna is no ordinary being. He is verily God as it was not possible for anybody to do what Krishna did."

The following day, they again went into the forest. After playing for some time, Krishna said that He was hungry. When the Gopalas wanted to go to the village to fetch food, Krishna told them to go to a nearby place where a sacred Yajna was being performed, and ask the Brahmins for food. The Brahmins bluntly rejected their request by saying that they would give the food only after Poornahuti (final oblations) in the Yajna and after they partake of the food themselves. Seeing the Gopalas returning disappointed, Krishna said, "Only the mothers understand the hunger of children. Go and ask the wives of the Brahmins for food." In spiritual path, it is particularly women who readily recognise Divinity. The Gopalas went to the wives of the Brahmins and said, "Mothers, our Krishna is very hungry. He wants food." The mothers' joy knew no bounds as Krishna Himself, the protector of the entire universe, was asking them for food. They at once packed the food without even telling their husbands and went to Krishna. They served the delicacies to Krishna and Gopalas and experienced bliss in His proximity. Krishna told them to go back as their husbands would be waiting for them. *Karthavyam Yogamuchyathe* (discharging one's duty is Yoga). "Do your duty. Do not delay," Krishna said. They returned to their husbands and told them what had happened. Krishna's Will changed the minds of their husbands. They were very happy, and in fact asked for the Prasadam of Krishna.

It was evening when Krishna along with the Gopalas started homewards. On their way, a demon in the form of a python was lying on the ground. This python named Agadha was sent by Kamsa. If the mighty python opened its mouth, even cars could get in. The demon swallowed all the cows and was ready even to swallow the Gopalas. The Gopalas clamoured for help from Krishna. They said, "What would we answer if our parents asked for the cows?" Krishna pacified them. He entered the mouth of the demon and enlarged His body till the demon's body tore open. He rescued the cows after killing the python in this way. The Gopalas, awestruck with this incident, started spreading the glories of Krishna. Such miracles were experienced by the Gopalas every moment.

Kamsa Meets his End

The stories of Krishna's glory and miracles started spreading far and wide. This added fuel to the fire of hatred of Kamsa towards Krishna. As a part of his plan to kill Balaram and Krishna, he sent Akrura to invite both of them to fight with the wrestlers in his court. Despite knowing the evil intentions behind this invitation, Akrura went to Repalle to bring Balaram and Krishna as it was his duty to obey the command of the king. Seeing Balaram and Krishna mounting Akrura's chariot, the Gopikas and Gopalas blocked the pathway, thereby not allowing Akrura to take their Krishna away from them. They prayed, "Oh Krishna, don't leave us. Who will protect us if You go away? Don't go to that evil king Kamsa." Krishna pacified the grief stricken Gopikas and Gopalas with His gentle and sweet words appropriate to the moment. They reached Mathura.

Kubja, a short woman with a hunchback, was assigned the task of carrying perfumes to king Kamsa. On seeing her, Krishna asked, "Oh short lady, what are you carrying?" She replied that she was carrying perfumes to Kamsa, which he was very fond of Krishna went near her, deftly

stepped on her feet and with His hands under her chin lifted her up. Kubja, who was short with a hunch on her back, became straight and good-looking. These Leelas (miracles) were well expounded by Thyagaraja: *"You are beyond all description and human comprehension. Is it possible to estimate Your glory and splendour? I have been waiting for Your grace. Oh Lord! Listen to my prayer and redeem me. You are the one who brought back to life the dead son of Your preceptor. You are the one who subjugated the serpent Kaliya, freed Vasudeva and Devaki and saved Draupadi from humiliation. You fulfilled Kuchela's desires, You made ugly looking Kubja beautiful. You protected the Pandavas and saved 16,000 Gopikas. You are beyond all description and human comprehension. Krishna, it is not possible for even Brahma to describe Your glory. I have been praying for Your grace."* (Telugu Song) When Balaram and Krishna were passing through the streets of Mathura, even ladies came out of their houses to greet them. They were whispering among themselves thus: "Who are these children having radiant forms? Perhaps they are the sons of an emperor."

Balaram and Krishna entered the court of Kamsa where the wrestling competition was in progress. The competition did not produce a winner as none of the wrestlers gained an upper hand over the other. All of a sudden, Balaram and Krishna leapt onto the dais from where Kamsa was watching the proceedings and pulled him down. Kamsa fell down on the ground. Putting His foot on Kamsa's stomach, Krishna tore him to pieces and killed him. Kamsa had two wives Asti and Prapti. As it was not possible for them to stay there, they went back to their parents' house. Their father was also a mighty demon. The moment he heard the death of Kamsa, he became furious and set out to kill Balaram and Krishna. He came to fight with Balaram and Krishna many times, but was ultimately killed. Thus, Krishna punished the wicked and protected the pious. This was the Dharma for the Dwapara Yuga. But the Dharma for the other Yugas is not the same. Today man has to be put on the right path with sweet words and by setting an ideal before him.

Krishna showed many miracles to manifest His Divinity. The Gopikas and Gopalas were fortunate to enjoy and experience the Divinity of Krishna. Living in those days was highly sacred. People were engaged in selfless activities rather than in selfish deeds. All were always engaged in helping and never in hurting others. In this manner, they could directly recognise Divinity. Therefore, we should always perform our activities in a selfless manner and never indulge in selfishness. As I say often: Help ever, Hurt never. The cowherds were constantly acting in this manner. The situation is not the same today. Strange rumours are spread at times. Someone says that Sai Baba is angry with X or Y. But I bear no ill will against anyone, and nobody is against Me. (loud applause) Everyone loves and none hates Me. My mission is well known all over the world.

Bhagavan's Projects for the Service of Mankind

You are aware what educating children involves these days. To admit a child even in a Primary School, one needs to spend something like 20,000 rupees. On the other hand, in Sai institutions, education is imparted free of cost from kindergarten to postgraduate level. (Cheers) Our institutions do not collect even a Naya Paisa from any of the students here. Thousands of students have enjoyed these benefits. The whole world knows this fact.

It is the same in the field of health care. You know how much a heart operation costs these days. Each heart operation may cost some two to three lakh rupees. Is such treatment available to the poor anywhere? Wherefrom will they get so much money? This is not a happy state of affairs. With the aim that high-level health care should be available to all, I built a Super Specialty Hospital at Puttaparthi. It is ten years since the Super Specialty Hospital of Puttaparthi started functioning and already 12,000 heart operations have been performed. I leave it to your imagination to appreciate who is responsible for saving so many lives. In January this year, I started another Super Specialty Hospital at Bangalore. Within a period of six months, 1,500 operations have been successfully performed there. Who helped the poor there? The specialist doctors are highly paid. In our institutions, no aid is received even from the government. The salary of the teaching staff of our institutions is fully paid by us. You know how the salary scales of educational staff have gone up these days. We are paying staff salaries in accordance with government regulations. One should never go against rules and regulations. When contrary opinions were expressed, I said that no compromise should be made with regard to rules and regulations. When I am looking after the payments, why should anybody bother?

Take the Drinking Water Project of Anantapur. Even now there are some areas in Anantapur where there is scarcity of water. I have spent 300 crore rupees and made water available to the extent possible. Mahboobnagar is another water starved area in Telangana. I asked the Chief Engineer Kondal Rao to give a plan for water supply there. He gave an estimate of about 60 crore rupees. I told him not to bother about the money but to carry out the project. There is no point in putting up a project from a depleting source like bore wells and pumps; so I arranged for water to be brought from the Krishna river at a cost of about 110 crore rupees. Now the Water Supply Project for the Medak District is in progress. Many other similar projects are coming up. These hands are forever engaged in helping, not in hurting. (Loud applause) There are some jealous and petty minds who do false and imaginary propaganda. I take no note of this. I am only concerned with My functioning and not with the comments of others. I am aware that all love Me as much as I love them. In the single family of humankind, where is the room for jealousy or hatred? These are all imaginary. Whatever is anybody's imagination, My truth is unwavering. *Sathyam Bhruyat, Priyam Bhruyat, Na Bhruyat Sathyamapriyam* (speak the truth, speak pleasantly and do not speak unpalatable truth). There is nothing greater than truth in this world. Truth is God; love is God, live in love. Love is My wealth. Sacrifice is My enjoyment. What greater joy do I have? That is why I have been undertaking so many social welfare projects all along. None can comprehend My nature. Whatever I undertake is bound to succeed. When we do good, we need not bother about criticism. All that I do is for the good of others. Good actions should not be criticised. Good actions always succeed.

Meeting the Expenses of Hospitals and Educational Institutions

All may not be aware of the facts about our expenses. The Bangalore Hospital involves an expenditure of three crore rupees per month. Special medicines, artificial heart valves, etc., have to be imported from America. Similarly, the Prasanthi Nilayam Hospital costs about two crore rupees per month. I do not desire any help from the government nor are they giving any. Again, there are educational institutions at Prasanthi Nilayam, Anantapur, Bangalore, Muddenahalli and Rajahmundry. These cost about one crore rupees a month. In this manner, roughly the expenses come to six crore rupees per month. Wherefrom does it all come? However, I am giving it. It would require a corpus of about 600 crore rupees in deposit, which will yield an interest

sufficient to run the hospitals and educational institutions. If this is done, this level of free health care and education can be maintained. There are thousands of you here and I have never asked anyone for help. My hand is always above (giving) and never below (receiving). (prolonged loud applause) My hand is stretched only for love, but none realises this fully. What I needed was 600 crores and only today I have received the news that a sum of 600 crore rupees is coming from the U.S. on Monday. If this amount is apportioned as 300 crores for Bangalore Hospital, 200 crores for Puttaparthi Hospital and 100 crores for the educational institutions and invested, the interest accruing from these deposits will take care of the running expenses.

I have no personal desires or selfishness in Me at all. I have not asked anybody for help. Will anybody simply give hundreds of crores for the mere asking? None. But a single individual has come forward to give 600 crore rupees. I have no direct contact with that person. The message says, "Swami, You will receive the amount on Monday noon. Please put this money in Bangalore and Puttaparthi Hospitals. accounts as fixed deposit as soon as the amount is received." It may be hard to find entirely selfless people, but if you undertake selfless work, resources flow on their own accord. Bharat is a sacred land. It is a land of Tyaga (sacrifice), Yoga (spirituality) and not of Bhoga (sensual enjoyment). *Na Karmana Na Prajaya Dhanena Thyagenaikena Amrutatthwamanasu* (immortality is not attained through action, progeny or wealth. It is attained only by sacrifice). It is this spirit of sacrifice that makes such achievements possible. I have many other projects in mind.

Uphold the Dignity of Womanhood

Today many newspapers give news and pictures which are totally opposed to our culture. How sacred is the conduct of the women of Bharat! From ancient times, how high have women been held in our tradition! All energy emanates from the female principle. This sacred principle is grossly perverted in unsightly and immoral forms by the films and magazines. We are showing goddesses of welfare as objects of vice. Such vulgar exhibitionism is inimical to Bharatiya culture. We have to protect our culture and restore the proper status of the women of Bharat. We have to seek some appropriate method for achieving this. I am prepared to provide a suitable amount for those who can come up with appropriate proposals for the restoration and upholding of true feminine values and traditions in the media. With money, you can achieve worthy objectives like these.

In this world, much is achieved by money and there is no harm in using money in the work of upholding righteousness. All types of obscenity must be eliminated from the newspapers and other media. Exposure of young people to such images ruins their lives. To stop this trend and to strengthen Bharatiya culture, I am prepared to give help to any extent. Truth must be expressed, righteousness extolled, injustice and evil should be opposed, obscenity should be rooted out and the honour and respect of womanhood should be upheld. The glory of Bharatiya culture is based on the high regard it bestows on women. Welfare of women is the true welfare of Bharat. Here is a small example.

Our Krishan Kant (the Vice President of India) is here. His mother is a very pious lady. She is constantly remembering God. In fact, it is his mother's influence which is responsible for the exalted position occupied by Krishan Kant today. Many great men of this country owe their greatness to the influence of their mothers. I am very happy to see such persons. Even now she

advises her son in the right path as if he were a little child. Krishan Kant also respects his mother highly and carries out her wishes with great humility. Today the country needs such mothers and children. If mothers are good, children will also be good. To ensure proper care of the mother and the child, I am proposing to establish a Mother and Child Health Care Centre in Bangalore. The relationship between parents and children is far from ideal today. If the parents abuse each other, the children will fight among themselves. This is a very unhappy situation. The teaching of our scriptures is: *Matru Devo Bhava, Pitru Devo Bhava, Acharya Devo Bhava, Atithi Devo Bhava* (revere your mother, father, preceptor and guest as God). Parents devote their entire lives for the welfare of their children. Children should realise this and behave in an appropriate manner. Krishan Kant is affectionate towards his mother. Basked in the love of his mother, he has always been obedient to her. Such examples must be widely emulated in our country.

A Unique Plan to Help the Destitute Children

Unfortunately, today in this country, there are many fatherless and motherless children in great distress. My resolve is to help such children by providing them proper amenities by way of houses, education, etc., and mould them into ideal citizens. (cheers) I have spoken about this to the local District Collector. He has agreed to help and has allocated some land for this purpose. The construction has to be commenced shortly.

There is nothing hidden in My actions. My nature is not to amass riches but to help all to the extent possible. All I do is transparent. Bring to My notice any such deserving orphan or fatherless child. If the mother is alive, I shall arrange to allocate one lakh rupees in her name to be kept in fixed deposit for the upbringing of the children until they are able to support themselves. All that I do has a great ideal for humanity. Chairman of Nagarjuna Construction Company, who recited his compositions just now, has agreed to construct the houses expeditiously. He has assented with alacrity. The project is to construct one house per fatherless family and provide the wherewithal for livelihood and schooling of the children until they are educated and become capable of discrimination. Today we have a large number of educated children, but many lack discrimination. Education should always lead to discrimination. My firm resolve is to disseminate such discrimination widely. What others say is of no concern to Me because what I am proposing is good. I have no ill will against anybody and I love everybody equally. You should also love all, and everyone will love you in return. Love to love and heart to heart. Disregard every manner of adverse comments. Hold firm to your resolve.

Having resolved, what ought to be resolved, hold on to it till you have succeeded. Having desired what ought to be desired, hold on to it till your desire is fulfilled. Having asked what ought to be asked, do not leave the hold till you get it. Having thought what ought to be thought, hold on to it till you have succeeded. With heart mellowed, the Lord must yield to your wishes or forgetting yourself, you should ask Him with all your heart. Persevere, be tenacious, and never give up, for it is the quality of a devotee never to retreat, abandoning his resolve. (Telugu Poem)

Pursue your resolve firmly and I will grant your wish by your sheer perseverance. This should be the relationship between you and Me. Be active in good deeds, act righteously, respect womanhood. The glory of women is the index of the glory of the country.

The history of Bharat is replete with examples of women of high character such as Savitri who brought back to life her dead husband and Sumathi who could stop the sun from rising. But we are showing scant regard towards our women and are treating them badly. This is a big mistake. The country's welfare is closely linked to the welfare of women. Therefore, we have to uphold the dignity of womanhood. This is the highest education. Take to heart this lesson.

Going abroad and acquiring some foreign qualification and earning a lot of money is not a sign of greatness. You have to hold fast to Bharatiya culture and uphold the honour of your country. Engage yourself in good deeds. Love even those who abuse you. I am a standing example of this. My Life is My Message. You should do the same. Goodness encounters several impediments. Stones are thrown only on fruit bearing trees. Similarly, good people receive brickbats. This should not make us waver. Rough diamond acquires value as it is cut and polished. In the same way, abuses turn into ornaments. Hence, we should disregard abuse and hold on to our righteous ideals firmly.

The cowherd companions of Krishna and Balaram became ideal persons. In the same manner, I want all the students here to become ideal. Serve your parents, respect them and obey them implicitly. That indeed is the essence of Bharatiya culture. *Loka Samastha Sukhino Bhavantu* (May all the people of the world be happy!). This is our goal. Do not seek your own happiness; work for the welfare of the entire world. Abandon selfishness and pursue the welfare of others and attain Paramartha (supreme goal). That is true education. Acquire this education.

Embodiments of Love!

Your education is not merely for earning wealth, but for cultivating virtues. You desire wealth, power and friendship, but without character they are of little consequence. Therefore, you should acquire good qualities and build your character. Then the glory of Bharat will spread all over the world. Bharat will achieve unity with all countries.

Today is Krishna Janmashtami, the birthday of Lord Krishna. I am making a promise today that the people of all the countries, viz., Pakistan, China, Germany, Russia will be united. That should be our goal. The goodness of Bharat will lead to this unity. Unity is essential. Purity lies in unity and purity leads to divinity., You should achieve divinity.

Bhagavan concluded His Discourse with tie Bhajans, "*Hari Bhajan Bina Sukha Santhi Nahi...*" "*Prema Mudita Manase Kaho...* ", "*Subramaniam, Subramaniam...*" and "*Vahe Guru Vahe Guru...*"

***From Bhagavan's Krishna Janmashtami Sandesh in Sai Kulwant Hall, Prasanthi Nilayam on
11th August 2001***

KRISHNA JANMASHTAMI CELEBRATIONS AT PRASANTHI NILAYAM

Unity, Purity and Divinity

"Today is Krishna Janmashtami, the birthday of Lord Krishna. I am making a promise today that the people of all the countries, viz., Pakistan, China, Germany, Russia will be united," declared Bhagavan Baba while giving His Krishna Janmashtami Message to a mammoth gathering of devotees in Sai Kulwant Hall at Prasanthi Nilayam on 11th August 2001. Bhagavan further said, "The goodness of Bharat will lead to this unity. Unity is essential. Purity lies in unity and purity leads to divinity. You should achieve divinity."

Celebrations of this sacred festival began on the morning of 11th August 2001 with the Divine Darshan of Bhagavan in Sai Kulwant Hall, Prasanthi Nilayam. Bhagavan came to Sai Kulwant Hall at 6.45 a.m. As soon as Bhagavan occupied His chair on the specially decorated dais after His usual round of Darshan, the Institute students started chanting Stotras which included Krishnashtakam, Madhurashtakam, Pandurangashtakam, etc. They also sang songs in praise of Lord Krishna and Bhagavan Baba. After an hour of this blissful singing, the students started Bhajans which were followed by the devotees in chorus, surcharging the entire milieu with spiritual vibrations. The morning programme came to a close at 8.30 a.m. with Arati to Bhagavan. Prasadam was distributed to all the devotees before the close of the morning programme.

In the afternoon, Bhagavan came to Sai Kulwant Hall at 3.45 p.m. The Vice President of India, Sri Krishan Kant, who came to Puttaparthi on the previous day along with his family to offer obeisance to Bhagavan, shared the dais with Bhagavan. In the beginning of the programme, Primary School students in ochre robes chanted Veda Mantras.

Before the Divine Discourse of Bhagavan Baba on this sacred occasion, the distinguished guest, Sri Krishan Kant, addressed the devotees. Terming the teachings of the Gita as "the sum and substance of the search for truth", Sri Krishan Kant quoted a Hindi couplet to state that truth can never be defeated. *Yug beete par Sathya na beeta, sab hare par Sathya na hara* (eras have passed but the truth has remained eternal, all have been defeated but truth has never had any defeat). Referring to the teachings of Lord Krishna as the eternal source of inspiration for mankind and especially for India, Sri Krishan Kant observed, "To India Lord Krishna has at all times been a source of inspiration all through our struggle. For those Indians who participated in the Indian freedom struggle, the bonding with the Lord is more special. And you know Krishna was born in jail." It was the message of the Gita to fight fearlessly without recourse to despondence in adversity and exuberance of joy in success that sustained the freedom struggle of India, said Sri Krishan Kant. The distinguished speaker stated that Gandhiji and Vinoba Bhave regarded the Gita as mother. Emphasising the relevance of the values enshrined in the Gita for modern times, Sri Krishan Kant observed, "The Divine is defined as dominant mother principle, which is the embodiment of the best of all the creative values. The future of humanity can be safeguarded and enriched if the mother values guide all our activities in industry, administration, education, science, technology and research." In conclusion, Sri Krishan Kant referred to the teachings of Bhagavan Baba and observed, "For a world of peace and happiness, Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba's love, affection and care represent the divine mother values of the Gita."

Earlier, Sri A. V. S. Raju, Chairman, Nagarjuna Construction Company, regaled the devotees with his Telugu poems on Sri Krishna, Sri Rama and Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba, and Dr. G. Venkataraman, former Vice Chancellor of Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning, made a

brief speech. Quoting the declaration of Bhagavan Baba from His reply to Dr. Hislop's query, Dr. Venkataraman stated that the people of this era had the rarest of the rare opportunity to be born as contemporaries of the Avatar, Bhagavan Baba. Referring to the teachings of the Gita, Dr. Venkataraman stated that we should be concerned only with our duty and not with the outcome of our actions as taught by Lord Krishna in the Gita.

In the end, Bhagavan gave His nectarine Discourse, full text of which has been given elsewhere in this issue. The programme came to a close at 5.25 p.m. with Arati to Bhagavan.

The Beauty of Baba's Love

~Dorothy and Moyia O'Brien

"You will find that people will not always act the way you expect them to, the way you would like them to and the way you think they should. You cannot change people, but if you put enough love into any situation, it will work out right in the end." ~**Sathya Sai Baba**

*"You fill our lives with sunshine,
Your smile is a thousand stars,
Your presence a brilliant rainbow,
Your teachings sweet Prasad.
Your lotus feet are sweet Amrit,
You emanate pure love.
You are our greatest strength,
You are the moonlit sky above."*

We had the joy of saying these words to Baba in an interview once, and He smiled sweetly and tenderly at us and said, "Very happy".

He is Always with us

He does mean all of that to us and so much more. He is the joy of our lives. He is our father, our mother and our greatest friend. He delights us not only when we are with Him in India but every day of our lives. When we wake in the morning, our first thoughts are of Him. We say His special morning prayer and ask Him to guide and protect us through the day and we do feel His presence with us.

He guides us safely to work at `Swara', our place for disabled people and when we have a problem we ask His help and it always comes in the form of needed helpers; or finance and inspiration to make difficult decisions. He guides us home safely in the evening and gives us the help we need there to cope with our physical disabilities. He sends us beautiful caring people to give us love and consideration. We draw constantly on the inspirational words of Professor Kasturi from his beautiful poem, `The Annunciation Song'.

*"Bring your disaster, disease, distress, defeat
And pile them at His lotus feet."*

*Then light of foot and bright of heart
You can skip along the pilgrim path
Happy, hopping free."*

What an incredible comfort it is to know we have this help when we have done all we can ourselves to bring a solution to a problem or a trouble! When things are beyond us, we just leave it all to Him and happily know that even if the outcome is not what we expected or hoped for, it is His Will and as He has promised us He does everything for our good. In His words in a letter to His students He said, "Why do you fear anything when you have such a Lord of the universe to look after you?"

We know He is always with us because once He said to us when we were leaving for Australia, "Don't cry, I won't leave you. I will come with you and I will be with you all the time and I will be in your house with you." One day, He gave us a demonstration of how we work when we were making books for Him in our own home. So, we know that He is with us there and sometimes we can actually feel a sweet, loving vibration that we believe is Him.

Saviour of Mankind

As we are a little older than Baba, we had to live the first three years of our lives in the world without His physical presence but we must have been aware of Him on another level. Then as we grew from childhood to mature adulthood, we loved God in the form of Jesus. Twenty years ago, we found Him as our beloved Sathya Sai Baba who we love and worship. We hope, we will still have many years here with Him on earth. He asked us once, "Do you two want to merge?" We said, "Oh yes, but not while You are still here in Your physical form."

The time we became aware of Him in His physical body was a period of concern throughout the world. It was the time of "cold war with Russia" and there was with us all a feeling of dread that the whole 'world could suddenly be plunged into an atomic war. Then we became aware of Baba's words, "For the protection of the virtuous, for the destruction of evil doers and for establishing righteousness on a firm footing I incarnate from Age to Age. Whenever disharmony overwhelms the world, the Lord will incarnate in human form to establish peace and to re-educate the human community in the path of love. Let Me assure you that this Divine Body has not come in vain." These words are from His Discourse on 23.11.1968 which gave us great comfort, confidence and consolation.

Today when people are feeling concerned about the earth's changes that have been predicted from so many sources as being imminent in this period of time, Baba again gives us the consoling assurance that He has come on earth to help us and if His devotees focus on Him and follow His teachings He will protect us all. He emphasises that we must not have tears in this regard as this will result in drawing problems to us. What a wonderful gift these words are to us all when He says, "Why fear when I am here"! We believe that we will still have something to contribute if troubles come, even if it is only by doing service with the mind as Baba once said we do, which is sending love, light and healing thoughts to people in need.

Love People Instead of Trying to Change them

Because of our work with disabled people, we have been given considerable media coverage both in newspapers and magazines and on television. When we are being interviewed we always talk about Baba and on some occasions, words have been printed about Him. One magazine said, "When the twins go to India they visit a holy man who teaches them good living, harmony, truth and all other things wholesome." Another newspaper said, "They go to India twice a year to be spiritually recharged by a beautiful spiritual leader, Sathya Sai Baba who educates people about love, peace, truth, non-violence, right living and loving service." We believe these printed words have given a knowledge of Baba to many who were previously unaware of Him. We have had several enquiries from interested people giving us the opportunity of sharing Baba's love and beauty with them.

Another great pleasure that Baba has given us is the opportunity to listen to many of His Discourses. Most of the words are available to read later in printed form. However, our real delight is to hear Him talk to us while we are in His Divine Presence.

He has helped us to understand that we all have a divine spark in us, and we are therefore part of God. He has taught us the importance of unconditional love and that we should do service. But when we help others, we should not expect them to be grateful to us; instead we should be grateful to them for helping us to grow spiritually. He has helped us to understand our relationship with Nature, we have always loved, respected and tried to protect.

He declares, "*You are one with the most distant star and the least little blade of grass, you shine as dew on the petal of a rose, you swing from star to star, you are part and parcel of all this manifestation.*"

He has helped us to realise the power of love in these wonderful words: "You will find that people will not always act the way you expect them to, the way you would like them to and the way you think they should. You cannot change people, but if you put enough love into any situation, it will work out right in the end." This has proved very effective on many occasions.

AVATAR VANI

GANESHA CHATURTHI DISCOURSE

Selfless Service Earns Divine Grace

Oh man! Examine and enquire for yourself what great happiness you have achieved by spending all the time from dawn to dusk in acquiring knowledge and earning wealth while forgetting God.
(Telugu Poem)

Embodiments of Love!

Human life is the noblest, rarest and most worthy to be lived. It is the primary duty and responsibility of man to redeem his life by working hard and discharging his duties.

You struggle hard in life merely for the sake of filling your belly. You acquire many forms of knowledge from various fields. But you are not able to enjoy total bliss. So, take refuge in God and contemplate on Him. He will certainly show you the proper path. (Telugu Poem)

Cultivate the Spirit of Sacrifice

Embodiments of Love!

You strain so much just to fill your small belly. You earn money in every possible way for this. Does this bring contentment to you? No. There can be no contentment in this. On this basis, it is said, *Na Sukhat Labhyate Sukham* (you cannot derive happiness out of happiness). Happiness is the fructification of difficulties. You want all the comforts and happiness, but this will not give you peace. If you want to have a taste of happiness and peace, then difficulties are necessary in life.

In human life, sacrifice is most essential. *"As long as it is alive, the tree bears fruit for others; even after it dies, it offers itself as useful firewood. Trees are the very symbols of sacrifice. For the ideal of sacrifice, trees are the best teachers."* (Telugu Poem) Without sacrifice, you cannot enjoy the state of bliss at all. You should cultivate the spirit of sacrifice right from now onwards. We should be noble and broad-minded. We should never be mean-minded. *"You may extend all help and hospitality to a mean-minded person, but he will certainly harm you because of his evil nature."* (Telugu Poem) We should uphold the pristine glory, esteem and supreme status of man in the universe. Modern man is weak. In modern times, people commit mistakes, but they neither realise their mistakes nor do they repent. In ancient times, whenever the sages erred, they repented for their mistakes. They corrected their mistakes and led a pure life. They were exalted persons, always grateful to God. In order to express their gratitude to God, they started the worship of Lord Vighneshwara. You should follow such great and noble personalities.

Vinayaka Shows the Right Path

Who is Vighneshwara? Who is Ganapati? 'Ga' is related to intellect, 'Na' refers to wisdom. So, Ganapati is the master of all the secular and spiritual knowledge. Vinayaka has no master above him. He is the master unto himself. Vinayaka will never put you to suffering in anyway. Vinayaka blesses all your efforts and endeavours and grants you success. He will never allow anything evil to abide in you. He has mouse as his vehicle. Mouse stands for darkness as it moves about in the darkness at night. Vinayaka leads you to light by dispelling darkness.

Divinity is not limited to mankind alone. We find divinity present in birds and beasts too. Vinayaka with elephant's head manifests this latent, immanent divinity. The elephant is highly intelligent, faithful and loyal. It stands as a symbol of gratitude which is a very sacred quality. It is prepared to sacrifice even its life to protect its master. The elephant is also endowed with the quality of forbearance. *"Forbearance is truth, forbearance is righteousness, forbearance is the teaching of the Vedas, forbearance is non-violence, forbearance is sacrifice, forbearance confers happiness and heavenly bliss. In fact, it is everything in all the worlds."* (Telugu Poem) When there is no path for us to take in the jungle, it is the elephant that walks through and creates a path for us. Similarly, in this jungle of life, it is the elephant-headed Vinayaka who shows the ideal path for man to tread.

On this day of Vinayaka Chaturthi, various kinds of offerings are made to Vinayaka. All preparations are cooked in steam without using any oil. Preparations like Kudumulu and Vundrallu, made of rice flour and til (sesame) seeds, are special offerings prepared on this day. Why are such offerings made? It is because health is wealth. Those who partake of the food

cooked in steam attain perfect health. Today man is running after various delicacies, thereby spoiling his health. This preparation of rice flour and til seeds frees us from various defects of the eye. A combination of jaggery and til seeds prevents all defects and diseases caused due to bile, wind and phlegm. Rice flour preparations cooked in steam help in easy digestion, too, which helps us in attaining good health.

Ingratitude Makes one Wicked

We have learnt only to worship Vinayaka, but we do not try to understand the inner significance of his worship, which can lead us to health and happiness and make everyone an ideal person. If students worship Vinayaka and practise his ideals, they will improve their memory power and intelligence. Musicians first pray to Vinayaka before starting any music programme. No music programme begins without a prayer to Vinayaka. But because of the effects of the Kali Age, we are forgetting these ideals. This is the root cause of the misfortunes of man. Today man is after temporary, fleeting, ephemeral pleasures, forgetting eternal bliss. We should strive for permanent bliss and peace. We can achieve that only by praying to God. As the time passes, the very humanness is getting lost. Human values have disappeared. Man is not following his prescribed code of conduct. If human values are followed, divinity can be attained. Once you receive any help from others, it should be remembered throughout life. For any act of help, whether small or big, one must be grateful.

In 'Suryanamaskar', we extol the sun god by various Mantras. One of them is *Kritagnagnaya Namah* (salutations to the one who punishes the ungrateful). The light in our eyes is the gift of the sun god. It is because of the sun god that we are able to see. Even if the sun is present, we will not be able to see anything if our eyes are closed. Vision is the reflection of the sun god. The sun withdraws from the eyesight of the man (i.e. he turns blind) who does not have gratitude. Man cannot discharge his duties when he is blind. A person may be a great scholar, but when he closes his eyes, he cannot see anything. Therefore, Netra (eye) is the Shastra (scripture) for our life. Sage Saraswatha explained in detail the prayer offered to the sun god. He also sang verses in praise of goddesses Saraswati and Lakshmi. In fact, all these are divine forms. Their worship, particularly that of Vinayaka, promotes the power of discrimination. But you are not filling your lives with divine, noble and novel thoughts. You are wasting your lives with bad thoughts, bad vibrations and bad actions. Man today is bound by attachment. Attachment, greed and possessiveness are responsible for illusion. The ancient sages were great Yogis. They realised their mistakes and repented. Today you have Bhogis (pleasure seekers) who do not realise their mistakes. Bhoga is bound to cause Roga (disease). Therefore, you must realise your mistakes and repent sincerely and pray to God for forgiveness.

The teachings of Vinayaka help man to liberate himself. Worship of Lord Ganesha has been prevalent since very ancient times. Lord Ganesha is praised in the Narayana Upanishad. "*Tat Purushaya Vidmahe Vakratundaya Dheemahi Tanno Danthi Prachodayat.*" We find mention of Lord Ganesh in the Vedas. In music also people pray to Ganesha to invoke his grace. But what really helps to secure his grace? Do we have the qualities of Vinayaka? Vinayaka has a heart full of purity. Siddhi and Buddhi (success and intellect), considered to be his consorts, are his two eyes. Buddhi is the source of intelligence. For Buddhi, we need to have gratitude. An ungrateful man can never develop his intellect. Without intellect, one can never be successful in life. Vinayaka gives success. So, we need to know the inner significance of the worship of Lord

Vinayaka. Today, before we start any work, we pray to Lord Ganesha. Without praying to the master of masters, Vinayaka, and thereby, acting in an egoistic way, we are bound to fail. Vinayaka Chaturthi is the first festival of the year, followed by other festivals. The Bharatiyas begin their daily worship with a prayer to Lord Ganesha. Vinayaka grants physical, mental and spiritual strength.

Mind-Body-Atma Integration Course

In our college, we have M.B.A. course. It is called Master of Business Administration, but it is not really that. M stands for Mind, B for Body and A for Atma. So, M.B.A. indeed stands for the integration of all the three (cheers). The mind is given to think and enquire. The body is meant to perform good deeds. The Atma is the witness of the performance of these two. The Atma is eternal. The mind is fickle and has to be made steady. One should constantly enquire whether one has the mind of a man or a beast. We should act according to the mind of man and not of the beast. The body acts according to the mind. The intellect has the capability to discriminate whether a thought is good or bad, right or wrong. The intellect will never endorse an act that is wrong.

Man should understand that he is the combination of mind, body and Atma. He has to purify the mind. An impure mind is not acceptable to the intellect. Since the intellect transcends all the senses, it has the power of discrimination. We follow the mind and the senses. The mind is the master of the senses. But if it does not control the senses, then what is the use? So, master the mind and be a mastermind. To exercise control over the mind, worship of Vinayaka is important. Vinayaka does not react, but remains as a witness. He sets ideals in all fields of human endeavour by practising and demonstrating the ideals.

The Atma is eternal. It is the witness and watches everything, but does not get attached. The reason is that the Atma does not get involved in the activities of the body and mind. The Atma remains only tie witness.

Vinayaka is the Master of Sacred Vibrations

At one time, Valmiki asked Narada if there was anyone who adhered to truth, enjoyed eternal bliss, was ever smiling and forgiving, who did not commit any mistake, expressed gratitude for any small help, who always helped others, etc. In this way, he enumerated eleven noble qualities. Narada replied, "Oh sage! Why do you worry? Not just eleven, there are 11000 noble qualities in a single individual who has taken birth in this world. The person with such divine qualities has taken birth in human form as Lord Rama. He faced many problems and difficulties, but He never budged from the righteous path. He never gave up truth; rather, whatever He spoke became the truth. Follow the ideals of Rama." This was the sacred truth revealed by Narada. Some people wrongly think that Narada always caused conflicts. No. In fact, he was the very beacon of light that spread sacred wisdom. He gave to humanity the knowledge of the Gayatri Mantra conceived by sage Vishwamitra. In the Gayatri Mantra,

*Om
Bhur Bhuvah Suvah
Tat Savitur Varenyam
Bhargo Devasya Dheemahi*

Dhiyo Yo Na Prachodayat

`Bhur' pertains to matter, which is the body. The body is the combination of various materials like calcium, lead, etc. 'Bhuvah' is the vibration that comes out of the mind and makes the body function. `Suvah' is the radiation, which is the Atma. Man is the combination of materialisation, vibration and radiation. As is the feeling, so is the vibration. Everyday, morning and evening, Bhajans are held here. You think that the Bhajans are going on in the Bhajan Hall only. No. The vibrations of Bhajans are there all over this place. You can certainly hear the Bhajans even from this table if you listen carefully with a steady mind and pure and selfless heart. Everything is divine vibration—the walls, the roof, and this mike. Sage Saraswatha could listen to these vibrations and taught them to the other sages. What is the source of the Vedas? Who gave them to man? The Vedas were present everywhere in the form of vibrations. The Vedas were thus heard through sound, through vibrations. If you sit down and listen with a pure heart, you too can listen to it. Why go so far? Just close your ears and you can hear Omkar from within. Om is the source of the Vedas. *Om Ityekaksharam Brahma* (the sacred syllable Om is Brahman). Everything originated from Omkar. The same air produces seven different notes through different reeds in the harmonium. Similarly, Omkar is one; all other sounds are Vikaras (modifications of Omkar). Vinayaka is the source of all these vibrations. You may listen to any sound, but the most sacred is Omkar. If your body is full of evil vibrations, everything will be evil. Never allow a wicked man to come near you. Run away from bad company to prevent evil vibrations from entering you. *Tyaja Durjana Samsargam; Bhaja Sadhu Samagamam; Kuru Punyam Ahorathram* (run away from bad company; join good company and perform meritorious deeds day and night).

Human Beings must have Human Qualities

If you are good, your body will be full of good and divine vibrations. Bad thoughts give rise to bad vibrations. All that you see is the reflection of what is inside you. If you call a person bad, it is just that the bad in you is reflected in him. It has got nothing to do with him. Good and bad are the reflections of your inner being. Never consider that good and bad are separate from you. Good thoughts are the source of good vibrations. But modern students do not have the capacity to understand this truth. They have only bookish knowledge and not the knowledge of the heart. They fill their heads with all that they read in books, go to the examination hall and empty their heads by writing on the answer sheets. They do not even remember what they have written in the examination hall. All this is artificial knowledge; it is not true education.

"In spite of his education and intelligence, a foolish man will not know his true Self and a mean-minded person will not give up his wicked qualities. Modern education leads only to argumentation, not to total wisdom. What is the use of acquiring worldly education if it cannot lead you to immortality? Acquire the knowledge that will make you immortal." (Telugu Poem)
The education today is being used to earn a living. All this knowledge is superficial. Secular knowledge helps you only in worldly matters, it does not provide fulfillment. Therefore, you should learn that which is related to the heart.

Embodiments of Love!

All that is happening in this world today is destructive, divisive and extremely unnatural to man. Everywhere, we find atrocities, killings, conflicts and quarrels. Having been born as a human

being, what happened to your humanness? What happened to your compassion and kindness? What happened to sacrifice, love and non-violence? There is no trace of all these in you. We find only useless exhibitionism.

God is the personification of love and compassion. Sometimes, He may appear unkind, but there is kindness in that too. You do not have the capacity to understand this kindness of God. You can understand kindness only when you possess kindness. Similarly, you can understand love with love. But when you have hatred in you, you will see hatred only.

You are born as humans; therefore, you must live as humans. You must practise, propagate and experience humanness, and enjoy and share with your fellowmen the bliss that results. When you have such sacred thoughts in you, naturally you will become a divine person. You call yourselves human but, in reality, there are no human qualities in you. The behaviour is always perverted and the mind is full of evil thoughts. Where are the good feelings of love and compassion? We should imbibe the qualities of love and compassion. One without compassion is a Danava (demon). One with compassion is Manava (man). With compassion and love, you can achieve anything. The Gopikas pined only for Krishna's love. This was their prayer:

*"Oh Krishna, play your sweet flute and sow the seeds of love in the desert of loveless hearts.
Let the rain of love fall on earth and make the rivers of love flow."*

(Telugu Song)

From where was Krishna producing melodious notes? Was it through the flute, which was made of wood? What is a flute? This body with nine openings is the flute. From this instrument (body), proper and melodious tunes should come out and not the discordant ones. *"Oh Krishna! Play on, holding the flute of my heart, and sing tunes full of love,"* sang Radha. Listening to that tune coming from the flute of Krishna, Radha merged in the divine melody. Who is Radha? She is not just a woman. Radha is Dhara, the earth. The name of woman comes first. First Prakriti (Nature) and then Paramatma (God). That is why we say Radhakrishna, Sitarama, Lakshminarayana, etc. Therefore, you should worship Nature and do sacred deeds. Then, you will enjoy the presence of God. There is nothing that God cannot do for you. Nothing is impossible for Him.

Embodiments of Love!

Today is Vinayaka Chaturthi. Vinayaka is the master of Siddhi and Buddhi. He is the master of success and a leader par excellence. We have to pray to such a Lord. If your leader is good, you will certainly reach the goal. Who is a good leader? Your conscience is the leader, but you have polluted your conscience. It is full of bad traits and wickedness. Vinayaka is the one who annihilates all such bad traits in your conscience. A mouse smells everything wherever it goes. Vinayaka has such a creature as his vehicle. He puts the mouse under his foot. This means that he annihilates all bad traits. As he is the master of all sacred qualities, sages and spiritual seekers worship him. We have to recognise and understand the significance of Vinayaka, who is there in our hearts. We have to think of him constantly. He is worshipped by all gods. Saivites as well as Vaisnavites worship Vinayaka. He is the embodiment of all gods and the personification of the essence of all religions. He stands for auspiciousness. Once you recognise this and worship accordingly, you will redeem your lives.

True Devotion Lies in Selfless Service

Today we have many persons in Prasanthi Nilayam who have been serving Swami with steady and unwavering mind, unmindful of obstacles and difficulties. That is the true quality of a devotee. That is why I decided to felicitate all of them. (*Loud applause*) This is not merely felicitation but reflection of Bhagavan's love towards them. In future, many more things are going to happen. Continue to serve with faith and steady devotion.

We have here with us Professor Radhaswamy, who has been serving for more than ten years. When he is given some work, he says, "Swami, You have given me life. My bypass surgery was done in the Super Specialty Hospital. I do not want anything in this world. I want only to serve You." Do you find anybody with such a sacred heart? There should be more and more such people in future. We have a doctor from Italy, where he had a lot of work. Nevertheless, he wanted to work in the proximity of the Divine. He came and settled here and is working in the department of cardiology. Another doctor Keshav Prasad, a young man from the U.S.A., could have done great work there. However, he wanted to do Swami's service. Therefore, he came here with bag and baggage and settled here.

To outsiders, all these people look very ordinary. If you go deep and enquire about them and their bio-data, you will find them very special. They are good leaders and specialists in their fields. Such leaders are leading simple and unostentatious lives in Prasanthi Nilayam. They work very hard, day and night, just for the sake of Swami's love. You have seen Dr. Alreja. When I visited Mumbai thirty years ago, he was there in the crowd, at which time he sustained a heart attack and collapsed. I got up from the dais and ran to him, made him lie down and patted on his chest. Then a stretcher was brought and he was taken away. Later, he came to Puttaparthi, and from then onwards, he has been here and has never gone home. When Swami told Alreja, "You are nearly 90 years old. You cannot climb the stairs. It is very difficult for you to walk. You can go in a car", he replied, "My body is the car. As long as it is healthy, I will walk. You don't have to take any trouble. I don't want the car." He goes to the hospital everyday on foot.

Earlier, there was Seshagiri Rao in Prasanthi Nilayam. He was a great officer. He used to offer Arati. He lived for 100 years. Another person, named Kishtappa, came after Seshagiri Rao passed away. He used to come from a far off place on foot, sit through the Bhajans and offer Arati to Bhagavan. He too lived for 101 years. Surayya, a huge personality from Venkatagiri, with a height of 6 feet and 3 inches, was also here. He was a celibate. When I took rest at night, he used to come slowly and massage My feet. When I said, "Surayya, My feet are not paining. You need not press My feet," he said, "Swami, You do not have any pain, but if I do not press Your feet, I will feel pain. So let me massage Your feet." He used to leave the room only after I closed My eyes and pretended to sleep. He did this service till his last day. He too lived for 100 years. Karunyananda Swami also lived for 100 years. Kasturi was supposed to have died very early. But after entering Prasanthi Nilayam, he lived for ninety years.

Whoever came here lived long. What is the reason? They were thinking of God all the time. This ensures long, healthy and divine life. There are many people who do physical exercise and take medicines to remain healthy. But these people never took any medicines. If they had any problem, they came to Me to take Vibhuti Prasadam. They led their lives in this manner. There should be more and more such people. The youth should have them as their role models.

Youngsters today have a monkey mind; not just monkey mind, but something worse. What is said is forgotten the very next moment. The tongue has no bone and hence, it can be twisted in any way. But this does not mean you should talk whatever you like. You have to hold on to the promise you have made till your last breath. Many people say, "Swami, I am losing my teeth. What is the use after I lose all my teeth?" Swami says, "You may lose your teeth but the tongue is still there." As the teeth are strong, they go first. The tongue is soft; so it remains with you. When you go from this world, the tongue goes with you. Therefore, the tongue should be kept safe. It should always be soft and sweet. That is why I say: *You cannot always oblige but you can speak always obligingly.*

Talk softly and sweetly. Speak the truth. Follow righteousness. Chant the Name of the Lord and make others listen to it. Do you know why the tongue is given? Is it to taste everything? Do you know why the feet are given? Is it to go around in the lanes and bylanes? Each limb of the body has its own purpose. On this sacred day of Ganesha Chaturthi, you should sanctify every limb of your body. You should perform good and sacred deeds. *Sareeramadyam Khalu Dharma Sadhanam* (body is meant to undertake righteous actions). You should follow Dharma and abjure Adharma (unrighteousness). Let your body tread the sacred path and prove its worth. I expect you to earn a good name.

Bhagavan concluded His Divine Discourse with the Bhajan "Hari Bhajan Bina Sukha Santhi Nahi... "

*From Bhagavan's Ganesha Chaturthi Discourse in Sai Kulwant Hall, Prasanthi Nilayam on
22nd August 2001*

GANESHA CHATURTHI AT PRASANTHI NILAYAM

Memorable Ganesha Chaturthi Celebrations

The auspicious day of the birthday of the god of auspiciousness, Lord Ganesha, became doubly auspicious when Bhagavan felicitated and honoured His dedicated staff members for their selfless voluntary work in the various establishments of Sai Organisation. The celebrations of Ganesha Chaturthi began on the morning of 22nd August 2001 in Sai Kulwant Hall, Prasanthi Nilayam after Bhagavan's arrival in the Hall for the morning Darshan.

The programme started with Veda chanting by school students at 6.55 a.m. Thereafter, Prof. Anil Kumar, a faculty member of Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning, introduced the staff members who were to be felicitated by Bhagavan on this auspicious day. With beaming faces, they came one by one and received mementos and clothes from Divine hands besides a cash award of Rs. 10,000/- each. Some of them had dedicated their entire life for Bhagavan's Mission without any pecuniary benefits. They included eminent educationists, high ranking government officers, renowned medical experts, teachers, engineers, managers, administrators, etc., who recognised Bhagavan's Divinity in His early years and became a part of His Divine Mission, renouncing their lucrative and prestigious positions in their fields of work. The finest example of selfless dedicated service set by them has been a source of great inspiration for others, and

thousands of eminent experts today are in queue to get this unique opportunity to serve Bhagavan Baba, the Avatar of Kali Age.

The magnanimous gesture of honouring these selfless men and women by Bhagavan is sure to provide further fillip to this trend. Ecstatic devotees cheered them loudly as they received their awards from Bhagavan. Many of them could not contain their joy as they relished the greatest moment of their life. Later, Bhagavan praised their selfless dedicated work for the Sai Mission in His Ganesha Chaturthi Discourse. Bhagavan also exhorted the youth to follow the finest example set by these devotees in the service of humanity. The total number of the recipients of this unique honour was 49, twelve of whom were ladies. They represented almost all Sai institutions, viz., Sri Sathya Sai Educational Institutions, Sri Sathya Sai General Hospital, Sri Sathya Sai Super Specialty Hospital and the Ashram establishment.

After this, Bhagavan gave His Ganesha Chaturthi Discourse (printed elsewhere in this issue). The programme ended with Arati to Bhagavan at 9.00 a.m. In the end, Prasadam was distributed to all the devotees.

The immersion ceremony of the idols of Lord Ganesha consecrated and worshipped by the various institutions of Prasanthi Nilayam was held on the afternoon of 25th August 2001 in Sai Kulwant Hall. Amidst the chanting of Veda Mantras and singing of Bhajans the idols were brought before the dais by groups of students and staff in specially decorated vehicles. After arriving in the Sai Kulwant Hall, they circumambulated the Mandir and then stationed their richly decorated vehicles and idols of Lord Ganesha before the dais. By 3.15 p.m., all the groups had stationed their vehicles in the Hall. Bhagavan then went to bless each group one by one and posed for photographs with them. After nearly one hour of Veda chanting and Bhajan singing by these groups in this divinely surcharged milieu, the idols were taken for immersion at 3.30 p.m. The Ganesha Chaturthi celebrations came to a happy conclusion at Prasanthi Nilayam with Arati to Bhagavan.

Sri Sathya Sai Baba's Miracle of Transformation

Bhagavan Baba dwells in Puttaparthi but His Divine Mission spreads in all parts of the world through thousands of people whom He chooses in His own unique way. Dr. Yassin Sankar from Canada narrates how he was transformed and motivated to spread the teachings of Bhagavan Baba to various institutions.

I came to know Sri Sathya Sai Baba on April 1, 1978. On this day, I was rushed to the hospital by ambulance to the emergency ward. A team of specialists examined me and gave me a battery of tests, all of which I failed. Simple questions about my name, phone number, date of birth, occupation, place of employment and field of specialisation I could not answer. I was delirious and in a state of mental confusion and anxiety. The team diagnosed that I had a neurological dysfunction and I would be hospitalised for 6 months to a year.

A New Vocabulary in Values and Ethics

During the night in my state disconnected from reality, time and space, I dreamt a man with bushy hair and an orange robe who took me into a garden, sang a few Bhajans and touched my head. Next morning, the team of specialists arrived and started questioning me about my occupation, phone number, etc. I answered all their questions and was curious about this simplistic level of questioning. They were amazed at my lucidity and queried what happened in the evening. I told them about the dream; the dream that was crystal clear in my mind. They concluded, it was an amazing recovery. However, they decided to keep me in hospital for two weeks for observation. After I was discharged, I found out that the man in my dream was Sri Sathya Sai Baba.

I started reading everything about Him, His miracles, community projects, discourses, etc., and was overwhelmed by His divine wisdom. The second miracle more critical than my amazing recovery is the miracle of transformation of my vision, work ethics and behaviour.

I studied at top universities in the West, McGill University, University of Toronto and Johns Hopkins University and never learned a lesson in human values or ethics. So, when I became a professor I never lectured on this topic in management. I thought it was nonsensical, problematic, subjective, relativistic, etc. Since I started studying Sai Baba's teachings I now lecture on values and ethics; there is an infusion of values and ethics in all my books, research papers, and conference proceedings. A new vocabulary on values and ethics has entered my mind and consciousness. The value-based perspective in education, motivation, leadership, technological change, etc., is really the centre of my pedagogy and I have taken it to the Universities of Cambridge, Oxford, etc., where it was well received. This is a miracle of transformation not only in terms of my profession but also in my vision, goals, attitude, perception of reality, values, behaviour, lifestyle, work ethics—all elements of my personality.

I now lecture in my B. Com. and MBA classes on Sri Sathya Sai Baba's theories of stress management, human personality, education, values, ethics, leadership, etc., with a few questions in the mid-term examination on His teachings which are popular with students. I also assign research papers on His revolutionary definitions on education, manager, and have completed three books on His teachings and on students' reflections on these teachings.

Love in Action

The teachings of Sri Sathya Sai Baba on the unity of religions are most timely and relevant in the modern world. "All, religions are facets of the same truth," He says. Celebration of the festivals of all religions in His Ashram has made Him very popular in 160 countries. He is the only modern spiritual leader of such stature who seeks to build bridges of human understanding among all religions.

With His amazing projects, like the Super Speciality Hospitals at Puttaparthi and Bangalore, architectural wonders of the world, with His University for men and women, elite educational institutions of academic and moral excellence and pure water projects and other community initiatives, He has translated His love into action. "*Hands that serve are holier than lips that pray*" has been exemplified by Him.

Building Bridges of Human Understanding

It is because of Sri Sathya Sai Baba that my life is happier, more meaningful and insightful and my job is enriched with new challenges and new perspectives and meanings: "Work is love made visible." His love and service translated into action for over 60 years are mind boggling, and His initiatives at cross cultural understanding among devotees from over 160 countries are just as amazing.

For me the miracle of transformation is more powerful than His other miracles of healing, materialisations, etc. His revival of the great spiritual classics of Hinduism and Indian culture worldwide in 160 countries has made India the spiritual and philosophical beacon for the world. For the information age what we need is not more information but transformation according to Sri Sathya Sai Baba. Information-oriented knowledge makes man a machine, whereas transformation-oriented knowledge makes man a composer. One ton of information may contain zero insight. The mansion of happiness is built on insight into the Atma and one's character, one's moral compass, He states. Sri Sathya Sai Baba has given me a moral compass to guide me on the ocean of life. I have met many of His students in Canada who are true gems of virtuous character, work ethics and human excellence.

I am not from India and have never talked to Sri Sathya Sai Baba nor had an interview with Him. My ancestors left India 150 years ago. I visited His Ashram to know more about Him, particularly His teachings, wisdom, love, the ideal of service and His charismatic personality. His power to transform peoples' vision, goals, values, personality and character, His celebration of the unity of religions at His ashram, and His work at building bridges of human understanding across all cultures on the planet are most astounding and marvellous.

Dr. Yassin Sankar is a Professor of Management in Dalhousie University, Canada

Do not go on adding things that bind you. Bind yourself to the great liberator, God. —Baba

ONAM CELEBRATIONS AT PRASANTHI NILAYAM

Excellent Cultural Programme

The rich cultural heritage of Kerala came alive at Prasanthi Nilayam when Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organisation of Kerala presented a galaxy of cultural programmes as a part of Onam Celebrations at Prasanthi Nilayam in the Divine Presence of Bhagavan Baba on three consecutive days from 29th to 31st August 2001. The entire Mandir complex bore a festive look with traditional Kerala style decorations while Panchavadyam and Nadaswaram added extra charm to the festivities.

The cultural programme on the evening of 29th August 2001 commenced with Nadaswaram recital by Sri Kodandaraman of Bangalore. This was followed by a splendid invocation song in

praise of Bhagavan Baba by the Bal Vikas children of Wynad District. In the end, Sri Ganesan regaled the devotees with Jalataranga music. On the evening of 30th August, violin maestro Sri T .N. Krishnan sent the audience into raptures by the sweet tunes and Kirtans rendered by him in his own unique style. Thereafter, Sri M. G. Sreekumar and party presented a delightful programme of devotional songs. The programme on 30th August concluded with dance drama "Mahabali" by the Bal Vikas children of Quilon District. The cultural programme on the Onam evening, i.e., 31st August comprised of Carnatic music by Sri V. Ramachandran and a playlet entitled "Sinner Turns Saint" by the students of Sri Sathya Sai Vidyapeeth, Srisailam. Bhagavan blessed the cast and distributed clothes to all of them. Some of them were blessed by Bhagavan with His materialisations.

The main Onam programme was held on the morning of Onam, i.e., 31st August 2001. Bhagavan was led to Sai Kulwant Hall in a beautiful procession and was received with Poornakumbham amidst Veda chanting, Nadaswaram and Thalappoli. Swami inaugurated the function by lighting the sacred lamp at 7.10 a.m. The function began with a prayer song, which was followed by the Gowla Raga Pancharatna Kriti rendered by Sri Trichur V Ramachandran and party. A beautiful harvest dance by the Bal Vikas children of Quilon District, Sri Chandrasekharashtakam by the ladies from Kerala and a dance drama on the unity of all faiths by the Calicut Bal Vikas children were the beautiful and enriching items presented on this occasion.

Before the Divine Discourse of Bhagavan Baba, Sri K. Jaya Kumar, Secretary for Irrigation and Waterworks of Kerala State addressed the devotees exhorting them to put Bhagavan's teachings into practice. In His Divine Discourse, Bhagavan explained the significance of Emperor Bali's unique sense of self-sacrifice and praised the glorious cultural values upheld by the Keralites. The programme came to a close with Arati to Bhagavan at 9.25 a.m.

***Spiritual Blindness:** Today people study the Vedas and other scriptures as a ritual; they do not put into practice any of their injunctions. Of what avail is it merely to know how the Vedas and Upanishads have described the Divine when this knowledge is not reflected in one's life? Such a person is like a blind man who hears about the existence of the world but cannot see it. There is no difference between a physically blind man and a spiritually blind person who merely studies the scriptures. The scriptures are meant to provide guidance for practical living and not merely to be learnt by rote.*

~Baba

Be Near and Dear to God

Swami began His Divine Discourse by showering His blessings on the devotees in Malayalam: *Indha Pujiyamaya Onam Divasam Ella Janangalukum Isndey Paripurna Anugraham Asirvadam* (On this auspicious day of Onam, I confer My bounteous grace and blessings on all of you).

What happiness did the demon Somakasura attain by stealing the Vedas from Brahma and opposing Lord Vishnu? What was the fate of the ten-headed Ravana who abducted the consort of Rama? What did Duryodhana take with him in the end who refused to give to the Pandavas even as much land as would occupy a needlepoint? What happened to the wicked Kamsa ultimately who indulged in the gruesome act of slaying infants? The same will be the fate of the wicked today. If not today, one day or the other, they are bound to meet their doom. Oh man! Do not entertain excessive desires. Better lead a life of moderation. (Telugu Poem)

Embodiments of Love!

Truth is the foundation of the whole world. Truth is all pervasive. All types of wealth, comforts and conveniences are based on truth. Bereft of truth, the world cannot exist. Today man is facing hardships as he has forgotten truth. Truth can neither be hidden nor changed. *Trikalabadhyam Sathyam* (Truth remains unchanged in the three periods of time—past, present and future).

Truth is the Basis of the Entire Universe

Since ancient times, Bharat has been enjoying peace and prosperity because its people adhered to truth. The Bharatiyas propagated the message of spirituality to the entire world. The ideal of *Loka Samasta Sukhino Bhavantu* (May all the people of the world be happy!) is based on truth. There is no Dharma without truth. *Sathyannasti Paro Dharma* (there is no Dharma greater than adherence to truth). Truth is the main principle of Dharma. Truth is the very life of man. Without truth, there is no human life. All the human values are based on truth. Truth is the noblest of all the virtues. You might have heard the story of king Harishchandra who sacrificed his kingdom and even his wife and son for the sake of truth.

*The creation emerges from truth and merges into truth,
Is there a place where truth does not exist?
Visualise such pure and unsullied truth.* (Telugu Poem)

Truth may sound like a simple word, but its meaning is invested with immense greatness. All that *is* is embodied in Sathya (truth). The entire universe is based on truth. If the very basis is lost, what is left of life? There is no place where truth does not exist. Truth pervades everywhere.

Consequence of Evil Thoughts of Ratnamala

Embodiments of Love!

Emperor Bali based all his actions on truth. He performed his duties looking upon his subjects as his own children. He was the embodiment of love, charity and generosity. He was a shining sun of truth. It is because of his reign in the land of Kerala that the people there are happy and prosperous. He conquered all gods with his great prowess and performed Vishwajit Yajna in commemoration of his victory on the banks of the river Narmada. God incarnated as Vamana at that time. He was born as the son of the saintly couple Kashyapa and Aditi. They lived in a

hermitage known as Siddha Ashram. The young Vamana walked towards the site where Bali was performing the sacred ritual. He shone with brilliance and effulgence and everyone looked with adoration at His divine radiant form.

Everybody was attracted by the radiance and magnetic power of Vamana. Ratnamala, the daughter of Bali, saw the young boy and developed a desire in her mind to have Him as her own child and fondle Him. But in the meantime, as you know, Vamana pushed Bali down into Patala (netherworld). This event turned her love towards Vamana into hatred and she felt that she should kill Him herself. The all-knowing Vamana noticed what was passing through the mind of Ratnamala and pronounced 'Tathastu' (may it be so!). God is omnipresent. *Sarvatah Panipadam Tat Sarvathokshi Siromukham, Sarvatah Sruthimalloke Sarvama vruthya Thishthati* (with hands, feet, eyes, head, mouth and ears pervading everywhere, He permeates the entire universe). He blesses you as per your feelings and thoughts. He is constantly pronouncing this blessing on all. Nothing escapes His attention. That is why we should always keep our minds filled with good thoughts. He told Ratnamala, "Mother, you first desired to breastfeed Me. But seeing your father's downfall, your desire turned into hatred. You felt like feeding poison and killing Me. Hence, you will be born in Dwapara Yuga as Poothana and feed Me with poisonous milk, and you yourself will die." Therefore, it is essential for all of us to have always good thoughts as God pronounces His blessings of fulfillment instantaneously. Due to the ignorance of this reality, man fills his mind with many forms of evil thoughts.

*See no evil, see what is good,
Hear no evil, hear what is good,
Talk no evil, talk what is good;
Think no evil, think what is good,
Do no evil, do what is good;
This is the way to God.*

Imbibe the Virtues of Emperor Bali

If your thoughts are pure, you are blessed with purity. But if you fill your mind with evil thoughts and spend your time in evil activities and in evil company, you are bound to suffer and will be filled with misery. The consequences of every thought that emanates from the mind are determined by its quality. So, the fate of Ratnamala was determined by the thoughts in her mind. When you are subjected to misery, you blame God, but you do not realise that your suffering is the consequence of your own thoughts. This is what the story of Ratnamala teaches.

Emperor Bali was the personification of charity. He gave away everything in charity during the Yajna. To uphold his promise to Vamana, he sacrificed everything. Young Vamana asked for three steps of land. Bali promised without a moment's hesitation despite his preceptor Sukracharya's efforts to dissuade him. He told Bali, "The person before you is Vishnu Himself. So, do not make any hasty promises." Bali replied that there was no greater sin than going back on one's promise and, notwithstanding the contrary advice of his own preceptor, he upheld the promise made to Vamana. Bali was prepared to undergo any suffering for the sake of truth. So, Lord Vishnu sent him to Patala (netherworld) and gave him all the comforts of living. In Patala, he attained eternal life. He however prayed to Vamana that he should return every year to the

land of Kerala to see his subjects. Vamana granted him his wish. The people of Kerala celebrate with great fervour the festival of Onam which signifies the visit of Bali to this land every year.

Embodiments of Love!

Emperor Bali was highly virtuous. Though born in a family of demons, he was filled with divine thoughts. It is the consequence of the great merits of Bali that people of Kerala enjoy great benefits today. Onam does not mean merely preparing sweet pudding and various delicious dishes, etc., and eating them. We should think of the sacred encounter between Bali and Vamana. This being the day associated with the memory of the incarnation of God, it should be celebrated with gaiety and piety.

Cultivate Human Qualities

We should lead an ethical, moral and spiritual life. *Sathyam Bhruyat, Priyam Bhruyat, Na Bhruyat Sathyam apriyam* (speak the truth, speak pleasantly and do not speak unpalatable truth). These three values refer to moral, social and spiritual domains of life, respectively. All the three values ultimately depend upon truth. Following the path of truth and spirituality, we should work for the welfare of the whole world. Politically, Kerala may be predominantly communist. However, every Keralite, irrespective of his political ideology, performs the daily duties of a purifying bath, smearing of holy ash on his forehead or wearing a sandalwood paste mark, visiting temples, etc. Their love and devotion are unparalleled. Kerala is a beautiful State. Its people are suffused with spiritual fervour. But time has had its toll, and the tender hearts of people have turned hard. Why is it so? It is our own attitude that is responsible. The good or bad conduct of the individuals has its effect on the entire land.

*If money is lost, nothing is lost,
If health is lost, something is lost,
If character is lost, everything is lost.*

Therefore, first and foremost, you must have good character. This is what God desires at all times. Not recognising this truth, man spends his time in the acquisition of wealth and in other selfish activities. This selfishness should be done away with. All are one, be alike to everyone. The entire humanity is a single family. Whether you are an atheist or a theist, young or aged, you should recognise that you are all part of the single race of humanity. Forget all other superficial identities; remember that you are human. You have to develop human values. Without this, you are human merely in form, not in reality. Man today is filled with anger, desire, greed, jealousy, etc. These are animal qualities. Anger is the nature of a dog. Wavering mind is the quality of a monkey. You are neither a dog nor a monkey. When you are in a fit of anger, remind yourself constantly that you are not a dog and your anger will subside. Man today has lost human qualities and acquired animal qualities. This is a situation that must be corrected. What are the human qualities? Compassion, truth, forbearance, empathy, etc., are the human qualities which we must cultivate.

Prevent Evil Qualities from Entering You

God's actions vary and their significance cannot be understood by man. But you form your own opinions and attitudes. These are the reflections of your inner being. They are your own creation and do not conform to the reality. Various evil qualities like greed, jealousy, pride, delusion, etc.,

are your inner feelings. God is pure, attributeless and selfless and on such a Divinity, you project your own inner defects. This is a great mistake. You attempt to suppress your negative impulses. There is no use in such attempts for, sooner or later, they are bound to surface again. Your effort should be to prevent them from entering your heart. Several fuels like petroleum, coal, etc., are extracted from the earth. Wherefrom did they come in the first place? Over a long period of time, they accumulated deep inside the earth. Later they made their appearance outside. In the same way, evil tendencies like greed, anger, hatred, etc., get piled up in you. Some time or the other, they are bound to come out. So, take care that they do not enter you. This is the true human value. The very attempt to control or restrain your anger is a sign of weakness. In fact, you have to cultivate your nature in such a manner that the feeling of anger does not enter you.

Embodiments of Love!

There are many evil qualities. It is not possible to prevent all of them from entering you. You should discriminate and ensure that only good qualities enter you. You should ingrain them and be an example to others around you. This is the true human value. First of all, inculcate love. Love is God; live in love. We should have pure love filled in our heart. If our heart is full of sacred love, no evil tendency will enter it. The heart is like a single seat sofa, not a double seat sofa, or a musical chair. There is room only for a single tendency and let it be divine love. As there is no love in human heart, all wicked qualities get into it.

*Start the day with love,
Fill the day with love,
Spend the day with love,
End the day with love,
This is the way to God.*

Evolution of Mars is Based on Truth and Love

Love emanates from truth and truth emanates from love; one cannot exist without the other. Truth is the internal current and love is its external flow. The Vedic declaration, *Antar Bahischa Tatsarvamvyapya Narayana Sthita* (That all-pervasive God is present within and without) is an expression of this truth. The Narayana principle is the expression of this unity. The inner flow is continuous. This symbolises Saraswati. You may have seen the rivers Ganga and Yamuna. Saraswati is the invisible undercurrent. The eternal inner flow of the Saraswati principle represents speech. Our faculty of speech is the divine Saraswati principle and, as such, should not be abused or misused. You cannot always oblige, but you can speak always obligingly. Control of speech is of vital importance. If you slip and fall, there is no great harm; but a slip of the tongue causes irreparable damage. Of all the human faculties, speech is extremely important and should be used with great care. Never speak untruth and never hurt anybody by your speech. One may think that it is difficult, but it is very easy. In fact, more than your teeth or other parts of your body, your tongue is under your control. It is extremely flexible and has no bone in it. You can turn it any way you want and speak in whatever way you want to. Therefore, you must utter only sacred words through it.

Sounds emanate from the tongue. It is said that sound symbolises the Divine principle: *Shabda Brahmayi, Characharamayi, Jyotirmayi, Vaangmayi, Nityanandamayi; Paratparamayi, Mayamayi, Sreemayi* (God is the embodiment of sound, mobility and immobility, light, speech,

eternal bliss, supreme majesty, delusion and wealth). Therefore, you should always speak sweetly.

Embodiments of Love!

For the proper evolution of humanity truth and love are fundamental. Emperor Bali attained eternal life through truth and love only. Bali manifests his subtle presence without his body. *Body is like water bubble, mind is like a mad monkey don't follow the body, don't follow the mind follow the conscience.* This is the lesson of Bali's life. *"Conscience is changeless and deathless. It is eternal without birth or death. It has no beginning, middle or end. It is omnipresent as the Atma of every being."* (Telugu Poem) How can you comprehend such an entity? All that you conceive is merely a reflection of this reality.

Focus Your Mind on God

Sound is all-pervading. Today you have listened to some speakers who spoke in this Hall. You have also listened to the sweet songs sung here. All these sounds are everywhere. The divine vibrations in the form of sound are present in every soft or hard article or object here. They are eternal and omnipresent. That is why the Vedas declare, *"Sarvatah Pani-padam ..."* (Divinity pervades everything). These divine vibrations are immanent in all of us from top to toe. Divine vibrations will permeate you and you will feel divine bliss only if you make proper use of your speaking faculty consistently. *"Can you call such a person a human being who is bereft of humanness and is ignorant, irreverent and without any fear of sin? He is the enemy of universal peace."* (Telugu Poem) What is the source of all the violence and disturbance in the world? The goodness of an individual is reflected in the condition of the world. If each individual is good, then the world is peaceful. Speak well and act well. Transform your life into a sacred one. In this manner, distribute goodness all around. Talk with love. Sing with love. This is what the Gopikas sang:

"Oh Krishna, play your sweet flute and sow the seeds of love in the desert of loveless hearts. Let the rain of love fall on earth and make the rivers of love flow."
(Telugu Song)

Music is full of melody and human heart is full of love. So, music is the reflection of love. In fact, all phenomena are the reflection, reaction and resound of your inner reality. Life is a reflection and heart signifies reality. Without reality, there can be no reflection. Therefore, we should fill our hearts with love. Love is a vast term. There are many kinds of love. There is worldly love, physical love and love of God. Spiritual love that emanates from the heart is true love as it is permanent. All other kinds of love are transient. Spiritual love flowing out of the heart alone is positive and all other kinds are negative. Even the rituals you perform or meditation and worship you do are all, in fact, negative. You are sitting in meditation rotating the beads of your rosary, but your mind is doing purchases in the market. What is the use of such a meditation? Your mind should repeat the Name of God. Identification of the mind with the Name of God is real worship. Letting your mind wander while you sit in prayer and meditation is no worship at all.

Manah Eva Manushyanam Karanam Bandhamokshayo (mind alone is responsible for both bondage and liberation of man). Your mind should be focused on God. Your heart is the lock and your mind is the key. Put the key in the lock and turn it to the right and the lock opens; turn it to

the left and it is closed. Turn your mind towards God and you are free. Turn it towards the world and you are bound. Our mind is constantly turned towards the world. It is obsessed with the world. We are not directing it towards God. Of course, the world is there but it is impermanent, ephemeral. There is only one truth and that is the Atmic principle. To identify oneself with the Self is to 'merge' with Divinity. Worldly life is like a 'marriage', which is actually a 'mirage', an illusion. A mirage is visible but there is no reality in it. What is marriage when there is no unity between the husband and the wife? If one says yes, the other says no and there is endless strife. Unity alone is the reality. *Ekam Sath Viprah Bahudha Vadanthi* (Truth is one, but sages refer to it by many names.)

Man is the Embodiment of Divinity

For the sake of filling our belly, we study, acquire professional qualifications and engage ourselves in business activities. We work all our life for the sake of endless accumulation of wealth, property and possessions. Is there anybody who has taken a bit of it along with him after death? A certain amount of money is necessary for leading a comfortable life. Money makes many wrongs. Money makes many things. Money comes and goes, but morality comes and grows. Therefore, first of all it is necessary to acquire a stock of morality. Students today are keen to acquire wealth, power and friendship, but show little interest in developing virtues. Without virtues, wealth, power and friendship are worthless. It is the virtues that are permanent. So, man should acquire virtues. A true human being is one who is endowed with virtues. Without virtues, man is no better than an animal. For their physical needs, animals have reason and season, whereas man has no reason or season. What is the use of such an unrestrained life?

The people of Kerala must endeavour to preserve their ancient culture. All the seeds for the cultivation of their culture are still alive and strong. Emperor Bali encouraged pure and sacred thoughts and activities. He was called Mahabali as he was truly great in noble qualities. Kerala, ruled by such a great personage, is not to be reckoned lightly. In the map of the world, Kerala may look small, but it is a centre of divinity. (Cheers) It is a centre of bliss. This land gave birth to Bali and Vamana. It is the land where Vishwamitra performed intense penance and revealed the sacred Gayatri Mantra: *Bhur Bhuvah Suvah ...* Bhur represents materialisation, Bhuvah, vibration and Suvah, radiation. The universe is constituted out of these three components. Radiation is Divinity, vibration is the life principle and materialisation is the body. All these three are in you. You are not one person, but three, viz., the one you think you are (the body), the one others think you are (the mind) and the one you really are (the Atma). You achieve humanness only when you recognise this reality. Do not get too much attached to your body. So long as you are alive, you must keep your body in a healthy condition. For Karma Yoga, the body is the basis. For meditation and worship, the mind is the basis. For self-realisation, the heart is the basis. You must recognise the unity of all these three.

*Tridalam Trigunakaram Trinetrancha Triyayudham,
Trijanma Papa Samharam Eka Bilvam Sivarpanam.*

(Offer trifoliate Bilva leaf to Lord Siva, the three-eyed Lord having trident in His hand which destroys the sins of three births.)

What is the proper offering to God? It is said, Patram, Pushpam, Phalam, Toyam (a leaf, a flower, a fruit and water). What are these? Your body is the leaf; your heart is the flower, your mind is the fruit and the tears of bliss is the water. Instead of attaching undue importance to this ephemeral body, emphasise on the Atmatattwa (Atmic principle). The body is also to be surrendered unto God. How? By the acts of worship and other sacred deeds.

Embodiments of Love!

It is not necessary to go in search of temples and shrines for worship. Your body itself is a temple. *Deho Devalaya Prokto Jeevo Deva Sanathana* (body is the temple and the indweller is the eternal God). God is not to be found in the temple or in a palace. Find Him in your heart. All of you are the embodiments of Divinity. As the Vedas say, *Sahasra Seersha Purusha, Sahasraksha Sahasra Pad* (with thousands of heads, thousands of feet and thousands of eyes, Divinity pervades everywhere).

Keep this thought in your mind: "I am not a mere man, I am the embodiment of Divinity." Keep this conviction firm in your mind and you will realise the truth. As it is said, *Brahmavid Brahmaiva Bhavathi* (the knower of Brahman becomes verily Brahman). If you think yourself as Divine, you become Divine. If you consider yourself a human being, you will remain so. While your form is that of a human being, there is the Atmic principle in you. To recognise this Atma, you have to keep your heart pure. To purify our hearts, we celebrate these festivals. Where there is purity, there is Divinity. Therefore, purity is very important for humanity. Perform your daily duties in the light of the principle of love.

(Bhagavan sang the Bhajan, "Prema Mudita Manase Kaho..." Later, He continued the Discourse).

Firm Faith Develops True Devotion

Embodiments of Love!

Today there are many obstacles in the path of spirituality. But these are temporary and surmountable. Man's mind is wavering by nature. The environment of the world adds to its fickleness. Focus your mind on one goal and do not allow it to waver. You have to hold on to it till the very end. Such fixity of aim is not common these days. What is the reason? There are a host of so-called spiritual guides known as Mathajis, Swamijis and Babajis. Because of this, man's mind gets confused.

There is only one Divinity. Stick to any one deity of your choice and hold firm to it. This is true devotion. Do not go to various places unnecessarily. This will confuse you and destroy your faith. If you keep transplanting a sapling from one place to another frequently, how can it grow into a healthy tree? It has to be planted at one place, manured and watered regularly until it grows into a firm, strong tree. If you keep changing your spiritual guides frequently, your devotion gets adulterated. Do not resort to such a course. As the Gita says, *Mamaivamsho Jeevaloke Jeevabhuta Sanathana* (the eternal Atma in all beings is a part of My Being). Trust that God is in all, but if one keeps on changing from one god to another, it is false devotion. You should not change your allegiance. God is *Nirgunam, Niranjanam, Sanathana, Niketanam, Nitya, Suddha, Buddha, Mukta, Nirmala Swarupinam* (attributeless, pure, final abode, eternal, unsullied, enlightened, free and embodiment of sacredness). You should be firm in your faith. No

matter what difficulties you encounter or whatever hardships you suffer, you should get over them and go forward. That is true devotion. Many great souls had to pass through such ordeals. What difficulties did Mira and Sakkubai not pass through? But they held themselves firm to their faith and never deviated from their chosen deities. Mira's husband, the Maharana himself, found fault with her-and forced her to leave the palace. Mira was shocked but she recovered her composure in a moment. Consoling herself, she thought of going to the banks of Ganga and Yamuna. (Swami rendered the song in His Divine voice, "*Chalo Re Man Ganga Yamuna Teer, Ganga Yamuna Nirmal Pani, Sheetal Hoth Sareer...*"). Today people extol Mira for her true devotion. We have to develop such staunch devotion.

Adi Sankara also taught in a similar way. He advised a Brahmin against wasting his time in learning the rules of grammar and asked him to concentrate on the Name of Govinda instead. "*Oh foolish man, concentrate on worshipping Govinda, for when the end approaches near, your rules of grammar will not come to your rescue. So, worship Govinda.*" (Sanskrit Verse) All the teachings of these great personages are true and eternal. You should remember such teachings. If you keep changing day by day, you will pollute your heart. Have control over your wavering mind and deluding vision. This is the main quality of a true devotee.

Worship any form, any name of God. In fact, God has thousands of names and forms. *Ek Prabhu Ke Anek Nam* (the one Lord has many names). You worship God with thousands of names, but you should be fully aware that it is one Divinity you are addressing. Rama, Krishna, Govinda, Allah, Jesus, etc., all these names denote the same Divinity. Hold this faith firmly in your heart and lead a worthwhile and blissful life. You should always be happy. Happiness is union with God. Have union with God. If you unite with the world, you will never be happy. You will have no peace. Many people come to Me asking for peace. I tell them, "Son, peace is not outside, what you find outside are only pieces." You are the embodiment of peace, you are the embodiment of God, you are the embodiment of truth and you are the embodiment of Dharma (righteousness). When you are yourself the personification of peace, why are you looking for it outside? Follow your heart and you will reach your goal. Understand the divine principle of unity and sanctify your life. This is what you are required to do on this holy festival of Onam. Man's life is full of difficulties and worries.

"To be born is a worry, to be on the earth is a worry; world is a cause of worry and death too; entire childhood is a worry and so is the old age; life is a worry, failure is a worry; all actions and difficulties cause worry; even happiness too is a mysterious worry." (Telugu Poem)

If you dig a well by the side of the sea, you will get only brine water. If you dig a well near the Ganga, you will get pure water of the Ganga itself. When you have got the pure water of the Ganga flowing nearby, why do you waste your energy, time and money by digging wells here and there? There is no need for any other well anywhere. God is like the Ganga. Be near God and be dear to Him and enjoy bliss. (*Cheers*)

The people of Kerala are really very lucky. Instead of celebrating this festival in their own small way in their homes, they have got this opportunity to celebrate it in this grand manner in the company of thousands of people assembled here and enjoy supreme bliss. The people of Kerala are the subjects of Bali and are blessed by Vamana, and therefore they are all very lucky and full

of merit. Remember and adore your ancient culture. That is your life and your sustenance. These days, our culture is being forgotten. If you lose your culture, what are you left with? Everything is lost. The seeds of ancient Indian culture planted in this land are alive and growing. Both believers and nonbelievers are wedded to this culture. Ensure that this culture is nurtured and developed. This is My wish. I don't want anything for Myself. There is no selfishness in Me. All that I want is your happiness and your love. I want your love to grow more and more. That is what I expect from you.

*From Bhagavan's Onam Sandesh in Sai Kulwant Hall, Prasanthi Nilayam on 31st August
2001*

UNITY OF RELIGIONS

Religions are the Pathways to God

~Maj. Gen. S. P. Mahadevan

*All religions are Mine. All forms and names are Mine.
You call Me by any name, I will answer.*

- Baba

Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba has summed up the concept of unity of religions just in one line: *There is only one religion, the religion of love.* Bhagavan further says, "As all rivers reach the same ocean, all religions are the paths to the one and the same God." So, various religions are in fact different roads converging at the same destination. Swami has been saying that unity of religions is unity in diversity. He has confirmed this divine concept by giving to the world a symbol which incorporates the emblems of five major religions of the world, denoting at the same time the five basic human values, namely, Sathya, Dharma, Santhi, Prema and Ahimsa.

There is no Duality

What is religion? The word 'religion' has its origin from the Latin word religio-onis, meaning 'bond/union' (with God). How can we unite with something which cannot be defined? We know from the scriptures of most religions that God is in everything and everything is in God. His mystery is not only for the common man, but for the intellectual and the rationalist also. In an interview, Swami described man's relationship with God in these words: "You are like the fish that is mostly made up of water, is surrounded by water and is swimming through water. Likewise you are God, surrounded by God and from birth to death you relate with everything that is God. No separation, no this or that, all just the One expressed in multitude of diversity—God's play. You feel separated by your own ignorance and delusion. Experience the divinity within and in everything and in every person. Love all - Serve all."

To put it in simple words, the duality or separation, the multitude of opposing thoughts, words and actions, our reactions and conflicts arise from our ignorance, ego, attachment and the like. However religious and pious our outlook may be and however clever or intellectual we may consider ourselves to be, we carry with us in our subconscious mind an enormous cargo of ego, doubts, fears and prejudices that cause our separation from God, who can be experienced through

love. Swami keeps on saying, "Unity is divinity, purity is enlightenment. Unity in diversity is the university of life."

Sai has not incarnated to start a new religion, cult or sect. He has come in human form to show us the royal path to reach God by following our respective religions and by being good Christians, good Muslims, good Hindus and good Buddhists, etc. Bhagavan says, "The aim of all religions is to kill the false self to allow the true Self to reign. The motive of all the religions is to see good, do good and be good because this is the way to God" Swami proclaims, "Let the different faiths exist, let them flourish, let the glory of God be sung in all the languages in a variety of tunes in various countries. Respect the differences between the faiths and recognise them as valid so far as they do not extinguish the flame of unity."

Living God in Human Form

Sai is the living symbol of harmony and unity of all religions in the world. He has been preaching and practising the lofty and sacred principle of Brotherhood of Man and Fatherhood of God, which is the core of all religions of the world. In the 'Ten-fold Path to Divinity' given by Him in 1985 during His 60th Birthday celebrations, He confirmed the validity and relevance of the unity of religions by declaring, "Honour every religion, each is a pathway to one God." Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa proclaimed the same truth when he remarked, "To reach Kolkata you can go by air, sea, car, bullock cart or on foot, but the destination is the same, though time and route may be different. Similarly to reach God, you can follow any religion."

Swami says, "Every religion has its inherent and inbuilt factors conducive to the sense of unity. Each religion teaches the righteous path, it exhorts us to cleanse our hearts of malice, greed, hatred, jealousy and anger." Sai wants us to transform ourselves by leaving animal qualities and by acquiring human and divine qualities through our respective religions with faith in our chosen deity. In my humble opinion, having faith in Sai is the surest and quickest road to universal religion as He is the Living God in human form and a Loving God in flesh and blood, who can be seen, touched, spoken to and heard, and whose infinite grace can be experienced through Darshan, Sparshan and Sambhashan.

Swami says, "Sanathana Dharma is the great grandfather, Buddhism is the son, Christianity is the grandson and Islam is the great grandson. So, all the religions form one family." He further says, "As there is no separate sun for the Hindus, Muslims, Christians, Buddhists, Sikhs, etc., there is no separate truth for each religion." Sai explains in detail the similarities and commonalities among religions, viz., existence of God, sainthood, salvation, morality, spirituality, love, truth, grace, knowing the Self, service to the needy, following righteous path and sacred ideals, etc.

Bhagavan assures the world that the Sai Era of harmony and unity has dawned and that all religions should endeavour to transform the world, so that man may realise the Divinity within him. "All the religions point to one truth that God is one, truth is God, love is God, God is love and therefore live in love." Millions of people from all religions, from about 170 countries of the world including Russia, China and African countries, speaking different languages, belonging to all castes, colours and races come to Sai because they find in Him the manifestation of universal love that is selfless and keeps on giving and forgiving.

All Religions Unite at Prasanthi Nilayam

Sai says, "All religions are Mine. All forms and names are Mine. You call Me by any name, I will answer." In fact, He has been answering the prayers of both the devotees and non-devotees whether they are near or far, provided they pray with sincerity and full faith. Swami is the living symbol of all the scriptures of all the religions, like the Vedas, the Bhagavad-Gita, the Bible, the Koran, the Granth Sahib, etc. He is known to have given His visions in the forms worshipped by the devotees of different faiths as Sai Rama, Sai Krishna, Sai Siva, Sai Christ or as Sai Ma. Swami says, "God is not living in the sky or in a far off land, but He is living in the heart of the devotees." He declares, His permanent address is not Prasanthi Nilayam or Brindavan but the devotees' heart. Swami reminds us *Ekam Sath Vipra Bahudha Vadanti* (God is one, but scholars refer to Him by various names).

In response to the prayers of His devotees, Swami gives them what they deserve. For example, in 1970 Swami took out from a heap of sand on the beach near Dwaraka a 15 inches high gold statue of Krishna and gave it to Rajmata of Jamnagar as she had been worshipping Him as Sai Krishna. In 1978 in Bandipur Sanctuary, Swami created a crucifix with Jesus figure on it and gave it to Prof. Hislop of the U.S.A.; in Ooty in 1984, Swami materialised a silver cross with Jesus in gold with diamonds for eyes and gave it to Mrs. Craxi of Italy because they had been worshipping Him as Sai Christ. In 1985, He materialised a gold statue of Buddha and gave it to Dr. Art-ong Jumsai of Thailand for his mother who had been praying to Him as Sai Buddha since the Second World War days. In 1990, a Siva Lingam was materialised by Swami and given to a lady devotee of Chennai as she had been worshipping Him as Sai Siva. In Kodaikanal in 1984, He materialised a gold statue of Rama and gave it to Advocate Raman of Chennai as he had been worshipping Him as Sai Rama.

In the Vatican (Rome) only the Christians assemble, in Mecca only the Muslims gather and at Haridwar only the Hindus congregate, but at Prasanthi Nilayam people of all religions, races, colours, creeds and castes, speaking different languages and hailing from all the continents of the world come in large numbers. Why? Because Bhagavan Baba is the incarnation of the all-pervading Divinity and His Divine Love acts as a divine magnet to attract people of all religions who are seeking peace and happiness. All the people coming to Lord Sai from any religion or culture or ethnic backdrop experience the same cosmic spiritual power which is the most benign, most compassionate though each one may perceive it differently through his or her mindset. Whom the Muslims adore as Allah, whom the Christians worship as Jehovah, whom the Vaishnavites venerate as Krishna, the Saivites as Siva and the Sikhs as Vahe Guru, I pray to that Loving God Sai to bless us all by guiding us and guarding us always!

To Swami

Blessed are those denizens of the Chitravati Valley
Who breathe the same air as You,
Blessed are those breezes which fan Your cheek
And lift tiny tendrils of Your hair,
Blessed are those Chitravati sands,

Which bear many an imprint of Your Lotus Feet.

But what of those seven seas, Swami,
Which distance me from You?
I know, dear Swami, that You are in every leaf and flower,
In every nook and corner,
Yet my eyes long for Your Darshan,
For a glimpse of that beauteous form,
Long for a loving glance,
Long for Your palm upturned in benediction.

And if there be another birth, Swami,
Not for me, this bundle of flesh and bones,
All I ask is to be a speck of dust
In that path which You tread the most.

~Ritu Raju

GURUDEV VANI

SUMMER COURSE DISCOURSES—VI

God is Your Only True Friend

*Siva (God) is Jiva (individual) and Jiva is Siva,
He who realises this unity is a Jnani (enlightened one).
(Sanskrit Verse)*

Embodiments of Love!

God is man and man is God! The Supreme Self is the same as the individual self. He is truly wise who understands this intrinsic unity between the individual and the Divine.

There is only one Divine Principle

Students, Boys and Girls!

Human life is hard to obtain. One may ask: "How can one assert that Divinity is latent in man?" The Gita is the authority. Lord Krishna declares: *Mamatma Sarvabhutantaratma* (the Atma present in all beings is the same as the Atma present in Me). The Lord's declaration is the proof, if any proof is needed. Man alone has the capacity to recognise this latent Divinity within. Other beings do not have this capability.

Man is enveloped by five Koshas or sheaths. They are: Annamaya Kosha (food sheath), Pranamaya Kosha (life sheath), Manomaya Kosha (mind sheath), Vijnanamaya Kosha (wisdom sheath), and Anandamaya Kosha (bliss sheath). Whereas other beings can at best reach up to three Koshas, man can easily go to the fourth and even beyond, if he makes effort. This is what makes man superior to other beings. It is through his wisdom that man can perceive the underlying unity between the individual self and the Universal Self. However, all beings are subject to Moha (attachment) caused by Maya (delusion). This Maya or delusion arises on

account of the three Gunas (intrinsic qualities), namely, Satwa Guna (gentleness), Rajo Guna (passion) and Tamo Guna (sloth). One who transcends the three Gunas is totally free from both delusion as well as attachment. Therefore, if you want to be rid of attachment, you have to go beyond the three Gunas. So long as you are in the grip of the Gunas, you cannot escape Maya and Moha. Maya leads man to Moha (attachment) which is of three kinds—Dhaneshana (attachment to wealth), Dareshana (attachment to wife) and Putreshana (attachment to progeny). First and foremost, man should overcome these three types of Moha to escape from the delusion (Maya).

Among all beings, it is only man who is capable of breaking away from Moha and attaining Moksha (liberation) which is nothing but Moha Kshaya or dissolution of attachment. This capacity of transition from Moha to Moksha is once again an expression of divinity of man. Divinity is latent in all things in the universe. Lord Krishna says in the Gita: *Acharam Charameva Cha* (God is both immobile as well as mobile). These two aspects of mobility and immobility are present in all living creatures. Similarly, God is present within, without and everywhere as He is all-pervasive. When a pot is immersed in water, there is water in the pot as well as outside the pot. That is why, the Upanishads declare: *Antar Bahischa Tatsarvamvyapya Narayana Sthita* (that all pervasive Lord is present within, without and everywhere). When an iron rod is put in fire, it becomes hot. The heat is everywhere; it is present in the rod as well as the fire. In the same way, the same God is present in man as well as in the whole world surrounding him. There are not two Gods or two Divine principles in action. There is only one God and only one Divine principle. That which is latent within is seen as a reflection without. That is why Swami often says that the world is merely a reflection of the inner being. If there is no reality within, how can there be its reflection outside? How can one say the world is real and deny the Indweller? Reality is within, and it is seen as a reflection outside. In the same manner, action originates from within while reaction comes from outside. Similarly, sound is inside and resound outside. Total reality is composite of everything within and everything outside. The Rishis of yore grasped this truth and proclaimed it to the entire world. It is such teachings and truths that helped ordinary people of those days to rise to exalted levels. Ancient teachings are full of inner significance. They are not pedestrian instructions relating to the phenomenal world but keys to inner wisdom.

You must Yearn for Liberation

At one time, the population of the world was just one billion while today it is nearly six billion. The population has swelled but the desire for liberation has sharply declined. In ancient times, most people pined for liberation; the percentage was as high as seventy-five, but today not even twenty per cent want liberation. Why? Because the emphasis is on the quest for worldly knowledge. Such knowledge drives people towards worldly pursuits and a million ways of making money. In one way or the other, all that today's education aims at is to make a living rather than life itself, the fundamental purpose of human existence. How can education that caters to the stomach produce a yearning for liberation in the heart? Modern education promotes only Mohapeksha (craving for worldly things) instead of Mokshapeksha (desire for liberation). In olden times, students controlled their desires and reduced their worldly wants, increasing instead the desire for liberation. What is the meaning of worldly desires? It means craving for the supposedly good things that are available in the external world, the sort of things that give only temporary happiness, which the birds and beasts go after. Is it for seeking these that one goes to

school and college? Does one have to work so hard to attain these? Our ancients recognised the futility of such pursuits and instead directed their attention to more purposeful goals. Modern education system has totally reversed the priorities. What our ancients shunned has now become priority number one. Such is the perversion of today's education!

Be Grateful to the Guru

In those days, gratitude was expressed towards those who showed the right path. Students never failed to prostrate before their Guru; they gave expression to their gratitude in many ways. Whatever the Guru wanted was given unhesitatingly and with much love. The preceptors sacrificed much for their disciples, and the disciples were not far behind either in the matter of sacrifice. What about the students of today?

*They are ready to ruin those who feed them.
They will ridicule those who teach them.
And they will not hesitate to harm those who help them.* (Telugu Poem)

Such is the fallout of modern education, which is supposed to be so advanced. There is a gulf of difference between the ancient and modern education. In modern education, morality and ethics are confined only to books. Man's heart has become the centre of all evil and his hands have become totally selfish. This is what modern education has made of man. Students of olden days were humble and obedient to their Gurus. They were ready to sacrifice even their life for their preceptor. The tribal boy Ekalavya provides the classic example.

Ekalavya adopted the celebrated Dronacharya as his Guru, even though the latter did not accept Ekalavya as his pupil. Ekalavya never received any instructions in archery from his self-chosen Guru. He became an archer par excellence through self-effort. Yet there was never any doubt in his mind that Drona was his Guru. One day, Drona took his favourite disciple Arjuna into the forest. They took a hunting dog along with them. On spotting a wild animal, the dog started barking. All of a sudden, Arjuna found 5-6 arrows coming from somewhere piercing the gullet of the dog. The person who shot the arrows was none other than Ekalavya. Though he could not see the dog, guided by the barking sound, he shot the arrows one after the other that found the target. They both were stunned. They then started searching for the archer and soon located Ekalavya. Arjuna asked the tribal boy, "Who is your Guru?" Ekalavya pointed to Drona and said, "He is my Guru." Drona angrily said, "I am not your Guru. I never taught you anything." Ekalavya replied, "Sir, that may be, but in my mind I adopted you as my Guru. Your picture is imprinted on my heart. My respect and , devotion for you have enabled me to acquire all skills, even though you personally never taught me. I have learnt it all from within." In those days, there were no books and all instruction was by word of mouth. Word was therefore considered very sacred.

Dronacharya was unhappy to see another archer whose skill was greater than that of his favourite student Arjuna. Wanting to ensure that Arjuna was number one and that there was none to excel him, Drona told Ekalavya, "If I am your Guru, then what about my Gurudakshina (fee paid to the teacher)?" Ekalavya replied, "Master, what is it that you want?" Without the slightest trace of magnanimity, Drona angrily demanded, "I want your right thumb as my payment." Drona knew that without the thumb, Ekalavya's career as an archer would be finished; and automatically, Arjuna would move to the number one position. On hearing Drona's demand, Ekalavya pulled

out his knife, cut his thumb off without any hesitation whatsoever, and offered it as Gurudakshina.

*"Proffering the right hand thumb, He ceased to be an archer.
Disabling himself, He surrendered his very skill as a token of gratitude
and as a mark of respect." (Telugu Poem)*

Such was the spirit of sacrifice amongst disciples in those days. For the sake of their Guru, they were ready to sacrifice anything, including their lives. Just compare this with what is happening today! The teacher stretches out his hand for money even before the instruction is complete. The student is regarded as a source of income rather than as a responsibility. In olden times, things were different. The Guru not only had affection for his disciples but actually looked upon them as his own sons. Drona, however, was an exception to this noble tradition, and betrayed the trust placed in him by Ekalavya. *Yad Bhavm Tad Bhavati* (as is the feeling, so is the consequence). As is the action, so is the reaction. In due course, Drona had to pay for his cruelty. No one can escape the inexorable law of reflection, reaction and resound.

The Ideal Friend

Students! You should not be immersed in books all the time. Instead of being merely a scholar, you should be virtuous. Serve your teachers in such a manner that they are pleased. In every human relationship, there should be balance and parity. At one time, the brothers Vali and Sugriva were inseparable; but enmity developed and they parted company. While Vali remained in his palace, Sugriva hid himself in the Rishyamuka Mountain to save himself from Vali's wrath. Sugriva was all the time wondering how he could defeat his brother, now his enemy. Vali was very strong and powerful and could be defeated only by one who was more powerful than him. Sugriva consulted Hanuman for advice and the latter suggested that Sugriva should be patient; time would show the way.

One day, Sugriva and Hanuman spotted two persons walking in the hills at a distance. There was an extraordinary radiance on their faces. It appeared as if they had descended from the very heavens. Sugriva asked Hanuman to investigate and ascertain who they were. He said, "Find out if these two are Vali's agents who have come in disguise." Clearly, Sugriva's observation was a reflection of his inner fear; otherwise, how could he make such a statement, considering that the strangers had a distinct divine aura about them? Hanuman replied, "To me these two look divine. Anyway, I shall go and investigate."

Coming down from the mountain, Hanuman approached the two strangers who were none other than Rama and Lakshmana. Rama introduced Himself thus, "We are the sons of King Dasaratha, and are presently in the forest in exile. Recently someone abducted My wife Sita, and we are wandering about in search of her." A king should always speak the truth, and Rama did what a king ought to. As is well said: *Hastasya Bhushanam Danam, Sathyam Kanthasya Bhushanam, Srotrasya Bhushanam Sastram* (charity is the true ornament for the hand, Truth is the true necklace and listening to sacred Sastras is the true ornament for the ears). What more ornaments do you need? Every word uttered must be true. He is a noble one, who always adheres to truth.

Hanuman told Rama, "Lord, I shall take you both to King Sugriva who lives over there. Kindly tell him Your problem, and he might be able to help." Carrying Rama and Lakshmana on his shoulders, Hanuman leapt over the hills and landed where Sugriva was. Seeing the two brothers, Sugriva forgot all his problems and became ecstatic. Beaming, he said to Rama, "Lord, You must be tired. Kindly rest here for a while, and partake of these fruits and drink some cold and refreshing water." But Rama and Lakshmana were not interested either in rest or in food as they were worried about Sita.

Next day, Sugriva thought about the possibility of befriending Rama. Now what sort of a friend should one have? Not the one who feigns loyalty but betrays with cunning; not the one who speaks sweetly but never matches words with action. He alone is fit to be called a friend who swears by truth. True friendship implies one breath in two bodies. Sugriva wanted such a friend so that with his help he could overcome Vali.

Sugriva wondered: "Is Rama strong enough to overcome Vali?" He decided to test Rama's power and capability. On the following day, Sugriva took Rama to a huge tree and said, "Rama, do you know what tree is this? It is a jungle tree that grows to a big size and is very strong. There are six trees in a row here. Once my brother Vali shot an arrow that pierced through not just one but two trees. I am on the lookout for someone who can excel that feat." Sugriva then requested Rama to shoot an arrow. Rama's arrow went through not just two trees but all the six of them. Sugriva immediately fell at the feet of Rama and declared, "You are the friend I have been looking for all along." Who was this friend that Sugriva had found? He was the very Lord Himself! The friendship between Rama and Sugriva was formally solemnised with fire as the sacred witness. Sugriva then said, "Rama, from today I am Your servant while You are my master and preceptor. Please relieve me of my suffering, give me courage, and lead me to victory over my brother." Rama kept His promise to Sugriva and killed Vali. This story teaches that if you are looking for a friend to help you, then that friend must be stronger than your adversaries. In life, obstacles are the main adversaries, and the only friend who can help you across is God; He is the only true friend.

Lack of Virtues Leads to Doubts

Doubts readily come to the mind of the people who are worldly wise. They may be clever and intelligent where worldly matters are concerned but utterly unwise where real discrimination is required. Sugriva was one such person. In his heart he felt that Rama was Divine but there were doubts in his mind; so, he decided to test Rama's skill in archery as his mind and heart were not in harmony. Hanuman provides a striking contrast to Sugriva in this matter. From the moment he first set his eyes on Rama, there was never even an iota of doubt in his mind that Rama was God Himself. It is the so-called educated ones who are plagued with all sorts of doubts. This is what is happening today. Man is totally preoccupied with the acquisition of worldly skills and worldly knowledge, completely ignoring basic values and the necessity for the cultivation of virtues. Modern education may make you clever but it would never help you to develop virtues. What is the use of intelligence without virtues?

Education that does not foster virtues leads to blindness (spiritual). Can you afford to be blind? No! Without virtues and the grace of God, you cannot really achieve anything. Karna was rich, strong, and powerful, but he distanced himself from Dharma and Krishna. What is the use of

wealth and skills if you do not have the grace of God? This mighty Karna, who had many good qualities, did not submit himself to God. He refused to obey the command of Krishna. If you fail to serve God, all the intelligence you might possess is of little value. In fact, the intelligence then gets misused. Since Karna spurned Krishna, he eventually fell in battle despite his intellectual acumen and physical prowess. One must always strive to earn the protection of Dharma and the grace of God. You become strong only when you harmonise your activities with Divinity. When the goal and God go together, then victory is assured.

Students, Boys and Girls!

It is not enough if you merely read books. Study of books and acquisition of secular knowledge are no doubt required. However, all such knowledge is totally useless without the support of devotion to God. Devotion is the foundation. All forms of worldly and physical powers are useless if they are not based on devotion to God.

If Character is Lost, Everything is Lost

Pure and divine feelings must radiate from your heart, which is possible only when you imbibe virtues and character. All of you know about Prahlada. He was a student just like you, in fact, much younger in age. What an extraordinary character he possessed even at that age! By his virtues, he was able to achieve great success and victory in later life. He could even vanquish Indra, the chief of the Devas (gods). Indra became worried about his defeat and began to explore all possibilities to regain his kingdom.

One day, the preceptor of the Devas summoned Indra and said, "Prahlada is presently performing the sacred ritual, Vishwajit. On such occasions, gifts are given as charity. You must present yourself before Prahlada and ask for his character as a gift. You will then be able to regain your kingdom." Indra got the hint. Disguising himself as a Brahmin, Indra went to the court of Prahlada. The latter was impressed with the Brahmin and asked, "Sir, what is it that you would like to have?" Indra (posing as a Brahmin) replied, "Oh king! I want very little. Just give me your Sheelam (character)." A surprised Prahlada said, "That I can easily give but you should really ask for something more substantial. I am ready to give you anything you want. Why then are you prepared to settle for something so little?" The cunning Indra replied, "For me, this small thing is enough. I do not want much." Prahlada said, "As you wish." Immediately, Prahlada's character peeled off. Prahlada did not seem to be bothered. A little later, another entity emerged from Prahlada and left him. Prahlada was surprised and asked, "Who are you?" The entity replied, "I am Tejas (glory). Once character goes, the glory of the person also leaves him; therefore, I am leaving you!" After this, Dharma (righteousness), Sathya (truth), Parakrama (strength) and Rajya Lakshmi (wealth) left Prahlada one after the other. So, Prahlada lost everything. This story teaches that once character is lost, everything is lost.

A crestfallen Prahlada now realised what had happened to him. He prayed to Lord Narayana, "Lord, I do not care any more for kingdom, wealth and all the rest I have lost. I just want my character back. That is enough." Thus, Prahlada came to realise the important role character plays in life. In fact, character is three-fourths of one's life. Prahlada prayed to the Lord for the restoration of his character. Pleased with his sense of sacrifice, the Lord granted Prahlada's prayer. This story teaches how fundamental and important character and values are in life. Character is supreme. Behaviour is born out of character; if your character is good, so would be

you behaviour. The welfare of a country depends on the character of its citizens. Men and women of character alone bring prosperity to a nation.

Embodiments of Love!

Give utmost importance to the development of character. Apart from the books that you normally study, there is one big book that you definitely ought to study; that is the book called the `world'! All that you want to know and need to know is contained in this extraordinary book. Besides, you also need a teacher. Who is the best and the greatest of all teachers? Your heart! Not the physical heart but the spiritual heart. You also need a friend. Who is the best possible friend you could ever have? God! (*loud applause*) Taking God as your friend, your heart as the teacher and the world as the great book, acquire all the knowledge you wish to. You should master this Pustaka (book) using your Mastaka (head)! Books printed on paper are not as important as this book composed and written by God Himself. It is available everywhere, to everyone, at all times, and is absolutely free. So, even as you pore over your regular textbooks, remember your Guru, the heart; and make sure you always have your true friend God near you! *Sarvada Sarvakaleshu Sarvatra Daiva Chintanam* (think of God at all times and at all places). God is in you, with you, above you, below you, around you; and He will always take care of you. Do you know why? Because He is your best friend (*loud applause*)! Your so called worldly friends are always selfish and have their own axe to grind but God is not like that. He is totally free from desires and expects nothing. He only helps, supports and protects. And in return He only wants your love. He has absolutely no desires. His heart is full of love and compassion for His devotees. This is a reflection of God's love. Is this treasure of selfless love available anywhere else (except with God)?

All that Happens is only for your Good

Students! Right from today, develop sacred feelings, serve your parents, respect elders, and adopt God as your friend. With God as your friend, you are sure to find fulfillment in life. Cheerfully accept all the tests He may subject you to, remembering that they are all meant for your own good. No matter how difficult or painful the test, always repeat to yourself: "This is good for me, this is good for me." You must have full faith that everything that God does is only for your good and welfare. You have a disease and you undergo surgery. The doctor cuts your limbs with a sharp knife; he does so not out of hatred for you but because he wants to cure you. In the same way, understand that God too is curing you out of love for you; there is thus no room for grumbling or complaints.

Students! Be aware that man has within himself all the powers that one can think of. You should be charged with the feeling that the divine spark is present everywhere and in all beings. If you sincerely cultivate this feeling, you would without fail be able to have access to the divine power within you in full measure. With such a feeling, man can penetrate through all the five Koshas or sheaths surrounding him. That is why it is said, *Janthunam Narajanma Durlabham* (among all the living beings, the human birth is the most precious). When he can have the company of the Divine within, why should man seek bad company without? Why does he have to become a slave to others? It is to God that one must become a slave. Not just that. Seek to serve the servants of the Lord. Serve God in this manner, and the entire world would serve you. But if you become a slave to desires, then a slave you shall be to the whole world. Keep desires under

control, and the world would become your slave. The only desire you must have is the desire for God. Then God will protect you at all times and eventually liberate you.

Sanctify the Period of Youth

Students! Yours is the sacred and golden age. Do not defile it. Make good use of the golden opportunity and sanctify your lives. Do not waste even a single moment. Suppose you are wrapping thread into a spool. You wrap the thread one round at a time. If you accidentally let the spool drop, it would roll down the floor and unwind itself to a considerable extent. Similarly, if you forget God even for a moment, it may cost you much. The time lost may appear to be just a moment but in that fleeting moment you may lose everything! Hence, always be very careful and hold on to the golden opportunity before you; then alone would you be successful.

Embodiments of Love!

Study well. By all means acquire all the secular knowledge you want to. But do not stop just at that. Remember, secular knowledge is for making a living while spiritual knowledge is for life!

Worldly knowledge is certainly required because one has to live in this world. But spiritual knowledge is transcendental. While secular knowledge is useful for daily life, spiritual knowledge is for the life hereafter. You cannot postpone the acquisition of spiritual knowledge; you have to do it now! Secular knowledge will fill your belly but spiritual knowledge will fill your heart. One is 'left' and the other is 'right'. While marching, both the left and right steps are needed - you march: left, right, left, right... When the time comes to go, the 'left' has to be left behind! You can take with you only the 'right' or spiritual knowledge. 'Left' is weak but 'right' is strong and also right! So, keep to the right! It also earns you the right to reach God!! In marching through life, both the 'left' and 'right' steps are, no doubt, needed but recognise their relative merits and utility. This is how normal life must be blended with spirituality.

Embodiments of Love!

Always think of God, constantly chant His Name and sing His glory in Bhajans. Propagate to the entire world the greatness and the glory of Bhajans.

At the conclusion of the Discourse, Bhagavan sang two Bhajans. First he sang, "Govinda Krishna Vitthale..." and then, "Vahe Guru Vahe Guru..."

From Bhagavan's Summer Course Discourse in Sai Ramesh Krishan Hall, Brindavan on 20th May, 2000

BHAGAVAN'S DIVINE MISSION

Unity of Mankind

~S. Sivagnanam

Love is a tool that will disarm every opponent; love begets love. It will be reflected back; it will have only one reaction and that is love. The path of love is the only path to God. God is love, live in love. Let all humanity live in love.

- Baba

There is only one religion, the religion of love. Religions are the expressions of man's highest aspirations, his divine inspiration and the path he must tread to realise the ultimate reality, the oneness with God. All the religions recognise the primacy of love. They proclaim the same truth in their basic teachings. But few people try to understand the inner import of religions. Out of a mistaken belief that their religion is superior to that of others, they evince dislike towards members of other faiths and behave in a holier-than-thou manner towards them. In some sad instances where religious fundamentalism has raised its ugly head, they even preach hatred towards other religions and other lifestyles, thus vitiating the atmosphere with negative vibrations. It is this narrow sectarian attitude towards religion which has been and is the bane of civilized life. It has caused untold misery and hardships and many cruel wars the world over through centuries of its existence.

Parochialism Breeds Hatred

As we enter the 21st century, it is of paramount importance that we eschew all narrow, exclusive and constricting emotions and ideas and embrace the all-inclusive love that Bhagavan Baba preaches. He says that love is expansion, it is boundless, unconditional and selfless. Anything that is narrow, restrictive and selfish is anathema to religion and must be jettisoned from our minds and hearts. The foundation of all religions is morality which is equated with selfless love. Religions were thus instituted to foster the well-being of society through the cultivation of love for all beings. All religions enjoin upon their votaries to seek peace and eschew violence. This being the avowed purpose of religion, it is a sad commentary on all faiths that the previous century has witnessed the cruelest manifestations of hatred and greed of mankind, despite a flicker of hope now and then in some parts of the globe. Despite centuries and millenniums of religious conditioning, wars have been fought with ruthless ferocity that would shame even the cruelest denizens of the jungles.

Science has provided to man the most destructive weapons of annihilation and these are now freely available to many nations. Nuclear weapons were used on Japan and can be used again by another country in another region. Religious and ethnic animosities are escalating and civil strife is stalking many lands. What has religion done to counteract these nefarious tendencies? Some people strongly believe that religion is the cause of many of these conflicts. Much has been written about the atrocities committed against humanity in the name of religion—the Crusades, the Islamic Jehads, the Inquisition, the Infamous Gas Chambers of Nazi Germany, etc.

Religious Tolerance Leads to Peace and Harmony

As Bhagavan Baba has said, "Religion is of immense help in fostering the integral development of the human personality." Religion reiterates unity in diversity. No religion preaches hatred or unrighteousness. All religions endeavour to facilitate the manifestation of divinity inherent in man. In the final analysis, the responsibility for good or evil cannot be placed on religion. Good and evil tendencies are found in the minds of men and women. Religion tries to eradicate the evil propensities and foster goodness. It strives to restrain people from violent and acrimonious activities. Perhaps we can give credit to the cumulative effect of the salutary teachings of the various religions for the relative peace and harmony that have pervaded many countries and which do not make it to the history books.

Common Divine Heritage of Man

In an era of religious conflicts and civil strife, Bhagavan Baba has come as the beacon light for peace and goodwill among the warring nations and creeds. He has proclaimed, "There is only one religion, the religion of love. There is only caste, the caste of humanity. There is only one language, the language of the heart, and there is only one God and He is omnipresent." Baba emphasises on the unity of all faiths, and for the past six decades, He has enjoined on and inspired His devotees to practise tolerance and acceptance of all faiths as valid paths to the goal they seek to attain, whatever the nomenclature. Baba has said that He has come to feed the roots of all religions and He is engaged in reconciling the conflicts and unifying all the divergent elements in the various religions into a stupendous stream of love that will sustain and revitalise all mankind. At His Ashram at Prasanthi Nilayam and in all Sathya Sai Organisations that function under His name, this ideal of unity of faiths is diligently adhered to. He preaches that religion should extinguish strife and foster selfless and unconditional love. The human condition being the same the world over, all religions strive towards uplifting man's consciousness by helping him to overcome mental impurities or defilements such as lust, anger, greed, pride, delusion and envy. This is the main and the highest purpose of religion. When this is accomplished, all the beatitudes will follow and the sacred state, the ultimate realisation, will be achieved.

Baba says that the motive that prompted the propagation of all these faiths is the same. The founders of all religions were filled with love and wisdom, and their purpose was to elevate man's consciousness and to accelerate the spiritual evolution of all human beings. None had the intention to divide or disturb mankind or promote strife and ill will. They sought to train the passions and emotions, to educate the emotions and instincts, and to direct the faculty of reason to paths beneficial to the individual and society. The founders of all religions stressed the fundamental values of love, compassion, brotherhood, justice and truth. They appeared in different parts -of the world at different times in diverse climes and traditions and imparted their wisdom through practice and precept in order to wean man away from the moral turpitude, and to help him get rid of his animal instincts, and to assist him ascend the human state, and then to the ultimate divine state of Moksha, Nirvana, or whatever else one may call it. This striving for the ultimate realisation of one's true Self, and the annihilation of the ego-centric self is what religion is all about.

Bhagavan Baba says, "Love is a tool that will disarm every opponent; love begets love. It will be reflected back; it will have only one reaction and that is love. The path of love is the only path to God. God is love, live in love. Let all humanity live in love."

Love is the Guiding Light of the Universe

All the religions of the world and all the saints of the world have stressed love as the basic requirement for a righteous and spiritually uplifting life. They have all emphasised the values of selfless service, humility, truth, righteousness, peace and non-violence and exhorted their followers to live by these values.

In our time, the Avatar of the Age, Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba, the embodiment of peace and love, has through His innumerable discourses, tirelessly urged His devotees to eschew parochial and narrow loyalties to dogmas and creeds, to broaden their outlook and expand their vision to

include the whole of humanity in their quest for lasting peace by practising love for God and all mankind; fear of sin and observance of justice and morality in society. He is vigorously engaged in the task of eradicating evil tendencies and practices, injustice and corruption. Baba propagates the unity of all faiths. He says that we can achieve this unity only when we learn to see unity in diversity. In our ignorance, we now see diversity in what is really unity. We have to correct our vision. Unity can be seen and experienced only when we destroy our sense of identity with the body.

In spiritual terms, all mankind belongs to one and the same class, caste and religion. The divine principle in all of them derives from one and the same God. Baba says that the fundamental oneness has to be made manifest through direct contact with spiritual realities and the persuasive and expansive power of love, until all become part of the universal religion of work, worship and wisdom. It is Baba's Mission to unite all mankind into one family in Atmic realisation, the basis on which the entire cosmic design rests. Once that is realised, the common divine heritage that binds us to one another and basically to God will become apparent and love shall prevail as the guiding light of the universe. *Advaita Darshanam Jnanam*—seeing unity in diversity is wisdom, the Vedas say.

Think about God while carrying on your regular duties. Regard all work as sacred offering to the Divine. See God in everything you do. Meditation is not confined to any one thing. It should permeate every action you do. There is real solitude only when the mind is completely stilled.

- Baba

The Absolute Reality One dreams that one is a boy, one grows, marries and fondles one's children and grandchildren—the story of fifty years is telescoped to a period of two minutes in dream state. This is within the experience of all. The dream is `real' experience during the dream; it lasted for `fifty years' but when judged from the point of view of the waking state, it lasted but for two minutes. So, too, from the point of view of the `fully awake', the Jnani, even the waking state is ephemeral, illusory. That is why Jnana is considered to be so illuminating; it reveals the truth that all this is only relatively real; the Absolute Reality is the Brahman.

- Baba

Morality is the Royal Road to Immortality

People turn a deaf ear to good things even when told with all earnestness. But they listen to evil talk and gossip with eagerness and interest. How can such people realise Divinity? This is the truth that is being conveyed. (Telugu Poem)

Embodiments of Love!

It is the need of the hour that young men and women should develop and foster moral values. It is their primary responsibility to protect and uphold moral values. But the youth today have no idea as to what morality is and what values stand for. That is why they are undergoing a lot of suffering. The equivalent of morality in Telugu is Neeti. Neeti is not an ordinary word. It is highly valuable and sacred. How can one have humanness if one does not foster morality? Humanness lies in leading a life of moral integrity. Modern youth have no idea as to what life is. They are not aware of the path and goal of life either. The true meaning of morality lies in recognising the latent divinity in humanity.

Man should Manifest his Innate Divinity

Jesus explained the meaning and importance of morality to the people in the Roman empire. They followed the teachings of Jesus to attain the kingdom of God. The Romans used the word 'persona' for Jesus as he manifested his divinity and attracted everyone. The English word 'person' has its origin in the Latin word 'persona'. The word 'persona' symbolises the divinity latent in man. Similarly, 'Vyakti' is the equivalent word in Telugu for 'person'. A 'Vyakti' is one who has the capacity to manifest the Avyakta (unmanifest) divinity. The words 'persona' and 'Vyakti' point to the truth that divinity lies hidden in everybody. Man should make every effort to manifest his latent divinity. Only then can he be called a 'Vyakti' or a true human being. Though divinity is latent in him, man considers himself weak and helpless as he is unable to recognise and manifest the same.

Overcome Maya to Attain Nirvana

Many worthy kings ruled over Bharat in the past. Thousands of years before Christ, Sri Ramachandra incarnated on the earth and set a model before all as an ideal emperor. Akbar and Shivaji were also held in high esteem as they followed the spiritual path, recognising their innate divinity. Likewise, every man should endeavour to manifest his innate divinity. But modern man has no knowledge of what 'Vyakti' means. He should give up ego and attachment, contemplate on divinity and cultivate sacred feelings. He should foster theistic values and follow the spiritual path. What is spirituality? Spirituality means giving up animal tendencies and manifesting the innate divinity. But modern education has robbed man of his humanness. Consequently, he is forgetting his innate divinity and cultivating bestial qualities. People have forgotten the very meaning of humanness. That is why for the last fifteen years, we have taken up the propagation of human values in a big way. What are human values? People say truth, righteousness, peace, love and non-violence are human values. But true humanness lies in subduing the animal tendencies completely, contemplating on the Divine and manifesting human qualities all the time.

The Upanishads have described man as a sacred being. The one with a Manchi Manas (good mind) is a true Manava (human being). True humanness lies in leading an ideal life, manifesting the Atmic principle and enjoying infinite bliss. These are the qualities which make a man good. But today good men are rare to find. What is the inner meaning of the word 'Man'. M stands for overcoming Maya (delusion), A for having the vision of the Atma and N for attaining Nirvana (liberation). So, he alone is a man in the true sense who overcomes Maya, has the vision of the Atma and attains Nirvana. Today man is immersed in Maya. He has forgotten the Atma. Then how can he attain Nirvana? First of all, one should vanquish Maya. Maya means taking the non-existent entity as real. Maya makes man forget his reality, subjects him to misery and takes him away from the goal of life. Therefore, man is put to anxiety, worries and troubles.

Heart is the Mine of Divinity

Our ancients prescribed the worship of Kali, Durga and Saraswati during these Navaratri (nine nights). Durga is the embodiment of power and represents the combination of all the powers of the body, mind and soul. Kali symbolises destruction of evil with the help of these powers. Kali and Durga are not elsewhere. They reside in every man. When the mind and the senses, instead of following the dictates of conscience, run after worldly desires, man becomes a slave to evil habits and turns wicked. The main purpose of celebration of Navaratri is to annihilate cruelty and wickedness in man so as to bring forth the principle of the Atma in pristine form. When man reads, hears and does wicked things, how can he expect to foster goodness? It is nothing short of Bhrama (delusion) if he thinks that he is leading a good life. Brahma (Divinity) eludes one who is under the influence of Bhrama.

Divinity is present in all. It has to be manifested. Just as man extracts various metals like copper, silver, etc., from mines, one should manifest sacred qualities from the mine of divinity, i.e., heart. In fact, human heart is a big mine, from which all good qualities can be extracted. But man today is unable to manifest his goodness and divinity as he has lost faith in the teachings of noble people. Divinity is all-pervasive in the form of Chaitanya (consciousness). There is no place where this Chaitanya is not present. But man denies the existence of consciousness as it is not visible to the naked eye. One should have the firm conviction that divinity is immanent in everything.

Man today has forgotten his true nature. His mind is influenced by all that is happening in the world. The effects of the acts of previous lives are also imprinted on his mind. So, his mind has become a conglomeration of conflicts, disturbances and desires. Desires make man forget his true nature. One who forgets his true nature is no human at all. Purification of the mind is, therefore, the main spiritual practice that one has to undertake. You will have the right to call yourself a human being only when you have a pure mind.

Out of infinite love, kindness and compassion when Swami tells good words, people are not prepared to listen to them. But they are all ears to listen to evil talk. This has depraved their intellect. *Vinashakale Vipareeta Buddhi* (the intellect gets perverted when one is destined for destruction). One should listen only to sacred words which are beneficial to one and all. The words you utter should not cause pain to others. They should be suffused with love. They should lead others to the right path.

Guiding Principles for Man in Life

Today is the first day of the Veda Purusha Saptah JnanaYajna. Purusha does not mean one who wears pant and shirt. God alone is Purusha. One with Pourusha (supreme power) is Purusha. We should have clear understanding of Divinity. All that is worldly is negative in nature. Divinity alone is positive. It is within you. It is not subject to change.

Embodiments of Love!

Modern students are not making any effort to cultivate moral values. Morality is highly valuable. One who lacks morality is no human being at all. True education is that which inculcates moral values. All your worldly achievements are of no avail if you lack moral values. You may amass wealth, build mansions and hold positions of authority but without morality, all these are of little consequence. Morality is latent in human heart. Man has to make every effort to manifest the same. As he is completely obsessed with worldliness, he manifests worldly propensities.

God cannot be attained by money, position and power. He can be attained only through morality and integrity. So, men and women should cultivate morality and integrity. They should have Daiva Preeti, Papa Bheeti and Sangha Neeti (love for God, fear of sin and morality in society). Unfortunately, man is cultivating Papa Preeti and Daiva Dwesham (love for sin and hatred towards God). Daiva Dwesham is the worst of all sins. Understand the fundamental principle, *Ekatma Sarvabhutantaratma* (one Atma is present in all beings). Love is the common principle in all. One bereft of love is like a corpse. So, cultivate love. Only through love can you realise your true nature. As one strives hard to earn money through various means, one should spare no effort to cultivate love by treading the spiritual path. Just as channels are built to channelise water for irrigation purposes, man should have the channels of sense control to harness his life and direct his love towards society. He should keep the welfare of society in mind while performing all his tasks as his welfare is linked to the welfare of society. How can you expect to be happy when society is unhappy?

Students!

As today is the first day of the Yajna, I have given you guidelines for the future course of action in a simple manner. First of all, develop morality and purify your mind. The mind by nature is sacred, but it gets polluted because of its association with evil qualities. Repentance and penance make the mind sacred. Repent wholeheartedly for the mistakes committed knowingly or unknowingly. In this way, you can atone for your sins and purify your mind.

Shed Falsehood and Attain Divinity

Embodiments of Love!

Your life is truly sacred. You are fortunate that you have chosen the spiritual path. Do not squander this opportunity by associating yourselves with evil company. It is said: Tell me your company, I shall tell what you are. As is your company, so you become. The good and bad of the world are based on man's conduct. Man's conduct is based on his thoughts. Thoughts are based on desires. Desires depend on the company you associate yourselves with. So, join good company. Good company gives rise to noble thoughts. Noble thoughts are the royal road to divinity.

Embodiments of Love!

You have to understand the significance of morality properly. Human life is a total waste without morality. So, you should always adhere to morality in life. Any mighty task can be accomplished if you have morality. Tomorrow, I will dilate on this topic of Neeti and Nijayati (morality and integrity). Neeti is the basis for Manava Jati (human race). There is only one father for the entire humanity and He is God. Jesus addressed God as Father. At the time of his crucifixion, he prayed, "Oh Father, what sin have I committed? Why do You make me suffer? Please help me." Then an ethereal voice spoke to Jesus thus, "My dear son, why do you worry? All are your brothers. You are thinking that you are being put to suffering by your own brothers. In fact, it is not suffering. Whatever happens is good for you. So, accept it cheerfully." Jesus attained the state of tranquillity and quietly closed his eyes. He declared: *Death is the dress of life*. Just as you change your dress, likewise the soul takes a new body after death. Man has no death at all. The body may change but the Atma is immortal. You are eternal; you never change. The body changes, the mind changes. But you are not the body or the mind or the intellect; you are the Atma. The Atma has no form. It is called consciousness. The five elements are the forms of the Atma. Distance yourselves from Anrutattwa (falsehood) and attain Amrutattwa (immortality).

God is not separate from you

Today man is ruining his life with Bhranti (delusion), and is giving rise to limitless desires. It is said: *Less luggage, more comfort makes travel a pleasure*. Your journey of life will be smooth and peaceful once you reduce the luggage of your desires. What is it that you brought with you at the time of birth? What is it that you are going to take with you at the time of death? You have come to this world empty-handed and will go empty handed. Understand that everything is a passing cloud. Your body undergoes changes; the mind also keeps changing. But you are neither of them. You are the changeless eternal Atmic principle.

At the time of birth, you are a baby; after 10 years, you are called a boy. At the age of thirty, you are called man and at 75, you become grandfather. These changes are related to the body. However, the innate Atmic principle remains the same at any point of time. Therefore, the Atma is your true Self. Develop Atma Vishwasa (self-confidence). Anything can be achieved with self-confidence. So, one should develop faith in oneself. One who does not believe in oneself cannot believe in God. Today man is reading various books but what is the use? *"What is the use of acquiring worldly education if it cannot lead you to immortality? Acquire the knowledge that will make you immortal."* (Telugu Poem) To the extent possible, help everybody. *Paropakara Punyaya, Papaya Parapeedanam* (you earn merit by serving others; hurting others is a sin). Hands are given to help others, ears are given to listen to stories of the Lord. Truth is the true necklace that one should decorate oneself with. The evil effects of Kali Age cannot harm a person whose heart is filled with compassion, who speaks truth and whose body is always engaged in the service of others.

Today man is immersed in worldly pursuits all the time. He is getting carried away by momentary joys and pleasures. One day or the other, all worldly wealth and comforts are bound to desert you. God alone is with you always. Even if you forget Him, He will never forsake you. So, think of God always. All your Chinthalu (worries) will disappear in the Chintana (contemplation) of God. *"To be born is a worry, to be on the earth is a worry; world is a cause of worry and death too; entire childhood is a worry and so is the old age; life is a worry, failure is a worry, all actions and difficulties cause worry, even happiness is a worry in disguise. Oh*

people! At least from now onwards chant the Divine Name incessantly and wholeheartedly. That alone will put an end to your worries." (Telugu Poem)

Embodiments of Love!

Some are worried about examinations and some are worried about their parents' sickness, but will worrying help them in any way? Can anyone escape from difficulties merely by worrying about them? No. Whatever has to happen will happen. So, never give scope to worry. Be happy always. How can you be happy? Happiness is union with God. You will be blissful only when you are in the company of God. It is impossible to attain bliss if you think that God is separate from you. God is not separate from you. You are God. But you do various Sadhanas (spiritual practices) to attain God, thinking that He is separate from you. Constantly remind yourselves that you are God. Be blissful always. Think of God whenever you find time. Develop noble thoughts. Take to the sacred path. Never give room to mean and wicked feelings.

Bhagavan concluded His Discourse with the Bhajan, "Hari Bhajan Bina Sukha Santhi Nahin. . ."

*From Bhagavan's First Dasara Discourse in Sai Kulwant Hall, Prasanthi Nilayam on 20th
October 2001*

The Task of Uniting Mankind

This Sai has come in order to achieve the supreme task of uniting the entire mankind as one family through the bond of brotherhood by affirming and illuminating the inner reality of each being and by revealing the Divine which is the basis on which the entire cosmos rests. I have taken upon Myself to instruct all to recognise the common Divine heritage that binds man, so that man can rid himself of the animal and rise to the Divine which is his goal. - Baba

Torch-Bearers of Truth

Holding hands, we walk in a determined stride.
Nothing can stop us with Sai Baba on our side.
Armed with love and an absorbing drive to serve,
Surely the entire universe we can swerve.

Deeply touching the loves of many,
Without asking for a single penny
By the spell-binding radiance of love in her hearts
And the essence of wisdom that pure knowledge imparts.
Uplifting the consciousness of the nations
To the beauty and awe of the entire creation.
Nothing can stop us. Oh world, watch out!

Through those bodies Sai Current will flow,
And fear, hatred, and ignorance will gradually go.
World peace and harmony will grow,
And love on the faces of all will glow.
The Golden Age will gleam and beam in all its glory,
And another chapter will be started in the universal story.

Every dark corner and every sad face
Will be illumined by Swami's Grace.
We will continue. We will proceed!
With Swami's blessings we will succeed.

No stone unturned,
No lesson unlearned
In performing our role and doing our share,
Oh world, watch out! It is Sai Love that we share.
We are the peacemakers: the torch-bearers of Truth.
Oh, watch out! We are Sai Baba's Youth.

~Gayle Fitzgerald

REMINISCENCES OF DIVINE GRACE

Experiencing Bhagavan's Divinity

—K. Gopal Rao

If you have Divinity with you, everything is possible. But we should not forget that God is the only doer and we are only His instruments.

First met Bhagavan Baba in Mumbai on 24th July 1965. I was to translate His Discourse that evening in Shanmukhananda Hall. I was quite nervous as I had no experience in translating. But at the very last minute, Sri B. Ramakrishna Rao, who usually translated for Swami, arrived unexpectedly I felt greatly relieved. At the same time, I had the rare opportunity of travelling with Swami in His car to the venue of the meeting. My wife and I had His blessings also. This encounter totally changed our lives. My family and I have had many experiences of Swami's Divinity over the past 36 years but I will confine this narrative to the more significant ones. Firstly, my own story.

Swami Cancels my Cancer

In 1962, I had surgery and radiation for malignancy in my urinary bladder. Four years later, when there was a recurrence, my doctors sent me to London for further treatment. The urologist there, after examination and tests, wanted to remove my bladder. I was reluctant. I wrote a letter to Swami for help. During the surgery that followed, the doctor to his utter surprise found no trace of cancer. There was an understanding between us that if no cancer cells were found, my bladder should not be removed. So, he closed me up allowing my bladder to remain.

After my return to Mumbai, my wife and I visited Puttaparthi quite a few times. During one such visit, Swami told my wife not to worry about my health any longer as He would look after me. Thereafter, I did not need any examination or medication for more than three decades. Swami had cancelled my cancer. I have been a resident in Swami's Ashram since my retirement in 1973 and by His grace I have been enjoying perfect health. I am now in my 93rd year.

Arthritis Cured with Vibhuti

The next experience relates to my daughter Surya Kumari (68). My wife, who was an ardent devotee of Swami, passed away in April 1976. Swami permitted me to attend the Summer Course in Ooty in May to help me get over my grief. On my return to Bangalore, I was shocked to find my daughter crawling on the floor, unable to stand up or walk. She was found to be suffering from rheumatoid arthritis. I immediately took her to Puttaparthi and prayed to Swami to save her. It was only a few weeks since my wife passed away and I would not be able to bear another calamity so soon, I pleaded.

Let my daughter continue the story: "In the interview Swami looked at me with love and compassion as I slowly limped into His Presence. He said to me softly, "See Bangaru, believe in Me fully. Keep away all medicines. You will walk and do all your household work in a week, I promise." He materialised Vibhuti for me and gave me Padanamaskar. I did walk within a week. My arthritis disappeared as if in a dream never to bother me again. To experience His close presence, I became a Bal Vikas Guru and this Seva has been giving me immense satisfaction for the past 35 years."

Swami Gives a Second Life to my Son

My son Suryanarayana (67) has been Swami's devotee since 1963, even before I met Swami. A highly qualified mechanical engineer, he has had a long and distinguished career with Ashok Leyland. In December 1997, he came to Puttaparthi for my 90th birthday and during our interview, which Swami granted us, he told Swami that the doctors had discovered a patch in his left upper lung through scanning and X-ray. He had been losing weight and appetite and getting weaker. He was advised to undergo bronchoscopy and biopsy to determine whether the patch was malignant.

We prayed to Swami for His protection and guidance. Swami asked my son to go through the tests, assuring him that He would be with him. My son returned in a week with the reports which confirmed malignancy. He was advised surgery within a week for the removal of the lung or a portion. This did not guarantee a cure however. Suryanarayana was much depressed and despondent. We showed the reports to Dr. Alreja, who on our request placed them at the Lotus Feet of Bhagavan. Dr. Alreja brought us Prasadam from Swami.

I now continue the story in my son's own words: "In my anxiety I had told my two sons in the USA of my grave condition and they decided to come to India immediately to be with me in this crisis. At this stage Swami appeared in my son Gopal's dream that night and told him, "Do not come. I am looking after your father. Nothing will happen to him while I am here." Gopal phoned to tell me this.

"The following day, 8th January 1998 was a Thursday and Vaikuntha Ekadasi day. I was able to get a front line seat in the morning Darshan. Swami came direct to me and asked: "What are the doctors saying?" I raised both my hands in total surrender and responded, "Swami, You alone must save me." Swami in His infinite compassion placed His hand on my head and gave me divinely materialised Vibhuti. Almost instantly, I started to feel a sense of well-being. I hurried to my room to convey this happy news to my father and wife. For three months, I stayed in j Puttaparthi having Darshan daily and f doing intense Sadhana. Swami would notice me at times and raise His hand in recognition.

"My health showed an all-round remarkable improvement. From that time till now I did not take any medicine. Nor did I get myself examined by any doctor, not even by my son who is an M.D., practising in the USA. I depended solely upon Divine Darshan and Vibhuti with total faith. I now enjoy good health and am free from all anxieties. Bhagavan has granted me a second lease of life."

Swami Cures my Grandson Gopal in a Dream

Gopal has been a computer engineer in New Jersey, USA for the last eight years. He and his wife sing Bhajans at Sai Centres and he also plays on the Tabla at Bhajans. He writes: "In May 1993, I was getting excruciating pain in my feet during my daily jogging. A specialist diagnosed my problem as flatfoot. Due to insufficient arch, the tissue at the bottom of the foot pulled at the heel bone causing pain. An injection gave me relief for six months. But in winter, the pain would return with double the intensity. When rry problem continued despite treatment, I was advised surgery but with no guarantee of cure. I shared my anxiety with my parents over the phone in June 1998. My father gave a letter to Swami about my condition.

"In July 1998, early one morning, I had a vivid dream. I was sitting in Prasanthi Nilayam. Swami came right up to me and asked me what the matter was with my feet. He said, "Let me see your right leg." I stretched my right leg with the sole facing upward. Swami put His right foot in the region of the arch and pressed firmly. Even in my dream I could hear myself groaning with pain caused by the pressure. Swami did the same to my left foot also. After Swami spoke to me a few words, the dream ended. When I woke up in the morning, miraculously I felt the pain leaving me. It was going down my waist propelled by a cool blissful sensation in both my legs and then to my feet and then to disappear completely. When I put my feet on the ground, I realised for the first time in years that I was free from pain. I could not believe myself. By Bhagavan's grace, the pain has never recurred."

Swami Restores a Bank's Health

Even institutions have health problems sometimes. In 1968, with Swami's blessings, I became the Chairman of the Andhra Bank for a five-year term. I had served in Tamil Nadu, Gujarat and Maharashtra for over 40 years. My ambition was to serve my own State also before I finally retired. Earlier to my taking over, a strong employees' union had forced a weak management to sign away its rights in regard to recruitment and promotions on the basis of merit. This was crippling the Bank's progress and was its chief problem.

A 90 day strike brought on by the union on a non-issue gave us a chance to remove the roadblock. Swami's directive to me was: Stand firm with courage and do not yield. We had the

support of the Government, the Reserve Bank, the public at large and the loyal staff with us. No wonder, when Divinity is with you, everybody will also be with you. With 'No Work No Pay' enforced at our instance throughout the country by all other banks also, the All India Union had to call off the strike. This was unprecedented. For 30 years now there have been no prolonged strikes either in banks or Government or industry. The principle of 'No Work No Pay' has come to stay. Through Swami's grace, the country has benefited immensely.

Normally, a bank would be in shambles after such a lengthy strike. But the Andhra Bank's growth that year was the best in 49 years of its existence. The Reserve Bank expected a run on us when we reopened, but exactly the reverse happened. We had a rush of deposits. Even the staff who had lost the wages during the strike worked with zeal. During my five-year period, the bank grew to three times its size despite labour troubles.

I shudder to think as to what would have been the predicament of my family had it not been for Bhagavan's immeasurable compassion and grace. This is the story of one family. Bhagavan's protection extends worldwide to millions. Each one will have a story to tell if there is someone to listen. We are in the immediate presence of the Avatar. This is our extraordinary good fortune. This is one chance to fulfill our lives through selfless and dedicated service to humanity with the firm conviction that we are thereby serving God Himself who is immanent in all. We should be Swami's worth instruments with no feeling of doership.

Reaching out to Villages with Bhagavan's Message of Love

Sri Sathya Sai Grama Seva 2001

This unique programme of service to the villages started by Bhagavan Baba in October last year was repeated this year also during winter vacation. Most of the students cancelled their hometown railway bookings as soon as they heard the announcement of this programme so as to take part in the sacred task of serving the villagers. The entire staff of the Institute and school and more than 800 students availed of this rare opportunity of Seva provided to them by Bhagavan Baba.

The service programme started on 7th October 2001. The students and staff of the Institute along with some senior devotees assembled in Sai Kulwant Hall on the morning of 7th October to receive the blessings of Bhagavan before embarking on this sacred mission of service. They circumambulated the Mandir amidst chanting of Veda Mantras and singing of Bhajans while Bhagavan stood in the verandah to shower His blessings on all. As the convoy of 20 vehicles loaded with food packets, laddus, Saris, Dhotis, blankets and clothes for children got ready to depart on the first day, Bhagavan went near Gopuram Gate, broke coconuts as a mark of auspiciousness and flagged off the convoy with His profound blessings.

For the next two weeks till the 19th of October, the students visited different villages in the Mandals of Hindupur and Kadiri and a few villages in and around Puttaparthi. Under Bhagavan's directions, the Grama Seva would commence with Nagarsankirtan from the outskirts of the village to some central point. Thereafter, the students would divide themselves into batches and

go door to door distributing the food packets. Clothes were distributed to every household. School children were assembled in the local school or a temple and stationery items were distributed to all of them to their great delight. The local Seva Dal in these villages guided the distribution whenever required. Blankets were distributed to the needy senior citizens.

For any given day of Grama Seva, meticulous planning had to be done on the previous day itself. There were so many things to be attended to—sorting out the clothes to be distributed, cooking and packing the food, making laddus, loading all the distribution material into vans, organising and briefing all the distribution parties, and so on.

Students and staff experienced a number of touching moments while interacting with the villagers and were overwhelmed with the villagers' heartwarming response and expression of gratitude to Bhagavan. All said and done, it was a great learning experience for the students and the staff. Not only did the Grama Seva provide the student community with an insight into the plight of rural India, it also gave them an enormous exposure to what Bhagavan calls 'practical knowledge' through utilisation of multifarious skills for the efficient conduct of a mammoth project of such a nature covering about 100 villages. More than that, it provided them the joyous experience of being used by Bhagavan as an instrument to reach out to His people at their very doorstep, reassuring them that God had not forsaken them. An exhilarating scene was witnessed when the students returned in the evening again in a convoy and disembarked from their vehicles near the Mandir hailing 'Jai' of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba. Bhagavan too would be eagerly looking forward to their arrival and would lovingly enquire about them and distribute Prasadam to them.

Sri Sathya Sai Grama Seva is a beacon light for the whole humanity, a lesson in caring and sharing and a demonstration of Bhagavan's love in action. It is difficult to state who were blessed more—the villagers who joyously received Bhagavan's love or the students and staff who were used as instruments in this holy and auspicious Karma Yajna as Bhagavan aptly described it.

AVATAR VANI

SAI PADUKA PRATISHTHA MAHOTSAV DISCOURSE

Understand the Principle of the Five Elements

Fear of sin has declined; wicked deeds have become the order of the day; devotion to God has diminished. We find acts of violence all around. Oh man! Understand, you will attain peace and happiness only when you take refuge at the Lotus Feet of the Lord and chant His Divine Name.

(Telugu Poem)

Embodiments of Love!

All that you see in this Prapancha (world) constituted by mobile and immobile objects is the manifestation of the Pancha Bhutas (five elements). There is no world without the five elements. They are the very forms of the Divine. That is why people reverentially refer to the five elements, namely, earth, water, fire, air and ether as Bhudevi, Gangadevi, Agnideva, Vayudeva and Shabda Brahman, respectively. It is on this basis that Divinity is extolled as Shabda Brahmayi, Characharamayi, Jyotirmayi, Vaangmayi, Nityanandamayi, Paratparamayi,

Mayamayi and Sreemayi (the embodiment of sound, mobility and immobility, light, speech, eternal bliss, supreme majesty, delusion and wealth). These are the attributes of the five elements, which sustain the world. The five elements are present in every being. The Spirit or the Atma, which is the very form of God, is not visible to the naked eye, but the Pancha Bhutas can be seen, heard, felt and experienced by one and all. One who understands the principle of these five elements becomes God himself.

Declarations of Profound Truth

The Gayatri Mantra begins with Bhur, Bhuvah, Suvaha. Bhur represents materialisation; it is related to the body. Bhuvah represents vibration; it relates to air (Prana). Suvaha represents radiation; it is supreme knowledge. This morning, during the course of Puja, the Chief Priest described Dakshinamoorthi as the embodiment of supreme knowledge. The four Vedas have given four Mahavakyas (declarations of profound wisdom) to the world. They are: *Prajnanam Brahma* (Brahman is Supreme Consciousness), *Aham Brahmasmi* (I am Brahman), *Tattwamasi* (That Thou Art), *Ayam Atma Brahma* (This Self is Brahman). These divine axioms represent the essence of the Vedas. What is Prajnana? Is it bookish knowledge? Is it the knowledge that is forgotten with the passage of time? Is it related to the experience of the body? No. Not at all. Prajnana is the unchanging and eternal principle which is in you at all times and under all circumstances. People call it supreme knowledge but the correct translation for this term is Constant Integrated Awareness. This Constant Integrated Awareness is immanent in man. Just as the air is all-pervasive, so too is the Constant Integrated Awareness. How is it that man is not able to recognise such all-pervasive divinity, which exists in all the three periods of time—past, present and future? The Vedas describe divinity as that which does not move but appears to be moving and that which exists everywhere but cannot be perceived. Though God is present within, man goes in search of Him thinking that He is present only at a particular place. It is tantamount to somebody going in search of himself elsewhere. How ignorant is man that he does not realise divinity present in him in the form of the five elements! It is foolishness on his part to look for God outside ignoring his innate divinity. Divinity is present in every being. None can exist without divinity. The life principle that flows through each and every nerve of the body is verily divine. This life principle that sustains our body is Prajnana. On this basis, it is said, *Prajnanam Brahma*.

The same thing is reflected in another Mahavakya, *Ayam Atma Brahma* (This Self is Brahman). It can be interpreted as 'I am Atma and Brahman'. The third one is *Tattwamasi*. Tat denotes all-pervasive Brahman and Twam stands for individual self. It means that the same divinity is present within and without: *Antarbahischa Tatsarvam Vyapya Narayana Sthita* (That all-pervasive God is present within and without). That which is seen, heard and experienced outside is nothing but the reflection, reaction and resound of the inner being. When reality is within, why crave for its reflection outside? It is sheer foolishness. Prabhava is the name of the first year of the Indian calendar. The word Prabha means divine effulgence. So, Prabhava denotes the manifestation of latent divinity. Man is the embodiment of time. He is the master of time. In order to understand this reality, man has to control his mind. Hence, it is said, *master the mind and be a mastermind*. The five elements that are seen outside are present in man. He is the master of the five elements. You should master the mind; do not become its slave. Kaikeyi was a queen who accepted the evil advice of her maid-servant Manthara. You all know what happened to her. She lost her husband and was despised by her own son and earned a bad name for

herself. Today you do not find any lady bearing the name Kaikeyi. Similar will be the fate of those who yield to the vagaries of the mind. Man is the master of the mind. He should not conduct himself like a slave.

The Five Elements Manifest Divinity

Man is the embodiment of the five elements. Though they are highly powerful, yet man is their master. But man, out of his ignorance, considers himself very weak and helpless. He is unaware of the divinity which permeates every atom of the universe. The Vedas declare, *Anoraneeyan Mahato Maheeyan* (God is subtler than the subtlest and vaster than the vastest). Such divinity is present in man. How can man comprehend divinity? All that is seen in the external world is also a manifestation of divinity, but man fails to realise this as he lacks the right vision. *Pashyannapi Cha Na Pashyati Moodho* (he is a fool who sees yet does not recognise the reality). All that man sees, does and experiences in the world is also divine, but he is not able to comprehend this divinity.

God has no distinctions or differences. No one can stipulate do's and don'ts for Him. He can do anything as He is in everything and is everything. He has no master above Him. If man wants to visualise God, he will see Him only in the form of a human being far superior to him in all respects. *Janthunam Narajanma Durlabham* (out of all the living beings, the human birth is the rarest). *Daivam Manusha Rupena* (God takes the form of man). So, man should know the nature of a human being to begin with. All the sacred texts have described God as having human form. But it does not mean that God is confined to human form only. All forms are His. However, man cannot visualise God in any other form than that of a human being. If a buffalo visualises God, it can think of Him only as another buffalo of a gigantic form. Similarly, a frog thinks of God as another gigantic frog. God has no differences; He can assume any form and do anything. He has no trace of selfishness in Him. Whatever He does is for your welfare. No one can say that God has a particular form. He is present all over. All forms are His and each form is composed of the five elements. So, have faith that God is immanent in the five elements. When you have faith, you will experience truth.

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

You love your mother because you have faith that she is your mother. The husband loves his wife because he has faith that she is his wife. But before marriage who is the husband and who is the wife? So, faith is the basis of love. One can attain divinity only when one has steady faith. Without faith, you cannot experience God. First of all, one should have faith in one's own self. Develop self-confidence, which will lead to self-satisfaction. When you have self-satisfaction, you will be prepared for self-sacrifice. Only through self-sacrifice can one attain self-realisation. Self-realisation means to realise that you are everything. Self-confidence is the foundation, self-satisfaction represents the walls and self-sacrifice is the roof. No one can live in a building without a roof. Roof cannot be laid without walls and walls cannot be raised without foundation. So, self-confidence, self-satisfaction and self-sacrifice are very essential for self-realisation.

Today man has lost self-confidence. If you lose self-confidence, you lose everything. Only through self-confidence can one have the vision of the effulgent divinity.

Recognise your Innate Divinity

Embodiments of Love!

All are essentially divine. Wherever we see the five elements, there is divinity. As man is made up of the five elements, he is verily God. God has no specific form. People attribute various forms to God. Here we have an idol of Dakshinamoorthi. This form is but your own imagination. It is not the reality. How can you visualise God who is the very form of the universe? One of the names of God is Vishwa. What is the meaning of Vishwa? Vishwa is that which has unlimited forms, shapes, objects and limbs. Vishwa (universe) is made up of the five elements. The human body also consists of the five elements. Hence, it is called Vishwa. The Veda says, Sahasra Seersha Purusha Sahasraksha Sahasra Pad (God has thousands of heads, eyes and feet). It only means that all heads, hands, hearts are His. Unable to understand this truth, man considers himself to be an ordinary being and develops attachment to the body. You are human only in form but you are the embodiment of divinity. So, have firm conviction that you are God. Develop total faith in the truth contained in the four Mahavakyas that you are no different from God. Here is a small example. When you say, this is my handkerchief, you are different from the handkerchief. Likewise, when you say, this is my body, my mind, my Buddhi, my Chitta, etc., you are different from all these. Then, who are you? Put this question to yourself. These are mere instruments and you are the master. Once you realise this truth, you will transcend all these.

This plate, tumbler and spoon are made up of silver. Their names and forms are different, but silver is common to all of them. Names and forms can be changed but silver remains unchanged. Likewise, a child becomes a boy, then a man and later on a grandfather. The form keeps changing but the spirit remains unchanged. Do not repose your faith in the body which constantly changes. Body is like a water bubble; mind is like a mad monkey. Do not follow the body, do not follow the mind. Follow the conscience. Conscience is the Atma (Self). Have total faith in the Atma. You are bound to face problems if you rely on the body, the mind and the senses. However, so long as you live in the world, you have to discharge your duties using your body and the mind as instruments. Also you have to make use of the five elements for your worldly existence and ultimately you become one with them.

Have Firm Faith in God

You are the embodiment of Prajnana. It is not worldly or secular knowledge. This true knowledge is within you. It is not something that you acquire after you are born. It is with you right from your birth. This knowledge is with you always and it shows you the right path. But you have forgotten this truth and consequently, you suffer from illusion. In this world, everything is Maya (illusion). All are passing clouds, nothing is permanent. The Atma alone is true and eternal. To have the experience of the Atma should be the goal of your life. Carry out your duties in the world keeping in view the goal of attaining the eternal Atmic principle.

Today you have done Paduka worship. What is the significance of the Padukas? The head is the most important part of the body. That is why it is crowned. Such a precious head cannot go anywhere without the help of the feet. The feet bear the weight of the head. *Chandrama Manaso Jataha Chaksho Suryo Ajayata* (the moon was born out of the mind and the sun out of the eyes

of the Supreme Being). Eyes are very important in the body. Without the Netra (eyes), you cannot go through the Shastra (sacred text). Without Drishti (vision), one cannot see Srishti (creation). But all these limbs are mere instruments. The fundamental basis for all this is the Atmic principle. Man ignores this fundamental basis and attaches importance to the instruments. As a result, he is subjected to misery. It is the Bhrama (delusion) that is responsible for one's misery. So long as one is engulfed in Bhrama, one cannot attain Brahma. The term Brahma means vastness. Similar is the meaning of the term Vishnu. So, God symbolises vastness and broad-mindedness. But a narrow-minded person considers God also narrow-minded. *Yad Bhavam Tad Bhavathi* (as are your feelings, so will be the result). God is filled with broad feelings. It is not possible for anybody to comprehend God's Sankalpa (Will). Unable to understand the Divine Will, people forget Yathartha (reality) and fall into Anartha (difficulties). They are carried away by Padartha (worldly objects) and ignore Parartha (Divinity). Parartha is fundamental; everything else pertains to the physical world. Do not repose your faith in the physical world. However, you have to play your role well in this drama of life. You have to discharge your worldly responsibilities. To that extent, you can keep the world in your mind. If you have firm faith in God, you will perceive divinity everywhere; no other thought will enter your mind. Once you understand the principle of the five elements, you will understand divinity.

God has no Specific Form

Embodiments of Love!

The five elements are the very life principle of man. There can be no life even if one of the five elements is absent. Air is present in you, around you and below you, but you can neither see it nor catch hold of it. You cannot deny its existence for you cannot survive without air. It is present in you in the form of breath. So long as there is breath in you, you are Sivam (auspicious), otherwise you become Shavam (corpse). So, the breath is the very form of Easwara. Thus, we see that God resides in man in the form of breath and sustains his life.

First of all, give up the notion that God has a specific form. All forms that are attributed to Him are man's own creation and imagination. God is depicted to be having four hands holding Shankha, Chakra, Gada and Padma (conch, discus, mace and lotus). If God were really to be born with four hands, people would certainly put Him in exhibition. What is the inner meaning of God having these four insignia? Shankha represents sound, Chakra denotes the wheel of time. Gada symbolises power and lotus stands for heart. It is only to make you understand that God is the master of sound, time, power and heart that He is depicted to be having these insignia in His hands.

Out of all the forms of God, human form is very significant. God incarnates in human form. You should have full faith that you are the embodiment of divinity. Make proper use of your senses. Only then can you become a true human being. Who is a human being? One who has unity of thought, word and deed is a true human being. The proper study of mankind is man. It means your thoughts, words and deeds should be in harmony with one another. That which is thought must be said and that which is said must be acted upon. Unity of these three signifies true humanness.

*Tridalam Trigunakaram Trinetrancha Triyayudham;
Trijanma Papa Samharam Eka Bilvam Sivarpanam.*

(Offer the trifoliate Bilva leaf to Lord Siva, the three-eyed Lord having trident in His hand, which destroys the sins of three births.) Offer your thoughts, words and deeds to God.

Though God is present in you, with you, around you all the time, you are wasting a lot of time looking for Him outside. Do not waste time, for time is God. That is why God is extolled as *Kalasarupaya Namah, Kalateetaya Namah* (salutations to God who is the embodiment of time and transcends time). When you are in the company of God all the time, why should you give room for worry? In order to understand that God is not separate from you, undertake sacred deeds. Help others. *Hastasya Bhushanam Danam, Sathyam Kanthasya Bhushanam, Srotrasya Bhushanam Sastram*. (Charity is the true ornament for the hand, truth is the true ornament for the neck and listening to sacred texts is the true ornament for the ears). These are the Bhushanas (ornaments) which God wants you to adorn yourself with. But man craves for worldly Bhushanas and thereby subjects himself to Dushanas (censure). Discard artificial jewellery and adorn yourself with natural jewellery.

Use your Body for Selfless Service

Embodiments of Love!

Love is the common principle in all of you. It is sacred and changeless. Even though you are endowed with sacred love, you take to wrong path. You direct such sacred love towards selfish worldly ends and subject yourself to blame and censure. Undertake sacred activities and earn a good name for yourself. Your body is sustained by God. So, utilise it for noble causes.

*See no evil, see what is good,
Hear no evil, hear what is good,
Talk no evil, talk what is good;
Think no evil, think what is good;
Do no evil, do what is good,
This is the way to God.*

Sanctify all the limbs, of the body by undertaking selfless, activities. But it is not that easy to practise. There is always some self-interest in whatever man does. Self-interest is also necessary, but it should be within certain limits.

God is the ocean of bliss. As is the size of your container, so is the amount of water that you can collect from the ocean. If you want to collect more bliss from the ocean of bliss, i.e., God, you have to increase the size of the container, which means you have to cultivate expansion love. Expansion love is life; contraction love is death. Develop love in you and share it with others. That is true sacrifice. *Na Karmana Na Prajaya Dhanena Thyagenaikena Amrutatthwamanasu* (immortality is not attained through action, progeny or wealth; it is attained only by sacrifice). Everything belongs to God. There is nothing that you can lay claim to as yours.

*"Oh God, I offer the heart which You have given me. What else can I offer at Your Lotus Feet?
Please accept my salutations."*

(Telugu Poem)

This is the true offering that one should make to God. But modern man though highly educated and intelligent is immersed in ignorance. *"In spite of his education and intelligence, a foolish man will not know his true Self and a mean-minded person will not give up his wicked qualities. Modern education leads only to argumentation, not to total wisdom. What is the use of acquiring worldly education if it cannot lead you to immortality? Acquire the knowledge that will make you immortal."* (Telugu Poem)

Today man acquires education only to eke out a livelihood. The more he studies, the more he starts doubting God. Such a person cannot be called a human being at all. A human being should have a pure heart without a trace of doubt. Only then can he understand divinity.

You know why God has given you the eyes? Is it to see everything that comes your way? No, no. The eyes are given to see God. But there are some people who close their eyes and start meditating even while sitting in front of Swami. Such meditation is false piety. People who close their eyes in front of God might have been blind in their previous births or will be blind in the coming births. It is an unhealthy and unholy practice to close your eyes in front of God. Open your eyes and see Him. Open not only the physical eyes, but also the eye of wisdom. Why has God given you the tongue? Is it to partake of delicious food? No, not merely for that. The tongue is given to chant the Divine Name and to talk sweetly and softly. Do not talk as you please which may hurt the feelings of others. Some people may not pay heed to you if you talk softly and sweetly; leave them to their fate. They may listen or not, but you should always talk in a pleasing manner. If that is not possible, observe silence. When you are silent, there can be no conflict.

God is the Perfect Life-smith

Only those who do not recognise divinity act in a foolish manner. In fact, man himself is divine. He can become a perfect human being only after realising his divinity. Then whatever he does will be perfect. There was a person named Antony who used to make violins. Being a perfectionist, he used to take one full year to make one violin. Once his friends chided him saying, "Antony, if you take one full year to make one violin, how will you be able to support your family? We feel you are wasting your time." Antony replied, "Brothers, what I am doing is God's work, who is the embodiment of perfection. So, I take care that the violin I make is also a perfect one" That is why Antony's violin became very famous. Whatever you do, do it to satisfy God. Only then will you find fulfillment from your work. All your actions should be beneficial to one and all. Only then will you be dear to Me and I will become your friend. Even if you offer a morsel of food to some one, do it in a proper manner.

Yesterday, our boys took great pains and went to far off villages to do Grama Seva. They distributed food packets till 10 o'clock in the night. No doubt it is a good work, but they did not use their power of discrimination. The food was prepared in the early hours of the day. How can it remain in good condition till 10 o'clock in the night? Would it not get spoiled by then? Is it proper to serve such food to people? If the food is spoiled, you should get back and take fresh food next day. When this was told to the boys, they realised their mistake. In fact, they got involved in food distribution so much that they did not realise this aspect. The boys should have taken some rest after their lunch. It is said, "Sleep awhile after lunch." But this was not the case as they set out for Seva again, going to different villages immediately after their lunch.

Consequently, some of the boys had stomach-ache and developed fever. One should exercise one's power of discrimination in whatever one does.

God always does things perfectly. Whenever I materialise a ring for a devotee, it exactly fits his finger. Even a goldsmith who takes measurement and makes the ring may commit a mistake. He is goldsmith, but God is life-smith. (Cheers) He always does things in a perfect manner. Whatever service you undertake should be done perfectly. The one who serves and the one who is served, both should be satisfied. That is real service. The bliss that results out of such service cannot be found anywhere else.

Students - Boys and Girls!

You are the future citizens and future parents of this country. Develop sacred qualities and undertake sacred activities. Only then will your lives become sacred. The Upanishads say, human life is most precious. The value of man cannot be estimated or compared. Who attaches value to gold and diamonds? It is because of man that gold and diamonds have acquired value. Men are more valuable than all the wealth of the world. So, do not lose your value by indulging in selfish deeds. But today man is becoming more and more selfish. Fish is better than a man who is selfish. Fish cleans the water of its dirt, but the selfish man pollutes society in which he lives. All your actions should be selfless and sacred. Only then are you fit to be called a human being.

Man has the sacred name Manishi. When reversed, it reads as Shinima (cinema). Today man has become a `Cinema Manishi' meaning one leading an artificial life. You should be a true human being. Man has another name Manava. `Ma' means Ajnana (ignorance), `Na' means without and `Va' means to conduct oneself. So, Manava means one who conducts oneself without ignorance. You should be such humans. There lies the fulfillment of your education.

Students!

Let your conduct and behaviour be an ideal for the rest of the world. Today the world is in utter chaos and confusion. You find misery, sadness, sin and anger everywhere. In such a situation, it is your bounden duty to give peace to the distraught. Where is peace? It is within you. You are the embodiment of peace. In the outside world, there is no peace, but only pieces. Man's selfishness is responsible for this.

Spirituality is not a Business

In olden days, education and health care were provided free of cost. But today the fields of education and health care have become business-oriented. Even to admit a child in Kindergarten, one is expected to pay a donation of twenty to twenty-five thousand rupees. People spend 10 crores on a hospital expecting a profit of 100 crores. How can the poor afford such costly treatment? Today even in the field of spirituality, we find people indulging in business. Spirituality is meant to promote love, not business. Everything will be spoiled if business finds its way into the field of spirituality. Even God's name will be tarnished. Nobody spends anything for My sake nor do I accept anything from others.

Madurai people have spent some money in conducting this function which includes travel expenses and food expenses, etc. They may collect as much money as is required for the function

but they should not prescribe membership fee. Love is the membership fee in the field of spirituality. (Cheers) There is no greater fee than love. So, share your love with others. Do not indulge in business. By doing this, you are bringing a bad name to God. I want our organisations not to collect any fees from anybody. All of you are aware, I don't take even a naya paisa from our students. In our hospitals also, patients are given costly medicines and operations are performed totally free of cost. If your intention is good, money comes to you on its own. But if you have any selfish motive, you will certainly be put to loss. Do not crave for money. *Money comes and goes, but morality comes and grows.* So, cultivate morality.

In spiritual organisations, no fee whatsoever should be collected from people. Who can estimate the value of the Atma? It is infinite and beyond estimate. Only when you understand this principle and act accordingly will the entire world take to the path of spirituality. Only then will peace prevail in the world. Today we find restlessness and agitation all over the world. Every newspaper stands ample testimony to this. Make efforts to transform this country of Bharat into a land of peace. If you are peaceful, the whole world will be peaceful. Lead your life peacefully and help others to attain peace. Follow the ideal of Antony and let all your actions be perfect. Some people make their lives miserable by their wicked qualities and evil deeds. Moreover, they argue that they are always right. It is utter foolishness. Such an attitude is never going to help them. Do good and make everybody happy. That is true human life.

Embodiments of Love!

Let all your activities, whether study or doing a job, be suffused with love. Lead your lives with love and uphold the prestige and honour of your country.

Bhagavan concluded His Discourse with the Bhajan, "Prema Mudita Manase Kaho..."

From Bhagavan's Discourse in Sai Kulwant Hall, Prasanthi Nilayam on 9th October 2001 on the occasion of the 9th anniversary of Sai Paduka Pratishtha Mahotsav

Sai Paduka Pratishtha Mahotsav 2001

In a simple and solemn function, Puja of Sai Padukas was conducted by a large congregation of devotees from all parts of the world on 9th October 2001 in Sai Kulwant Hall, Prasanthi Nilayam in the Divine Presence of Bhagavan Baba. This was the 9th group Puja of Sai Padukas organised by Sri Sai Paduka Trust, Madurai (India) since they started this programme in 1993.

One day before the Paduka Puja programme, i.e., on 8th October 2001, a Yajna for world peace was conducted in one of the halls at Prasanthi Nilayam by learned Pundits under the able guidance of Sri Jayarama Sastrigal. In the afternoon of 8th October 2001, a music programme was held in Sai Kulwant Hall. The first item of the programme was "Sai ki Aradhana" consisting of various Kritis in praise of Bhagavan Baba by Madurai devotees. The second item was a programme of Carnatic music in guitar by Sri Ramesh of Coimbatore. Both the programmes earned the appreciation of the devotees.

Bhagavan was offered traditional welcome with Poornakumbham amidst Veda chanting when He came to Sai Kulwant Hall on the morning of 9th October 2001. The participants in the Sai Paduka Puja had already occupied their seats in orderly rows in the Hall and were ready for Puja with Sai Padukas placed before them along with necessary Puja materials. The programme was inaugurated by Bhagavan Baba at 7.05 a.m. by lighting the sacred lamp placed on the dais, which was beautifully decorated. Idols of Dakshinamoorthi and Lord Narayana as Vamana on both sides of the semicircular portico of the Mandir added to the beauty and piety of the function.

The Puja programme started with the worship of Lord Ganesh, the remover of all obstacles. This was followed by Dakshinamoorthi Puja. Paduka Puja and Abhishekam started at 7.50 a.m. amidst chanting of Vedic hymns, the Chief Priest instructed the participants to offer Abhishekam to the Padukas with various materials like pure water, sandal paste, Panchamritam, Vibhuti and rose water. During the course of Abhishekam, Swami went into the rows of the devotees performing Puja and showered blessings and bliss on them. The Puja concluded with offering of flowers at the Padukas with the chanting of Mantras in praise of Bhagavan Baba. The programme of Sai Paduka Puja came to a close at 8.30 a.m. with offer of Arati to Bhagavan.

On the afternoon of 9th October 2001, Bhagavan came to Sai Kulwant Hall at 2.15 p.m. and showered the bliss of His Divine Darshan on the assembled devotees and Paduka worshippers. The programme in the afternoon began with Vedic invocation by Institute students. Thereafter, two speakers made brief speeches before the Divine Discourse of Bhagavan Baba. The first speaker was Sri Srinivasan Chettiar, President of Sri Sai Paduka Trust. Emphasising the importance of faith in spirituality, Sri Chettiar said that it was the devotees' unshakeable faith in the Divinity of Bhagavan Baba that imparted real meaning to the worship of His Padukas. Without faith, it was a mere ritual.

The second speaker was Sri Ajit Popat of the U.K. Referring to the Grama Seva being done by the students and staff of Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning, Sri Popat remarked that real Puja of God was the service of the poor and needy. Emphasising the subtle aspect of Paduka Puja of Bhagavan, Sri Popat said that one should install the Lotus Feet of Bhagavan in one's heart. That, he said, was the real meaning of Paduka worship.

After this, Bhagavan gave His Divine Discourse (full text of the Discourse given elsewhere in this issue). This programme came to a close with offer of Arati to Bhagavan.

Later at 4.40 p.m., famous Carnatic musician Smt. Nithyasree Mahadevan presented an excellent programme of Carnatic music and enthralled the devotees with classical and devotional songs. Bhagavan blessed Smt. Mahadevan and other accompanying artistes and gave clothes to them. The programme concluded with distribution of Prasadam.

Divine Love of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba

Lt. Gen. (Retd) S. P. Malhotra

With a passion to serve the nation, I was traversing the path of life in the Indian Army. It was in the year 1974, I remember, when the path took a turning towards the spiritual, taking me to Wellington where I was posted as Commandant, Defence Services Staff College. Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba came to Ooty, a beautiful hill station about 14 kilometres away from Wellington. Since we had heard so much about Baba's spiritual powers to lead people towards the path of piety and service to humanity, my wife Prem and I decided to visit Ooty to have Darshan of Bhagavan.

My First Darshan of Baba

On arriving at Ooty, we went to the Ashram. At the time of evening prayers, sitting in a small room we were awaiting the emergence of Baba from His room. After some time, Baba came out clad in a saffron coloured long robe. He glanced at us and passed by going to the congregation waiting outside for Him. We had fulfilling Darshan of Baba and listened to His Discourse. He spoke in a continuous flow of mellifluous prose, keeping the devotees in a state of complete attention to His timeless words of wisdom.

Thereafter, we made a few visits to Ooty during Baba's stay. At Wellington, we have a Mandir in the Staff College complex. A desire arose in me to request Baba to visit our Mandir. I prayed to Baba to accept my request. Next morning, the telephone rang and I got the welcome message that Baba had agreed to visit the Mandir at Wellington! On Baba's visit to Wellington, we attended His Discourse along with the staff, the students and their families. The visit over, just as Baba was boarding the car for His journey back to Ooty, my eyes met the glance of Baba and I felt that a communication had been established between us and I was on my way to the less travelled road of spirituality.

A Calamity Afflicts Me

Six years passed by. Our contact with Baba continued by our visits to Puttaparthi twice a year for seeking His blessings. It was in October, 1980 that I went on an official visit to Kamptee (Nagpur) to prepare and organise a Colour Presentation Ceremony in my capacity as Colonel of Brigade of the Guards. While visiting Kamptee, I developed 'herpes of the eyes'. Due to being fully occupied with the Colour Presentation Ceremony and on account of my obsession to make it a success, the trouble got neglected. The attack got aggravated resulting in oozing blisters on my head and face. Immediately, after the Colour Presentation Ceremony, I had to be evacuated by an I.A.F. plane to the Army Hospital in Delhi Cantonment. As I was a senior officer, full attention was given to my ailment. However, in spite of administration of latest medicines, my condition deteriorated, virtually closing my eyes. There was a distinct possibility that I might lose my eyesight. I recollect how helpless I felt while lying in bed in the hospital with emotional tears of anxiety in my eyes and praying to Baba continuously for His help. The doctor, Colonel Boparai, was sitting in his room contemplating upon my case and wondering why all medicines administered so far had not produced any result. Suddenly, the light shone in the mind of Colonel Boparai and he gave me a particular injection to which earlier patients had not responded. It worked. The ailment was arrested. The attack left behind clear pigment marks all over my face which the doctors said would not go and I will have to live with them. I was in hospital for 35 days, at the end of which I was granted four weeks sick leave with instructions to return for a review. When being discharged from the hospital, I was advised not to travel and to ensure that dust did not go into the eyes.

Baba Saves my Eyes and Career

Overlooking the doctor's advice, I travelled to Puttaparthi by air and some distance by a rough road to get Baba's blessings. I reached in the afternoon. Baba lived adjacent to a beautiful Mandir with a verandah all around. Hoping to have Baba's Darshan during the evening prayers in the Mandir's courtyard, I waited in the verandah. Many people were sitting outside in a congregation. At about 4.00 p.m., Baba came out of His residence and on seeing me sitting in the verandah, came over to me with a smile on His face, took away my glasses with His hands and said "I have gifted you your eyes". He advised me to stop all medicines and enquired as to how long I would be staying at Puttaparthi. I said, "About a week". Baba said, "Have all your meals with Me while you are here". I felt great exuberance within me. The dining room was furnished in a simple manner with a table and chairs. During meal hours, I used to be mostly alone with Baba. Whenever I would look up at Baba, while having my meals, I could see Baba looking into my eyes directly. As the days of the week passed by, the pain in my eyes started diminishing and the pigments started vanishing. A miracle indeed! On my return when doctors observed me, they were overwhelmed with astonishment. Lord be praised!

Years rolled by. The calamity which had struck me was kept at bay with Baba's grace. Both my eyes and my service career were protected till I retired in September 1982 as an Army Commander in the Indian Armed Forces. With Baba's grace I was awarded Padma Bhushan in January 1983 for rendering exceptional service and for excellence in defence matters.

A Sacred Jnana Ganga (river of knowledge) of supreme wisdom of the Vedas flowed from its source, Veda Purusha Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba in the form of His Divine Discourses during Dasara celebrations and Veda Purusha Saptah Jnana Yajna at Prasanthi Nilayam from 20th to 26th October 2001.

Veda Purusha Saptaha Jnana Yajna Veda Purusha Saptaha Jnana Yajna started on the morning of 20th October 2001. Amidst the chanting of Vedic Mantras, the procession of the Pandits carrying the sacred Kumbha (silver pot), worshipped daily in the Mandir since 17th October, started from the Mandir Hall at 7.55 a.m for Poornachandra Auditorium, the venue of the Yajna. It was led by the musicians playing Mangalavadyam and was followed by the Veda chanting students. In the meanwhile, Bhagavan distributed sewing machines to the needy in Sai Kulwant Hall to enable them to earn their livelihood.

Soon after this, Bhagavan arrived in Poornachandra Auditorium, lighted the sacred Jyoti and blessed the priests. The priests started the Yajna after lighting the fire in the traditional manner. Soon the entire Poornachandra Auditorium reverberated with the vibrations of sacred Vedic Mantras chanted by the Pandits and students. A few Pandits in the meanwhile started the study of sacred texts, like the Ramayana and the Bhagavata, and another priest started doing Suryanamaskar. Worship of Devi (Divine Mother) also started at the same time. Bhagavan sat in His chair on the dais and watched the proceedings of the Yajna sanctifying the atmosphere with His Divine Presence. Arati was offered to Bhagavan daily by the Chief Pries during the course of the Yajna. The Yajna continued with full devotional fervour up to 26th October when Poornahuti was performed by Bhagavan.

On the day of Poornahuti, Bhagavan came to Sai Kulwant Hall at 6.35 a.m. The procession of Vedic Pandits started from Sai Kulwant Hall for Poornachandra Auditorium at 7.20 a.m. amidst Veda chanting. It was led by musicians playing Mangalavadyam followed by richly caparisoned Sai Geetha and Veda chanting students. Bhagavan came to Poornachandra Auditorium at 8.00 a.m. and occupied His seat near the Yajna Kunda. Amidst the chanting of Vedic Mantras, Bhagavan materialised gems and Akshatas (sacred rice) and put them in the sacrificial fire along with precious clothes. Swami then blessed the Pandits by sprinkling Akshatas on them.

The programme of sprinkling of Teertham (sacred Yajna water) on the devotees was conducted this year in Sai Kulwant Hall instead of Poornachandra Auditorium on the afternoon of 26th October 2001. Bhagavan went into the length and breadth of the entire Hall to shower His blessings and Teertham on the devotees.

Bhagavan's Dasara Discourses

The proceedings of the Prasanthi Vidwanmahasabha began on the afternoon of 20th October 2001 after the arrival of Bhagavan in Sai Kulwant Hall which was beautifully decorated for this occasion. The programme began with Veda chanting by the students. Thereafter, Dr. M. Sainath, who compared the programme, welcomed all to the first day's programme of the Prasanthi Vidwanmahasabha and announced the names of three speakers who were blessed by Bhagavan to address the devotees before His Discourse.

The first speaker of the programme was Sri Sailaish Bangdel, a second year M.B.A. student of the Institute. Sri Bangdel narrated his experiences of Sri Sathya Sai Grama Seva and told that man as the supreme creation of the world could find fulfillment only when he realised how much useful he was for others. The second speaker, Sri Joydeep Dass, a student of B. Com., Brindavan Campus, referred to the joy and bliss showered by Bhagavan on thousands of devotees in a few minutes of His Darshan time and exhorted the students and devotees to follow the teachings of Bhagavan and try to make others' life as happy as possible. The last speaker of the afternoon, Sri B. N. Narasimha Murthy, Warden, Brindavan Campus, narrated how the compassionate Lord Sai comforted him by telling that He was his Sai Mata when he was worrying about the illness of his mother who was in hospital at that time. Referring to Bhagavan as the Divine Mother of mankind, Sri Murthy narrated several incidents how Bhagavan acted like a most loving and compassionate Divine Mother for the entire humanity. After this, Bhagavan blessed the devotees with His Discourse (full text of the Discourse printed elsewhere in this issue). The first day's programme came to a close with Arati to Bhagavan at 5.10 p.m.

On 21st October also three speakers made brief speeches before Bhagavan's Discourse.—The first speaker, Sri Sundar Narayan Swamy, a student of 1st year M.A. (Econ.), Prasanthi Nilayam Campus referred to the main teachings of Bhagavan Baba and made an impassioned plea to the students to follow the example of selfless service set before mankind by Bhagavan Baba. The second speaker, Sri B. Arvind, a student of 2nd year B.Sc., Brindavan Campus, referred to Bhagavan Baba as Divine Mother embodying all aspects of Durga, Lakshmi and Saraswati and narrated how Swami multiplied His love by distributing it to millions who came to Him. The last speaker, Sri TG. Krishnamurthy, State President, Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organisation, Tamil Nadu referred to Veda Purusha Saptaha Jnana Yajna and observed that man should put to fire all his evil qualities and purify himself. Total purification was real Poornahuti which earned Divine

grace, he said. The programme came to a close with Bhagavan's Discourse followed by offer of Arati to Bhagavan at 5.30 p.m.

The third day's programme of Prasanthi Vidwanmahasabha commenced at 3.25 p.m. with Veda chanting by school students. First of all, Sri Hari Sankar, 2nd year M.B.A. student of the Institute addressed the gathering. Sri Hari Sankar said that man was a marvellous creation of God and, in fact, a walking miracle. Man, he said, could rise to the level of God by his love for and surrender to God. The second speaker, Sri D. V. Hemant Kumar, 2nd year B.Sc. student of Brindavan Campus, narrated how Bhagavan fulfilled His promise made to a devotee of East Godavari District to visit his house by crossing the flooded River Godavari in a small boat in a flash of a moment. Bhagavan's Will, he said, was supreme and no obstacles could stop its fulfillment. The next speaker, Sri Sanjay Sahni, Commerce Lecturer, Brindavan Campus, referred to his experiences of Grama Seva and observed: "Living for God is real Seva, living with Bhagavan is real education and living in God is real spirituality." After this, Bhagavan Baba showered His benedictions on the devotees in His Divine Discourse, which He concluded at 5.30 p.m. with the famous composition of Adi Sankara "Bhaja Govindam, Bhaja Govindam..." The programme came to a close with Arati to Bhagavan.

On the 4th day, i.e., 23rd October 2001, the programme commenced at 3.50 p.m. with Veda chanting. The first speaker of the programme, a student of 1st year M.B.A., Sri Madhusoodan Rao Naidu began his speech with a very interesting story of Akbar and Birbal to tell how Bhagavan Baba was always giving and devotees were always receiving. Sri Rao stated that God descends on the earth so that man may ascend to Divinity. The second speaker, Sri Meer Pratap Thakkar, a 3rd year student of B.Com., Brindavan Campus, referred to the teachings of Bhagavan and exhorted the students to have firm determination for achieving the goal of life. The last speaker, Dr. G. Venkataraman, former Vice Chancellor of Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning, narrated the real life story of a cobbler's son, Abdul, who suffered from a complicated heart problem. The poor cobbler could not afford the huge amount of money demanded by outside hospitals and came to Sri Sathya Sai Super Speciality Hospital, where his son was operated upon and cured without any expense on his part. Dr. Venkataraman observed that Swami's love expressed in various ways was transforming the entire mankind. The programme ended with offer of Arati to Bhagavan after His Divine Discourse which He concluded at 5.45 p.m. with the Bhajan "Govinda Krishna Jai, Gopala Krishna Jai ..."

The 5th day's proceedings of Prasanthi Vidwanmahasabha started at 3.20 p.m. on 24th October 2001 with Veda chanting by the Institute students. The first speaker, Dr. M. Sainath, Physics Lecturer, Prasanthi Nilayam Campus, referred to Bhagavan Baba's teachings and said, "Sai stands for love, and love is universal with no boundaries, discriminations and demarcations. So, we should live in love as taught by Bhagavan Baba." The next speaker, Sri Ruchir Desai, Commerce Lecturer, Brindavan Campus observed that Yajna symbolised sacrifice. God by incarnating in human form with all the limitations of a human body makes the greatest sacrifice. We should lead a life of sacrifice by following Bhagavan Baba's example, Sri Desai said. The last speaker of the afternoon was Sri V. Srinivasan, All India President of Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organisations. Appreciating the excellent chanting of Mahishasura Mardini Stotra rendered by the Primary School students, Sri Srinivasan said, "Today is the auspicious day of Durga Ashtmi. Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba is Sai Durga who is destroying the Mahishasura of greed, hatred,

etc, within us. He has given us the Trishul (trident) of *Daiva Preeti, Papa Bheeti and Sangha Neeti* (love for God, fear of sin and morality in society) to kill this Mahishasura" After this speech, Bhagavan Baba delivered His Divine Discourse and concluded it with the Bhajan "Prema Mudita Manase Kaho..." The programme came to a close with Arati to Bhagavan at 5.35 p.m.

Three speakers addressed the gathering on the afternoon of 25th October 2001 before Bhagavan's Divine Discourse. The first speaker, Dr. T. Ravi Kumar, Chemistry Lecturer, Brindavan Campus of the Institute narrated several incidents of his student days describing how Bhagavan showered His love on him and other students like a most affectionate mother. The second speaker, Sri S. V. Giri, Vice Chancellor, Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning referred to the teachings contained in the Upanishads and observed that Bhagavan's love and compassion gave a new dimension to the teachings of the Upanishads for man's transformation. The last speaker of this programme, Prof. (Mrs.) Jayalakshmi Gopinath, Principal and Warden of Anantapur College narrated a few touching incidents to tell how Divine Sai Mother's love is all-encompassing and all-pervasive. It is for the entire creation including the inanimate objects, Prof. Gopinath said. After this, Bhagavan Baba blessed the devotees with His Divine Discourse. The day's programme ended at 6.15 p.m. with offer of Arati to Bhagavan. In the end, Prasadam was distributed to all.

The grand finale of the proceedings of the Prasanthi Vidwanmahasabha came on the morning of 26th October 2001 with Bhagavan's Divine Discourse soon after the Poornahuti of the Veda Purusha Saptaha Jnana Yajna by Bhagavan Baba in Poornachandra Auditorium. Before Bhagavan's Divine Discourse, Dr. G. Venkataraman, made a brief speech advising the devotees to make every act of their life a Yajna by offering it to God. The programme concluded with Arati to Bhagavan at 9.35 a.m.

Excellent Drama Presentations

As a part of Dasara celebrations, two excellent dramas were presented in the Poornachandra Auditorium on 27th October 2001 in the Divine Presence of Bhagavan Baba. The first drama entitled "Perfect Harmony is Divinity" was presented by the Bal Vikas Children of Haryana and Chandigarh, while the second drama "Siddhartha to Gautam Buddha" was presented by the Bal Vikas children of Bihar and Jharkhand. Bhagavan Baba came to Poornachandra Auditorium at 5.35 p.m. and watched both the dramas. Superb acting of the children and perfect direction made these dramas memorable presentations. Bhagavan blessed the cast of these dramas, distributed clothes to them and posed for photographs with them. The programme ended with Arati to Bhagavan at 7.30 p.m.

Mission of the Avatar

It is to clear the spiritual path of man that the Avatar has come. Man has to be saved from Asanthi (turmoil) in which he is immersed. That is what is meant by Parithranaya Sadhunam (saving the good) from the tentacles of Asanthi caused by lack of knowledge of the relative unimportance of worldly things. All must get Santhi (peace) and Santosha (happiness). That is the mission on which the Lord comes again and again on this earth. He selects a place full of Pavitrata (holiness) and Divyatwam (divinity) and takes on the human form, so that you may talk

*and listen to Him, meet, understand, appreciate, follow and experience Him, and thereby derive benefit . - **Baba***

Cultivate Love for God

The entire universe is under the control of God.

God is governed by Truth.

Noble souls are the guardians of Truth.

Such noble souls are verily the embodiments of Divinity. (Sanskrit Verse)

Embodiments of Love!

Every man desires happiness and wants to avoid sorrow. But in this world, happiness and sorrow, truth and untruth, righteousness and unrighteousness, justice and injustice are not permanent; they pass and change with time. Man should recognise and adore the source from which these pairs of opposites arise. Everyday man experiences happiness and sorrow. He is caught up in attachment and hatred, and verily invites worry and misery. How can man be at peace under these conditions? He should be able to welcome sorrow in the same way as he welcomes happiness. One with the quality of equal-mindedness is a true human being. Man should therefore trust the Divine and experience His love in his heart.

Imbibe Steadfast Devotion and Faith

If you want to be respected by everyone, you should respect everyone. Everyone has the same self-respect whether he is rich or poor, high or low. You should try to maintain your self-respect. If you are conscious of your self-respect then you will respect all.

Embodiments of Love!

There is nothing new to be taught to you today. Everyone should attain bliss. Everyone should overcome sorrow, develop true love and experience unity and divinity. This is My principal message to you today. (Cheers) Human life is most precious and noble. Man is endowed with a tender heart, sweet mind and eternal life principle. Everyone should recognise this truth. Man should experience sweetness in heart and develop equal-mindedness. This is the main wealth he should acquire today.

Man today does not know the greatness of human life. *Daivam Manusha Rupena* (God Himself takes human form). In every man, there, is divinity. The name Bhavani Sankara signifies this truth. Bhavana Sankara stands for the embodiment of Siva and Shakti. Bhavani symbolises Sraddha (steadfast devotion) and Sankara symbolises Viswasa (faith). Where there is Sraddha, symbolising Bhavani, there dances Siva who stands for faith. Life becomes useless without devotion and faith. But today man lacks faith though both Bhavani and Sankara are latent in him. The entire creation symbolises *Ardhanareeswara* (divinity embodying both male and female principles). Every person should try to recognise the divinity within himself. There is no spirituality higher than this. Adoring this Bhavani Sankara principle is the primary duty of every man.

Eternal Bliss Lies in Hardships

If man today is under the sway of sorrow and misery, his mind is responsible for it. Happiness and sorrow, attachment and hatred, and the sensual pleasures that man experiences today arise out of his mind. Since the mind is filled with duality, you suffer all these. When the mind is

trained to see oneness of all creation, there will not be any perversions. In this dualistic world, the gain from sorrow is more than that out of happiness. Ancient saints and sages aspired for hardships rather than happiness. The joy that arises out of hardships is more lasting than that gained from happiness. We should not be averse to sorrow. We should not look for happiness alone.

Sorrow is our true friend and not ephemeral happiness. In the Mahabharata, when Kunti fell at the feet of Krishna, He asked her, "Mother, what do you want?" She answered, "Krishna, always bestow upon me only adversities. I loved and adored You more intensely only during my hardships. In fact, when I was the queen of King Pandu I never thought of You. Only from the time my sons went into a life of exile in the forest and suffered various privations, my love and faith grew in intensity. Kindly grant me only difficulties." We have to develop equanimity in both joy and sorrow. It is the true sign of wisdom.

Embodiments of Love!

There are many persons in the world who have made history. All of them always welcomed trials and tribulations. The happiness derived from comforts is temporary. It is out of pain and hardships that one gets permanent bliss. God has created both pain and pleasure, happiness and sorrow.

What does the word 'Bhagavan' mean? Bha means effulgence. Hence, Bhagavan is one who has the capacity and ability to spread His effulgence everywhere. Though He has no particular form, all forms are His. He is subtler than space and smaller than an atom. What form can you attribute to God? He pervades the entire universe. God is in you and you are in God. There is no difference between you and God. Since you see duality in such non-dualistic principle, you suffer in life.

The whole of creation emerges from Truth and merges back into it. There is no place devoid of Truth. Visualise such pure and unsullied truth. (Telugu Poem) Likewise God is all-pervasive. That is why the Bhagavad-Gita declares, *Sarvata Panipadam Tat Sarvathokshi Siromukham, Sarvata Sruthimalloke Sarvamavruthya Thishtathi* (with hands, feet, eyes, heads, mouth and ears pervading everything, He permeates the entire universe). God is in you in the form of Truth. But man does not recognise this; he thinks that God is separate from him and wastes his time and life in useless pursuits. Indian culture embodies the principle of the Self that does not change with time, even when aeons pass, and it is beginningless and endless. This principle neither waxes nor wanes with time, is neither created nor destroyed, and is imperishable.

*Man is eternal with no birth and death,
He is the primordial principle without a beginning or an end,
He is neither born, nor does he die, nor is he slain by anyone.
He is the Atma which is the eternal witness. (Telugu Poem)*

How should we worship God? We should worship Him as our own Self. We should do away with the feeling that God is different from us. There is no temple dearer to God than the human heart. God loves to reside in the mansion of human heart which is full of love. This is His true residence. We should not look for Him outside.

Self-confidence is the Greatest Asset When I was coming here this morning, everyone wished me "Happy Birthday"! I am always happy. Wish Happy Birthday to those who do not have happiness.

Happiness is not outside. Happiness is union with God. You will be happy only in the company of God. But man imagines that happiness is somewhere outside and strives to attain it through external means and lands himself in difficulties. How did the ancient sages worship God? They worshipped Him with the flower of sacrifice and offered their love to Him. They considered truth as God. They believed in love, kindness and oneness. They offered Him the throne of their heart. Only through such sublime adoration, they attained Divinity. Therefore, modern man should also install God in the altar of his heart and adore Him there.

You should remain happy always under all circumstances. In this dualistic world, it is natural that gain and pain alternate. You cannot avoid it. You should not despair when adversities confront you nor exult when success comes your way. Any adversity is a stepping-stone to eternal bliss. Only when the Pandavas suffered many hardships during their exile could they secure the grace of Krishna and the Lord was always with them everywhere. The Pandavas had correct priorities in their lives. They accorded first place to God, second to the world, and kept 'I' last of all. But the Kauravas had their priorities other way round. They placed 'I' first, world next and God last. That is why they lost the battle. Bliss eluded them. One who has won the proximity to God is always blissful.

Embodiments of Love!

The rind of bitterness of sorrow covers the sweet juice of joy in the orange fruit of life. When you peel off the rind, you get the sweet juice. *Raso Vai Saha* (God is the essence of all sweetness), say the scriptures. So, you should aspire for that sweetness and happiness alone. In his childhood, Lincoln led a poor life. He could not afford even proper dress. His affluent friends made fun of him because he was poor. One day, unable to bear the ridicule, he poured out his heart to his mother and told her how he was being insulted and humiliated. His mother consoled him saying, "My dear son, do not get perturbed by praise or blame. Develop self-respect. Self-respect is your property, it is your treasure and it is verily your God." These words of encouragement inspired Lincoln and gave him the strength to face the ups and downs of life with equanimity. His self-respect and self-confidence helped him to pass his examination with good marks. His admirers and well-wishers who had recognised the strength of his character encouraged him to contest the elections. Lincoln, being a man of great humility, hesitated initially. But he remembered the words of encouragement of his mother when he was young. Finally, he contested the elections, emerged victorious and ultimately became the President of America. Self-confidence and self-respect developed in him by his mother were responsible for his rise to the highest position in the country. A person without self-confidence cannot make any progress in life. You should consider self-confidence as the most important asset in life. Without self-confidence you can never attain happiness in life. Therefore, try to develop self-confidence in order to lead a good life.

My Life is My Message

You are God yourself. God is the eternal resident of your heart. Therefore, there is nothing greater than your heart in this world. You should love everyone and hate none. Others may hate you but you should not hate anyone. That is what I demonstrate in My life. My Life is My Message. (Cheers) Some people may hate and criticise Me, but I will not hate or criticise anyone. When you practise this principle, you can also attain Divinity that Sai Baba is. If Sai has attained such fame and reputation, what is the reason for it? It is His Love Principle alone. Love is My real property and treasure. You should also set ideals in society by developing self-confidence, by sharing your love with others and by leading an exemplary life in this world.

Be always happy. Aspire for the happiness and welfare of not only Bharat but for all the nations of the world. *Loka Samastha Sukhino Bhavantu* (May all the people of the world be happy!). Pray for the happiness of all. Only then will you attain bliss. Develop broad-mindedness and put aside narrow-mindedness. Even if others put you to trouble or pose problems for you, bear everything with patience believing that it will do you only good. *The body which is made up of the five elements has to fall and perish one day or the other. The indweller of the body is eternal, is birthless and deathless and is not bound by any chains of bondage. In fact, this indweller is God Himself!* (Telugu Poem) When a beggar begs for food, he says, *Bhavati Bhiksham Dehi!* (Mother, give me food). He is really begging from the Dehi (the indweller) and not from you. Recognise the truth that he is praying to God in you for alms. It is your pride and ignorance if you think that he is begging from you. It amounts to arrogance. Divinity resides in everyone whether one is a prince or a pauper. You have to adore this divine principle in all and love them, but love should be selfless. Love free from body attachment flows equally towards everyone. Body consciousness leads to narrow-mindedness. Your relationship with God is 'heart to heart and love to love!'

I never invited anyone here for this function; in fact, no invitation was printed. If such a large number of people have gathered here, the reason is their love for Me. (cheers) It is a matter of great bliss to be loved by so many people. There are many who cannot win the love of even their parents. To win the hearts of so many people is in itself a sign of Divinity. I love everyone and everyone loves Me. Those who love Me are not only the ones present here but there are crores of people spread all over the world. Young and old love Me alike.

This morning devotees gathered in large numbers even at two o'clock seeking entry into Sai Kulwant Hall. Their enthusiasm was boundless. Many people queue up to enter a theatre or to get into a bus. But here, the love and devotion of the devotees for Swami is so much that they do not bother about any hardships and inconveniences to have Swami's Darshan. It is difficult to earn God's love by years of penance. You have the good fortune today of enjoying bliss in the Divine Presence. You must have done penance in many previous lives, performed many sacrifices and undertaken varied spiritual austerities in order to secure this divine bliss. It is My love which attracts so much of love from others.

Do not hurt anyone by your harsh words and do not take to evil path.

Recognise the truth that God pervades everything from microcosm to macrocosm. This truth dwells in you but you are not aware of it. That is a big mistake. You are the embodiment of

Bhavani Sankara, Sraddha and Viswasa (steadfast devotion and faith). With self-confidence, you can achieve anything in the world.

Master the Mind

Embodiments of Love!

You need not undertake any difficult spiritual practices to attain Divinity. You need not fast or do any chanting or meditation. Love God from the depth of your heart. Devotees want to offer many types of service to God. These are the characteristics of faith. Strengthen your faith. When Bhavani Sankara reside in your body, you should not sully your sacred body by partaking of improper food. Adopt and practise these three principles in life: *Daiva Preeti, Papa Bheeti and Sangha Neeti* (love for God, fear of sin and morality in society). If you want morality in society, you should develop love for God. If you love God, you will have fear of sin. Today people without fear of sin commit heinous acts. This contradicts the very human nature. There are various types of worries that haunt man starting from birth to death. *"To be born is a worry, to be on the earth is a worry; world is a cause of worry and death too; entire childhood is a worry and so is the old age; life is a worry, failure is a worry, all actions and difficulties cause worry; even happiness too is a mysterious worry."* (Telugu Poem) How can man free himself from worries? All these worries are related to the body and arise from the mind. If you master the mind, there is no scope for any worry.

Thyagaraja said, "Is there any need for Mantra and Tantra for a man who has conquered his mind?" That is the solution of all your problems. As declared many a time by Swami, "Oh, people of the world, develop love for Sai which will destroy all your worries." (cheers) Be free from all worries and do not get bogged down by them. With prayer to God, you can achieve anything. Not only the Bharatiyas, but many people of other countries have achieved success. There are many who have attained fulfillment in life by obeying the command of their mothers. Having been born as a human being, you should follow noble principles of *Matru Devo Bhava, Pitru Devo Bhava, Acharya Devo Bhava* (revere your mother, father and preceptor as God). Love your mother first and foremost. When you love your mother, you will automatically love your father and also your teacher. Before you love your mother, you have to love your Self. One who does not believe in oneself cannot believe one's mother also. Faith in yourself and faith in God is the secret of greatness. We have to understand these two principles.

Embodiments of Love!

In the evening also, we have some birthday programmes. You have been sitting here for a long time. You need rest; you also need food. Human stomach is like a petrol tank which needs to be filled time and again. Many people have been sitting here right from two o'clock in the morning. Therefore, let us bring an end to this morning's programme. Take a vow today that you will develop self-confidence. Keep ruminating over what you have heard from Swami. Follow Swami's commands and you can attain everything and be victorious in all your endeavours.

Bhagavan concluded His Discourse with the Bhajan, Hari Bhajan Bina Sukha Santhi Nahi...

—*From Bhagavan's Birthday Message in Sai Kulwant Hall, Prasanthi Nilayam on 23rd November 2001*

Bhagavan's 76th Birthday Celebrations

Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba's Birthday Celebrations over the years have come to assume a unique significance in the history of mankind when Prasanthi Nilayam becomes a world village symbolising unity of mankind irrespective of any differences of race, religion, culture and nation. Millions of Bhagavan Baba's devotees from every corner of the world congregate at Prasanthi Nilayam in a unique demonstration of Brotherhood of Man and Fatherhood of God. Basking in the sunshine of Bhagavan's Divine grace, the devotees have an experience of Divine bliss at the Lotus Feet of Bhagavan at Prasanthi Nilayam, an abode of love, peace and bliss in the midst of hatred, conflict and turmoil of the present-day world.

Global Akhanda Bhajan

This year's Birthday Celebrations of Bhagavan Baba were preceded by Global Akhanda Bhajan for 24 hours from 6.00 p.m. on 10th November to 6 p.m. on 11th November 2001. Bhagavan has been using devotional singing as one of the most potent means of man's transformation even from His childhood days when He started Pandhari Bhajans in the village of Puttaparthi by teaching Bhajans to a group of village children. From this humble start, Bhagavan has now developed it into an international movement of great spiritual significance. In the hundreds of thousands Sai Centres spread over the entire face of the globe, Bhajan singing is a regular activity which continues throughout the year. Global Akhanda Bhajan entailing continuous singing of Divine glories for 24 hours at a stretch in all Sai Centres of the world is one of the most shining features of Bhagavan's Divine Mission of spiritualising and divinising humanity.

At Prasanthi Nilayam, this programme of devotional singing assumes great spiritual significance as it is held in the Divine Presence of the Lord Himself. The students of Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning from its three campuses of Prasanthi Nilayam, Brindavan and Anantapur play a prominent role in this 24 hour continuous devotional singing. This year also they organised themselves into groups and carried out this programme with devotion and dedication. Bhagavan Baba was present not only at the start of the Bhajan on 10th November and its conclusion on 11th November but also during most part of the day radiating love and bliss of His Divinity. At the conclusion of the Bhajan at 6 p.m. on 11th November 2001, Mangalarati was offered to Bhagavan and Prasadam was distributed to all the devotees. Deepavali Celebrations Deepavali was celebrated at Prasanthi Nilayam on 14th November 2001 in the Divine Presence of Bhagavan Baba. In the morning, Bhagavan came at 6.55 a.m. to Sai Kulwant Hall which was tastefully decorated. Soon after His arrival, Bhagavan lighted candles and ceremoniously cut the cake amidst thunderous applause of the devotees. The students started singing songs in praise of Lord Sai and Lord Rama as soon as Bhagavan occupied His chair on the dais. Bhajan singing was started by the students at 7.30 a.m., in which the devotees joined in chorus. At the end of the Bhajans, Prasadam was distributed to all the devotees. To the delight of staff, students and devotees Bhagavan distributed toffees with His Divine Hands and showered bliss on all. The morning programme came to a close with Arati to Bhagavan at 8.15 a.m.

Display of fireworks on the Deepavali evening delights one and all, especially the children. Bhagavan's Divine Presence lends special charm to this festival of lights, illuminating not only

the darkness outside but inside man also. The display of fireworks was arranged in the lawn around the Sarva Dharma Stupa in front of Bhagavan's residence. Just as Bhagavan stepped out of His abode, the students started bursting crackers put up on a string in a corner of the lawn. Firing of crackers, flower pots and rockets presented an exciting and delightful show for young and old, but obviously the Primary School students enjoyed this fun filled display most of all. Bhagavan sat through the entire performance and added sweetness and bliss to this celebration by distributing toffees with His Divine Hands at the end of this fireworks display. Deepavali celebrations came to a conclusion with offer of Arati to Bhagavan at 6.10 p.m.

Rathotsavam (Chariot Festival)

The holy festival of Rathotsavam was celebrated at Prasanthi Nilayam on the morning of 18th November 2001 with great devotional fervour. The musicians played Nadaswaram to herald Bhagavan's arrival when He came to Sai Kulwant Hall at 6.45 a.m. The idols consecrated by the sacred touch of the Divine Hands of Bhagavan Baba were taken out from the Mandir Hall in two decorated palanquins amidst Veda chanting and Bhajan singing by the Institute students. Led by Sai Geeta, bedecked beautifully for that occasion, and the musicians, and followed by Veda chanting and Bhajan singing students, the Ratha (chariot) carrying the idol of Sri Krishna was taken to Pedda Venkarna Raju Kalyana Mandapam in Puttaparthi village. The idols of Rama, Lakshmana and Sita and Hanuman were also carried in this procession to the village. The procession terminated at the Kalyana Mandapam where Arati was performed.

Grand Anniversary Celebrations of Chaitanya Jyoti

The first anniversary of Chaitanya Jyoti Museum, the grand edifice housing the exhibits on the Life and Mission of Bhagavan Baba, was celebrated in a grand manner on 18th November 2001 at Prasanthi Nilayam. Bhagavan arrived at the entrance of the building at 8.15 a.m. From there, His car was escorted up the ramp by Singapore devotees performing dragon dance and lion dance. When Bhagavan entered the Museum, the students chanted Vedic Mantras. In the Museum, Bhagavan inaugurated the Contemplation Hall by lighting the sacred lamp. He went round to see some of the exhibits on the ground floor and watched the Telugu version of the video film on the Story of Creation and another film on the Glory and Message of the Avatar in the Vishwaroopa Theatre. The function at the Museum came to a close at 9.00 a.m. with Arati to Bhagavan and distribution of Prasadam to the assembled devotees, students and staff.

Bhagavan gave His Divine Message on this auspicious occasion in a function held in the afternoon in Sai Kulwant Hall. The function began with recitation of Vedic Mantras by the Institute students at 2.40 p.m. Before Bhagavan's Discourse, four speakers made brief speeches. Referring to Chaitanya Jyoti as a great institution and a beacon of illumination for the future generations of mankind, the first speaker, Dr. Michael Goldstein, Overseas Chairman of Sri Sathya Sai Organisations, said that men and women of future Ages would associate it with the holy land where the Avatar of the Kali Age lived and walked in human form. After his inspiring speech, Dr. Goldstein introduced the other speakers of the programme.

The next speaker, Col. S. K. Bose, Director of the Museum, narrated how stupendous construction problems were overcome by Divine grace and the marvellous edifice of unparalleled architectural beauty emerged from a part of the hillock in a record time of one year. Col. Bose also spoke about the tremendous response this Museum had received from the public

in general and students and educational institutions in particular in the last one year. Eminent scientist, Dr. Muralidhara Rao, who played an important part in the designing of the exhibits of the Museum, spoke next. Dr. Rao mentioned the six qualities of God given in the scriptures, namely, Soundarya, Veerya, Aishwarya, Yashas, Vairagya, Jnana (beauty, power, majesty, fame, detachment and wisdom) and observed that Bhagavan Baba is the embodiment of all the virtues as exemplified by His life. After this, the famous architect from Malaysia who designed the Museum, Dr. Goh Say Tong, shared his thoughts with the devotees. Dr. Goh explained how he got an opportunity to go to China to study temple architecture before he was called by Bhagavan Baba to design Chaitanya Jyoti. Dr. Goh also narrated how he was saved by Bhagavan Baba when he underwent a complicated heart operation in 1992 which necessitated his stay in intensive care unit of the hospital for 42 days. At the end of Dr. Goh's speech, Bhagavan Baba presented two gold bracelets and a silver idol of Lord Buddha to him to bless and honour him. After these speeches, Bhagavan delivered His nectarine Discourse for about one hour and concluded it with the Bhajan "Hari Bhajan Bina Sukha Santhi Nahin" at 4.40 p.m.

Ladies Day Celebrations

One of the glorious traditions of Bharat is the reverence for the ladies. Celebration of Ladies Day presents a great ideal before the world to follow this tradition. In Prasanthi Nilayam, all the programmes on this day are conducted by the ladies. They lead the morning Omkaram, Suprabhatam and Veda Parayanam, and conduct Special Nagarsankirtan on this day. This year also, Ladies Day began with these morning programmes on 19th November, 2001.

As Bhagavan Baba came to give morning Darshan on this day, a group of girl students welcomed Bhagavan with sweet Nadaswaram music. Bhagavan was led into Sai Kulwant Hall in a grand procession when He came to give morning Darshan at 6.50 a.m. A group of girl students playing Nadaswaram, two girl students' bands and Veda chanting group of girl students formed part of this procession. Bhagavan inaugurated the programme at 7.05 a.m. by lighting the sacred lamp. A magnificent cultural programme was presented by groups of girl students on this occasion. Besides group dances by girls, a spectacular item of the programme was a Burra Katha, depicting beautifully the life story of Bhagavan. Bhagavan Baba blessed the participants and posed for photographs with them at the end of this programme.

Other items of the programme were an excellent musical presentation on the Veena and a group song. This was followed by Bhajans led by Anantapur College students. During the Bhajans, Bhagavan distributed saris and sweets to the ladies. The morning programme came to a close with Arati to Bhagavan at 9.15 a. m.

The afternoon programme on the Ladies Day began soon after Bhagavan's arrival in Sai Kulwant Hall at 2.15 p.m. First of all, a thrilling programme of choir music was presented by overseas ladies devotees from 22 countries. After this, Mrs. Sarala Shah dwelt on the significance of Ladies Day started by Bhagavan seven years ago and invoked the blessings of Divine Mother Easwaramma who presented to the world a model of ideal womanhood. Mrs. Shah then introduced the four speakers who were blessed by Bhagavan to share their views with the devotees before Bhagavan's Divine Discourse.

Mrs. Genoveva Kanu, who has been working in Sathya Sai Institute of Education in Zambia with her husband Sri Victor Kanu, was the first speaker. Mrs. Kanu told how Sathya Sai Human Values programme was transforming the lives of African children and emphasised the need for spreading this programme throughout the world. The second speaker was Justice Prabha Sridevan, a sitting judge of Madras High Court. Justice Sridevan remarked that women were invested with great power to transform society as they could lay the spiritual foundations of the children. She felt that it was necessary to send the children to Bal Vikas classes for their spiritual, moral and ethical development. The next speaker was Ms. Carol Alderman from the U.K. who has been doing very valuable work on Sathya Sai Human Values. Ms. Alderman observed that women could ensure values in society because what they taught to the children today would be reflected in the citizens of tomorrow. The last speaker of the afternoon, Ms. Varsha Chitnis, observed that it was in the hands of women to maintain the harmony of the home. She, in fact, was the maker of the home, society and the world, Ms. Chitnis remarked.

After these speeches, Bhagavan Baba delivered His Divine Discourse which was preceded by Veda chanting by school girls. Bhagavan's Discourse was translated into English by Prof. (Mrs.) Jayalakshmi Gopinath, Principal of the Anantapur College for Women. The programme of Ladies Day came to a close with Arati to Bhagavan at 4.50 p.m. Glorious Birthday Function Mammoth crowds thronged Prasanthi Nilayam to pay their loving homage to Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba on His 76th Birthday. In a grand function held in aesthetically decorated Sai Kulwant Hall, the programme of Birthday Celebrations started in the morning when Bhagavan came to the Hall at 7.10 a.m. As soon as Bhagavan entered Sai Kulwant Hall clad in a white robe, the huge multitude of devotees welcomed Him with a prolonged thunderous applause. Bhagavan was led into the Hall by Primary School students bands, the Institute band and Veda chanting students including a group of ochre robed Primary School students. After entering the Hall, Swami showered the bliss of His Darshan on all the devotees including those sitting outside the Hall. Bhagavan then came to the Mandir verandah where He lighted candles and cut cakes to the joy of the devotees.

Radio Sai Global Harmony: As soon as Bhagavan came to the dais and sat in His chair, the morning programme started. First of all, ochre-robed Primary School students chanted Vedic Mantras. Thereafter, former Vice Chancellor of Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning, Dr. G. Venkataraman, offered greetings to Bhagavan on behalf of all the devotees of Bhagavan. "This 23rd November is doubly blessed because from this day onward you can listen to the golden voice of Bhagavan and His message all the 24 hours in the day in any part of the world through satellite on your digital radio," announced Dr. Venkataraman amidst a deafening applause of the devotees. He said that Dr. Noah Samara, Chief Executive Officer, World Space Corporation in America had offered a complete radio channel which was named 'Radio Sai Global Harmony'. Dr. Venkataraman then introduced the two speakers who were blessed by Bhagavan to speak before His Birthday Message.

Sri V. Srinivasan, All India President, Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organisations then offered his reverential Pranams at the Lotus Feet of Bhagavan and shared his happiness with the devotees on the launch of the Radio Sai Global Harmony channel. In a world torn by conflicts and disharmony, the message of Bhagavan through digital radio would radiate peace and harmony,

Sri Srinivasan observed. Kettering to the impact of Bhagavan's teachings of Sathya, Dharma, Santhi, Prema and Ahimsa, Sri Srinivasan remarked that a new society in the world was emerging and the Sai Era was in the making.

The last speaker was Dr. Michael Nobel, one of the Members of the Board of Directors of the World Space Corporation. Dr. Michael Nobel is a direct descendant of Alfred Nobel, the founder of the Nobel Prize. Referring to Bhagavan Baba's message of peace, Dr. Nobel observed, "Though the cold war was over ten years ago and the spectre of nuclear holocaust was removed, war has not ended." The beautiful message of Swami had to be brought to the whole world, he remarked and prayed to Bhagavan to inaugurate Radio Sai Global Harmony channel of the satellite broadcast programme. Amidst a thunderous applause of the devotees, Swami then pressed the button and the devotees in the Hall listened to a welcome song in Telugu sung by the Institute students broadcast on Radio Sai Global Harmony channel.

Bhagavan then gave His Birthday Message (given elsewhere in this issue) and showered His blessings on all. Swami concluded His Divine Discourse at 8.55 a.m. with the Bhajan "Hari Bhajan Bina Sukha Santhi Nahin..." Prasadam was distributed to all the devotees after this. The morning programme of Birthday Celebrations came to a close with Arati to Bhagavan at 9.25 a.m.

Cultural Programmes

Bhagavan's Birthday Celebrations is an occasion for the devotees from various parts of the world to present their cultural programmes at Prasanthi Nilayam in His Divine Presence. This year also, some excellent cultural programmes were presented on this occasion.

Cornelia: The Sathya Sai Organisation of Italy presented an excellent drama entitled "Cornelia" depicting the story of Rome on 19th November 2001 in Poornachandra Auditorium, Prasanthi Nilayam in the Divine Presence of Bhagavan Baba. With an excellent stage setting representing a Roman structure and with appropriate Roman costumes of the cast, the viewers were transported to Rome itself while viewing the story of Rome's rise to fame and power, the fall of the Roman empire, the Dark Ages and its rise again as the the centre of spirituality and cultural excellence through the advent of its great men like St. Francis, Dante, Leonardo, Galileo, Michelangelo and so many others. The depiction ended with a group song hailing the advent of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba as the incarnation of God and the saviour of mankind. This programme came to a close with Bhagavan Baba going up the stage, blessing and distributing clothes to the cast and with offer of Arati to Bhagavan at 6.20 p.m.

Dance Drama on the Ramayana: This dance drama was performed by the Sai devotees of Bali (Indonesia) on the evening of 20th November 2001 in the Poornachandra Auditorium in the Divine Presence of Bhagavan Baba. The story started from the jungle abode of Rama, Lakshmana and Sita during their exile and concluded with Rama's victory over Ravana. Everything about this drama, the dances, the acting, the music, the costumes and the direction were so perfect and superb that one thought one was viewing a performance by a professional cultural troupe instead of that of an amateur group of Sai devotees. Bhagavan Baba who came to Poornachandra Auditorium at 6.05 p.m. sat through the entire performance and blessed the cast at the conclusion of the drama. He distributed clothes to them, posed for photographs with them

and created a gold chain for the girl who performed the role of Rama. The programme came to a close at 7.00 p.m. with Arati to Bhagavan.

Excellent Musical Presentations: A galaxy of renowned musicians paid their musical homage to Bhagavan Baba during His 76th Birthday Celebrations.

Music lovers had a rare treat of an excellent Veena recital by the reputed Veena artiste, Sri R. Krishnamurthy, Principal of the newly started Sri Sathya Sai Mirpuri College of Music and his talented wife Mrs. Padma Krishnamurthy, Lecturer in Veena in the same college when they gave a scintillating performance in Sai Kulwant Hall, Prasanthi Nilayam on the evening of 18th November 2001. The artistes drew repeated applause of the assembled devotees for their compositions.

There was a classical Hindustani vocal recital by Mrs. Asha Khadilkar on 19th November 2001 during the Ladies Day celebrations. Her Alap on Todi was immensely mature and satiating to the lovers of music. The Tarana drew good response of the gathering.

On the evening of 21st November 2001, Prof. Yella Venkateswara Rao, the well-known Mridangam artiste and his troupe of musicians enthralled the devotees with an excellent instrumental music concert.

Two famous musicians paid their musical tributes to Bhagavan on the auspicious occasion of His Birthday and enthralled the audience on the afternoon of 23rd November 2001. The first programme was given by Ms. Parveen Sultana, the reputed Hindustani classical musician. She first presented 'Hamsadvani' Alap and followed it with the fast moving Tarana. The popular Meera Bhajan "Mere to Giridhar Gopal" was full of aesthetic beauty. The two Sai Bhajans that followed were sheer Bhakti that she manifested, and all the devotees were seen swinging with ecstasy. This programme was followed by a Western vocal music concert by internationally reputed singer Ms. Dana Gillespie who sang many numbers on the love of Sai in typical Western pop style. Instrumental support was provided by the Institute students. The African drums were played by Pandit Dinesh from England.

Deviating from their usual practice of enacting a play on the Convocation day, the students of SSSIHL presented a soul-stirring Qawali programme on 22nd evening in Sai Kulwant Hall, giving the message of unity of faiths and love for God. The Qawali troupe consisted of 31 students in attractive costumes depicting the major religions of the world. Bhagavan presented silver tumblers to the participants and blessed them.

Another remarkable presentation was made by the well-known Mandolin artiste Sri U. Srinivas and his brother Sri U. Rajesh on the evening of 24th November 2001. Prof. Yella Venkateswara Rao gave a very professional support to the artistes on the Mridangam.

Bhagavan very graciously blessed all the artistes, presented clothes and gifts to them and posed for photographs with them at the conclusion of these programmes. Bhagavan also materialised a gold ring each for Sri U. Srinivas and his brother.

Principles of Education

No harm can ever befall a person whose heart is full of compassion, whose words are adorned with truth and whose body is dedicated to the welfare of others. (Sanskrit Verse)

Embodiments of Love!

First and foremost, we must deliberate on 'Panchatantra' or the five principles of education. These relate to the following questions:

1. What is education?
2. What are the types of education?
3. What is the main aim of education?
4. What are the responsibilities of the teachers?
5. What are the benefits of education?

Education and its Types

Only when we recognise the inner significance of these five principles can we understand the meaning of education. Education is of two types: The first type is concerned only with collection of facts and knowledge about the external world and teaching them to the students. The second type is educare. Educare involves deep understanding of the knowledge that springs from within, and imparting it to the students.

Today's education imparts to the students mainly the knowledge about the external world. But it is only culture or refinement that can develop human goodness and not the modern secular education. Today's education is devoid of culture and is like a counterfeit coin. Even a beggar does not accept a counterfeit coin. Then how can experienced and intelligent people accept such education?

Education without culture is like a dark room. Only bats can live in a dark room. Such rooms are filthy. So, by pursuing such education devoid of culture, our hearts have become dark rooms and hence many animal qualities find their way into them. Education without culture is like a kite with its string snapped. No one knows where it will fall and what damage it will cause to others. Therefore, such education does not benefit anyone. It is therefore essential to develop educare so that all can experience bliss from within. Only if education is blended with culture will it shine forth as true education. What is culture? It is the cultivation of good thoughts, good feelings and good qualities and eradication of evil thoughts, evil qualities and evil feelings by discriminating between good and bad, sin and merit, truth and untruth. Not only this, culture makes one broad-minded by destroying one's narrow-mindedness.

This morning, a song "I and you are one" was sung. Even this is also a kind of narrow mindedness. It will be better to say, "All are one!" (Cheers) An ethereal voice told Jesus, "All are one, my dear son, be alike to everyone!" Educare develops such broad-mindedness.

Today we find only worldly and materialistic education, the focus of which is bookish knowledge. It is only superficial knowledge which is temporary and transient. We must acquire education and not merely bookish knowledge, Education comprises practical knowledge. There are a few steps between superficial knowledge and practical knowledge. From superficial knowledge, we must proceed to general knowledge. After analysing this general knowledge, we can gain discrimination knowledge and know the difference between good and evil. From this discrimination knowledge we proceed to practical knowledge. This practical knowledge is changeless. True and eternal education never changes. When the heart is filled with compassion, it becomes sacred and aspires for the welfare of one and all.

An educated person should not have bad qualities and must not indulge in evil deeds. Today's education imparts only bookish knowledge. It really degrades a person if he totally relies on it. How long does this bookish knowledge last? It lasts as long as it is in our head. It is not possible to put bookish knowledge into practice. We fill our heads with bookish knowledge, go to the examination hall, write our answer paper and return empty-headed! In effect, the head always remains empty. To acquire discrimination knowledge, one requires general knowledge which consists of ordinary acumen and intelligence. Discrimination knowledge also has in it common sense. Both are essential for life in this world.

Main Aims of Education

Students and Teachers!

What we need today is not bookish knowledge though we require it to a certain extent to cope up with life in this world. But what is essential to us is the knowledge of the Atma. Spiritual education is the highest education, says the Bhagavad-Gita. It starts with discrimination knowledge, which is like a perennial river. In perennial rivers, the quantity of water may vary but not the quality. Therefore, students should understand that quality of education is more important than its quantity. Degrees are not important, but the knowledge accomplished out of education is important. What is the meaning of education? It is not just the accumulation of information. It includes action too. Education which originates from within has a sound basis and is permanent. It is referred to as Sathyam. A step higher than Sathyam is Ritam (absolute truth) as mentioned in the Vedas.

People mistake bookish knowledge to be true education. What is the aim of education? No one today bothers about the aim of education. Education is for life and not for a living. Today's education is aimed at merely eking out a livelihood. If education is merely for a living, then how do birds and beasts live without any education? Even ants and mosquitoes, which do not have any education, carry on with their lives. Is education for merely earning one's bread? What is the essence of education? The essence of education is the concentration of the mind and not the collection of facts. Mere collection of facts will not serve any purpose. Here is a small example. A washerman in a village goes from house to house collecting clothes for washing. In each household the number of clothes, which are given for washing, is noted down in a notebook. But the washerman does not keep any written record. By the evening, he returns the clothes to the respective houses. This is general knowledge. For acquiring this general knowledge, education is not necessary. Even a washerman possesses it. Many educated men lack the acumen of even a washerman. You have general knowledge right from your birth. This should remain with you all your life.

What is the end of education? People answer this question by saying, there is no end of education. But it is not so. The end of education is character. Education without character is useless. (Cheers) Earlier in Gurukulas, the sages took the students along with them wherever they went and taught them without conforming to any time schedule. This education was a continuous learning process. But today in schools and colleges, education is imparted according to a definite time schedule. This limits the scope of education. But true education, which moulds character, has no limits. So, the end of education is the development of the highest character which is without any limit. Our character is reflected in our words, behaviour and conduct in daily life. So, we should speak pleasantly and should not hurt others with our harsh words. It is true that we cannot always oblige but we can speak always obligingly. All our actions are related to character.

While cooking, ladies select appropriate vessels according to the quantity of rice to be cooked. It does not make sense if a large vessel is chosen to cook a small quantity of rice. Discrimination should be used to select the vessel and the intensity of the flame required for cooking. In the same way, discrimination should be used to enrich one's character. When elderly guests visit the house, even if one cannot offer them anything to eat, one should at least welcome them inside, speak affectionate words and make them happy. Instead, if one asks them rudely, "Why have you come?" it is not good. Even when the father is at home, it is told that he is not there. This is not proper education. Speak good words and tell the truth.

There are three types of truth—a fact, truth and absolute truth. To say as it is what you have seen is a fact. Suppose I see you wearing a white dress and say that "you are wearing a white dress", it connotes a fact. Later at home, you might wear a blue shirt. Then what I said earlier does not hold good any more. Thus, a fact is subject to change. Truth, on the other hand, does not change with time. A person may change any number of dresses. But the person remains the same. Thus, truth is the same at all times. I often say that you are not one person but three. The one you think you are, that is the physical body. The one others think you are, that is the mind. The one you really are, that is the Atma. You are a combination of the body, mind and Atma, The body is subject to change. It is the Atma that is eternal. This is referred to as Ritam in the Vedas. It is changeless and has no attributes. It is described as *Nirgunam, Niranjanam, Sanathana Niketanam, Nitya, Shuddha, Buddha, Mukta, Nirmala Swarupinam* (attributeless, pure, final abode, eternal, unsullied, enlightened, free and embodiment of sacredness).

Responsibilities of Teachers

Various reforms in education have redefined the aims of education. One may say that one has acquired three postgraduate degrees. But what are these degrees? These are mere sheets of paper. Who has earned all these degrees? It is `I'. This `I' is the absolute truth. During the day time when you are awake, you move about, see many sights, eat many dishes and experience many things. But in the dream state, you create many scenes and experience them. You do your work and travel to far off places like Delhi, England, America, etc., without even purchasing a plane ticket. In deep sleep state, one does not go anywhere. It is a changeless and steady state; it is a state of bliss. The same `I' experiences all these three states.

In the waking state, you experience everything physically through the senses. Adi Sankara has cautioned us about the truth of what we experience through the senses. In order to control the vagaries of the mind, Sankara introduced a practice in his Ashram. The disciples would walk from one end of the Ashram to the other repeating, "*Jagrat, Jagrat*" (Be careful! Be careful!). Once a feeling arose in Sankara's mind that he was the head of a big Ashram. At that moment, he heard the sentinels cautioning, "Jagrat! Jagrat!" This alerted him and brought about a change in him. Not only this; one has to be careful at every stage of one's life.

Adi Sankara reflected on the questions of life, old age and death and cautioned man about the truth of human life in the following words: *Birth is a misery, old age is a misery, family is a misery, and death is a terrible misery. So, be careful! Be careful!* (Sanskrit Verse) Neither mother nor father nor relatives nor brothers, not wealth nor possessions will come to your rescue in the last moments. Hence, be careful! Be careful! (Sanskrit Verse) In ancient times, these truths were taught in Gurukulas to the students by the preceptors. This ancient education system originated from Ritam (absolute truth). This Ritam is educare.

The letters ABC of the English alphabet also give us the message to be cautious. ABC means 'Always Be Careful'. Sankara preached the same principle. So, it is necessary to impart spiritual education along with secular education to the students. General knowledge devoid of spiritual education is negative. General knowledge is like the bulb and spiritual knowledge is like the current flowing through it. Only when positive and negative meet, darkness is dispelled. So, both positive and negative are necessary. The divine power is latent in every being; it is positive. But man today is accumulating all that is negative by his worldly and materialistic pursuits.

Spirituality forms the basis for all forms of knowledge. Fundamental knowledge, which comprises spiritual knowledge, is greater than both practical knowledge and general knowledge. So, this should be imparted to the students along with secular education. How can we lead a truthful and ideal life in the world without trying to discover Ritam (absolute truth)?

Benefits of Education

We make a mistake by identifying ourselves with the body. For example, a mother died leaving behind her fifteen year-old son. The son was grief-stricken and cried, "Oh mother! You have left me!" But who had left? The body of the mother was right in front of him; then why was he sad? It was because life had left the body of his mother. So, the body is not the mother, but the life principle. Life principle has no death. The body is like a dress; death is like change of dress. Everything in this world undergoes change. But there is one thing that is changeless. That is fundamental knowledge. Once you have mastered it, it follows you and protects you wherever you go. Gradually, you should get rid of body attachment and develop Atmic consciousness.

You are pursuing different types of education in different countries. But ultimately education should converge into educare. That can be achieved gradually. Therefore, mere acquaintance with books and what is spoken, or written on the blackboard cannot constitute education. True education throws open the doors of the mind. How can you enter a house with the doors closed? You desire happiness and comforts. You also aspire for virtues. For that, you have to open the doors of your mind first. Only then will Ritam manifest in you. This Ritam is all pervasive. In

our organisation, we should not only wear a uniform dress, but develop uniform mind also. The basic thing to be achieved is purity of the mind.

Embodiments of Love!

There are many aspects of modern education system that we must understand. But we are not learning what we ought to. Instead, we are gathering irrelevant information. Mere learning of the contents of a book constitutes secular education. Education must be combined with educate. Only then will you experience bliss. What is the difference between education and educate? Education is like insipid water, educate is like sugar. Merely adding sugar to water does not make it sweet. It is only on stirring that the sugar mixes with water making it sweet. The heart is the tumbler, educate is the sugar and secular education is water. With Vijnana (wisdom) as spoon and enquiry as the process of stirring, you can attain Prajnana (spiritual knowledge). When you put Vijnana into practice, you attain Sujnana (supreme knowledge) of all-pervasive Divinity, which enables you to recognise the unity of all creation. This is a cloth. But it is not just cloth. It is a bundle of threads and more fundamentally it is cotton. Cotton, thread and cloth are one and the same. Without cotton, there is no thread and without thread there is no cloth. Recognition of unity in multiplicity is the ultimate goal of education.

You should learn to face adversities boldly without blaming God. God may have planned to grant you some benefit through hardship. You should accept both pain and pleasure as gifts of God and develop the attitude that whatever God does is for your own good!

You will have many discussions in the Conference. Let the discussions be filled with love and not with criticism. You should not criticise any religion, because it is the same God you worship, be it in a church, in a temple or in a mosque. A true devotee of God will not criticise anyone. Share your love equally with everyone. Tomorrow I shall answer your questions and clear your doubts that may arise in your discussions today.

—From Bhagavan's Inaugural Address at the First Conference of Sathya Sai Schools in Sai Kulwant Hall, Prasanthi Nilayam on 20th November 2001

20th CONVOCATION OF SSSIHL

Education should cultivate Simplicity and Humility

The students should not have ego for their educational achievements. They should cultivate simplicity and humility like Ishwarchandra Vidyasagar, observed Bhagavan Baba, the Chancellor of Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning while delivering His Benedictory Address on the twentieth Convocation of the Institute at Prasanthi Nilayam.

The grand Convocation function held in aesthetically decorated Sai Kulwant Hall was a virtual feast for the eyes and the mind, a landmark in the history of the Deemed University. At the stroke of 3 p.m. in the afternoon on 22nd November, 2001, the Academic Procession was led into Sai Kulwant Hall by the smartly clad Institute band. At the head of the procession was

Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba, the Chancellor of the University, followed by Vice Chancellor, Sri S. V. Giri and Chief Guest, Sri Shivraj Patil. Many renowned scholars and dignitaries and Members of the Academic Council and Governing Body of the Institute formed part of this grand procession. As soon as the Academic Procession entered Sai Kulwant Hall, it was greeted with a thunderous applause by a huge gathering of the eminent and the earnest present at the memorable function to witness the annual celebration. Offering of garland to the Chief Guest was followed by the invocatory chants by the students.

Vice Chancellor's Introductory Address

When Bhagavan Baba said "I declare the Convocation open" following Vice Chancellor Sri S. V. Giri's request to do so, the entire Hall reverberated with a loud applause. The Vice Chancellor in his introductory welcome remarks referred to the message and mission of Bhagavan Baba and the commitment of the Chancellor in providing "a system of education so meticulously designed and deeply rooted in our ancient culture". He said that Baba's emphasis on Educare aims at bringing out the inner divinity in man and making the students active instruments of change and progress—not merely qualified degree holders in pursuit of jobs and careers. The harmonious blend of academic excellence and human values was what made the Institute unique. The system helped the students to cultivate self-knowledge and self-confidence, so that each one of them could learn self-sacrifice and attain self-realisation. In the era of globalisation, when our society was itself in the throes of transition, such a valuebased education only could protect and nurture our moral and spiritual values. In this context, he stressed the fundamental relevance of looking at the entire humanity as one large family—*Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam* characterised by Samatva, Samaikyata, Sahabhratrutva and Sahajeevanam and to lifelong learning as underlined in the Upanishadic dictum "*Swadhyaya Pravachanabhyam Na Pramaditavyam*" to adapt to the continuously changing social conditions.

Tracing the growth of Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning during the last twenty years, the Vice Chancellor referred to starting the postgraduate course in Economics and the Music College last year. Acknowledging the assistance given by the UGC, Sri Giri told that the SSSIHL's Library was now electronically connected to all libraries in India and the computer system was equipped with the latest software.

Graduates Presented to the Chancellor

After the Introductory Address of Sri Giri, Prof. U.S. Rao, Principal of the Institute presented the graduates to the Chancellor for award of degrees. Vice Chancellor, Sri Giri administered the pledge to the graduates. It was indeed a delight to witness the students receiving their degrees and diplomas. When the medal winners, among whom there were several girls students, received from Revered Chancellor's Divine Hands medals and presents, it evoked in the gathering a special sense of appreciation. They were heartily cheered and applauded. Not only the recipients but the entire gathering of students were cheered by one and all. All through there was commendable orderliness and show of cheer. Such discipline and dedication among students should be seen to be believed.

Convocation Address by Sri Shivraj Patil

Beginning his Convocation Address by paying his obeisance to Bhagavan whom he hailed as "ocean of love", Sri Shivraj Patil elaborately dwelt on the good fortune of the students to have

studied here and to have received Bhagavan Baba's guidance and blessings. "This is more than a university, it is a cosmic institution", he declared amidst applause. He explained how Bhagavan's educational institutions stood out from all other institutions around the world. He encouraged and inspired the students by remarking that they always excelled in any activity that they undertook. Saying that "they create most beautiful human beings out of the clay which is put in their hands", he praised the efforts and pains taken by the teachers and professors in building the character of the students.

Focusing on what the essence of education implied, he said, "Education does not mean a science of acquiring skills to earn subsistence and wealth only. It means the art of living life beautifully, artistically, in tune with the song and the rhythm of dance of nature with the bliss and the truthfulness of divinity." Elaborating further, he explained how education passes through four different stages—the first phase acquaints the students with teaching them how to read and write, the second equips them with information and knowledge, the third phase teaches the students to inquire into and discover facts of reality in the mystery of nature and existence and the fourth phase, which he referred to as the most important aspect, develops the flashes of intuition that occur to the innovators and discoverers. He emphasised on the point that through intuition alone scientific and spiritual realities had been found and it was true education that helped the students to develop a mind, a spirit which was capable of experiencing these intuitional flashes.

Expressing his feelings about the so called "new education" as the "tragedy of the modern times," Sri Patil succinctly drove home the point that today's educated individual was not taught to be content and happy, to see and enjoy the beauty in the things and nature around him; rather he was taught to produce more, sell more, consume more without any regard to the result. The wisdom to acquire the balance should be developed not only from books and artificial laboratories, but from nature and laboratory of existence, he remarked.

Highlighting Bhagavan Baba's message of oneness and unity, Sri Patil said that if human beings could see themselves in all things, Brotherhood of Man and Fatherhood of God would be realised, the distance between beings would diminish and eventually would bestow lasting and internal peace. He said, "There is nothing more important than what Baba has been telling us. If we know it, we are wise and educated; if not, in spite of all our degrees we still remain ignorant."

Concluding his Address to a loud applause, the Chief Guest with a voice choked with emotion prayed to Swami:

*Give us the strength to live according to Your ideas of life;
Give us the determination to act as You think we should;
Make our lives dutiful to humanity,
And allow us to be at Your Lotus Feet all the time.*

Benedictory Address by the Chancellor, Bhagavan Baba

In His Benedictory Address, Bhagavan emphasised that students must acquire knowledge that would be of service to society; and they must learn with the motive to help others experience what they have learnt. He exhorted them to acquire wisdom and virtues which in turn developed good character. He made the general observation that modern education was bringing about a

lot of agitation and said that students must never be egoistic, in spite of their achievements. He quoted Winston Churchill's saying—"Man has conquered all, but not himself;" and observed that acquiring knowledge of the Self is positive, while acquiring knowledge of the worldly things is negative.

Emphasising the difference between the wisdom brought by knowledge put to the right use and the degeneration caused by the knowledge used for wrong purpose, Swami reminded all about Rama and Ravana. He said that though Rama and Ravana acquired the same knowledge, Valmiki described Rama as the embodiment of wisdom and Ravana as a fool. This was because Rama put to practice whatever He learnt and thus led an exemplary life; on the other hand, Ravana became a victim of sensual pleasures and thus paved way for his own destruction. For this very reason, education must demonstrate character, which transcends worldly pleasures.

Swami insisted that along with secular knowledge we should also have spiritual knowledge. To stress this point, He posed the rhetoric question whether any of the well-educated people in society made anyone happy; or, in the least, were they happy with themselves. Bhagavan also narrated the life story of venerable Ishwarchandra Vidyasagar and explained how he lived his early years in the clutches of poverty, yet he told his mother, "We can be happy only when we pass through problems," and lived a life of utter simplicity throughout.

Bhagavan went on to list a few of the indispensable qualities that must be possessed by a student—a good mind, truthfulness, devotion, discipline and a sense of duty. On a closing note, Bhagavan said:

*Truth is the jewel for the neck,
Charity alone is the jewel for the hands.
Having acquired education,
We must be ready to sacrifice for others.*

Bhagavan concluded His Address with the Bhajan, Prema Mudita Manase Kaho ...

The Convocation Function came to a close with singing of the National Anthem.

A Glimpse of Divine Glory

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

First Conference of Sathya Sai Schools

The first conference of Sathya Sai Schools of India and overseas countries was held at Prasanthi Nilayam on 20th and 21st November 2001 under the divine guidance of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba to discuss the various aspects of Educare. Participants from 29 countries representing 47 schools of Sathya Sai Organisation attended the Conference. They included the principals of the schools and the Directors of Institute of Sathya Sai Education of Thailand, Zambia, Australia, Philippines, Brazil and India. Bhagavan Himself provided the necessary guidelines and spelled out the vision and underlying principles of Sathya Sai Educare in His Inaugural Discourse on the morning of 20th November 2001. Inaugural Function: Bhagavan showered the bliss of His Darshan on the Conference delegates and assembled devotees in Sai Kulwant Hall on the morning of 20th November 2001 before formally inaugurating the Conference. The inaugural function commenced with Vedic invocation by the Institute students after Bhagavan lighted the sacred lamp at 7.00 a.m. amidst a thunderous applause of the delegates and the devotees. The delegates expressed their gratitude to Bhagavan in two invocation songs which they sang in chorus.

At the outset, Dr. Art-ong Jumsai, Director, Sathya Sai Institute, Thailand welcomed the delegates who, he said, had come to seek divine guidance of Bhagavan from all the nine continents of the world and to be a part of Divine Mission of Bhagavan for ushering in an era of peace in the world through the medium of Sathya Sai Educare. Dr. Jumsai remarked that there were two most distinguishing features of Sathya Sai Educare: (i) it is absolutely free and (ii) it maintains highest quality in academic and moral domains. In the end, Dr. Jumsai prayed to Bhagavan for guidance and also to give the diplomas to the graduates who had successfully completed their training as teachers from four Sathya Sai Institutes in the world. After this, 53 graduates from 19 countries received their diplomas from the Divine Hands of Bhagavan. Bhagavan then delivered His Inaugural Discourse. Full text of Bhagavan's Discourse has been printed separately in this issue. The inaugural function came to a close at 8.30 a.m. with offer of Arati to Bhagavan and distribution of Prasadam to all.

First Session: The first session of the Conference was held in the International Conference Hall on 20th November 2001 at 10.00 a.m. The first speaker was Sri Indulal Shah, International Chairman, Sri Sathya Sai Overseas Organisations who spoke on the topic of "Vision of Sathya Sai Educare." Sri Shah traced the history of Sathya Sai Educare since the year 1962 when it was started by Bhagavan Baba as Bal Vikas for the children of Sai devotees. Sri Shah stated that with the blessings of Bhagavan, this programme was now benefiting about 2, 50,000 children in all parts of the world, and more than 2000 schools all over the world were exposed to Sathya Sai Educare.

Dr. Judo, Assistant Director of Sathya Sai Institute of Thailand in his paper on "Sathya Sai Educare: the Veda for the 21st Century", discussed Educare in the 21st century and emphasised that Educare was a process of bringing out the inner knowledge and values. It was also a process of encouraging the children to unfold and discover their latent divinity.

After this, Dr. Art-ong Jumsai presented his paper on "Methods of Teaching in Sathya Sai Schools" and stressed the need for interdisciplinary and intra-disciplinary integration of values in the school curriculum. The essence of education being concentration, the child's capacity to silence the mind was of utmost importance, Dr. Jumsai said.

Sri Victor Krishna Kanu, Director, African Sathya Sai Institute, Zambia then presented his paper on "An Innovative Approach to SSEHV". Sri Kanu emphasised the importance of culture as a repository of human values and gave elaborate examples of the basic human values in African culture and tradition.

In a session chaired by Dr. Pal Dhall, Director, Sathya Sai Institute, Australia, the Principals of Sai Schools from 9 countries (Argentina, Australia, Canada, Fiji, Nepal, New Zealand, Philippines, Thailand and Zambia) presented a variety of papers dealing with their experiences, challenges, rewards, phenomenal achievements, and wondrous happenings in the Sai Schools and their communities.

Second Session: The second session opened at 9.00 a.m. on 21st November 2001. First of all, Sri Ryuko Hira, Director, Sathya Sai Institute, Japan presented his paper entitled "Innovative Management of Sai Schools." He emphasised that the management should emulate Bhagavan in the level of concern and care for the children, the personal knowledge of staff and involvement in learning and spirituality. The key element in this management approach was the capacity of the management to sacrifice.

Ms. Loraine Angela Burrows from Thailand, in her paper entitled "A New Look at Methodology for SSEHV", gave three key goals for the aim of Educare: (i) to draw out latent divinity (ii) to develop discrimination between right and wrong and (iii) to give the child a sense of true identity. She suggested a thematic approach in which neither the values nor the teaching techniques were strictly compartmentalised.

Ms. Kay Scovill from the USA dealt with the topic of "Innovative Training of Teachers". She reminded the delegates that teachers had to be especially careful because they often conveyed their own strengths and weaknesses to the children under their charge. There was thus a need for an integrated professional development for a balanced development of head, hand and heart through theory, demonstration, practice, feedback and coaching.

The last session of the morning was devoted to the views and suggestions from the participants for an Action Plan for Sathya Sai Schools. This session was chaired by Dr. Judo, who was requested to place the Action Plan at the Lotus Feet of Bhagavan for approval.

The second day's deliberations concluded with two presentations made by Dr. G. Venkataraman and Sri S. V. Giri, the former and present Vice Chancellor of Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning, respectively on the theme of "Experiences with Sathya Sai Schools in the Divine Presence." Sri S. V. Giri, noted that the purpose of Sathya Sai Institute was to develop self-knowledge and self-confidence so that each student became capable of self-sacrifice and self-realisation. Dr. G. Venkataraman explained the concept of Constant Integrated Awareness and shared his experiences and insights in the unfolding of Educare in the students of the Institute. A special session of the Conference was held on 24th November 2001 on the need for standardisation of Sai Schools in keeping with SAI 2000, a document on standards, accreditation and inspection of Sai Schools. Sri Tom Scovill from the USA was appointed the Director of the

Accreditation Commission to which applications should be made for accreditation of Sai Schools.

Valedictory Function: The Valedictory Function of the Conference was held in Sai Kulwant Hall, Prasanthi Nilayam on the afternoon of 21st November 2001 in the Divine Presence of Bhagavan Baba. Bhagavan came to Sai Kulwant Hall at 2.30 p.m. and showered His love and blessings on the delegates and devotees by going into their rows and by taking their letters. The Valedictory Function began at 2.45 p.m. with Veda chanting by students, and invocation songs by the delegates in praise of Bhagavan Baba.

Dr. Art-ong Jumsai in his introductory speech expressed gratitude to Bhagavan Baba on behalf of all the delegates for His love and blessings and divine guidance, and advised the delegates to fill their hearts with the divine love of Sai. Then values, he observed, would blossom in the hearts of teachers and students. Dr. Jumsai requested Sri Victor Krishna Karu to present the Report of the Conference and also requested Dr. Judo to present the Action Plan for Sathya Sai Schools for Bhagavan's approval. In the end, he prayed to Bhagavan to give His Valedictory Message.

After this, Sri Kanu read out the contents of the Report of the Conference. After the presentation of the Report, Dr. Judo placed the Action Plan at the Lotus Feet of Bhagavan.

After this, Bhagavan gave His Valedictory Message at 3.25 p.m. and answered the questions put forward by the delegates. The Conference came to a close with Arati to Bhagavan at 5.00 p.m.

Love All, Serve All

In all religions, birthdays of great personalities are celebrated but the ideals for which they lived are not remembered and followed. If you do not care to follow their teachings, the celebrations lose their meaning and become artificial observances. It is not doing justice to the great men whose birthdays you celebrate. Jesus taught people to love all beings and serve all with compassion. It is only by practising these ideals that you can truly celebrate his birthday. You must live in love and lead a life of selfless service based on love. This is the only right way of celebrating the birth of Jesus.

—**Baba**

*“Everyone should attain bliss. Everyone should overcome sorrow, develop true love and experience unity and divinity. This is my principal message today.” —**Baba***