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1. The Love of God

Date: 19 January 1986 / Location: Chennai

One may be a master of all the Scriptures And competent to teach the Vedanta; One may be a great ruler Living in a many-splendoured mansion; One may be a valiant hero Who has vanquished his enemies; Or one may be a pitiable Victim of poverty and privation. If he has no devotion in him His life is devoid of meaning. A servant who is filled with love of the Lord Is more to be adored than the overlord of the world. "BHAKTI is service to Hrishikesa," it has been said. Service to God has been described as Bhakti. The heart of the devotee flows with love of the Lord through constant remembrance and recitation of His name. Out of this stream of love, devotion emerges. One who is nourished by the nectar of Bhakti will have no desire for anything else. To be unaffected by joy or sorrow, gain or loss, praise or blame, to remain steadfast and unwavering in faith, is the hall-mark of true devotion. Affection, attachment, desire are natural qualities in man. When these qualities are directed towards God and when one is continuously engaged in good deeds, these qualities acquire purity and sacredness. Then a man becomes not only a great soul but can become divine.

State of mind of a devotee

The devotee is ever conscious that the universe is a manifestation of the Divine and is permeated by the Divine. His life is based on the recognition of the immanence of God in everything. This state of mind is called "Prema Advaitam" (unity in Love.) Through this love the devotee experiences his oneness with the Divine. Enjoying the bliss of this experience, the devotee does not even desire Moksha (Liberation from birth and death). Unremitting love of the Lord is everything for him. Such devotion is known as "Ananya Bhakti" (Total devotion to One and One only.) Bhakti indicates that man needs, in addition to the four Purusharthas (the objects of life - Dharma, Artha, Kama and Moksha) - a fifth object, devotion to God. Adi Sankara characterised this devotion as the mark of jnana. There is no need to bemoan the fact that one has not been able to perform the prescribed rites or forms of

worship. "Parama Bhakti" (Supreme devotion to the Divine) encompasses within itself all meritorious qualities.

Vedanta proclaiming that Love of God is Moksha

The Puranas consider Moksha (Liberation) as mergence in the Divine. But the bliss that is experienced by constant contemplation of the Divine through devotion cannot be got even by merging in the Divine. Vedanta has proclaimed that the love of God is Moksha. The heart of the devotee filled with love of God is tender and sweet. Sometime or other everyone is bound to make his heart such a shrine of love for the Lord. With the Lord enshrined in him, the devotee renounces the desire for liberation. Devotion itself will make him one with the Lord. When a drop of water falls into the ocean, it achieves immortality and infinitude. If you hold a drop of water in your palm, it evaporates in a few moments. But when you join it with the ocean, it becomes boundless and one with the vast ocean. Only through Love can union with the Universal be realised. To a devotee who has achieved such a union with-the Eternal, everything appears as Divine.

The gopikas of Brindavan were such devotees. They experienced divine bliss through their intense devotion. Like a fish that cannot live out of water, the devotee, who is immersed in the nectarine ocean of divine love, cannot exist for a moment without the love of God. He cannot relish any other thing.

Every part of his body is so much filled with the love of God that each organ finds expression in proclaiming the glory of God or rendering service to God. This was the kind of devotion the Gopikas had for Krishna. It was something beyond the intellect and the power of reason. Krishna explained to Uddhava the true nature of the Gopis bhakti. Because such bhakti is incapable of intellectual analysis, it is dismissed as blind faith. Intellectual enquiry cannot explore what is subtle and can be known only through experience.

Develop steadfast devotion to God

A Gopika once asked Radha how she felt when she saw Krishna, how her

heart responded, what transformation occurred in her and what joy she experienced. Radha replied: "The moment I hear the melodious flute of Krishna, my heart becomes still, and I forget myself when I learn that Krishna is coming. I am lost in the music of His flute and I am aware of nothing else. How can I describe to you my feelings when I am intoxicated by the magic of His melody?" The God-intoxicated devotee cannot describe his blissful experience in words. One who attempts to express it, has no real experience of it all. Those who regard themselves as devotees should recognise the vast difference between their narrow-minded attitude and the ineffable character of true devotion. They should resolve to shed petty attachments and develop steadfast devotion to God as the main object of their life. For this purpose, the company of the good is essential. Good thoughts are promoted only through association with the good. This means avoiding contact with the evil-minded and the unrighteous. Association with bad persons makes even a good person bad. There are classic examples of the evil consequences of association with the bad. Kaikeyi in the Ramayana and Dharmaraja in the Mahabharatha are examples of persons who suffered grievously because of their association with evil-minded persons - Manthara in the case of Kaikeyi and the Kauravas in the case of Dharmaraja.

Lover of God renounces everything

Everyone must strive to fill the heart with true devotion. Constant contemplation on the form of the Lord and frequent repetition of the Lord's name are the means by which the heart is filled with the love of God. When there is this love, the devotee is filled with inexpressible ecstasy. It was out of such ecstasy that Kulasekhara Alwar, the royal saint, exclaimed: "Oh Lord! People talk of Moksha as the means of redeeming life and getting rid of birth and death. I do not ask for such redemption. I shall be content with loving you and serving you in countless lives. Allow me to love you and serve you - that is the only blessing I seek from you and not Moksha." The universe is permeated with love. It is the embodiment of Vishnu. There is nothing in the cosmos, no place in it where He is not present. To regard the Universe as a manifestation of God and to experience it as such is real devotion. The Sage Narada was the supreme exponent of this doctrine. He observed: "Thyago

bhavati thrupto bhavati, Atmaramo bhavati." ("The lover of God renounces everything; he is supremely content. He is immersed in the bliss of the Self. Endow me with such love, Oh Lord!") Man today is behaving with less gratitude than what birds, beasts and even trees display. He is ungrateful to his parents, teachers, society and even to God. He makes a parade of his adherence to Truth, Righteousness, Peace, Love and Ahimsa, but does not practise any of them. Why is this so? It is because of intense selfishness and preoccupation with one's own concerns and interests. Only when man sheds his selfishness can he turn his mind towards God. The love of God will dispel the ignorance and conceit of man as the sun dispels the morning mist. The heart is the seat of love. That love must express itself, to begin with, in the home. From there it must extend to one's village or town, to one's state, nation and ultimately to the whole world.

Bhakti Marga is the path of Divine Love

Love must expand from the individual to the whole universe. We must regard Love as God. The different forms attributed to God are products of fancy. But Love can be directly experienced. Whether one is a theist or an atheist, a hedonist or a recluse, a yogi or a materialist, he will have high regard for love. Love is the one form in which everybody is ready to accept God. The cultivation of love and achieving universal Love through love is the sublime path of Love - that is the path of Bhakti.

To realise the Brahman through continuous meditation on the Brahman is not an enjoyable path for all to take. This was why spiritual teachers like Ramanuja favoured the path of devotion, experienced themselves the bliss flowing from the love of God and propagated the love-principle as the easiest means to experience the Divine. There have been teachers who have emphasised the Karma Marga (the path of Action), the Jnana Marga (the path of knowledge), the different types of yoga or other means to realise the Divine. But the common under-current that flows through all of them is the path of Bhakti - the path of Divine Love. This is accepted by all of them. Love is God. The universe is permeated by God. To see God in everything, to love everything as a manifestation of God and to offer everything to God as an

offering of Love - this is the way of Love.

True exemplars of Bhakti Marga

The Gopikas, the sage Narada and the child Prahlada are supreme exemplars of the path of Bhakti. Prahlada means one who is filled with infinite delight. The delight with which Prahlada was filled was the love of God. He saw God in everything. When his father Hiranyakasipu asked him whether God was in a pillar, he said God was in it. Hiranyakasipu smashed the pillar and the Lord came out of it in the form of Narasimha (Man-Lion) to vindicate Prahlada's faith in the omnipresence of the Divine.

Without firm faith in the omnipresence of the Divine, devotion has no meaning. By developing faith, devotion is nourished and devotion enables one to face all the vicissitudes of life with fortitude and serenity, regarding them as dispensations of Providence. Finally one-pointed devotion for God leads to union with the Divine. Today devotion begins with the morning ritual of yoga (a form of worship), progresses towards bhoga (enjoyment) at mid-day and ends with roga (sickness) at night. "Satatam Yoginah," says the Gita. Absorption in the Divine always is the mark of the yogi. This cannot be achieved in one jump. But through constant practice it can be achieved. Self-realisation is the goal. Love is the means. It is through the cultivation of Love that life can find fulfilment. Everyone must strive to achieve this fulfilment by filling this human adventure with the sweetness of love and transforming it into an expression of divinity. This is my benediction for all of you.

Discipline is important in life. It trains you to put up with disappointments. The path of life has both ups and downs. Every rose has a thorn. Now people want roses without thorns. They expect life to be one saga of sensual pleasures, a picnic all the time. When this does not happen, they turn wild and start blaming others.

- Sathya Sai Baba

2. Education for transformation

Date: 21 January 1986 / Location: Chennai / Occasion: Music Academy Auditorium

PRESENT day education develops the intellect and skills but does little to develop good qualities. Of what avail is all the knowledge in the world, if one has no good character? It is like water going down the drain.

There is no use if knowledge grows while desires multiply. It makes one a hero in words and a zero in action.

Man's achievements in the fields of science and technology have helped to improve the material conditions of living. What we need today, however, is a transformation of the spirit. Education should serve not only to develop one's intelligence and skills, but also help to broaden one's outlook and make him useful to society and the world at large. This is possible only when cultivation of the spirit is promoted along with education in the physical sciences. Moral and spiritual education will train a man to lead a disciplined life. Education without self-control is no education at all. True education should make a person compassionate and humane. It should not make him self-centered and narrow minded. Spontaneous sympathy and regard for all beings should flow from the heart of one who is properly educated. He should be keen to serve society rather than be preoccupied with his own acquisitive aspirations. This should be the real purpose of education in its true sense.

Fear of sin and faith in God should be promoted

Education should instill in the student "fear and faith." 'Fear' does not mean timidity. It is fear of sin and faith in God which have to be promoted. One should feel that he will forfeit the respect and regard of the community if he commits a sinful or immoral act. The student should learn to avoid unrighteous conduct. Students should be taught to love their mothers and their Motherland with deep devotion. Desabhakti (devotion to one's country) is one form of devotion to God. One who has no love for his mother, his Motherland, his mother tongue and his religion will be leading a meaningless

life.

The educational system is beset with many problems. It has failed to promote in the young such qualities as love, forbearance and fortitude. Instead, it serves to encourage the animal nature in students. There is no place in it for cultivating human values like Truth and Righteousness. It does not imbue the student with a sense of humility, which is the hall-mark of right education.

Human values are absent in educated persons

Parents are keen about educating their children, but they are not concerned about the kind of education that should be given. Education should help to make students the embodiments of human values such as Truth, Love, Right Conduct, Peace and Non-violence. Academic knowledge alone is of no great value. It may help one to earn a livelihood. But education should go beyond preparation for earning a living. It should prepare one for the challenges of life morality and spiritually. It is because human values are absent in 'educated' persons that we find them steeped in anxiety and worry. Who is responsible for the deplorable state of education today, for the lack of discipline among students and the absence of moral values among educated persons? It is not correct to blame the students. Teachers do not understand the needs and impulses of students and the students, for their part, have no great regard for the teachers. The management of the educational institutions and the educational administrators do not understand the problems of the teachers or the real needs of the students. Politicians utilise the situation for interfering with the education system. Conditions arise in which the police have to intervene and sometimes close the educational institutions. For such a situation, the parents, the teachers, the administration and the government are all to blame. Each is responsible in some way for the malaise in the system. All concerned have failed to recognise their respective obligations. The educational system that we inherited from Macaulay's days was designed to train students for filling certain types of jobs primarily to provide an army of clerks for the foreign administration. The link between education and jobs has to be broken. Education should be for life and not for a living. It should prepare youth for all the responsibilities of citizenship.

Parents and teachers should set the right example

Parents have the primary responsibility to mould the character of children. Too much freedom should not be given out of excessive affection. Children should be taught to exercise selfrestraint and observe discipline in their daily life. If parents are negligent in bringing up the children in their most tender years, it will not be easy to correct them later on. There is a Telugu saying that if the daughter-in-law is dark in complexion, all the children will be dark. In the sphere of education, the system of education can be compared to the daughter-in-law. If it is defective the end products will also be bad. The entire country will suffer from the consequences of defective education. If students are disciplined and well behaved, the country will be safe and sound.

What is the Government's responsibility? We find that every time there is a change in the education ministry, the educational policy is changed, with the result there is instability and uncertainty. The main defects in the educational system remain uncorrected. As a consequence, the students suffer.

There is no point in blaming the students. They are like the stones out of which the sculptor chisels' the figures he wants. It is the sculptor who produces a thing of beauty out of a piece of rough rock. Parents and teachers are the sculptors who have to mould the shape and figure of the students for whom they are responsible. If parents and teachers set the right example, the students will automatically blossom into models of excellence and bring glory to the nation.

Students should totally eschew politics

There is a basic rule that should be observed by students and teachers. They should totally eschew politics. The students can enter politics, if they choose, after completing their studies and starting life on their own. I am not against politics or politicians. Politics is an essential element in the growth of a country. But what I urge is that one should not venture into it in an immature and adolescent stage. When a student indulges in politics, he cannot be good

in his studies or in his politics. He will only be wasting his precious life. There is no room for teachers to indulge in politics. Their sole duty is to take good care of the students entrusted to their care and shape them into useful, patriotic and worthy citizens, reflecting the culture and traditions of the land. Teachers who take to politics do so for their own selfish ends to improve their position and influence. They are, in fact, betraying their trust as teachers.

What about elections to student bodies? We find that these elections are conducted on the lines of Assembly elections, involving considerable expenditure on campaigning through posters etc. Sometimes these electoral battles have resulted in damage to property and life. A great deal of energy and money is frittered away on this wasteful exercise. It is no doubt necessary to develop qualities of leadership among students. But this should be done in the proper way. Students after all remain in colleges for a brief period. The Vice-Chancellors and Principals of Colleges should sit together and devise methods to instill in the students a sense of discipline and to promote good behaviour and keenness to pursue their studies. There should be no elections, but only selection. The Principal should select a student, who is not only proficient in studies but is also exemplary in his behaviour and in rendering selfless service to others, and make him the leader of the students. Elections are conducted for so-called students' unions! What is the meaning of "Union"? It is "coming together of all persons." But what we actually see in students' unions are only dissensions, disunity and mutual rivalry.

Characteristic of true education is humility

The students are innocent. It is the parents and teachers who should lead them in the correct path. Unfortunately, teachers are not doing their part. They have their own "Unions" and indulge in undesirable activities, which are followed by the students, in their turn! The characteristic of true Vidya (education) is Vinayam (humility). Humility helps to make one a patra (one deserving respect). Deservedness leads to Dhanam (wealth) and Dhanam leads to Dharma (righteousness). Dharma is the means to Mukti (liberation). We are now giving importance only to intellectual cleverness. This is wrong. Importance has to be given only to character. Education is of no value at all

without character. What is the use of having ten acres of waste land? If you have a small plot of fertile land that is more valuable.

Undesirable state of academic standards

The prevailing system of assessment of the academic performance of students is deplorable. If one gets 25 per cent or 30 per cent of marks in a subject, a student is supposed to have obtained pass marks and he is promoted. This only means that everyone has the license to commit errors to the extent of 70% to 75%. If one commits mistakes to the extent of 75% as a student, how much more mistakes will he commit when taking up a job? He may commit even cent percent mistakes and get away with it. This is not a satisfactory state of affairs. "Look up and aim high" should be the motto. Low aim is actually a crime! If a student aims at 90%, he may manage to get 60%. If, on the other hand, he aims only at 30%, he may get only 15%. There is another undesirable practice now due to the interference of extraneous persons. The Education Minister gives some grace marks, the Chief Minister gives his own quota of grace marks and the Education Secretary gives some grace marks! With these quotas of grace marks in prospect, which student will have interest in his studies? India is hailed as a Karma Bhoomi, Thyaga Bhoomi, and Yoga Bhoomi (the land of righteous action, sacrifice and spiritual greatness). But, today we find that because of the defective educational system obtaining here, it has turned into a Bhoga Bhoomi and Roga Bhoomi (a country revelling in material pleasures and replete with diseases), ruining the health and character of the people as a nation. This is not a desirable state of affairs. Even if there are ten students of sterling qualities and impeccable character it is enough. What is required is quality and not quantity. If the education system could contribute to the turning out of students of good character, committed to human values, the country will become stronger and greater as a nation and be a model to the world.

The teacher is a king-maker

Teachers should not feel that they belong to a despised profession. Teaching is a very noble and respectable profession. The teacher is actually a king-

maker. Even Kings and Emperors have to be in their early years students under a teacher. Bala Gangadhar Tilak, the great patriot and freedom fighter, who was in the teaching profession, was asked as to what position he would like to occupy when the country became independent. He replied that he was not interested in becoming a Minister or holding any office in the administration. He would prefer to go back to his profession of teaching so that he could mould several students into ministers or rulers rather than be a ruler himself. Such is the nobility and dignity of the teaching profession. Science is tending to get out of control. There is a Sanskrit saying that there is no nobility without self-control. People are gloating over the phenomenal successes of science and technology. The scientist, in exploring the secrets of Nature, has acquired mastery over air, water, earth, fire, etc. But all these achievements are not greater than what Hiranyakasipu was stated to have achieved in his time. What should be recognised is that in controlling the forces of Nature, the balance should not be upset. In dealing with Nature, there are three requirements. The first is knowledge of the laws of nature. The second is the skill to utilise the powers of Nature for human needs. The third is to maintain the balance among natural forces. It is the disturbance of this balance that has led to such consequences as soil erosion, pollution of the atmosphere, etc.

Need for balance

Today's education is knocking off the 's' from 'skill', with the result that the knowledge is 'killed', with disastrous results for mankind. Students should be given knowledge, skill and balance. In the present system of education, this combination is absent. Each is pursuing his own selfish interest, without regard to the interests of others. This is the plight of man today. Science has enabled him to acquire immense control over the external world. But he has no control over himself. Winston Churchill once observed: "Man has conquered all, but not himself." And this was what Prahlada told his father, Hiranyakasipu: "Oh Father! you have conquered all the world, but you have not conquered yourself." If the present educational system is to improve, the only way is to eliminate selfishness and train students for the service of society. How are students to be trained for this purpose? It is only through the

inculcation of love, with no trace of self-interest. Love is of two kinds - Sahaja Prema (Natural love) and Daiva Prema (Divine love). Natural love is one which expects something in return. Divine love expresses itself in loving service without expectation of any return. Divine love always gives to others and receives nothing. Natural love always expects something from others. True education must teach this divine love of heart to heart, mind to mind, and Atma to Atma.

Freedom from Government

In order to effect real improvements in the system of education, it is necessary to free educational institutions from Government control and make them independent like the judiciary. They should be run by autonomous agencies free from Government and political influences. Education should be under the control of a national body of educational experts, who have the interests of students as their sole concern. Now we find that for a seat in a Medical College one has to pay Rs. 2 lakhs or more. Parents who are anxious to give a medical education for their children somehow raise the money. When a student has gone through the medical course in this way and sets up practice, his first concern is to earn money by whatever dubious means to recover the amount spent on his education. He has to resort to corrupt practices. Once this process starts, his character is undermined. We should not give room for practices which demoralise the students from the outset of their educational career.

Another problem relating to our education is the difference in the system from State to State. These differences make it difficult for parents who are liable to transfer to get their wards admitted in the respective classes in a different state. There should be some uniformity in the system of education throughout the country. Vice-Chancellors and Principals of Colleges should get together and devise a common system of higher education for the whole country. They should ensure that all examinations are completed by April 20 and the results are announced by the second week of June so that all colleges can reopen before the end of June. This will enable students to seek admission to any institution of their choice anywhere in the country. It is

essential to have a common schedule of examinations for all States.

Free Education in Sai Institute

There should be no link between money and education. In the Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Education (of which Bhagavan Baba is the Chancellor), we will be providing from the new academic year (June 1986) free education to students at all levels including Post-graduate courses. The aim is to train the students in the proper way and make them accept the Institute's discipline. When you collect money from outsiders you become tools in their hands. When you provide free education, you can control the students. You can impart moral values and mould the character of the students.

At present there are what are called moral instruction classes in some schools. These figure only in the time-table. Often these periods are used for teaching other subjects. From the most impressionable years the children should be taught to cultivate love for all. Love leads to unity. Unity promotes purity. Purity leads to Divinity. Today there is no love and we find enmity instead of unity. A human being without love is worse than a wild animal in the jungle. Animals, birds and trees provide some service to others, but the man who is selfish not only does no service but causes harm to others. The educated are even worse sinners in this respect than the unlettered. It is educated young men who are found engaged in crimes like hijacking, bank robberies and other grave offenses against society. Is this the kind of transformation that should be expected from education?

Teaching love through Love

Education should imbue students with certain ideals. They should realise that there is only one caste, the Caste of Humanity. There is only one religion, the Religion of Love. There is only one language, the Language of the Heart. If these basic ideals are followed, there will be no room for petty differences and mutual recrimination. You can teach love to students only through love. Because of my love which is my Swabhava (nature), the students in the Sathya Sai Institute are disciplined and orderly and there is no unrest in our

campus. I have no ill-will towards anyone. There may be persons who may criticise me or even bear malice or hatred towards me. But I have no enemies at all. Everyone is dear to me. As I have love as my permanent quality, I have no worry and am always happy and at peace. Love in speech is Sathya. Love in action is Dharma. Love in thought is Shanti. Love in understanding is Ahimsa (Non-violence). This love is flowing in us as an unseen river. It is only by developing love that we can sanctify the educational system and train the students in the practice of human values as the essential condition for leading worthy lives. I appeal to all of you, to strive in this direction and make education really purposeful for turning out students who will be good citizens of whom the country can be proud.

When truth, justice, compassion and peace flee from man, the world degenerates into a snake-pit. God then comes down as an Avatar to rescue mankind from its doom. He comes to reveal to man his Reality, to restore to him his birthright of Atmic bliss. He does not come to found a new creed or religion, to breed a new faction or install a new God.

- Sathya Sai Baba

3. The Mantra round your wrist

Date: **07 March 1986** / Location: **Prasanthi Nilayam** / Occasion: **Discourse delivered at the inaugural function of workshop for teachers and field workers involved in the programme of Education in Human Values**

THE five-lettered word WATCH can be as potent a mantra in promoting the five basic Human Values Truth, Righteous conduct, Peace, Love and Non-violence - as the Panchakshari mantra - Namah-Sivaya in promoting the spiritual progress of a sadhaka. Three categories of people support and sustain human society - those who produce, those who guard and those who guide - the workers, the soldiers and the teachers - the Karshaka, the Rakshaka, and Sikshaka. A society can be strong only when those who produce the food, clothing and shelter are well equipped and active, when the guardians of law and order and those in charge of the frontiers are patriotic and skilled, and when those who open the eyes of children and unfold their innate richness are full of love and understanding. These three are like the three legs of a tripod. But as a mere structure with three legs the tripod cannot be useful and efficient. The people who are the concern and under the care of the three categories form the plank on top of the three. The seat has to be screwed tight to the legs - the screws being peace, love and truth and the process of screwing and tightening being the eager enthusiasm for progress, prosperity, security and unity, the sincere effort to accept and promote the human values - Truth, Right Conduct, Peace, Non-violence and Love. These five values are as essential for a full and worthwhile life as a five vital airs or Pranas mentioned in the scriptures.

The Teacher's role

The teacher embodies these values and establishes them in society. That is his opportunity, his duty, the justification for his profession. Therefore, he becomes responsible for the efficiency and excellence of the other two categories also. He has to bear the burden of shaping and perfecting the producers and the guardians too. Why? The peace and prosperity of the world depend on the teacher - his personality, his character, skill and outlook. The

fruit of his efforts must be liberation itself, from the dual sufferings of pain and pleasure, grief and joy. "Ya vidya, sa vimukthaye" ("Vidya is That which liberates"), say the Upanishads. The teacher should not confine himself within books; the universe is his text. He must imbibe and transmit the knowledge and experience that the Universe is divine, true and holy. A good teacher is perpetual learner; for him, Nature or Prakriti is the best teacher. The word Prakriti is usually rendered as Nature-to indicate all that the Divine Will has projected. People in Karnataka use that word to denote one's body. When one desires to convey that his health is not good, he says "My prakriti is not good." The meaning of the word Prakriti comprises not only the physical body but also the conduct, the activity, the feeling, the speech and the motives that govern and exemplify it. The teacher teaches not merely by his words or through books but more by his attitudes and aptitudes, his prejudices and preferences, the means and methods he employs and his conduct and habits. A good student is an offering that a good teacher makes to the nation. The student has learnt from the daily life of the teacher not to hurt others by harsh words and not to allow the mind to entertain bad thoughts.

The teacher must elevate himself by dedication

When Kalidasa was at the court, Emperor Bhoja pitted one famous scholar against another equally famous opponent. When he found that no one failed before the arguments of the other, he invited one pupil each from those taught by the scholars and encouraged them to engage themselves in debate to discover which master-teacher was superior judging &om the performance of the students. But they too failed to overcome each other. The thousands who witnessed the end-products of the teaching by the masters acclaimed their greatness in unanimous appreciation.

A President or Prime Minister rises to that position because of the teachers who fostered him and implanted courage, confidence and elements of leadership in his formative years. The teacher should not condemn himself as weak nor think of his job as last desperate resort. He must give up lamenting his lot. He must elevate himself and his job by dedication to the five human values.

Message of the wrist watch

Today, every one wears a wrist watch; the watches are of many varieties - of shape, size and cost; the straps too are of different materials and monetary value. They tell us the time; they also serve as a decoration and an ornament. When they first came into the village of Puttaparthi, they created commotion and wonder. I was then nine years old. I wrote a limerick on the wearers of the strange contraption and on the leather strip round the wrists. Now, the watch has become a part of every wrist. Only, the wearer has not learnt the message of the watch, its potential to arouse the latent divinity in man. The name, WATCH, has five letters! The mantra that leads the sadhaka to God (Siva) - Na-mah-Si-va-ya has five syllables. WATCH is as much a panchakshari (five-lettered) mantra as Namah Sivaya, and, if meditated upon, is as meaningful and momentous.

W: The first letter reminds us of the Sadhana of watching the Word. One should not revel in idle gossip, or spreading slander and scandal and wound others and pollute oneself. Examine the word before the tongue pronounces it; is it true, will it hurt, is it necessary? Warn the tongue against relishing falsehood, or indulging in outbursts of vilification and the like. Adhere to Truth, at all costs. It is the basic human value. A: The second letter reminds us of the additional Sadhana of washing Action. Be vigilant that every activity conduces to your moral progress, to the welfare of society - that is to say, follows the moral code, Dharma. Dharma also means innate nature. Fire has to spread warmth and light and also to burn. These are its Dharma. Without them, it is but coal. Sugar without the sweet taste is but paltry powder. A rose without fragrance might as well be a plastic substitute. Man's Dharma is to love and serve fellowmen, practising truth without causing injury to others. 'A' teaches us to manifest Dharma in every action of ours. Dharma is another great human value.

Thoughts must reinforce innate Peace

T: The third letter 'T' indicates an additional sadhana, a third one watching

our Thoughts. While adhering to the earlier two, one trains the mind not to react vehemently or vengefully when one is blamed or extolled. Why should one worry if the blame has no basis? Thoughts must reinforce the innate peace and tranquillity which are one's heritage. They should not create anxiety or anger, arrogance or envy, which are alien to the Divine Core of human beings. Thoughts, when watched and warned, promote Santhi, another precious human value. Santhi is the jewel won by the sages. It resides in hearts free from pride and, greed. C: The fourth letter of the Panchakshari teaches one to watch the Character. Character is threequarters of life. The Sadhaka has to direct himself to the acquisition of the three values already mentioned, through steady vigilance. Man is the very embodiment of Love; so, his character finds expression through character saturated with love. A life without Love is really living death. Every thought, word and deed must emanate from Love. Love must bind the community as one; it must strengthen the feeling of brotherhood and satisfy the craving for expansion. Love must reach out to all mankind and to God. When such a steady selfless character is absent in man, he is a lampless home, a barren cow, a runaway kite drifting helplessly down, a counterfeit coin. Is he observing Truth? Is he virtuous? Has he serenity? Does love motivate him for every action? These are the tests.

Watch the Heart and the feelings it originates

H: The fifth letter 'H' instructs us to watch the Heart and the feelings it originates. It reminds us of the human value of Ahimsa (Non-violence). Heart does not mean the fist-size physical equipment we have to purify and pump blood. It is the centre of emotions, good and bad. It has to be watched, so that good emotions alone are manifested. It must expand to include all living beings to feel kinship with all creation. "My reality is the reality of all" - this truth must be ever springing forth. Then, the idea of violence can never find place in the heart. The sense of unity cannot produce competition and confrontation. The fifth human value - Ahimsa - is promoted by the sadhana indicated by the letter H. For want of these five human values, mankind is in the throes of distress and disaster. The morning newspaper is full of murder, massacre, arson and dacoities. The brain and the mind have been polluted to

a dangerous extent. Education aims only at providing information and promoting skills. It has not tackled the problem of moral degeneration, of the sublimation of low desires, of sense control and the development of spiritual insight. Man is converting himself into a brute with a human form. Vali, the monkey, is said to have argued that Rama wounded it with his mortal arrow, in spite of the fact that the sin it had committed was pardonable and even proper among monkeys. But Rama replied that Vali was only a monkey in appearance; it knew both right and wrong, and so deserved punishment. Man, today, is a beast in human garb. When he develops and demonstrates human values, he would have to discard the beast in him and become man, the pilgrim to God. Contemplation on the watch is the best means for achieving this end.

God can be attained by the wise use of time

The watch will teach Sathyam. It warns against evil, and alerts you to be good, Sivam. It is worn as a jewel so it is Sundaram, too, besides being a teacher and reminder of human values. The watch is the symbol of Time. We are powerless before Time but Time's Creator and Director can be won and attained by the wise use of Time. Instructing others on this inner meaning of the Watch and the Panchakshari Mantra derivable from the five letters WATCH are not enough to fulfill your duty.

The watch advises you to watch yourself whether you have the credentials to teach. A hundred eyes will be watching every word and deed of yours to discover whether you have mastered the human values and whether you are practising them. And, most important of all, God, the Universal Watcher, is witnessing and weighing your every thought, word and deed. The God in you examines and judges and you are able to acquire self-satisfaction through sincerity and serenity. Prove your human-ness by the practice of the values which are the unique qualities of man.

The dull and the lazy will refrain from activity for fear of exhaustion or failure or loss. The emotional and passionate persons will plunge headlong and crave for quick results and will be disappointed if success does not come their way.

The balanced persons engage themselves in work because it is their duty. They will not be affected either by success or failure.

- *Sathya Sai Baba*

4. Bhagavan and Bhakti

Date: 08 March 1986 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam / Occasion: Shivarathri

THE Upanishads are the outcome of the explorations into the nature of the Divine made by the ancient sages. They declare, "Isa Vasyamidam Jagath" - Jagath (the world) is permeated by Easwara. Jagath is the place wherein all beings are born, grow and disappear. Ceaselessly the air blows over the earth everywhere, but we do not see it. Time passes through a procession of days and night filled with activity and sleep. Continuously, somewhere or the other, births and deaths, joy and sorrow, pleasure and pain are occurring. The year is filled with varying, seasons, blazing heat or freezing cold, heavy rains or temperate weather. It is not easy to overcome these changing phenomena. Man's primary need is food. The production of food involves cultivation of land to grow food crops. Without the production of grains hunger cannot be appeased by mantras or money. Hence agriculture is the basic occupation for man. With the basic needs of food, shelter and clothing satisfied and with rearing a family, man is content. But with the growth of knowledge and skills, huts develop into mansions, villages turn into towns and cities; population grows and man is proud of what he has accomplished. But he is not aware of the things which are outside his ken and beyond his capacity.

Although births and deaths have been occurring from the beginning of time, men have not been able to understand the reasons for these happenings or their inner significance.

Ancients enquiries in search of God

Recognising that despite all man's intellectual achievements, there were many things beyond his understanding and control, the ancients concluded that there was some super-human power behind and beyond the phenomena. They felt that they should enquire into the nature of the power without which man could not exist, no plant could grow and no living being could survive. These enquiries were not based on blind faith. Nor were they products of wild imagination. They sought to find the truth by austere penance. They regarded

it as a search for God.

The earliest finding of the seekers was that the Sun was the most important factor in determining the daily life of man and providing the basic requirements for living. Life would be impossible without the Sun for man, beast, bird or plant. The Sun was regarded as the source of all energy and responsible for birth, growth and destruction of all things in creation. It was for this reason that Sage Viswamitra glorified the Sun God (Savitr) in the Gayathri mantra. The sages believed that the Divine principle was present in and outside of everything and that it could be experienced directly as well as indirectly. They pursued their penances further, for the benefit of mankind. They realised the Truth that the Divine Effulgent Person was beyond the outer darkness and, experiencing this Reality, they called upon all to seek and experience it. This Effulgent Purusha is utterly selfless, full of light, the embodiment of all auspicious qualities and free from attributes. He was described as "Siva" meaning one who is beyond the three Gunas (Sathwa, Rajas, Thamas) and hence absolutely pure and untainted. He was regarded as eternal, omnipotent, all-pervading and the possessor of all that is great and glorious - the six indices of the Divine: Wealth, Righteousness, Fame, Sacrifice, Wisdom and Reputation. And for this reason, He was given another appellation - Easwara. Easwara is one who is endowed with all conceivable kinds of wealth.

Siva's Will and Grace have no bounds

The sages found that Siva is also the protector of those who seek refuge in Him. Hence, He was called Sankara - one who confers protection and grace. His Sankalpa (Will) and grace have no bounds and are not dependent on any person, condition or qualification. Hence He was described as Swayambhu (self-created). The sages conceived of Him as one who could incarnate at will for the protection and rescue of man and the safeguarding of Dharma. In view of this transcendental power, He was described as Sambhavah - the one who incarnates whenever Dharma (the reign of Righteousness) is in danger and the good need protection. The Sun's reflection is seen in innumerable objects. The sages considered the human body as a vessel in the water (the lake of

the mind) of which the effulgence of the Sun is reflected. Likewise, recognising that the divine is present in all living things, they gave Him the name, Aditya.

Knowing the nature of the omnipotent entity

They realised that it is not possible to know this all-pervading, all-knowing, omnipotent entity. There are three bases for knowing anything: Direct perception, inference and Vedic sabda (testimony). The Divine is beyond prathyaksha (direct perception) because He has no form. The Divine may appear in the form one contemplates, but that is not the reality. Proof by inference may not be valid in the case of the Absolute. You may know that a seed has the potential to become a tree, but you cannot know what kind of tree it will actually become. Hence there are obvious limitations in seeking to know the nature of the Divine by means of direct perception or by inference.

We have, then, the Sabda (testimony) of the Vedas. The Vedas can only describe the Absolute, but cannot demonstrate it. It has, therefore, been declared: "Not by rituals, or wealth or progeny can you attain the Eternal. Only through sacrifice can you realise the immortal". The Vedanta explored the process of elimination - "Not this", "Not this" - to arrive at the Absolute. Having found that the Divine cannot be known by any of the three methods of knowing, the sages gave the name, Aprameyah - the indescribable, the immeasurable. The sages also found that the Supreme Person was not only the creator and the protector, but also the destroyer and-that he combined in himself all the powers required for these three functions. In fact, he was all these and more, that he could confer joy or sorrow, affluence or privation, and that there was nothing beyond his Power. They wanted to choose a name which would be allcomprehensive and appeal to one and all and so gave him the name Bhagavan a name which expressed all the glories and powers of the Supreme Person.

Control of senses should be practised regularly

The significance of Sivarathri is that it is a time when one can get closest to

Bhagavan, because the moon, which represents the mind, has shed fifteen of its aspects (kalas) and is about to shed the last (sixteenth) aspect. The ancient sages, who explored the link between numbers and the Divine, found that the letters in the name of Siva Rathri amounted to a total of eleven, which was the number of the dark forces called Rudras (those who make people cry). The Rudras enter the intellects of people and turn their desires towards worldly things, thereby giving rise to attachments and hatreds and pursuit of sensuous pleasures. As they turn the minds of people away from God and towards evil, they were called Rudras. The sages declared that whoever is able to keep the Rudras in check on the sacred day of Sivarathri will be able to experience Divinity. This means that control of the senses is the primary requisite for realising the Divine and attaining liberation.

Control of the senses is not easy. Even an evolved person like Arjuna confessed to Sri Krishna that sense-control was extremely difficult. The sages knew this well from their own experience. Hence, they suggested that even if control of the senses was not possible all the time, it should be practised at least on sacred days like Sivarathri. If one has nothing to do, the mind wanders in all directions. Hence the sages prescribed continuous absorption in thoughts of God on Sivarathri night. Repetition of the name of God and meditation on His glories would keep the mind away from other trivialities and promote control of the senses.

The proper way to observe Sivarathri

Sophisticated intellectuals of today look upon Sivarathri only as a night when they should try to keep awake. They do not see the need to observe it as a pure and holy day to be dedicated to thoughts of God. As keeping awake the whole night is their sole idea of Sivarathri, they try to spend it seeing three film shows or playing cards with their friends or playing with dice with their kith and kin the whole night. Keeping awake in this manner, they come home in the morning to have a hearty meal. Is this the way to observe Sivarathri? Not at all. It is a caricature of what should be a sacred occasion for contemplating on God. What kind of vigil is it in which there is no purity of mind and no meditation on God? The stork that stands on one leg waiting to

catch a fish cannot be regarded as doing penance. The drunken sot who is oblivious to the world cannot be equated with one who is absorbed in the divine. The man who gives up eating after a tiff with the wife cannot be described as observing a fast.

The unique value of Bharatiya Culture

The vigil on Sivarathri night means concentrating one's thoughts on the sacred, the pure, the beautiful and glorious form of the Divine. The ancient sages experienced the unique value of Bharatiya culture and bequeathed it as a precious legacy to the world. Today many are not aware of what is Bharatiya culture. What is our culture, what are our traditions and what is Sanathana Dharma? One who is not aware of the three cannot call himself a child of Bharat. Bharatiya culture is one that is ageless. It has withstood the vicissitudes of time. The soul of this culture is Sanathana Dharma.

It is the bounteous nectar that has emerged from the dedicated efforts and severe penances of the rishis. Those sages did not embark upon these exercises out of blind faith or ignorance and lack of knowledge. They were profound seers, free from attachment and self-interest. After discovering the basic truth through disinterested enquiry and personal experience, they gave it to the world.

In the world today, knowledge and skills have grown immensely, but human qualities have not developed at all. Every subject is riddled with controversy. The reasoning process is invoked, without understanding what exactly is reason. It must be clearly understood that the Divine cannot be known by ordinary perception or through rules of logic and reasoning.

The power of Faith - a true incident

Faith is only one. There is nothing like blind faith. For faith there can be no reason and no season. Faith and spirituality are beyond reason. It is foolish to search for the grounds of faith. There is a sacred pilgrim centre called Srisailem near Anantapur. In a small village adjacent to it, a widow was trying

to give her seven-year old son, Ramanna, a schooling with great difficulty. The Sivarathri festival was drawing near. In the Rayalaseema areas, it was customary to invite home the son-in-law and the daughter for the occasion. Ramanna heard from his friends that they were expecting their sisters and brothers-in-law for Sivarathri. He asked his mother whether he had any sister and brother-in-law, where they were living and whether they would come for Sivarathri. His mother had borne a daughter prior to the son, but she had died in infancy. Memory of that girl's death brought tears to the mother. Suppressing her grief, however, she told her son "Darling, you have a sister." The son implored his mother to let him know where she was so that he could bring her and her husband for Sivarathri. Yielding to his importunities, the mother sought to satisfy him by saying; "In Srisailam you have a sister named Bhramaramba and her husband's name is Mallikarjuna." The boy then said: "Mother, let us both go to Srisailam and bring sister and brother-in-law and celebrate Sivarathri." He had complete faith in his mother's words; he was determined somehow to bring the sister and brother-in-law to their home. The mother was in a fix. She used various arguments to avoid the journey and ultimately said that she would have to stay at home to make the arrangements for the daughter and son-in-law. The boy said he would go alone and bring his sister and brother-in-law.

To please the son, the mother sent him to Srisailam with some villagers who were going there. They reached Srisailam. The villagers had been instructed in advance by the mother that at Srisailam they should take the boy to the shrines of Mallikarjuna and Bhramaramba, and bring him back. The villagers took him to the temple of Mallikarjuna. They showed him the temple and said Mallikarjuna was inside. The boy cried out "Bhava, Bhava" (brother-in-law) and rushed into the temple. As he entered, the priests stopped him. The boy cried: "Bhava! please speak to me." The 'brother-in-law' was silent. The boy thought that as his brother-in-law had not seen him, he could not recognise him now. Meanwhile, the priests thought, the boy was out of his mind and pushed him out of the temple. Ramanna was certain that his 'sister' would recognise him. He went to the shrine of Bhramaramba and cried aloud, "Akka, Akka" (Sister, Sister). He rolled on the ground and wailed; "Sister, speak to me." The priests in that temple too thought the boy was demented and cast

him out. Ramanna was plunged in grief at the thought of returning home without his sister and brother-in-law. The villagers who had escorted him to Srisailam were inside the temple engaged in their puja. Ramanna was alone outside the temple. He saw a big boulder. Climbing on it, he cried: "My mother will not excuse me if I go without sister and brother-in-law. Even my friends will laugh at me. I shall not go home. If my sister and brother-in-law do not come with me, I shall end my life here." Such was his firm faith in his mother's words. Faith of this kind never fails one. Crying aloud, "Akka, Akka" he jumped from the precipitous boulder. At that very moment, a voice spoke: "Maridi Ramanna, Maridi Ramanna" (young brother-inlaw, Ramanna). From another direction, a loving feminine voice was heard: "Thammudu, Thammudu" (young brother, young brother). When the boy jumped, he was held from both sides by God Mallikarjuna and Goddess Bhramaramba. This spectacle was witnessed by all the pilgrims present there. Mallikarjuna and Bhramaramba appearing in human form, carried the boy to his home in his native village, partook of all the special delicacies prepared by the mother, and then vanished.

Faith can achieve anything

Note how the Divine responded to the simple faith of an innocent lad. Faith can achieve anything. Who is entitled to make a distinction between "genuine" faith and "blind" faith? Some may look upon the boy Ramanna as a naive, ingenuous child, who could believe anything in his innocence. The boy's faith was a firm, unwavering faith emanating from a pure heart. A big shrine has been erected on the spot where the divine couple rescued Ramanna. This is known as the shrine of "Maridi Ramanna" (coming to be called later as Mythili Ramanna shrine). It is wrong to think that such miracles do not happen in Kali Yuga. The manifestation of divinity transcends the bounds of time, space and circumstance. Hence, the first requisite is cultivation of faith. One who has no faith can accomplish nothing. With faith, he can achieve everything. Faith is the foundation for the realisation of God. I have often said: Where there is confidence, 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.

Realise God through Love

If you want to realise God, you must be immersed in Bliss. To experience Bliss, you have to follow Truth. To pursue Truth, you have to install Peace in your heart. To achieve Peace, you have to cultivate Love. It is confidence that begets love. Today, faith works like a see-saw which goes up and down. It is one continuous process of birth and death, faith at one moment turning into disbelief the next, and so on. With a faith which comes and goes, you cannot discover the unchanging, eternal Reality. The Atma shines eternally, With no birth and no death, With no beginning, middle or end Ever remaining the All-Seeing Witness. You may give God any name or form. The Divine has been given various names. Even the Rishis have called God by many names - Siva, Sankara, Adithya, Sambhava and Bhagavan. These names were given to Him; He did not give Himself any name. So, all that you see may be called God. Nature is God. Energy is God. Nothing is God. But, it is really not nothing; it is everything. In what. you call everything, there is nothing. What you call Nothing has everything. Everything is Nothing and Nothing is Everything. Some say "There is no God", but everything is in God. The atheist denies the existence of what is. In saying "There is no God", "There is" comes first. This means that he is denying what is. He is blind.

Divinity is all-pervading

The truth is, Divinity is all-pervading. After profound enquiry, the rishis discovered that God is the source of everything in creation. The rishis compared jagath (the cosmos) to a seed. Every seed is covered by husk. It is only when the grain and the husk are together that the seed can germinate. Likewise, in the cosmos, the inner grain is God, the outer husk is Prakriti (Nature). The cosmos demonstrates the unity of God and Nature. Nature is dependent on God and God is the basis for Nature. Likewise, when we seek refuge in God, He provides the protecting cover for us. Dasatvam (Dependence of the Devotee) and Daivatvam (protection by God) together constitute Divinity at work. This is also described as Siva-Sakthi-Atmaka-Swaroopam - the union of Siva and Sakthi. The Cosmos, thus, is not apart

from God. It is one with God. The scientists are saying the same thing in their own language when they say matter is energy and energy is matter. The relationship between matter and energy indicated the Prakriti-Paramatma (Nature-God) relationship. Energy is, in fact, one of the names of God. Prakriti is another name. It is not possible for any one to describe the greatness or the qualities of God. The scriptures have declared "Avang-manasa Gocharah" (He is beyond the reach of mind and speech). "From where speech returns, together with the mind, unable to grasp it," says the Upanishad. Devote yourselves to the contemplation of the glories of God on this sacred night and sanctify your lives by turning your thoughts away from mundane concerns.

True knowledge consists in understanding the unity that underlies the Cosmos. All the sufferings and problems in life arise from the sere of duality. Once the feeling of 'I' and 'mine' is got rid of, consciousness of all-pervading Divinity will be realised.

- Sathya Sai Baba

5. Human values are for everyone

Date: 09 March 1986 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam / Occasion: Valedictory discourse to EHV Seminar

Heroism in speech has grown Heroism in action has declined to vanishing point. Ostentatious living is the order of the day; This is the plight of the student today. MAN'S life is marked by the procession of days and nights. The rising of the sun in the east and its setting in the west are everyday experiences. But when it is noted that the earth is a globe revolving round itself and going round the sun, these phenomena have a different reality. Directions like east and west and north and south and the apparent motion of the sun are seen to be mistaken. Similarly, when we are seated in a moving train, we are moving along with the train, though we may be stationary. Though the earth is revolving at a speed of several hundred miles an hour, we are not aware of its motion at all. It is simultaneously moving in orbit round the sun at 66,000 miles an hour, carrying with it all things on earth. The earth seems firm and unmoving, while the sun and planets and stars appear to be going round the earth. Though the scientific reality is one thing, we are guided by the daily experience in which the reality is different. Even the scientist who knows about the earth's movements, uses the language of daily experience with reference to directions like east and west and the rising and setting of the sun. The entire creation is a conglomeration of subatomic particles. These particles are waves of energy. All of them emanate from the same source of energy. Even the scientist who knows all about electrons does not seek to find the primary source of all energy-the Paratathva (the Supreme Principle).

"The One willed to become the Many"

The power of Sakthi (energy) is incalculable. A small stone cast on a tumbler of water causes a ripple on the surface. A storm in the sea has the power to sink a ship. Both are manifestations of the power of atomic particles under varying conditions. Different combinations of atoms result in objects of different kinds like copper, gold or oxygen, which have varying utility and

value. But the primary energy which manifests itself in different kinds of atoms and objects is one and the same. The Vedas indicated this truth when they declared: "Ekoham Bahusyam" ("The One willed to become the Many"), "Ekam Sath Viprah bahudha Vadanthi" ("The Reality is one, the wise call it by many names"). If the Universe is itself the manifestation of the one primary energy, everything in it is also an expression of that energy. For instance, a wall which you see as a solid block can be seen as a vast congregation of minute particles when it is viewed through a microscope. Empty space between different particles can also be noticed.

The Vedic statement on the basic truth

Thus, there is a difference between the appearance of objects as we observe them in daily life and their inner reality. But the external appearance is based on the inner reality. It is the basic truth of the internal which enables us to experience the external. The .basis/ is the power of the primal energy which is in matter. This basic truth was proclaimed in the Vedic statement: "Anoraneeyan Mahatho maheeyan" ("It is subtler than the subtlest and vaster than the vastest"). This means that what is subtle can become the immense. All experiences in daily life are variation in form of the basic Reality and not different from it. Experience of this Basic Reality will reveal how the changes in the primary energy bring about the emergence and the disappearance of material substances. That experience is one only with no difference. This may be illustrated from mathematics. All numbers up to infinity are simply multiplication of the primary number one. One plus one becomes two, two plus one becomes three, and so on. Without one, all other numbers will have no basis. It should be clear from all this that there is one primordial power which is the basis of all that is. Until this truth is known, we may imagine we are knowalls. In this conceit, one man declared: "Mameva Pandithah" ("I alone am one who knows everything"). After some investigation, he found that there was a power greater than himself. He then declared: "Mamam cha pandithah" ("I am also a Pandit"). After further enquiry, he realised that there was a greater power than himself in the world and declared: "Pandithah samadarsinah" ("The pandit is one who views equally everything.") Proceeding further, he came to the conclusion, "Mamam na pandithah" ("I

know nothing").

Marks of a truly educated person

To realise the divinity in him, man should embark on this process of enquiry. One who claims to know everything should be treated as utterly ignorant. Before Buddha attained Nirvana, his disciples gathered round him and asked him what stage they have reached in their spiritual journey. Buddha took out a handful of leaves from the branch of the tree under which he was sitting and said: "Children, can you reckon the leaves in all the trees in all the forests all over the earth? What you have learnt is equal only to the handful of leaves in my palm, compared to what is to be known (that is, all the leaves in all the forests). We are today concerned with education in Human Values. In my view the cultivation of Human Values alone is education. Whoever tries to understand the human values of Truth, Righteous conduct, Peace, Love and Non-violence properly, who practises these values and propagates them with zeal and sincerity can alone be described as a truly educated person. There are, of course, the obligations and compulsions relating to one's daily life and the duties which have to be discharged to the family and others. For these purposes and for earning a living, one may have to take up some occupation or other. Knowledge of the natural sciences may be required for this purpose. But together with this it is essential to acquire knowledge relating to human values.

Everyone's body is a workshop

All are entitled to acquire knowledge of human values. Principal Narender mentioned that these values should be practised by persons in the home, the factory, and in office. But this is not enough. Everyone should practice Sathya, Dharma, Santhi, Prema and Ahimsa. Everyone's body is a workshop. This body is a machine. The limbs and organs are integral parts of the machine. Every organ shares in the pains and joys of every other part. The body demonstrates the organic unity of every limb and organ. If we fully understand the workings of this human workshop, we will have no need to study any other workshop. When the mind desires to acquire an object, say, a

fruit in a tree, all other organs, the feet, the hands, etc. cooperate in getting it. After the fruit is eaten, the stomach helps to digest it and supply blood to the heart for distribution to the entire body. In the process, every limb or organ has done its duty in harmony with the others. This kind of cooperation and harmony should be achieved in our daily life also. The functioning of the various organs of the body is an object lesson in cooperation and mutual help. This kind of mutual cooperation and unity could be experienced in our daily actions. For instance, when you are walking, your eyes may notice a thorn on the road. By a mysterious process of communication from the eyes to the feet, your legs automatically avoid the thorn. If the foot was to step on the thorn, the leg would be hurt and may start bleeding. Immediately, by the same mysterious process, the eyes experience the pain caused by the thorn and tears flow from them. This shows the remarkable link of love between the eyes and the feet. It is this kind of spontaneous love which is the mark of human-ness. It is when you experience another's suffering as your own that your human value is manifested.

Lessons to be learnt from the body

Our senses and limbs demonstrate these human qualities and serve as excellent teachers for us. There are numerous lessons to be learnt from the body. It is engaged in a variety of actions as the instrument for all activity. Knowledge and skill are required for doing anything. The body has to be kept in a fit condition for this purpose. All parts of the body, from head to foot, are equally important and have to be cared for with love and regard. Love should become the ruling principle of our life. Only then can we sanctify it. You may think the programme of education in human values was launched only five years ago. But in fact I initiated it nearly fifty years ago. When I was staying in Karnam Subbamma's house (in Puttaparthi) I used to sing a song: With Sathya, Dharma, Santhi and Prema Carry on your life's journey, oh man; Karma Yoga is your bounden duty; Remembering the Lord is the great secret And Sadhana is the devotee's hallmark, Proceed, oh man, on your life's pilgrimage With Sathya, Dharma, Santhi and Prema.

Raise the crop of Brahmananda in your hearts

Regard the heart as a vast field. Use the mind as a plough. Treat the gunas (qualities) as bullocks. Use the Viveka (intelligence) as a whip. With these aids, cultivate the field of your heart. What is the crop that is to be grown in it? Sathya, Dharma, Santhi and Prema are the seeds, Bhakti is the rain, Dhyana is the manure, Brahmananda is the crop. This is your task today. Cultivate the heart to raise a harvest of Truth, Righteousness, Peace and Love. This crop has to be raised in your heart and should be shared with others. Our life is like a block of ice which is melting away every moment. Before it spends itself, devote it to the service of others. Education in Human Values is designed to prepare everyone for this life of dedicated service. There may be doubts regarding this programme. No room should be given for futile controversies. The Human Values should be regarded as basic requirements for every human being. In spreading the message of these values to the world, you should all cooperate with each other and act in harmony. Whatever may be the experience in everyday life, the basic inner Truth should not be forgotten. "The Reality is one, though it may be called by different names". You have now the Sathya Sai Seva Samithi, the Sathya Sai Bhajana mandali, the Sai Seva Dal, the Sathya Sai Study Circle, the Sathya Sai Mahila Vibhag and the Sathya Sai Education Foundation. All this may be district Organisations, but the basic for all of them is Sathya Sai. This should always be borne in mind.

Human values are absent in today's world

Today, everyone is being attracted to the programme of Education in Human Values. The reason is the realisation that the world is in a sorry mess because of the absence of these values. Principal Narendra referred to the monstrous lethal weapons in the armouries of nations and the danger of nuclear war and "Star war", and said that in this critical situation the promotion of human values was supremely important. But, in truth, it is not these bombs and missiles that are the menace hovering over us. It is our bad qualities that are the more serious problem. The reason is: If the bombs are used, they will make an end of mankind and nothing will remain. But the bad qualities in man are devastating the lives of people all the time. This calamity is worse

than the other. If we want to eliminate bad qualities like hatred, envy, pride and ostentation, we have to employ Sathya, Dharma, Santhi, Prema and Ahimsa as the cleansing instruments. Together with worldly education, you have to cultivate the human values and undertake spiritual discipline. Oil imparts life to a lamp to keep it burning. Love animates the entire life. Love is like oil. But can you make a lamp burn by having a container, a wick and oil? You need some one to light the wick. Similarly, there must be some one to make a garland, even if you have flowers, thread and a needle. You cannot make a jewel out of gold and gems without a goldsmith. Likewise to teach the human values, which are like precious gems, you need competent and dedicated teachers who practise these values. For spreading EHV to all children, it is necessary to have contacts with educational authorities in Governments so that they may depute their teachers for training. But one thing must be clearly borne in mind. Whatever relations you may have with the authorities, your primary association with Sathya Sai should remain unaffected. It is to ensure that the contacts with the authorities are maintained on a proper recognised basis that the EHV Trust has been set up as a registered body.

Practice economy

Einstein was the greatest among the scientists of our day. He discovered the profound truth about the relationship between matter and energy. He showed that everything in the universe was made up of energy. Einstein did not have expensive equipment, like those you have in modern laboratories, to make his researches. All that he had was a pencil, paper and a waste paper basket. He lived up to the motto: Simple living and high study. Today what we see is ostentation and luxurious comfort in educational institutions; students want cushioned chairs; the staff want air conditioned rooms. Scientists want highly expensive equipment for their research. We should observe strict economy in Sai educational institutions. It is very difficult to raise money. Hence care should be taken to avoid unnecessary and superfluous expenditure on equipment or other things which may serve only to lighten the labours of the teaching faculty. Excessive use of computers and calculators is fraught with dangers. They make the students abjectly dependent on the machine, without

relying on their abilities. It must be realised that the human brain is the foremost computer. We must train our children to make proper and good use of their brains. It is not enough to acquire expensive, sophisticated equipment for education. We must know how to make full and effective use of them. Only then will the money spent on them be rewarding and justified.

In cultivating human values, emphasis should also be placed on avoiding wastage of money, food and time. Even teachers have to be trained in this respect.

Truth is primary among human values

In matters concerning expenditure, my attitude is strict. For anything that is legitimate and essential I am prepared to offer even lakhs of rupees. But I will grudge giving even a paise for something unnecessary and useless. This is because money breeds all the evils in the world. Everywhere extravagant and wasteful use of money is taking place. I do not want such a thing to happen in Sathya Sai institutions, which should serve as a model to others. I wish to ensure that in every type of activity those connected with Sai institutions should behave in an exemplary manner. I am always happy. But what hurts me is when any one utters a lie. If some mistake has been committed, admit it. To cover it by one lie, many other lies have to be invented.

In my view, among the human values, Truth is primary. There is no greater Dharma than Truth. Once you indulge in untruth, everything, you do gets tainted by the falsehood. Hence Truth is the life-breath of man. When truth goes, life goes.

The duty of teachers

Holding fast to Truth, you must make Righteousness, Peace, Love and Non-Violence, the guideposts for your life. As teachers you should try to impart the finest education to the children at minimum cost and make them lead pure and noble lives. You should also not be bound by considerations of hours of work. When necessary, you should be prepared to stay on for hours to

remove the doubts of students and help them to complete their assignments. This is your duty. You should not limit yourself to imparting the five human values alone. You must also create the environment which will be conducive to the practice of the basic values. When you have dedication and devotion, you will be able to face all the challenges in the discharge of your duties.

If teachers play their role properly, the nation can be transformed. For all the malpractices among students the parents and teachers are to blame. The parents are allowing the children to go astray at home through misplaced affection. In olden days, the children had such great regard and love for the parents that they were loth to go away from them. Today it is the reverse. The reason is the failure of the parents to enforce discipline together with lavishing love on the children. Teachers should establish contacts with parents so that the latter also practise the human values and reform their children. The authorities of the EHV Trust should arrange for meetings between teachers and parents for this purpose. All the three elements - the EHV Trust, the teachers and parents should work in cooperation in the interests of the children and see that human values are promoted not only among students but in the entire community.

The real criterion of moral conduct is harmony between one's profession and one's practice. Morality consists in acting up to the rules of right conduct prescribed by society at a particular time and place for an individual or group. If there is no connection between what one professes in words and his actions, morality cannot exist.

- Sathya Sai Baba

6. The ways of the Divine

Date: 04 April 1986 / Location: Brindavan / Occasion: An informal talk to Devotees in Trayee Brindavan

THE ways of the Lord in granting relief to devotees in distress or trouble are infinitely varied and often baffling. On one occasion, the Pandavas during their exile from the kingdom, had strayed into the forest of Romarishi. Romarishi was a sage whose body was covered with hair so long, that it spread as a carpet into the surrounding forest. There was a holy tree in that forest, yielding a very special fruit. The unique quality of that fruit was that once it was tasted one would not have hunger for years and years. But that fruit should not be plucked; it should be eaten after it dropped by itself. So, waiting for the fruit to fall, Romarishi was doing Tapas there. One day, when Dharmaraja and Draupadi were on a stroll in the woods, Draupadi happened to look at this particular tree and saw the luscious big fruit hanging from it. "Can we not take this," she said to her husband, "so that all of us could share it today?" Then Dharmaraja shot an arrow and the fruit fell to the ground. Holding his bow in his right hand, he went to lift the fruit with his left hand. It was so heavy he could not move it. Draupadi also tried to help. Dharmaraja used both his hands, still the fruit would not move. In the meantime, Arjuna also came there and all three - - Arjuna, Dharmaraja and Draupadi - tried to lift that fruit, but it would not move. The two younger brothers also came and tried to help lift the fruit but however hard they tried it was no use; it would not move. Finally came the strong man, Bhima. He asked the others to move away and said, "I will lift this." But even Bhima could not succeed. Meanwhile the hair of Romarishi, which had spread over all that area, began to stir. Because these six people were trampling about trying to lift the fruit, Romarishi felt the disturbance as strands of his hair were being trodden and pulled. He realised that there was someone trying to steal the fruit and he became very angry. Immediately his long hairs started to come together and coil round the Pandavas and tie them up. Draupadi realized the danger, and immediately prayed to Lord Krishna. 'Draupadi called on Lord Krishna whenever she sensed any trouble. Krishna appeared before her. Draupadi fell at His Feet and prayed to Him for help to protect the Pandavas from the

danger that was about to engulf them. Krishna told Draupadi that there was nothing He could do, since Romarishi was a great sage. As Lord, He resided in the hearts of all rishis, including Romarishi; so how could He do anything against the wishes of that Rishi? But Draupadi held on to His Feet and said, "You alone can save us. You can do anything you wish to do, in all the three worlds!" Then Krishna said, "All right, I will help you, but all of you should be totally silent, not say a word; you should do exactly as I tell you. Do not have any doubt or hesitation, but do exactly as I direct." Draupadi promised that they would obey Krishna's orders. Krishna went to each of the Pandavas and whispered His plan, in their ears. He told them: "I will now go to Romarishi's ashram; a little later, you must follow me there." In the meantime, Romarishi was furious with anger. He was about to curse the poachers. At that very moment, Krishna entered the Ashram. Romarishi fell prostrate at Krishna's Feet. He was overjoyed to see Him and asked Him, "What is it I can do for you, Lord?" Krishna kept Romarishi occupied, making a few casual inquiries, till the Pandavas arrived. As soon as the six reached the Ashram and entered it, Krishna fell at the feet of the Pandavas. The Pandavas were feeling very embarrassed, but remembering Krishna's command, they said nothing. Romarishi, seeing Krishna fall at the feet of the visitors, also fell at their feet. Then Krishna introduced the Pandavas to the Rishi. As Romarishi listened to the words of Krishna praising the greatness of the Pandavas, he totally forgot his anger. When Krishna explained that these were the people who were tempted by the fruit he awaited, Romarishi was so transformed that he said, "Let them take the fruit. I would like them to have it." By eating that fruit the Pandavas were able to live without hunger for a long time.

Soon after the Battle of Kurukshetra Krishna used the good offices of the Sage Durvasa to keep in hiding the Pandava brothers, whom Aswathama had vowed to exterminate, before the dawn of another day. Krishna approached the Sage, who was reputed for his quick temper as well as his adherence to truth, and told him about the peril confronting the Pandavas and requested him to keep them hidden in a cellar under his seat. The Sage told Krishna that he would not be able to utter a falsehood if Aswathama came to him enquiring about the whereabouts of the Pandavas. Krishna suggested that the Sage could tell the truth in a tone which would deter Aswathama from

questioning the Sage further.

The strategy was eminently successful. When Aswathama, after a futile search for the Pandavas, came to Sage Durvasa and requested him to reveal to him their whereabouts, the Sage ejaculated gruffly: "The Pandavas? They are beneath me!" The roar rattled Aswathama so much that he did not dare to pursue the matter further, lest the Sage lose his temper and curse him. And the Pandavas 'beneath him' were saved!

7. Strive for World Peace and Prosperity

Date: 10 April 1986 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam / Occasion: Ugadi

THE dualistic attitude of man was born out of a sense of separateness which was not correct. Man should realise his inherent divinity and get rid of identification of his real Self with the body. The body is only an instrument for realising the Self. No great scholarship is needed for achieving this realisation. The attitude of surrender to the Divine and dedicating all thoughts, words and actions as an offering to the Divine will lead to Self realisation. The bliss one will experience in that state is beyond description in words. Today marks the beginning of the year Akshaya (according to the Hindu Almanac). Akshaya is a combination of "Kshaya" and "A." "A" represents the Atmaswarupa - the Absolute, the Eternal. "Kshaya" represents the Jivaswarupa - the individual entity that is liable to change. Akshaya indicates the union of the unchanging Eternal Spirit and the impermanent individual entity. Because of the association of the human entity with the indestructible and eternal principle, you have to investigate what is permanent and unchanging and what is transient and liable to decay. The march of time is inevitably associated with ups and downs, joys and sorrows, gains and losses. This is inherent in the nature of the world, which is called Jagat - That in which birth and death take place. ("Ja" means birth and "ga" means passing).

Very few practise what they preach

According to Indian astrology, today marks the beginning of a new year, with the first day of the first month Chaitra. It is a Thursday. For every year, there is a ruling deity and there is a minister to the ruler from among the nine planets. For this Akshaya, the ruler is Brihaspati (Jupiter) and the minister is Chandra (the Moon). Both these planets are favourably placed and will have beneficent influences on the world, according to astrology. Because of the moon's favourable aspect - the moon being the presiding deity for the mind - the mental dispositions of people in general are likely to be calm and peaceful. It is essential, in this connection, to recognise the intimate link

between thoughts and actions. All the world's troubles today are due to the fact that there is no harmony between men's thoughts and words and their deeds. There is no dearth today of persons who preach Dharma (righteousness). There is no limit to propagandists, but those who practise what they preach are few and far between. The world needs today more people who will practise the good life and strive for the welfare of mankind. Rather than preach a hundred precepts, it is better to practise a few of them.

Significance of rituals

In many of the religious practices today, there is concern only for observing the external forms, with little regard for the inner significance of these rites. For instance, one wishes to offer a coconut to the idol in a temple. No care is taken to see whether the coconut is a good one or not. The mere breaking of a coconut, even if it is a rotten one, is considered enough for fulfilling the offering. Note the inner significance of the ritual. The coconut is a symbol of the heart. Before it is offered to God, all the outer fibre has to be removed. This means, spiritually, removing the Tamasic (evil) tendencies from our heart. The shell of the coconut symbolises the Rajo guna in us. The white kernel inside the coconut represents the Satwa guna. What we have to offer to God is a pure heart, without the Tamasic and Rajasic qualities such as anger, hatred and attachment. It is this purity of heart that must be manifested in making any offering to God and not the mechanical breaking of a coconut as a meaningless ritual. Some persons imagine that they will derive spiritual benefit merely by going to a sacred shrine and spending sometime there. When you are in a temple, your thoughts should be centered on God. When you are inside a temple, you must install God within you. That is true worship. If you merely sit in a temple, while your mind is wandering in the bazar, there is no merit in it. There are persons who recite mantras regularly, repeating the words correctly. But such recitation is of no use if there is not some understanding of the meaning of the mantras. Meaningless chanting of mantras, visiting temples without thoughts of God and breaking coconuts before idols without purity of the heart are spiritually useless. In every small act of worship, one must have regard for its inner significance and sacredness and do it with earnestness and purity.

Do not allow faith in God to weaken

Whatever troubles you may face, whatever ordeals you may encounter, you should not allow your faith in God to weaken to the slightest extent. You must learn a lesson from the Chakora bird. There may be terrible thunder and blinding lightning in the sky. But the Chakora bird will follow the cloud to catch the raindrops in the sky and will not go to any other source for water. Nothing less than the pure raindrops from the cloud will satisfy the Chakora. Likewise, you should yearn always for the bliss of nearness to God, whatever difficulties or joys you may experience in life.

Moreover, in the quest for mental peace, you should not be concerned only about your individual need. Apart from such a quest being an index of intense selfishness, it is also a futile one. Is it possible for a single individual alone to achieve peace? If there is chaos and unrest all around you, how can you alone have peace? If there is no peace in the home or in the community, how can you have peace? Your peace is dependent on peace in the family, in society and in the world. When there is peace in these, you will get peace. You cannot be indifferent to the state of the environment in which you live. One who wishes to dig a well for pure water will choose a spot far from polluted or saline areas. If you want to achieve peace, you have to see that the atmosphere around you is conducive to peace. This means that you have to cultivate the feeling that your individual peace is intimately related to the peace of the world. It was out of a realisation of this profound truth that the ancients prescribed the universal prayer: "Lokas-Samasthas-Sukhino Bhavanthu" (May all the people in all the worlds be happy).

Faith and love are necessary for godly life

It is only when we strive for world peace can we ensure our own individual peace. The mark of a genuinely godly person is that he strives not only for his peace, happiness and bliss, but also for the peace, prosperity and happiness of the world as a whole. Faith and Love are the two primary requisites for leading a godly life. These two are as important for man as the two wings for

a bird or the two wheels for a chariot. You must take a pledge on this Yugadi day to face with equanimity all the vicissitudes of life, the joys and sorrows that are incidental to human existence. Traditionally, on Yugadi day people consume a preparation made up of ingredients with various tastes - sweet, sour, bitter, etc. The inner meaning of this 'practise is that one must be prepared for every kind of experience in life. Whether happiness or sorrow, praise or blame, gain or loss - whatever comes along - you must resolve to face it with serenity and faith. Our ancients placed this ideal before the nation out of their experience and realisation. Today no heed is being given to their teachings. The traditions and teachings that have come down to us are full of significance and have perennial validity. It is only when we practise these truths that we will realise their inner purpose and enduring value.

Good prospects for Akshaya

The Akshaya year will be altogether a fairly good year with no serious untoward developments. However, the first two months - from mid-April to mid-June - are likely to witness some serious troubles. The heat will be excessive and some fire disasters may occur in May-June (Vaisakha month). Serious accidents during travel are likely. From the third month onwards (that is, after mid-June) conditions will be favourable for peace and prosperity. Astrologically, important changes all over the world are expected during the year. But all these will be for the good. Not India alone, but all countries will benefit from these changes. In this context, it is the foremost duty of everyone to pray for the peace, welfare and happiness of all people in every country. Everyone should take note that during this year, however soft and careful one may be in speech or action, there is likelihood of differences and divisions developing between persons and groups. Even friends are likely to fall out. Every care has to be taken to observe restraint in speech. Compared to the past two years - Rakthakshi and Krodhana - the new year Akshaya promises to be a good year. Some hangover from Krodhana may continue M Akshaya for a short spell. Hence in the first two months people have to conduct themselves with caution. After that, Akshaya will be Akshaya. (The year Akshaya will see no deterioration or decline.)

Promote the welfare of the world as a whole

Promote the welfare of the world as a whole Strengthen the "Akshaya " in you - the imperishable Supreme - and there will be no need to worry about any year or month. Fill your mind and heart with the spirit of Akshaya and sanctify your lives by having pure thoughts and doing pure actions. This is my benediction for you all on this sacred Yugadi day. Everyone must strive to promote the peace and welfare of the world. You must broaden your outlook, shedding the narrow concern about your own well-being, and developing the eagerness to promote the welfare of the world as a whole. You must recognise the basic truth that your individual well-being is bound up with the well-being of all people. On every available occasion recite the sacred name of the Lord.

8. The Rama story is ours

Date: 18 April 1986 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam / Occasion: Rama Navami

THE five basic elements that compose the Universe are cognised by the sense organs in man as sound, touch, form, taste and smell. The response of the person to these impacts can be either pleasure or pain, beneficent or maleficent, for it depends on how and in what spirit they are welcomed and accepted.

Man has three vital tools which can handle these impacts - body, speech and mind - capable of deed, word and thought. The body is essential for every act and achievement. "Man is human because of the body, it is the first requisite for moral living." Man has been blessed with the body in order that he may realise the purpose of life - revering elders, serving parents, and loving God. The body has to be sanctified by the study of scriptural texts and the lives of holy personages; further it is rendered pure and sacred by engaging in the promotion of the happiness of others and earning affection and appreciation of all. The second tool is speech. This tool has to be sanctified by adhering to truth and love and avoidance of violence. Speech has to be free from harshness and frenzy. It must be soft, soaked in love and pleasing. The words must be so sweet, that the listener desires to hear them more often. He should love to bring them back to memory, in order to relive the joyous moments.

Man has ten indriyas to pester him

The third tool is the mind. It requires persistent effort to sanctify the mind. It is named manah since it is ever busy with manana (recapitulation) of the past, confronting the present and planning for the future. It alternates between likes and dislikes, yes and no. It is carried away by fits of passion or panic. So, it has to be curbed and cured by patient persuasion. Above all, one must prevent it from catering to the greedy senses and thereby losing both health and happiness. The mind is described as the 'husband' (pathi) of the senses (Indriya). Dasaratha allowed one of his three wives to lead him so far

astray that he forfeited his own life. Utthanapada had two wives, their conflict to establish mastery over him cost him his own son, Dhruva, who left him, and later, his life. Man has ten indriyas to pester him. If his mind yields to their demands, woe be to him!

Tongue demands, "Bring me tasty delicacies or else, I won't speak to you." Ear demands, "Bring me pleasant music and tell me delightful counsel or else I will stay deaf." So Eye is adamant. She shouts, "Take me to some attractive Exhibition. Show me fine films, Video tapes or T.V. programmes; or else, I will no longer stay in this home!" The poor mind is tormented thus by every sense organ. So the mind gets feeble, faint and stunted.

When controlled, mind becomes a sacred tool

Therefore, the mind must be saved from being enslaved by the senses. The master should never allow himself to be the servant of his servants. The mind has been provided with a master, whom it is neglecting and ignoring, through its degrading subservience to the senses. That master is Buddhi (intelligence), the faculty of discrimination. When controlled and directed by this faculty, the mind becomes a sacred tool. This day, the birth of Sri Rama is celebrated in all lands. Rama had deed, word and thought, body, speech and mind, ever pure and totally free from blemish. Really speaking, one ought to revere the story of Rama as a profound allegory. Every act and actor in that story attracts attention and gets imprinted on the memory because the allegory is personal to each of us. For example, consider Dasaratha, the Ten Chariot King? He represents the human body with the five senses of perception and the five sense-organs of action. He has three wives - the three Gunas or dispositions, Satwa, Rajas and Tamas - named Kausalya, Sumitra and Kaikeyi. He has four sons, who embody in themselves the four goals of human life, Dharma, Artha, Kama and Moksha. Rama is the very embodiment of Dharma (Morality, Virtue, Right conduct). The other three goals can be achieved only by steady adherence to Dharma. We find, therefore, the brothers Lakshmana, Bharatha and Satrughna following the footsteps of Rama. Rama had mustered so much spiritual strength through his consistent observance of Dharma, that he could wield and bend the mighty bow named

Sivadhanus. That was the proof of the Jivi (the individual) having overcome delusion. Janaka, the Ruler of Videha, had the bow in his custody. He was on the look out for a hero who had mastered the fatal flaw.

Supreme Wisdom cannot co-exist with duality

The story relates that Janaka, the Videhi, (ruler of Videha, that is to say, 'without body' or 'bodyconsciousness') offered his daughter (the awareness of Brahman) to Rama. Wedding Sita is another way of saying 'acquiring Supreme Wisdom', for, from where was Sita gained? The story says, 'from a furrow on the Earth', that is to say, from Prakriti (Nature). This statement reveals that Brahma Jnana can be won by meaningful involvement with Prakriti. The next stage in the career of Rama finds him, in the thick jungle of life. The jungle was infested with attractions and aversions. The Supreme Wisdom cannot co-exist with duality. It insists on the renunciation of both aspects. Rama pursued the golden deer, which Sita longed to possess. Brahma Jnanam disappeared as a consequence of this lapse. Rama (the representative jivi) had to undergo many spiritual austerities to regain the Supreme Enlightenment. He reached, according to the story, the Rsyamuka peak, the abode of total detachment. There he secured two allies, Sugriva (Discrimination) and Hanuman (Courage). The alliance was sealed by an act of service from Rama, which indicated his loyalty to Dharma under all conditions. He slew Vali, the vicious victim of wickedness. Vali had dethroned his father, forced him to take refuge in the jungles, associated with Ravana, of evil fame, and ill-treated his brother Sugriva for no reason at all. Vali succumbed so low, because of the company he preferred to be in. He serves as a warning to everyone. Einstein said, "Tell me your company; I can tell you what you are."

Ramayana in real life of every aspirant

Rama installed Viveka on the throne of Vali. With his allies, he entered on the quest for the Wisdom that he had lost. He found across his path a wide ocean of Moha (delusion). His ally, Hanuman (Courage) had a vision, unclouded by desire or ignorance. His only desire was fixed on the Name of Rama and the

Form of Rama. So he was able to leap across the ocean, smooth and safe.

Rama reached the other shore. He slew Ravana (the embodiment of the Rajasic, passionate, impulsive, possessive traits) and his brother, Kumbhakarna (the embodiment of the Tamasic, the dull, the self-destructive, the lethargic, traits). Rama recovered Sita (Brahma Jnana) now confirmed by striving and struggling, and more convincingly precious as a result of constant meditation. And, Rama returned with Her to Ayodhya (the impregnable city, the Source and Spring of Wisdom).

The consummation of the soul's journey is the Coronation, the Maha Pattabhishekam. This is the Ramayana which needs to be gone through, during the life of every aspirant. The heart is the Ayodhya. Dasaratha is the body, the Gunas are the consorts, the Purusharthas are the sons, Sita is Wisdom. Attempt and attain this Realisation by purifying the three tools - body, speech and mind.

Hanuman's greatness

Hanuman is the brightest example of such a realised soul. When he first presented himself before Rama and offered his services, Rama turned to Lakshmana and said, "Brother! Listen! Notice how Hanuman has mastered the Vedas. His speech is saturated with the humility and dedication which the Rig' Veda embodies, the retentiveness and reverence that the Yajur Veda promotes and the intuitive vision that the Sama Veda grants. Hanuman knows all the scriptural texts. He is a genuine devotee. Sugriva is fortunate to have him as his minister, Hanuman, whose thoughts, words and deeds are offered to God." When these three are in perfect harmony, the person wins the Grace of God, as Hanuman succeeded in securing. Sugriva fumbled in this Sadhana. He failed to keep his word. He had not commandeered his forces, though the rainy season had ended. So, Lakshmana vented his anger at his ingratitude and inequity. "You can never cleanse yourselves of the sin of ungratefulness and breach of promise. Your conduct is so reprehensible that even vultures will desist from feeding on your corpse." When the terrified culprit fell at the feet of Rama, seeking pardon, Rama said, "Lakshmana! Safe and happy on

his throne, Sugriva is blinded by pride, power and ignorance. Misery alone can open the eyes of people to the values they have neglected. He has been holding on to the trivial and the temporary which intoxicate man with fleeting joys. How can such a person follow the path of Dharma?" Hanuman, who heard this compassionate reaction, returned with Sugriva and advised him to repent and reaffirm, his rectitude and thankfulness. One has to recognise one's faults and remedy their consequences by sincere self-examination and repentance. It is often said that Rama followed Dharma at all times. This is not the correct way of describing him. He did not follow Dharma; he was Dharma. What he thought, spoke and did was Dharma, is Dharma for ever.

Purify speech by adhering to truth

The recitation of Ramayan verses or listening to the exposition of those verses must transform the person into an embodiment of Dharma. His every word, thought and deed must exemplify that ideal. Sraddha (steady faith) in Rama, Ramayana and oneself is essential for success. And for what end? To become good and help others to unfold their goodness. To be totally human with every human value expanded to the utmost and promote those traits in society to help others too.

Purify the body by means of holy activity. Purify speech by adhering to truth, love and sympathy. Purify the mind, not yielding to the clamour of the senses and the desires they breed. But, the tragic truth is that learned people do not accept any moral responsibility now. The world is therefore enveloped in fear, for people whose thoughts, words and deeds are vitiated by inhuman and nonhuman motives have gained control over science and technology. The senses supply material to the mind. The mind is a by-product of the ego. The ego is a reflection of the Atma. The Atma is wave of the Paramatma, the Universal Consciousness. Everyone must trace the ego to its spiritual origins and direct his life on the lines of that heritage.

It is not realised that all the pleasures and comforts enjoyed by one are really delved from society and are not solely got from one's own means. Man does not show any gratitude to the society which has enabled him to enjoy his

wealth, position and power. A man lacking gratitude is worse than an animal. He forfeits the grace of God.

- *Sathya Sai Baba*

9. Purity and Unity

Date: **22 May 1986** / Location: **Vagata Village** / Occasion: **Discourse at a large gathering at Vagata village, where Sai Sevaks had been running a relief kitchen for feeding the drought-stricken people of the region**

PURITY, Unity, Divinity - these should be the Watchwords of the millions in Indian villages; they alone can ensure material and spiritual well-being. Men should take great care to see that their senses did not go astray and commit offences. Thinking evil, speaking evil and seeing evil invariably led to total ruin. For example, in Mahabharata, Duryodhana always had evil thoughts about the Pandavas and ultimately he brought destruction upon his entire family. Keechaka cast an evil eye on Draupadi, when the Pandavas were living incognito in Virata King's palace, and he paid for it with his life. The Ramayana had the story of Kaikeyi, who listened to the evil counsel of Manthara, and so lost not only her husband but the regard and love of her son Bharata. No one today even likes to be known by these infamous characters - Duryodhana, Keechaka or Ravana. But though the names are not favoured, the bad qualities associated with them have not been given up by mankind.

Strive to give up evil thoughts, evil looks, vicious speech and the greed to give ear to evil counsel and slanderous gossip. People in the villages are more simple-minded and good natured than those in towns and cities. The atmosphere in the villages is less polluted. If villagers can cultivate purity in thought, word and deed, they can lead happy and contented lives. Learn to live in harmony and unity. The village is to the villagers what the body is to the individual. Every organ in the body functions in cooperation with every other part. If the foot steps on a thorn, the eye feels the pain and sheds tears. If the eye notices a thorn or stone on the road, it warns the foot to avoid it. Villagers should develop the same sense of unity and share their joys and troubles as one organic body. There is nothing you cannot achieve with unity as your strength.

With purity and unity, you can disclose your divinity and develop genuine devotion to God. In Vagata you have an ancient temple venerated for

centuries by your forefathers. You should conduct bhajans daily in the morning and evening and earn the Lord's grace. You should fill your hearts with love and make your lives holy and purposeful. When everyone works in this spirit of unity and charity, this village would become a model for all the rest.

10. Message of the Vedas

Date: **May 1986** / Location: **Brindavan** / Occasion: **Trayee Brindavan Anniversary**

The essence of all the Vedas and Sastras Can be summed up in one sentence: The Atma that resides in all beings And in you is one only. Seeking liberation, man adores Crores of deities in the three worlds. Of what avail is it? The bondage remains. If he can shed the ego in him, He needs no liberation. Liberation is his. THE Vedas, which are limitless and which were revealed as illuminations of the Eternal Truth to the Rishis, were codified and presented in three collections of hymns by the sage Vyasa for the benefit of humanity. They are: Rig, Yajur and Sama Veda. The Vedas together with the Brahmanas, the Aranyakas and the Upanishads - provide the guidelines for the proper conduct of the four Ashramas (stages) in life - Brahmacharya, Grihastha, Vanaprastha and Sanyasa. In addition, they serve also as essential guides in the pursuit of the four Purusharthas (the basic goals of human life) - Dharma, Artha, Kama and Moksha (Righteousness, Material well-being, Desire of realisation and Liberation). Bharatiya culture and tradition is based on the authority and message of the Vedas. Veda means that which demonstrates the Divine principle. The Veda permeates the universe. It is the embodiment of Truth.

It flows in eight streams: Sabdabrahmamayee (manifesting as all-pervading Cosmic sound); Characharamayee (pervading all moving and unmoving objects); jyotrimayee (all-pervading effulgence); Vangmayee (sacred speech); Nityanandamayee (eternal-bliss); Paratparamayee (embodiment of the Omniwill); Mayamayee (manifestation of Maya) and Srimayee (the embodiment of all prosperity).

The Purusharthas

In all these different ways, the Vedas, have served to promote the well-being of mankind. The Vedas, however, have been regarded as the lower knowledge - Apara Vidya - as distinguished from Para Vidya (Knowledge of the Absolute). Vedic ritualism was regarded as helpful for dealing with worldly

concerns, but not of much use with regard to the understanding of the transcendental. The Vedas were useful for achieving mundane and heavenly pleasures and overcoming pain and giving encouragement and support in the pursuit of such objectives. Their main concern was with the first three Purusharthas - Dharma, Artha and Kama. Moksha (spiritual liberation) could be attained only through jnana (as distinct from rituals and Yajnas performed with Vedic mantras). The higher wisdom can be won, not through rituals, wealth or progeny, but only through sacrifice or renunciation.

Opponents to be overcome in spiritual life

All the disciplines or practices (sadhana) practised now relate to worldly interests, motivated by selfish desires. The spiritual goal transcends these worldly objects. It is beyond reason and the bounds set by the sacred texts. It is the concept of Moksha. "Mohakshayam = Moksham" - the elimination of moha (delusion) is Moksha. The concept of Moksha is related to the concept of Parama Prema (Love for the Supreme). In the process of realising this state of Supreme Love, several opponents have to be overcome. Foremost among these are the six "enemies" - Kama (passion), Krodha (hatred), Lobha (greed), Moha (delusion), Mada (pride), Matsaryam (envy). If one manages to overcome these six enemies, he is confronted with eight forms of pride, which stand in the way of his spiritual progress. Among these are pride of wealth, of physical strength, youth, beauty, scholarship, power or penance. These different forms of pride lead man away from his real goal. Modern man is filled with one or other of these forms of pride. So, the first requisite for man is the shedding of pride. A man without riches poses as a millionaire. One without learning poses as a scholar. And a miserable weakling struts about like Kingkong (a champion wrestler). What is the basis for this pride? How long can it last? The wielder of power may lose it the next day. Puffed up with pride of wealth or position, men forget their inner divinity. They are relying on things which are essentially transient and impermanent. A bird swaying on the branch of a tree has no fear because it relies for its safety not on the branch but on its wings. Man, on the contrary, has no confidence in his own inner Self. He is dependent on others. He is ready to abuse himself for the sake of position or office. The basic reason for this lamentable predicament is

the ill-conceived craving for undesirable things.

Realise the joy in giving than possessing

Man's desires are limitless. Man is attached to things none of which will accompany him when he dies. He should realise that there is greater joy in giving, than in possession and accumulation. Renouncing is as essential as acquiring. If there is no exhalation of breath in the wake of inhalation, man will not be able to survive. It is the attachment to property or position born out of sense of possessiveness that is the cause of man's sorrow and unhappiness. Man must strive to get rid of this feeling of "I" and "mine" to experience enduring happiness. When everything appears to be going well, man forgets everything including himself. His ego gets inflated as a result of his achievements and acquisitions. He should realise that he is only a temporary beneficiary of what he possesses and has no permanent title to any of them. He should regard power or position as a moral assignment carrying the obligation to discharge the duties relating to it. It is only when all actions are done in this spirit of moral imperative that man can experience genuine happiness and satisfaction.

Birth and gunas

The Vedas have laid down the basic regulations for the proper conduct of man. But these regulations are honoured more in the breach than in the observance. The first duty is to enquire into one's divine substance. The Divine is omnipresent and all-pervasive. The cosmos is permeated by the five basic vital elements. In the air we breathe, the water we drink or on the ground we tread on, there are innumerable microbial organisms which are destroyed. In such a situation, absolute non-violence is impracticable. What we should try to do is to avoid causing any harm to any living being consciously and deliberately. This is Ahimsa. To observe this nonviolence you have to cultivate the feeling that the One Supreme dwells in all beings. With this conviction there will be no tendency to cause harm to anyone. Born as human beings, many tend to forget their true human qualities. It is not birth or form that determines the nature of a person, but his qualities. The lotus,

for instance, grows out of the slush, but finds its place on the head of the Lord in a temple. It has earned this honour because of its qualities. Likewise, we should develop our human qualities without regard to our birth or circumstance. The air we breathe or the water we drink knows no distinction of caste or community. The sky or fire has no such distinctions. Only the earth is marred by barriers and differences.

We may erect barriers around our little plot of land. But can these barriers be extended to the sky above? Or, to the air around? Why, then, cherish such narrow ideas which restrict our spiritual horizons? All the wealth we have, our positions, knowledge and power, are all transient and fleeting. Our life itself can end any moment. In this context it is utterly lamentable that we ruin our lives with likes and dislikes. The precious time that is given to us should not be wasted to the slightest extent.

Education and character

Youth to-day are leading undisciplined and meaningless lives. They are not adhering to any regulations and are lacking in reverence and gratitude. Even dogs have deep gratitude, but the young do not revere elders or evince gratitude towards their parents. Education is wasted on such a person. It may enable him to earn a living. But even street beggars without any education get money enough to live. Education is not necessary for mere livelihood. Even if you live for only three days, your life should be righteous and meaningful. Your conduct should be good and commendable. If a man does not behave righteously, his high position or rank has no meaning. If a man claims to be a great scholar but has few good qualities, what reputation can he have? Even an illiterate person, who has good qualities, can command respect. Degrees are turning the minds of persons towards wealth and office and not towards God. Character should be the primary purpose of education. An educated person should be respected for his conduct and qualities. Neethi (ethics) is of paramount importance for anyone who calls himself a human being. It comprehends many qualities. It implies regard for society, reverence for the human personality, love for one's country, care for one's physical well-being; love for one's kith and kin and yearning for knowledge. These should

be regarded as the five life-breaths for man. But these are hardly present today.

Foremost duty of a student

Love of one's country means being proud of the country's ancient culture and having the determination not to degrade it in any way. Love and gratitude to one's parents is the foremost duty of a student. For the misbehaviour of students today, parents are largely to blame. They do not exercise sufficient control over children. People celebrate the birth of children. But the real celebration should be only when children have earned a good name and brought credit to their parents. Parents who do not bring up their children properly are unworthy of the role. Affection for children should not mean allowing them to go astray. Such parents are like Dhritarashtra, who allowed his children to have their way and ultimately faced wholesale disaster. The Mahabharata says: "The unwise wail over the lack of children. But what happened to the Kaurava king who had a hundred children? What good did they do to him? The sage Suka had no children. Did he experience any untoward fate? He was always in supreme bliss." One's birth is the result of one's actions in previous lives. The divine gate-keepers of Lord Vishnu, Jaya and Vijaya, were born as demons on earth because of the curse of the sages Sanaka, Sanandana and others. They came under the curse because of the dominance of the Rajo and Thamo gunas in them which induced them to show disregard to the great sages. Despite the high position they enjoyed in the Divine Presence, they had not absorbed the moral values - -humility and duty. Hence, they were cursed by the sages and took birth as Rakshasas. Hiranyakasipu was the greatest among the Rakshasas. But his son, Prahlada, was the greatest devotee of God. How did this happen? It was because of the divine message which Prahlada imbibed from sage Narada. A Rakshasa's son became the greatest devotee of Vishnu. Those who had been nearest to Vishnu Jaya and Vijaya - -were born as Rakshasas! Their moral qualities account for the difference. Likewise, if one born as a human displays demonic qualities, he is not a man, but a demon. If one who is born among Rakshasas has divine virtues, he is divine in nature and not a Rakshasa. Hence, whether one is good or bad should be judged by his qualities and not by his family

affinities or form. Learn to lead a life of virtue for, without virtue, life has no meaning **at all**.

Lessons taught by the Vedas

Man has to be guided by the directives of the Vedas. Of the three Vedas Rig, Yajur and Sama the Rig Veda contains the essence of all the three. Its principal teaching is Vinaya and Vidheyata (humility and duty). The Yajur Veda enjoins the quality of Dharana (steadfastness). This means that whatever difficulties you may encounter, whatever hardship you experience, you should fulfill your duty with fortitude and forbearance. Through both these means you can develop your human qualities to the highest extent. The essential teaching of the Sama Veda is Vignatha (Propriety). This tells you how to conduct yourself with any person, how to behave towards elders and superiors, how to treat guests, how to approach God and what is the right behaviour in any situation. These three Vedas (Trayee) provide the basic rules for right living: Vidheyata (Devotion to duty); dharana (steadfastness) and Vignata (Propriety). The Love principle integrates all three guidelines laid down by the Vedas.

Sacred significance of number three

The sages compendiously described the Vedas as Trayee. Trayee means three. Three is a significant number with sacred associations. The human qualities are three in number: Satwa, Rajas and Thamas. Man's body is subject to ills from three sources: the head, the stomach and the feet. Three has a sacred significance in worship. In offering bilva leaves to Lord Siva the devotees describe Siva as having three qualities, three weapons and three eyes. Time also has three aspects - past, present and future. The chaos in the world today is due to people ignoring the present and either brooding over the past which is beyond recall, or speculating about the future, which is unpredictable. What people should be concerned about are their obligations in the present. Their foremost duty is to try to discover their inherent divinity and transform their lives, recognising that the Divine pervades everything in Creation. The present is the product of the past and the future is the result of

the present. Both the past and the future are contained in the present. Hence live in the present with good thoughts and good actions. Rid your heart of all bad feelings and make it pure and holy. You may be confronted with many problems. Do not allow them to occupy your mind all the time. Have a timetable for all your daily activities. Set apart half an hour or an hour in the evening for thinking over your problems. You will be able to find solutions for them. If you worry about them all the time you will be wasting your time and not solving them.

Develop powers of discrimination

Once an opium addict came to me and expressed his immobility to get rid of the habit in spite of many efforts. Swami suggested to him to have a chalk of the size of the opium he used to take and each day write "Om" three times on a slate and take opium equal to the size of the chalk. As the chalk got reduced by writing, the quantity of opium consumed also got reduced from day to day and by the end of the month the chalk and the consumption of opium, got reduced to nothing. It is by such regular practice that one has to overcome bad habits. Students should develop their powers of discrimination, to know what is right and what is wrong, what should be done and what should be avoided. They study a variety of subjects like Physics, Chemistry, etc., but there is one knowledge by knowing which they can know every thing else. This is knowledge of the Spirit. Spiritual knowledge is like bathing in the ocean, which is equivalent to bathing in all the different sacred rivers. Faith in self and Faith in God is the secret of greatness. One who has no faith in himself cannot develop faith in God. Sankaracharya once told a disciple who came to him and said: "Jagat Mithya" (the world is unreal) that "if the world is unreal, you try to find out the truth about yourself, you will know the truth about everything." Sankaracharya told him: "You are not unreal. You are Bliss. You, however, think you are this body and this fickle mind. They are mutable and changing. Seek the consciousness that is unchanging and eternal. If you identify yourself with the body, you will fail to know the Reality. Learn to discriminate between what is permanent and what is transient. Use your Buddhi (intellect) and not give way to the caprices of the mind." You are now in Trayee Brindavan. The three Vedas are in the Brindavan. Your heart is a

Brindavan. It has three gunas (Satwa, Rajas and Thamas). To experience the Lord in the Brindavan of the heart is Ananda (Bliss). The three gunas have to be harmonised like the blades of the fan. When they revolve harmoniously, after you have turned on the switch of Discrimination and the current of sacred Love flows through the fan, you will experience the cool breeze of Bliss.

11. Spiritual Pancha Sheela

Date: 03 June 1986 / Location: Brindavan / Occasion: Discourse to a gathering of students and older devotees

FIVE principles have to be observed for realising the divinity in man. They are: Ahimsa (Noninjury), Sathya (Truth), Soucham (Purity), Daya (Compassion) and Asthikyam (Faith in God).

Non-harming (Ahimsa):

It is a supreme virtue. But, in daily life, almost at every step some harm or other is being caused. When we breathe in or breathe out, countless microbes perish. There are occasions when wittingly or otherwise, injury is caused to some being or other. Complete nonviolence is not a practicable ideal. What should be ensured is that there is no deliberate causing of injury or harm to anyone.

Truth (Sathyam):

Truth is Divine. Where there is Truth there is Divinity. When Dushyanta forgot that he had given a ring to Sakuntala when he met her near the sage Kanva's ashram, Sakuntala declared in the open court of the king that Truth was the supreme Dharma and a king should uphold truth at any cost. She pointed out that in the order of merit, starting from digging wells to performing horse-sacrifices, the horse-sacrifice ranked higher than having a hundred virtuous sons. But greater than a hundred horse-sacrifices (Aswamedha Yajna) was honouring one's plighted word. While the king was ruminating over this exhortation to uphold truth, some fishermen brought to the king a ring which they had found in a fish caught by them. The king then remembered the incidents that happened when he had gone for hunting near sage Kanva's ashram, his encounter with Sakuntala and the ring he had exchanged with her. He accepted Sakuntala as his queen and the child born to them was Bharata, after whom this country has been named.

Purity (Soucham):

Importance of physical and mental purity

Both internal and external purity are essential. We should try to ensure cleanliness of the body and purity of the mind. Our ancients used clay for cleaning the body. In naturopathy mud bath is used for the treatment of many physical ailments. The body is made of clay. But it is also the abode of the Divine. The importance of physical cleanliness could be illustrated from a story in the Mahabharata. Once, the disciple of a Guru, after completing his studies, requested the Guru to state what he would like to receive as Guru-dakshina (offering) from the disciple. The Guru asked the disciple to offer the earrings worn by a certain queen. The disciple ascertained who the queen was and went to the king to inform him of the mission on which he had come. The king permitted him to visit the queen's apartments to make his request. But he could not see the queen anywhere and reported his failure to the king. The king then told him that no person who was physically and mentally impure could see the queen. The disciple then went through a process of purification and was able to see the queen. **Another example of the serious consequences resulting from personal impurity was the case of King Nala, who had to face many ordeals because of a single lapse on his part. He lost his kingdom, became deformed after a snake-bite in the forest, separated from his wife and had to serve as a charioteer. It was only after he had purified himself by strenuous performance of Gayathri japa that he could get back his kingdom, his original form, reunion with his queen and his prosperity. (Incidentally Swami spoke about the unique efficacy of the Gayathri manthra).**

Compassion (daya):

Spirit in which service should be rendered

Daya is not mere display of kindness or sympathy to someone in distress. It calls for complete identification with the suffering experienced by another and

relieving that suffering as a means of relieving the agony experienced by himself. By way of illustration, let me relate the story of a calf which was caught up in a slushy pond while trying to reach a small pool of water. A crowd of urchins were watching with glee the plight of the calf which was unable to move forward because of the slush. An ascetic who was passing by saw the plight of the calf and taking it out of the mud, carried it on his back to the pool of water. The urchins asked him why he had done this, while they were watching to see how the calf was going to get near the water. The sanyasi told them that the sight of the struggling calf caused him great anguish and to relieve himself of his agony, he had gone to the relief of the calf. When any service or help is rendered to anyone, this is the spirit in which it should be done. You must feel you are helping yourself when you are helping another.

Faith in God (Asthikyam):

All troubles should be treated as tests

Faith in God implies recognition of the omnipresence, of the Divine in the universe and seeking to experience that divinity within one's self. The Divine is One, though it may be called by many names. It must be realised that God is all-pervasive and nothing exists without the power of the Divine. One should not allow one's faith in God to be affected by the ups and downs of life. All troubles should be treated as tests and challenges to be faced with courage and faith.

You should learn from the example of Ranthi Deva, who retained his faith in God and exhibited his compassion for the suffering despite the extreme privation to which he was reduced by the vicissitudes of life. To feed a hungry man, he and his family gave up the meagre food they had gathered and denied themselves even water, to relieve the thirst of a man crying for water. The Divine had subjected him to these ordeals and later blessed him with grace. Prahlada was unaffected by all tortures to which he was subjected because he saw in everybody and everything in the form of Vishnu. He exemplifies the strength derived from the love of God to the exclusion of

everything. Worldly love is blind and fickle. Divine love is all-embracing and defies description. When the heart is freed of all impurities, it can experience the Divine. It will revel in the bliss of that experience and will not seek any other trivial pleasure. When one is immersed in the nectar of divine love, he experiences ineffable bliss. Such a person experiences Sakshatkaram (direct experience) of the Divine.

The worldly kind of friendship is mostly selfish where each person has primarily his or her own self-interest at heart. Only God is totally devoid of selfishness and self-interest. God can be called the selfless Self. In the various worldly relationships there may be love present but it is not real love because it is tinged with selfishness.

- Sathya Sai Baba

12. Discover your Divine essence

Date: 03 July 1986 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam

SELF REALISATION, the understanding of one's basic Reality, should be the fundamental purpose of education and not the mere acquisition of information about the external world. Creation is a marvel. It has to be seen and experienced with wonder and awe and not dissected, disfigured or analysed or explained. The Cosmos is the glorious work of art projected by the Supreme Artist, without a wall or canvas to draw upon, without brushes or colours to paint with. Imagination boggles, beholding this cosmic scene. It defies description. It exhibits what is not real and conceals what is. Confronted with a Universe, so difficult to decide whether true or false, some have concluded it is real, some have declared it unreal and some have described it as a mixture of the real and the illusory. The problem has been the subject of endless debate and controversy. Right education should aim at discovering the basic truth, which will lay at rest this uncertainty.

The world is experienced by the "I". As long as the "I" dominates the mind, the world is cognised as real. And so long as the "I" is involved with the world, sorrow cannot be eliminated. In the state of deep sleep, there is no consciousness of the "I" and so there is no consciousness of the world too. When the world is absent, sorrow disappears. Man seeks to banish sorrow and acquire Ananda (happiness). What is happiness? Do wealth, power or health confer happiness? The world has numerous wealthy men, but are they experiencing happiness? There are many wielding power or having good health, but are they happy? No. The reason is there can be no real happiness as long as one is infected with the ever-greedy ego.

Ego and Universe

Like animals which run towards a mirage in the vain hope of quenching their thirst, man goes after sensual objects hoping to derive happiness from them. In the end he meets with disappointment and frustration and quits his life without realising his true destiny. Only when the feeling of "I" drops from him

can man realise his Brahmic reality and attain Ananda. The Vedanta declares: "Brahman is Sathya (Truth); the Cosmos is Mithya (illusory)." Whether the Universe is real or illusory, or whether it is real-unreal need not be your concern. For, the cosmos itself will reveal to you its permanent-cum-transient character. Your primary concern must be to understand whether you are real or unreal or what in you is real and what is unreal. It is only when you have recognised the truth of your own being, that you can recognise the world as illusory and your own reality. The realised person asserts: "I am Brahman." Wherefrom has this statement emanated? What does it mean? It is a spontaneous expression and not the result of thought or feeling. But when one states, "I am a man", the attribute "man" expresses a thought accepted and a feeling welcomed. "I" is inherent (sahajam); "man" is an intention (Bhavamu). The "I" is boundless Infinite. When the finite concept "man" merges in the Infinite "I" the "I" alone remains.

Aham and Atma

When a river reaches the ocean, there is only the ocean; the river ceases to exist. Before it joins the ocean, the river is bound by its banks and it has a distinct form. But when it merges in the ocean, it loses its separateness, its form and name and taste. It becomes the ocean. Likewise, when "man" merges in the Infinite "I" only the Infinite "I" remains and the limited human entity disappears.

What is the source of the term "I"? In Sanskrit, "I" is referred to as "Aham". The word Aham has its roots in the word, Atma. Aham arises from the idea of "I". The mind also is a projection of the idea of "I". The mind and the ego are thus related to the Atma as its manifestations. The Atma is the grandfather, Aham is the son and the Mind is the grandson. The ego has emanated from the pure, unchanging, selfless Atma but the ego has birth and growth; it comes and goes. The Atma has no birth, growth, decay or death. It is changeless, immutable and eternal. From the One unchanging Infinite Atma, the finite and changing ego and the mind, with its diverse feelings and ideas, have emanated. The multiplicity of names and forms can be understood in their true nature only if the truth about their fundamental basis is recognised.

Hence, everyone should seek to know the basis of what he terms as "I." Instead, when one is engaged in exploring the physical universe - prakriti (Nature), he is pursuing only a chimera.

Education has to develop power of concentration

Chaitanyam (Consciousness) is all-pervasive in the cosmos and in the individual mind. But, in the mind it is limited. It is most active, potent and prominent in man. Man is able to enquire into, examine and explore the phenomenal universe because of the consciousness that prods him. Nature and the phenomena that comprise it are reflections of inner experience. The world is a beautiful painting, a grand work of art. The art is outside, but the beauty is experienced by the heart inside us. Art becomes art when the heart recognises it. All investigations of the external world are indeed reflections of mental processes which emerge from the "I" projected by the Atma, a spark of Paramatma. If we concentrate on this basic truth, we can see the Divine basis that sustains everything. Education, therefore, has to develop this power of concentration and not the mere capacity to collect facts. Today with the accent on "collection", we are ignoring "concentration". The essence of education is concentration of the mind and not collection of facts. The world is teaching man innumerable lessons all the time. Each one should try to discover for himself the secret of his life and the Universal Consciousness that is inherent in him. The first requisite for each one is to make himself his own guru.

Nature and life

Nature is a preacher; life is a teacher. When this truth is recognised, life becomes meaningful and purposeful. Everyone should strive to unfold the divinity within him and illumine his life. Poring over a few books, one may secure a high rank in university examinations by one's diligence and industry. But this is not the consummation of education. Knowledge is not to be derived from books alone. Nature is to be accepted as a better instructor. By its forbearance, adherence to its genuineness, unselfish bounty, patience and serenity Nature is continually proclaiming its inherent and real role of

preacher of spiritual truths. Consider, for instance, a tree. It puts up with heat and rain, summer and winter and all the harm inflicted on it. It offers shade and distributes fruits to whoever approaches it. It has no feelings of hatred or vengeance towards those who cause injuries. It seeks no return from those who benefit from it. Everyone should learn this lesson in selfless, patient service from the tree. Consider, next, the bird. The lesson it teaches is self-reliance. A bird perched on the leafy twig of a tree is not affected by the wild swaying of the twig or the storm which might blow it off because it relies not on the twig or tree but on its own wings for its safety. It knows it can always fly and save itself. The bird is always happy and carefree, sporting as it pleases. Birds are not concerned about acquiring things for the morrow. They are content to make the best of the present, living on whatever they can get for the day. They do not worry about the careers of their children or the state of their bank accounts. They have no anxiety about the upkeep of houses or properties.

Now, look at what man has made of himself. Sitting on the branch of the life tree, he is worried about every little tremor in life; he is consumed by it, and loses his peace of mind.

Need for removal of defect in the vision

Man's ignorance of the Reality stems from his incorrect understanding of the world. This ignorance cannot be dispelled by yajnas, yagas or japa or even long bouts of dhyana. Only when he discovers his indwelling Divinity and realises the true nature of his self can he rid himself of this ignorance.

The individual who regards God as separate from Nature will declare that Nature is unreal - mithya. But, when he recognises that God is immanent in Nature, it becomes real to him. What is needed, therefore, is the removal of the defect in drishti (the vision). Nowadays, we hear of more and more people complaining of tension, as a reaction to frustration, failure and disasters. Tension is caused as a result of the mind indulging in likes and dislikes. Everyone must be vigilant about the mind, its capabilities and character. It reacts in fifty million different ways, not one or two. It assumes fifty million

forms. Each of these is a wave that agitates. The system of education practised today does not divinise the mind and turn it towards the 'I' which is a reflection of the Atma within. Students must, even while they are undergoing this education, probe into the divine basis of mental activity, so that the mind can bestow wisdom and bliss.

God is as far from you as you are far from yourself. That is to say, you are not the body to which you cling. God reacts to the status assigned to the "I". Who is it that says "I"? The body? How can the body speak? It is gross matter. The Atma? How can the Atma speak? It is subtler than the subtlest. Really, the "I" serves as the link which disappears when the body-mind complex merges in the Atma. This is the illumination you have to acquire as students. When you light a lamp in each home, the entire street gets light. I bless you that you will steadily inquire into the Divine Principle and that you will receive all the encouragement and inspiration while on this task.

13. The mind use and misuse

Date: 10 July 1986 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam

The mind causes rebirth to beings The mind causes release to beings The mind confers victory to beings In the struggle to attain the four: Goodness, Fullness, Fruition, Freedom, Dharma, Artha, Kama, Moksha. The mind confers mergence everlasting. THE mind wills, yearns, prompts and insists on effort and action. This process is named Sankalpa. These are like Sasanas (commands). Everyone has to be aware of the variety and validity of the actions induced by these promptings. The mind is host to fifty million such! Of the thoughts that appear and vanish, the clouds that pass silently, many stay and stir the mind into activity. These are referred to as Sankalpas. Until these are well understood against their vast background, man cannot live happily and in peace. Good sankalpas can elicit the best out of man and help him .to use all strength for his uplift, Man has to recognise bad sankalpas or urges as soon as they arise and render them ineffective by the systematic cultivation of beneficial sankalpas. These latter alone can save a person from disaster and keep him close to Prasanthi (supreme calm).

Ships at sea are guided by the compass along the desired direction; without it, they risk being wrecked on rocks or icebergs. Man has to sail safe across the ocean of Samsara (Flux and Flow). So he needs a one-pointed agitation-less mind to guide him and guard him.

The face is moulded by the mind

One can discover for himself how difficult it is to equip oneself with such a mind. The face photographs the mind; its moods, its decisions and desires; its sankalpas, in short. Consider a gramophone record; its contents - words, songs, noises - can only be heard, they cannot be seen; but the contents of the mind - evil sankalpas based on anger, hatred, envy, despair, arrogance, egotism or good sankalpas based on truth, love, charity, compassion - can be seen on the face, though they cannot be heard.

The face is moulded by the mind. Every single sankalpa (or thought accepted and acted upon) is a streak or line which affects its shape. We can picture it as the Notice Board, which announces to all concerned the activities inside the institute. The sankalpa cannot be hidden or kept under cover. All attempts in this direction are as foolish as the ostrich's behaviour when pursued. It sticks its small head into the loose sands and considers itself safe from being killed by hunters. But its huge body attracts the eye. It is soon destroyed and dragged away. Evil sankalpas as well as good are reflected on the face of man.

The mind activates the sense organs

A sankalpa affects the consciousness more subtly than an electric charge. It manifests as a need, a motive with a name and form. It colours the thought stream in a distinct way. It is no scribble on a blank mind; it causes clusters of reaction in the blankless mind. Its potency depends on time and circumstance. Sankalpas breed further sankalpas; they play their role, unaided through their own latent force.

The mind activates the eye and ear, the tongue and nose and every organ of perception and action. The mind initiates its activation when a sankalpa influences it. The mind is the unseen witness, the interested observer, as the queen inside the Raja's palace, watching the flow of men and vehicles on the road below through holes in the wooden window panes of the zenana. Whence do the sankalpas originate? From the ego, the "I" and the "I"? From the inmost Atma. Sankalpas or Conations or Inner Resolutions tend to be attracted towards one another, when they flow in the same direction or are related to similar desires. Cranes fly together as flock; they do not mix with crows. Crows form their own groups. Among beasts of the forest, bisons have herds of their own kind; they have no comradeship with elephants, which keep bisons away and mingle only with elephants. Deer too form groups by themselves. Similarly, a musician attracts musicians around him. Teachers seek teachers for company. The decisions which the mind makes, either to commit or omit, are amazing, for, the Cosmos and all its contents can be described as their consequence. The mind decides on the fact or facet of the

objective world which it has to notice. The Sankalpa bears fruit and the fruit conforms to the seed from which it springs. It has to reveal its impact, sooner or later. So, man has to avoid evil sankalpas and cultivate good ones.

Examine every thought with care

For example, one might entertain a thought to harm or injure someone. And, it might fructify as harm or injury on him. But, the sankalpa will surely rebound on the person bringing with it hundredfold harm and injury. A bad sankalpa hurts both the person and his target. A poisonous worm injures all who handle it. The Mahabharata relates how the Kauravas fed and fostered the sankalpa to adopt various tactics to disgrace and eliminate their cousins, the Pandavas; the result was their total elimination along with those who supported them. The Pandavas survived crowned with glory. Their sankalpa and their subjects were happy. Therefore, as soon as a passing thought sprouts in the mind as an urge or desire, one has to examine it with care to discover whether it would tarnish or promote one's reputation, hinder or help one's progress, weaken or strengthen one's character. If it is of the former category, cast it away, as a foul stinking object. And, save yourself by saturating the mind with good intentions. Earnestness in this direction is heightened by mutual encouragement. Rishis in their sylvan settlements benefited largely from such consultative, confirmative processes.

Effects of evil sankalpa

The nature of the Sankalpa that motivates a person can be sensed by others. The story of Ted Ross, a lone farmer in Holland, illustrates this quite well. He left his brother and mother in order to live in peace and freedom and settled on a forty-acre farm in a cottage he built thereon. He had interest in poultry farming and raised chicken. Killing birds for food was part of the culture he grew in. One night a fox entered the yard and made a meal of them. Its visit continued, night after night. So, the farmer took a decision (Sankalpa) to kill the fox and kept awake with gun in hand. But, though fowls disappeared, the fox was not seen. He could hear its approach, the flutter of the birds and its exit, but he could not spot where it was. His vain vigil persisted for five long

years.

He consulted many elders about the mystery. A pure hearted sympathiser told him, "Ted! Your mind is so free from blemish that even a tiny blot is patent to all. The fox is aware of your intention and is taking clever measures to avoid being noticed." Animals have this capacity. It is a gift of nature. A dog curled on the brink of the road will not be afraid of your approach, when you are Sankalpa- free. Plan to hit it, while even twenty feet away; the dog will rise and run! When animals have this sensitivity, why mention, men? Man's sankalpas, their manifestations in action, can be detected easily. A person who has committed wrong, who has 'robbed another's property, who has scandalised another or uttered a lie - look at his face; examine it closely. You will notice the signs of confusion and fear. The anxiety makes the blood cells become weak; the face becomes pale; lips quiver. The person suffers in health. Suppression is dangerous; expression brings about infamy. This is the effect of evil sankalpa. It must, therefore, be plucked by the roots and thrown out.

Every urge must be cleared by buddhi

Unrest, anxiety and anarchy are fed by evil sankalpa. You must see good, hear good and act good, so that evil intentions do not arise. People who move with criminals or read or write about them are likely to be infected with the evil. Sadhaks who move in the company of the godly are prone to develop serenity and compassion. The mind travels quicker than sound, far quicker than even light. Just as one holds under greater control a car that moves at a speed faster than the rest, one has to exercise greater control and mastery over the mind. Obey the mind's vagaries; you become a beast. Let discrimination control the vagaries; you become a candidate for Divinity. Every urge must undergo test, must be cleared by a judge, namely Buddhi. Does it prompt one to ridicule or defame another? Then, dismiss it as unworthy. Good intention sprouts as action; action fructifies into Sadhana; from sadhana emerges Seela (virtuous character) that draws down the shower of Grace. Intentions can all be beneficial, when the person persists in good company. Of course, one cannot gain them from without; they have to

grow from within, from the heart, freed from the weeds of pride and greed. Good company helps to purify the heart. This is the lesson people have to learn today cultivate Sath Sankara (good thought) by seeking out and sheltering in Sathsanga (good company). Planting poisonous seeds, people hope to get nutritious fruits! Why blame God when bitter seeds do not yield sweet fruits? Man is the only animal that imbibes and expresses Ananda. The smile on the face is the blooming of the joy that fills the heart; it wafts away discontent and depression from other faces. The mind can be an instrument to gain success in any of the paths of Yoga and in the struggle to gain the goals of life. If it is given licence to foster any type of wish or conation, it is certain to plunge man in bondage. The mind shapes life and the world wherein one lives. The mind of the individual, the 'i' has originated from the Cosmic Mind of God, Brahman. One's duty is to merge it in the source. Then, the 'i' becomes 'I'. Before the mergence, the 'i' is known as man and announces itself as limited. In order to achieve the mergence, the consummation, saturate the mind with Sathsankalpa. Remember: "From good thoughts, good minds; from good minds, good God."

14. The five-letter Mantra

Date: 21 July 1986 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam / Occasion: Guru Purnima

MAN is the only being endowed with the unique weapon of the mind. Whoever is able to master it will be victorious in life. A slave of the mind cannot achieve happiness or peace. The body with all the sense organs, made up of the five elements, is the dwelling which the mind has established for its fulfilment. It is like an armour. The mind is the basis for the body. It is the cause of all worldly activities and experiences. A body without the mind is like a school without a teacher, a crop withering for lack of water, a temple without a deity, an electric wire without the current - utterly useless and lifeless. Men are generally prone to regard the mind as intimately bound to the body. Believing that the body, a composite of the five elements, is real and permanent, they devote all their time and actions to its well-being. Life is wasted in pursuing mundane objects. The highest realisation consists in using the Buddhi (intelligence) to acquire Vignana (the higher wisdom) and conquering the mind through that wisdom. The Upanishad declares: "Prajnanam Brahma" (Realisation of Brahman is the highest wisdom). This consummation is attained only through Sathsankalpas (good thoughts). Sathsankalpas constitute the most precious possession. They are charged with immense power, purity and divinity. They are life-giving and life-sustaining. They will yield the desired fruits according the way they are used.

Transformation of sinners to Saints

The mind, it should be noted, is not like a blank paper. It is a palimpsest which carries on it the imprint of the experiences and actions of many past lives. It manifests as a reflection of the Atma (spirit). The Atma + the Mind = Man. Man - Mind = Atma. The mind is the cause of man's bondage or liberation. If man can fill himself with good thoughts in any situation, his life will become sanctified. Hence, it is necessary for everyone to see how he can cultivate good thoughts and make them govern his life and actions. The prime requisite for the cultivation of good thoughts is sathsang (association with good people). The scriptures have expatiated on the value of good company

with appropriate examples. Ratnakara was a highway robber who supported his family by attacking wayfarers and robbing them of their possessions. Such a person was so completely transformed by association with the seven great sages (Saptarishis - Vasishta and others) that he later became Valmiki, the great Adi Kavi, who wrote the epic "Ramayana". Not only was he the first among poets, but he achieved the same status as the sage Vyasa. The Seven Sages hailed Valmiki as Sloka data (the giver of the sloka), coming after the Lok-data Bhagavan, (the giver of all things). Another example: During Buddha's time, there was a very cruel and wicked man known as Angulimala. Like Ratnakara, he was also engaged in waylaying travellers, robbing them of their wealth and cutting off their thumbs to use them as a necklace round his neck. The Buddha was able to reform even such a cruel man and turn him into a spiritual seeker.

Power of faith

Gauranga belonged to a community called Jagayi-Madhayi, who were noted for the wicked ways and their cruelty. Through his association with holy men, he became a great devotee of the Lord and acquired the appellation Chaitanya (as he was always immersed in Krishna Consciousness). He devoted his entire life to glorifying God in song and dance. Thus through all ages there have been men who have been transformed into saints and sages by associating with good and holy men. Coming to more recent times, we have many good examples. In Tamilnadu, some decades ago, there was a young lad, belonging to a poor Brahmin family. At that time Gandhiji was emerging as the leader of the national struggle for freedom. Everyone was talking about the lawyer who was voicing the country's aspirations and demonstrating its determination to win freedom from foreign rule. The Brahmin boy's mother was keen that her son should become a lawyer like Gandhiji. She told him: "My dear son! You should study like Gandhi and try to relieve the sufferings of the poor. You must become a great hero like him. You must adhere to Dharma and fight for justice." From that day, the young lad devoted himself to his studies remembering his mother's advice. He resolved to become a lawyer and serve the poor and the distressed. He overcame innumerable difficulties and handicaps. As he could not afford lamps at home,

he used to study under street lamps and prepare for his examinations. Often he had to go without food. Once, on the eve of an examination, he was studying under a street lamp when he felt drowsy. As he could not afford a cup of tea - though it cost very little those days - he washed his face with cold water from a tap and continued his study. He passed the law examination with distinction.

Need for faith in God and good resolution

He always kept in mind his resolve to live up to his mother's words. He worked with several seniors at the Bar, picked up practice and progressed as lawyer. He had a deep faith in God. Whatever difficulties he encountered, he regarded them as intended by Providence for his own good. Because of his faith in God and association with good men, a great change occurred in his career. He was appointed Judge of the Madras High Court - the first Indian to be chosen for that honour. It was a fitting recognition for his character and abilities. Such was the career of T.Muthuswamy Iyer.

When devotion to God is coupled with good resolutions, anything can be accomplished. As in the case of Muthuswamy Iyer, there are instances of young men in other countries who started their careers to earn a living by polishing shoes or selling newspapers or washing dishes in hotels, but who rose to high positions because of their good resolutions and their unswerving faith in God. Some of them became great scholars and led dedicated lives.

Man has unlimited potentialities

In Britain, there was a poor lad who used to make a living by writing addresses on covers for illiterate persons and to give tuitions to children. Each time he wrote an address, he used to say: "May God bless you." He used to tell the young children before they went back to their homes after their lessons: "May God shower His grace on you." He had firm faith that some day God would raise him to a position where he would be able to render service to the people. He always told his young students: "Have faith in God." He himself had firm faith in God. In course of time, he became the Prime Minister

of Britain. He was James Ramsay MacDonald. From a poor address writer to the Prime Ministership of Great Britain - what a change in fortune wrought by the grace of God!

The union of good resolutions with faith in God is like the coming together of the positive and negative ends of electric wires; through this combination, any great thing can be accomplished. We do not realise the unlimited potentialities of man. Not only in respect of his physical form, but also in regard to his intelligence, man is far above all other beings on earth. He can achieve whatever he wills to do. He can even become the master of the world. But superficially man appears as weakling. The life of man is subject to certain limitations. However intelligent one may be, one should not forget that one's life is governed by these limitations. One should use the intelligence one is endowed with, within the limits inherent in the human condition, to lead an exemplary, ideal life. If the intelligence is not properly used life becomes futile.

Talents are misused for selfish purposes

Owing to absence of right thinking and right attitudes, the powers of the intellect are being misused now. Talents are being employed for selfish purposes. Though man has prodigious intellectual ability, it is being used for wrong purposes. Self-interest and self-centredness are distorting men's outlook and leading them astray from the righteous path. Truth and integrity are at a discount. Moral standards are declining. Caste and credal differences are mushrooming. Parochial differences are breeding mortal enmity and hatred. The spiritual consciousness is weakening. Envy and hatred are reigning supreme. Fear of sin has given place to fondness for sin. Anything spiritual is viewed with levity. What is the reason for all this? Absorbed in sensual desires and worldly pursuits man has lost all sense of morality and goodness. He has lost sight of his own divine nature. Greed has turned man against man. Bad thoughts and ill-conceived desires have wrought havoc. Concerted efforts must be made to change this situation by influencing men's thoughts and attitudes. The primary requisite is to develop the will power of people along right lines. When the will power (ichhasakti) is developed, other

powers like discrimination, intelligence, retentivity, articulation, analysis, contemplation and creative action, can be developed. Without a strong will, nothing can be accomplished. Will power is needed to get rid of entrenched habits like smoking. Through will power, desires of all kinds can be brought under control. The ancient sages were able to conquer all desires by austere penance, renouncing all worldly objects. The will should be directed towards God.

Deepen your faith in God

Faith in God is the bed-rock on which one's life should be built. All the scriptures one may read, all the rituals one may practise, the mastery of the Upanishads or the Gita, will be of no avail if there is no deep faith in God. They will be mere physical or intellectual exercises only. They may even strengthen the delusions regarding the body-mind complex. Deepen your faith in God. Without God how can all the marvels in the cosmos be accounted for? By whose power are millions of stars held in their places? How does the earth turn on its axis without an axle? How does the wind blow to give gratuitous comfort to one and all? These phenomena are beyond human power. All these are the work of the unseen Power acting from behind the screen. It is the Unseen that sustains the seen. It is the power of God.

Eight types of Gurus and their functions

Today is the sacred day of Guru Purnima. Bharatiyas have held the view that one should try to sublimate one's life by seeking a Guru and acting according to his teachings. There are eight types of Gurus: 1) Bodha Guru; 2) Veda Guru; 3) Nishiddha Guru; 4) Kamya Guru; 5) Vachaka Guru; 6) Soochaka Guru; 7) Karana Guru; 8) Vihita Guru. Bodha Guru teaches the Sastras and encourages the pupil to act upto sastraic injunctions. The Veda Guru imparts the inner meaning of the Vedas, establishes the pupil in spiritual truths and turns his mind towards God. The Nishiddha Guru imparts knowledge about rites and duties and shows how one's welfare here and in the hereafter, can be ensured. The Kamya Guru makes one engage himself in meritorious deeds to secure happiness in both the worlds.

The Vachaka Guru imparts knowledge of Yoga and prepares the disciple for the spiritual life. The Soochaka Guru teaches how the senses are to be controlled through various types of discipline.

The Karana Guru reveals the unity of the jivi and the Atma. The Vihita Guru clears all doubts, purifies the mind and shows how Self-realisation can be attained.

Of these eight Gurus, the Karana Guru is the foremost. Through various teachings and practices, he helps the individual to progress from the human to the divine consciousness. Only the divine can act as such a teacher. All other Gurus can be helpful only to a limited extent. There are, moreover, persons who claim to be Gurus, but who are really after the disciple's money. They trade in mantras and tantras. Self-realisation is not to be got through mantras or tantras. Only by the purification of the mind can the Omni-self be realised.

God is present in everyone

"Sarvam Vishnumayam Jagath" (The Universe is permeated by Vishnu).
"Sarvam Brahmayam Jagath" (Everything in the Cosmos is Brahman).
Vishnu and Brahman refer to one and the same, Universal Consciousness which pervades everything in the Cosmos.

The Divine is present in everyone. Holding firmly to this belief, one should not cause harm to anyone because he would be causing harm to God who is present in everyone. Today we talk about peace in the world. How can that peace be found outside? It has to be found inside you. How can you find peace in a world which is in 'pieces'? Holding the atom bomb in one hand, is there any meaning in talking about peace? When you are haunted by fear how can you have peace?

You can have real peace only when you throw away the atom bomb. Real peace can come only when thoughts about the world are replaced by thoughts of God. God is the author and the guarantor of peace. Only when we

rely on God can we have genuine peace.

"God is" - the powerful five-letter mantra

On this Guru Poornima day I do not intend to give you any Ashtakshari (eight letter) or Panchakshari (five-letter) mantra based on any particular deity's name. Nor am I enjoining you to study any Upanishad, or the Gita or the Brahma Sutras. There is a simple five-letter pronouncement. "God is" ("Devudunnadu," in Telugu). Make this your sheet-anchor. If you go on reciting it, thinking over it, acting up to it and conveying it to others, immersing yourself in the bliss of this experience, you will be making the greatest contribution to the welfare of the world. (Swami recited a poem on the glories of God's creation to prove "Devudunnadu"). Consider this mantra as the message for this Guru Poornima and proclaim it in all circumstances and at all places with all the conviction and strength you can command. The world can be turned into an earthly paradise if you strengthen your faith in God and demonstrate it in your actions. You must have the courage and determination to face any kind of problems and difficulties. By propagating this mantra you can promote the love of God and the fear of sin among the people. The mantra "God is" can be more powerful than a mantra based on any particular deity's name. Moreover, mere repetition of any mantra is of little use. Greater than the power of mantra or yantra is the power of a pure heart (chithasuddhi). Your faith must stem from the heart, which is the seat of the Divine.

In the Gita, the Lord has revealed in which part of the body the Divine resides. He has declared that taking the form of Vaiswanara, the Lord enters the body of every being to consume food and digest it. This means that the divine dwells in the stomach, digests whatever food is taken and supplies nourishment to all parts of the body. If bad food is eaten, the effects will be bad. The digestive energy turns our pure or impure, products in the system according to the nature of the food supplied to it.

Keep the five-letter mantra as constant companion

Spiritual disciplines determine the character of a person. Character determines the destiny - whether good or bad. Character is built up by constant practice of good actions. Actions, in their turn are based on one's thoughts and intentions. Whenever any thought arises in the mind, one should examine whether it is right or wrong, whether it will do good to society or cause harm to it. Actions should be based on such enquiry. It would be wrong to blame anyone for our misfortunes. Our thoughts and actions alone are responsible for our plight. If one entertains pure thoughts and does all actions with firm faith in God, he will be favoured with God's Grace. Have this five-letter mantra as your constant companion and strengthen your faith in God. This will lead in due course to God-realisation. Unwavering faith in God will promote Atma-sakti (spiritual power) and confer indescribable bliss. Doubts should not be allowed to sprout. Faith is essential for accomplishing anything in life. Without faith, even ordinary things in life are not possible.

From today, develop your faith in God; engage yourselves in dedicated service to society and make your lives purposeful and helpful to those in distress or need. Remember that whomsoever you may serve, you are serving God. This is my benediction for all of you.

Who is a real friend? It is said that a friend is one who helps you when you are in need. What is real help? Is it to help you to go to the cinema? There are two qualities that a friend should possess. He should be like the sandals that protect the feet, like the eyelids that protect the eye. A true friend is one who always protects you from danger and keeps you safe from all evil. The kind of pal who tells you how to get away from police is not a real friend. A real friend is one who sees to it that right from the beginning you don't get into any kind of trouble by ending into evil company and getting lured into committing wrong deeds.

- Sathya Sai Baba

15. Mano moolam Idam Jagath

Date: 31 July 1986 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam

THE mind is extremely subtle. It derives its energy from food. In the dialogue between Uddalaka and Svethakethu in the Chhandogya Upanishad, the theme is the connection between food and the mind. Pure food is conducive to purity of the mind. One with a pure mind is filled with pure thoughts, and bubbles with energy derived from pure love. Wisdom is the efflorescence of purity of mind. Only such a person can achieve control over the senses. The self-controlled person, by discovering his divine nature, can illumine the world around. Like a joss-stick, which scatters its fragrance in all directions, the name and fame of the pure-hearted self-realised individual reach all. Pure thoughts hold the key for purity of mind. Thoughts have an objective reality of their own. They deal with six characteristics associated with physical objects: weight, form, quality, size, force and colour. If a man has a champaka flower in his hand, the fragrance of that flower is carried by him wherever he goes. Likewise, he will be carrying foul smell too wherever he goes. It is the same with good or bad thoughts. They radiate their good or bad vibrations around them. Thoughts have so much power that when they are directed towards great objectives they can be used to influence the world. When the mind is filled with good thoughts, such as truth, love, forbearance and compassion, one's life is filled with peace and serenity. If, on the other hand, one allows thoughts of hatred, envy, anger and conceit to grow, life becomes perpetual misery.

Thoughts and life

The face is the index of the mind. When you bear ill-will towards anyone, your enmity alters your face and manners. When you entertain good and loving thoughts, your heart is filled with joy and you experience an upsurge of happiness. If you fill your heart with love, your entire life becomes a saga of love. If you fill it with hatred, envy and pride, life becomes a dreary desert. A tree that has roots deep in the ground cannot be destroyed when its branches or leaves are cut off. Likewise, when evil qualities like hatred and

envy have struck deep roots for the tree of life, they cannot be got rid off by striking at some branches. By suppressing bad thoughts intermittently, these evils cannot be eradicated. The mind has to be completely emptied of all bad thoughts to achieve real peace. Every bad thought must be rooted out the moment it arises in the mind. The war against bad thoughts is like the war against enemy hordes who attempt to get behind a fort through a subterranean tunnel. As each one of the enemy emerges from the tunnel, he should be struck down. Each one of the sense organs - the eye, the tongue or the ear - when it is influenced by a bad thought, is led astray and behaves improperly. When they are influenced by good thoughts and impulses, they act in a manner which produces joy and contentment. When the eye sees someone who is regarded as an enemy, there is an upsurge of ill-will in the mind. On the other hand, when one sees a dear friend the reaction is one of love and affection.

Sacred words generate elevating power

As in the case of things seen, what we hear can also have bad or good effects. The power of words to influence the mind is even more. Great Vedic pronouncements like "Aham Brahmasmi", "Tat-Twam-Asi" and "Ayam Atma Brahma" provide inspiration to aim at the highest goal. They should not be construed or used in a manner to inflate one's ego. Every expression is charged with a power of its own. When the words used are sacred, they generate a sanctifying and elevating power. When the words are abusive and vulgar, they arouse excitement, anger or depression. The joy or distress experienced by the mind is the result of the impressions conveyed by the senses. All experiences are products of the mind. The world itself is the projection of the mind. The mind can bring remote things near or send near things afar. It is the source of pleasure or pain. The sages have declared: "Mano moolam idam jagath." (This universe is based on the mind).

The mind seeks to acquire something with much effort in the hope that its possession will give pleasure. But the pleasure derived from it does not last long. And the sorrow caused by its loss is considerable. There is trouble during the process of acquisition. Possession confers only temporary

pleasure. The loss of the object leaves a trail of misery. Very often the pain from loss exceeds the pleasure from gain. It is a futile waste of one's life to go after such transient pleasures. Realising the meaninglessness of such pursuits the sages practised self-control as the means to enduring happiness. They evolved the technique of turning the senses and the mind inward to seek the source of lasting bliss.

Sadhana for self-control

This technique is described as Tantra. It consists of a variety of practices called Mudras: Khechari Mudra; Bhoochari Mudra; Madhyama Mudra; Shanmukha Mudra and Sambhavi Mudra. By practising these mudras, the sages tried to turn the senses and the mind inwards. Khechari Mudra: It consists in concentrating the two eyes on the mid-point between the eyebrows during meditation. This exercise enables the integration of vision by which one's Reality is experienced. This mudra can also be practised by closing the eyes, but concentrating the look inwardly on the midpoint between the brows. Performing the mudra with open eyes is an ordeal. Hence concentration with closed eyes is preferred. Bhoochari Mudra: In this, meditation is done with the eyes and the mind concentrated upon the tip of the nose. When the Divine is meditated upon in this manner, a unique kind of joy is experienced.

Madhyama Mudra: In this, the eyes are concentrated on the middle of the nose between the tip and the mid-point of the brows. Unlike the Bhoochari mudra, in which the eyes may be fully open, in this the eyes are only half-open. This mudra becomes easier after practising the Bhoochari mudra.

An exercise for sense control

Shanmukha Mudra: This is a very sacred exercise. It is also a very difficult one to practise. It consists in closing with the fingers of both the hands the eyes, the ears and the two nostrils. By gradual practice, one should try to practise this mudra for as long as seven minutes at a stretch. Inhaling of breath should be done once in seven minutes. Through regular practice, this form of sense

control can become a habit. No discomfort will be felt from control of the breath. By this practice, all the sense organs and the mind get absorbed in exploring the internal. The purpose of this discipline is to turn the sense organs away from the influence of happenings and objects in the outer world.

For instance, when the ears hear sounds from outside, the mind gets excited or pleased. Similarly when the eyes see certain objects or persons, the mind is influenced one way or the other. But by closing the eyes and the ears, the mind is induced to think less about the outer world and thereby made to achieve some kind of serenity. By closing the nostrils, the mind is saved from the influence of odours. Hence, when the organs of sight, hearing and smell are controlled, the mind is turned inwards.

Today all our sense organs are totally absorbed in experiencing the external world. Listening to some gossip or hearing about some stranger, people develop an unhealthy curiosity regarding men and things.

Looking within

All our thoughts are influenced by what we see, hear or smell. We must try to control the sense organs, especially the ears and the eyes. When you close your eyes even for a brief moment, you will be able to hear the sound "Om" coming from within you. This pranava sound can be heard when you close all the doors and windows in a room and let the wind blow through a small chink.

The body is like a house which contains the ten indriyas, of which four are important - the eyes, the ears, the nose and the mouth. When you close these four openings, the sound "Om," which arises from within can be heard. It represents the primal sound - the Nada bindu. The light of the Atma shines beyond this primal sound. Hence the Divine is hailed as Nada Bindu Kalatheetha - - "one who transcends the range of the all-pervading Nada (Pranava)." The purpose of the Shanmukha Mudra is to reveal to us the vibrations of the "Om." When we concentrate on this "Om," the senses and the mind turn away from the external to the inner world of the Spirit. Control of the mind is the means to Moksha (liberation). Purity of mind is the primary

requisite. When the mind is free from bad thoughts and is filled with good sankalpas (good thoughts) it is called Chitta (consciousness). The Tamil saint Tiruthondar declared in one of his hymns: "Oh Rama! I am worshipping you with a pure mind!" Sambhavi Mudra: This mudra aims at controlling the five Karmendriyas, the five jnanendriyas and the four psychic agencies - Manas, Buddhi, Chittam and Ahamkara. All these fourteen elements have to be directed towards the spiritual quest. The Aham ("I") is sustained by Ahamkara (egoism), Chitta, Buddhi and Manas. When Ahamkara is destroyed, the Chitta (Heart) becomes purified. A pure Chitta imparts illumination to the Buddhi (intelligence or discriminating power). When the Buddhi is illumined the mind becomes pure. And only a pure mind can control the sense organs and direct them in the right path.

Characteristic of a truly cultured person

The ego may be inflated by any number of things. It may be wealth, knowledge, power, position, beauty or intelligence. Such self-conceit is invariably associated with bad traits. It indicates the dominance of the sense organs over one's mind. Many are likely to feel proud about their knowledge or intellectual ability. But knowledge and intelligence without character and good conduct have no value. Learning by rote what is contained in books, without fully understanding their meaning or putting the knowledge to practical use, is a futile verbal exercise. Information from books and intellectual ability do not constitute culture. A truly cultured person is one who understands what he studies and makes proper use of that knowledge. As regards the knowledge of the mudras referred to earlier, some may try to practise them. There is nothing wrong in doing so. The three mudras - Khechari Mudra, Shanmukha Mudra and Sambhavi Mudra - are of immense value in developing control of the mind. The practice of these mudras is closely related to the awakening of the shadchakras (the six centres) in the spinal column.

Develop self-reliance to face problems of life

The quintessence of the teachings of the Upanishads, the Gita and Vedanta is

control of the mind. The first step in the process is developing faith in God. Without genuine and deep faith in God, it is utterly useless to master all the 700 slokas in the Gita. It is simply a burden on the memory.

Reciting the Vedas or ritual reading of the puranas dozens of times may be mental gymnastics, but are of little spiritual value. Reading or listening to stories about rishis and 'sages with superficial interest is valueless. It is only when they are studied with faith and earnestness that they can have an effect on our thoughts and actions. They will then cease to be mere stories and become sources of inspiration and solace for transforming our lives. Students! You must develop self-reliance to face the problems of life with ability and fortitude. You must discharge your duties with devotion. You must draw the right lessons from the stories of the epics and the puranas. Even as while eating you reject bad food, you must reject bad thoughts and take in only good wholesome thoughts in the mind. Do not bear any ill-will towards those who may have done some harm to you. By returning evil for evil, how are you better than the other person? It is only when you do good even to the person that causes harm to you that you can show your better nature.

Be good, do good, see good - this is the way to Sai!

The fruit comes from the tree. But can the tree know the nature of the fruit? When two sticks are rubbed against each other, fire emerges. But do the sticks know that the fire is latent in them? Likewise, The Divine is latent in man. It is through the process of enquiry and sadhana that man can discover the divine in him. It is like churning buttermilk to get the butter in it Through spiritual discipline and pure love, man should manifest his divinity. The true nature of Bhakti will then be clear.

- Sathya Sai Baba

16. Near and Dear

Date: 02 August 1986 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam

THE Lord has revealed to Arjuna, and thereby to all mankind, that He is pleased by the devotion offered by aspirants for Grace. "Bhakthiman me priyo narah" (The man so devoted is dear to me Gita XII 19), He declares. The devotee offers prayer, worship and his thought, words and acts to God whom he clothes with a Form and Name and attributes like Love, Compassion, Wisdom and Power. Most devotees seek health, wealth, power and fame from God, which are all trivial assets yielding momentary pleasure. Divine Grace can confer the most precious gift of His Love. Man may assert with the pride of achievement that he loves God. That takes him only half-way through. He does not gain much there-form. Does God respond with me priyo narah, (he is dear to me)? Only then can man claim to have achieved Grace. How can man become 'dear' to God? The Gita emphasises two qualifications: Samthushtah Sathatham (ever contented) and Dhruda nischayah (with firm resolve). He has to be contented and cheerful always, without regard for the changing tides of fortune. It should not be a pose, a passing phase, an artificial, superficial show. The prefix sam indicates that the thushti (contentment) has to be deeply rooted in the heart manifested in and through every thought and act. The other word for contentment is thrupthi; the all- pervading never changing form of thrupthi is also denoted by the prefix sam, which changes it into samthrupthi.

Equanimity is the sign of contentment

Samthushti fills the heart with divine delight. It marks a stage of detachment from the world, for the world makes one swing from pain to pleasure and back again. The devotee therefore must desist from attempts to earn joy or avoid grief. He has to be unconcerned with ups and downs. Success should not boost his ego, nor should defeat land him in dejection. Honours should not turn his head, nor dishonour make it droop. Equanimity, serenity, these are the signs of Samthushti. The devotee welcomes gratefully whatever happens to him or is given to him by the Divine Will, to which he has surrendered his

own will. Dhruda Nischayam (firm resolve) is the other requisite. Of course, all men possess this qualification; it is an asset that assures survival, and secures popularity and pre-eminence. Those who climb Himalayan peaks derive the tenacious courage, that sustains them, from the firmness of their resolve not to turn back. Others exhibit their heroism in crossing tumultuous oceans alone. Some others resolve on exploring fearful forests. Firmness of resolution, bravery and skill are utilised even for merciless torture of others to rob them of their riches. Ignoring their inner divinity and setting aside their human-ness, some people descend to demonic levels and become fanatically cruel. We have to conclude that dhruda nischala can serve good purposes as well as evil.

Valmiki, when he was Ratnakara, used his courage and adventurousness in vicious and wicked ways. Contact with the Seven Sages and their teachings made him direct the same qualities towards Rama. He was transformed so completely that he became the author of the Ramayana.

The Form and the Formless

Texts on devotion dwell at great length on the worship of the Personal and the Impersonal God, or of the Form-full and the Formless God. This problem too is considered and solved in the Bhagavad Gita. So long as man is afflicted with the delusion that he is the body which contains him and so long as he is attached to it and attracted by it, he cannot conceive the abstract, impersonal and formless entity. Nor can man stay without interruption on the Personal as the ultimate basis. He has need for both the Form and the Formless. They are as the two wings for a bird, the two wheels for the cart and the two legs of the human being. Both are valuable and valid for the devoted seeker, though Personal is not as lasting as the Impersonal. We have now about a thousand in this Mandir, with me. When you are back in your own homes and recollect this experience, you reconstruct this situation, this Prasanthi Nilayam, Swami and the thousand. Since this experience was gained in the wakeful stage, you could recall it into the subtle region of your consciousness, the Chitta Akasa, whenever and wherever you wish.

Identify the Kshara with Akshara

In order to make a child understand that the word 'chair' represents that piece of furniture, you have to draw the picture of a chair and write the letters underneath. When once he has learnt to identify the kshara (the temporary form, the chair) with the Akshara (the formless eternal - the Word), the picture is eliminated; the Word remains. The Word, hence forward, represents the thing, the concrete material visible thing. If no chair existed, the word chair could not have emerged. The word God emerged to indicate an entity that was experienced. A 'nothing', 'nonexisting being' needs no name. The name is evidence of the thing. The word God is evidence of the Divine Phenomenon.

The objection may be raised that words like sky-flowers or castles-in-the-air do not denote any concrete tangible reality. But these are not words, they are compounds, artificial strings of words. Consider another example of Form and No-form. Take this pillow. You described it as cotton enclosed in a cloth bag. I disclose that the cloth too is cotton. The shapeless, formless cotton has become yarn and by dealing with the yarn as warp and wool the cloth has put in form for the bag and the pillow.

From the Form .to the Formless, from the Formless to the Form both processes are possible and progressive. The Personal God is an expression, a symbol, a representation of the Impersonal God. The Impersonal does personate and assumes Form and Attributes. This is the very Nature of the Divine.

The devotee must not be agitated by such controversies promoted by people who have no intuitive experience. He must be free from anxiety and fear, pride and envy. He has four enemies intent on ruining him - anger, envy, hatred and the horde of desires. He regards both high and low as roles in the Divine play. When he insults or injures or rejects any one, he is, in fact, inflicting them on the God he adores. He cannot reap the harvest of Grace or the Bliss from the Atma, if he sows spiritual ardour on a heart full of the weeds of greed and hate. The basic moral prescription for the devotee who

aspires to be near and dear to the Avatar is "Worship God and offer Love to Him in every living being."

Attitudes of tolerance and reverance can be cultivated only along the spiritual path. That is the one path for attaining peace and harmony in this world of ceaseless striving and never-ending despair.

- *Sathya Sai Baba*

17. Give due place for Indian values

Date: **21 August 1986** / Location: **Prasanthi Nilayam** / Occasion: **Inauguration of the MBA program in the University**

EVERY man has three bodies - the gross or physical (sthoola), the subtle (sookshma) and the causal (karana). When the physical body is rendered pure by taking pure food, the subtle body consisting of the mind is purified by pure desires, and the causal body represented by the antahkarana (conscience) is sanctified by sacred thoughts, the inherent divinity in man can be manifested and fullness in life achieved. It is essential that every boy and girl should learn and practise the basic ethical principles for the blossoming of their true nature. Their primary obligation is to recognise the divinity that is in each of them. In the olden days, students used to pray to the Goddess of Knowledge, Saraswati , to make them good, truthful and sweet looking. Handsome is that handsome does. Where truth and goodness exist beauty is present as a natural outcome. Control of the senses and observance of the accepted code of discipline are the hallmarks of a cultured man.

Morality and survival

In the pilgrimage of life, man has to guide his conduct by certain moral principles known as Neethi . Neethi is derived from the word nitha , which means what is proper or right. Right conduct is the royal road for man to achieve the highest state in life. When morality declines in a man, or a society, or a nation, that man, society or nation faces destruction. The loss of morality may even result in the destruction of an entire civilisation built up through centuries. Without morality, people perish. Morality is the lifebreath of humanity. It is because of the decline of morals that mankind today is decadent. A man without morals is worse than a monkey. Darwin attributed to the monkey the claim: "Without me you man would not exist." Whatever may be the truth (about the evolution of man from the ape), the monkey does utter a challenge to man in these terms: "I am present in the human mind and form. I involve you in the affairs of the world. I make you forget the divine. That is why man's mind is described as a monkey mind. I am indeed

greater than you. I rendered service to Sri Rama. You are serving Kama (the demon of desire). Because I became a servant of Rama, Kama became my servant. Rama is God. Kama is a demon." It is only when man cultivates moral values and manifests, the divinity within him that his true personality as a human being will be revealed.

This means that man should strive constantly to cherish good thoughts and act righteously. One is called a Purusha (Person). Only a man with a personality can be called a person. This paurushyam (personality) is a term applicable only to a person who leads a model and truthful life, filled with good deeds. The Latin word "Persona" means one who is a spark of the Divine. Only by recognising the inherent divinity in him can man become truly human. The recognition of the divinity in man will lead to the realisation of the unity of mankind. Every one will then realise that he belongs to one human family just as all flowers in a creeper belong to the same plant, and all birds in a flock are one. It is this sense of unity that has been the core of Bharat's age-old culture. It has sought to promote the well-being of all as a cardinal faith. When Indians realise the value and validity of this heritage, they will make their lives meaningful.

Management patterns differ from country to country

Every nation in the world has developed its institutions and way of life on the basis of its cultural traditions, its system of values, and its historic circumstances. These institutions and value systems cannot be transplanted to other countries whose history, culture and circumstances are different. The management pattern in the United States is of one kind and that in Japan is another. In America, the management pattern is built up on the basis of a competitive and profit-oriented system. The relations between management and workers are based on "hiring and firing." Money and profits are more important than human values. By copying the American management model, we in India are having difficulties and are not reaping the benefits we expected.

In Japan, the management pattern is different. The workers have a high sense

of discipline and even when they have grievances, they do not resort to strikes which affect production. The relations between management and workers are generally cordial and cooperative. It is this which has helped Japan to progress industrially.

Indian ethos and values

There are some things which are common to all business organisations in any country. These relate to such matters as accounts, production procedures, maintenance of statistics, materials management and the like. But with regard to matters like business ethics and human relations, we in India have to choose our patterns in keeping with our culture, traditions and conditions. In the Sai Institute, we are attaching special importance to cultural and ethical values. Among these, the primary place is being given to "Indian Ethos and Values." The course will cover such matters as the Indian economic environment, Personnel management, Organisational behaviour and Business Communication. Emphasis will be laid on Personnel Management and Human Values, which do not figure very much in the courses of studies in other management institutes now. The use of computers will be an integral part of the course. The study of "Indian Ethos and Values" will be the most distinctive feature in the M.B.A. Course of the Sai Institute. No other Management Institute in India has provided for this subject. The relations between management and workers should be like those between a mother and the children, based on mutual love and understanding. It is desirable to start the day in every factory or workshop with a silent, common prayer in which managers and workers join. When such prayers are held, the workers will be able to experience harmony in the factory.

Avoid imitating practices of other countries

There is no meaning in one country simply imitating or copying the management practices of another. Such imitation often leads to waste of resources and many undesirable results. This is what is happening in many countries, including India. What is good or suitable for one country need not necessarily be good for another. We should have regard to the circumstances,

the individual attainments and the specific requirements of our country. Our culture and values are different from those of others. These different situations cannot be treated alike. The attempt to combine different sets of values may result in the loss of values of the less developed country. There is a story which illustrates how by listening to the views of all and sundry one makes himself a laughing stock and a loser in bargain. A fruit vendor put up a board over his stall to the effect: "Fruits are sold here." A passerby told the shopkeeper the word "here" in the sign board was superfluous. The vendor arranged to get the word erased. Another man came along to say that there was no need to announce that fruits were being "sold" as that was obvious to anyone. And so, the word "sold" was erased. A third man said that there was no need to mention that "fruits" were being sold, as it was patent to any one what was being sold in the shop. Ultimately, all that remained was a blank board, while the sign painter presented his bill for painting the board and then erasing the words. The fruit vendor realised the folly of acting on the opinions of every passerby without relying on his own judgement. In the sphere of business management, a similar situation has developed in India. By following the advice of one country or other India has made a hash of its economy and finances. In ancient times, India served as an example to other countries.

India then and now

A king from Greece came to India to study the conditions here, especially in regard to education and religion, after visiting other countries in Asia. He was impressed by the gurukula system of education and the kind of relations that existed between the guru and the sishyas (students). The ashram of every guru was a veritable university, without any of the paraphernalia of modern universities. The students were prepared for all kinds of hardship to acquire knowledge from the gurus. He also noted the discipline and high character of the students. He collected books like the Upanishads and the Gita and realised what values Indians attached to truth and integrity. He made a study of the Bible, the Quran and Buddhist texts and found that all of them laid emphasis on Truth. He noted that the Bible declared: "Righteousness exalteth a nation." In the Quran he found that only by adherence to Truth can one be a

real man. He noted the essential truth which was common to all faiths and recognised that in Bharat there was religious toleration and harmony as part of the people's code of ethics. He decided to follow India's example in Greece. Alexander the Great, who came to India at the behest of his teacher, on his way back to Greece took with him a lump of Indian earth, a vessel full of Ganges water, copies of the Bhagavad Gita and Mahabharata and the blessings of an Indian sage.

Due place must be given to Bharatiya Culture

In spite of Bharat's priceless heritage, many in this country behave like people under the shadow of a lamp who, unaware of its light, are attracted to distant things. It is the fascination for exotic things which accounts for the deplorable plight of the country. Hence, in the sphere of management studies, we should give due place to Bharatiya culture and values. Only the wealth or name that is acquired by righteous and honest means will be enduring and praiseworthy. Money that is earned by improper and immoral ways can confer neither peace nor happiness. Communication is an important aspect of business management. But care should be taken to use it within limits. Unrestricted use of communication may cause considerable harm to the country. For instance, if undue prominence is given in the mass media to some students' agitation or a strike, say, in Bangalore, the news immediately reaches Delhi, Calcutta, Agra, and other places and within a day the trouble spreads to other areas all over the country. "Communication" of this kind does more harm than good.

"Man management" should be given importance

The pursuit of money as an end in itself is making people greedy and excessively commercial minded. Many farmers are switching over to money crops to earn more money. This is not the kind of management we should have. We should be concerned with , "Man Management." The proper study of mankind is man. Men should learn to be pure in thought, word and deed. This is the highest virtue. We do not want slogan-writers and platform orators and "Yellow" journalists. We want leaders who will be persons of integrity and

character. The aim of management institutes should be to produce such leaders. Their courses should be based on Indian culture and values.

Along with courses in other aspects of management like production, accounts, finance and personnel, we should have a course in "Indian ethos and values." We should concentrate on meeting the basic needs of the country. Our programmes should be based on our resources and on our practical ability to achieve the goals. We have also to combine morality with spirituality, in business and other spheres. All over the world there are numerous institutes of management. They confer the Master's Degree in Business Administration. I do not regard this as the right course for India. In some countries, instead of M.B.A., they have a Master's Degree in Business Science (M.B.Sc.). In our Institute we want to turn out Masters in Man Management (M.M.M). The students should develop a broad outlook and prepare themselves to serve society with sincerity and dedication. They must set an example in morality, and bring credit to the country by their work and their contribution to the development of the nation.

Young people take great pains to acquire degrees for securing good jobs. But they hardly take any trouble to develop their character and personality. Good conduct and character are the most essential requisites for a man. They are the basis for the spiritual life. If the spiritual aspect is neglected, man becomes an artificial, mechanical being with no genuine human quality in him.

- Sathya Sai Baba

18. The Lord and the Devotee

Date: 27 August 1986 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam / Occasion: Krishna Jayanthi

All animals have a modicum of intelligence To secure their needs and enjoy life; If man remains at the same level He is not a man but an animal. The intelligence that reveals God is all sufficing; Of what avail is a mass of nondescript knowledge? The knowledge that does not reveal God is no knowledge at all. It merely serves to feed the belly. EMBODIMENTS of love! Every man is a creature of likes and dislikes, of attachment and aversion the pairs of opposites described in Vedanta as Dvandva. In Vedantic parlance, these are called Sannikarsha and Viprakarsha. Sannikarsha refers to the quality which attracts to oneself a distant object or being; Viprakarsha makes a near person or object remote. Making use of these two qualities, man leads his life. Bhakti (devotion) is the highest expression of Sannikarsha. The term Bhakti is derived from the root Bhaj, which means "to serve". Another meaning of Bhakti is "friendship coupled with fear". But true Bhakti is not based on service or a mixture of friendship and fear. True devotion stems from the consciousness that jivatma (the individual soul) is a spark of the Divine. Bhakti can be rightly understood only when this basic relationship is fully recognised and accepted. As long as God is regarded as different from the devotee, the true nature of Bhakti cannot be understood. It is this feeling of difference which ultimately leads to loss of faith in God, despite the practice of bhajans, japas, dhyana and yoga. One who regards himself as different from God can never become a true devotee. He must consider himself divine in substance, even as a spark is not different from the fire from which it came.

Purity of heart

God is the embodiment of Love. Man, who is an image of the Divine, should have love as his basic quality. Why, then, is man infected with qualities like hatred, envy, pride and self-conceit? The reason is man's heart gets polluted by his love being turned towards external objects. The image of the Lord cannot be imprinted on a heart that is impure. It is only when man realises

the omnipresence and omniscience of God that he can comprehend the nature of Divinity. Only then will he recognise the Divinity within him. To experience the joy that springs from a devotee who has developed Sannikarsha Bhakti, one has to show love and reverence towards elders and serve them with humility and respect. Towards equals, one should show love and friendliness. Towards the young, one should extend sympathy and loving care. By these means, we demonstrate our love and regard for the divine that is in each of them and in us.

Example of the Gopis

The gopikas of Brindavan knew devotion in this exalted form and 'exemplified it in all their actions. They experienced the divine every moment of their lives and showed to the world what bliss is got from pure devotion to God. The gopikas looked upon Bhakti as greater than Mukti (liberation). They regarded the love of God as sweeter than anything, and so nectarine as to confer immortality. The bliss experienced from Bhakti is ineffable. Bhakti does not call for arduous spiritual practices or severe disciplines of any kind. There is no need to perform yagas or yajnas (religious sacrifices). The path of Karma or Jnana is rigorous and hard for common folk. 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 of God. The gopikas experienced the continuous presence of God within them and outside them. 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. Where there is deep faith, there is intense love. Where there is love, there is sraddha (earnestness). Through earnestness, the Jnana (higher knowledge) is gained. This knowledge enables the practice of Sadhana. Hence, without faith and love, it is not possible to realise God. The Gopikas were prepared to face any trouble and go through any ordeal to obtain the grace of Krishna.

Divinity is present in all objects in creation

Uddhava, who went to Repalle to teach the gopikas the path of yoga for God-realisation, found that their single-minded devotion to Krishna did not permit them to think of anything else. They saw Krishna in every plant, tree, hill or dale and were immersed in Krishna Consciousness. They experienced the unity underlying all creation. Today, instead of unity, we have divisions of every kind. Forgetting the divinity that is present in everything in the universe, man is promoting differences and barriers between man and man, and nation and nation and subjecting himself to numerous difficulties.

Divinity is present in every object in creation, from the ant to Brahma. Ignoring this basic truth, man is involving himself in endless problems. God is treated as a convenience, to be sought when in trouble and forgotten at other times. The Divine is not to be sought in some far off place. He is the indweller in our heart. When this eternal, divine light is shining within us, it is a mark of ignorance to seek for illumination elsewhere outside.

The Krishna Avatar

The Krishna avatar has been described as a Purna Avatar - an incarnation with the plenitude of divine attributes. All avatars are equally divine and it is pointless to describe one incarnation as partial and another as full. The form and role of each avatar are dependent on the circumstances and the needs which led to the advent. Avatars are not to be judged in quantitative terms. Qualitatively, they are all essentially one. All avatars are "full" in fact. Only their forms and names differ according to the circumstances in which they appeared. For the Krishna avatar, for instance, the pundits have offered different interpretations from the name alone. The letters in the word Krishna Ka, ra, sha, na and a - have been interpreted as signifying the glorious attributes of Krishna. 'Ka' represents "Kamalakantha," the Lord of Lakshmi. Other meanings given to the letter are: "Kamaleswara" and "Kamalagarbha" - the lord of the lotus and the one from whose navel the lotus has issued. He is also known as "Kamalabandhavudu" the Kinsman of the lotus. The inner significance of these interpretations is that when divinity manifests within us, the heart blooms like a lotus before the sun. "Ka" thus symbolises the sun principle also. "Ra" represents the principle of delight. "Sha" represents

Vishnu, the source of all wealth and prosperity. "Na" signifies the Narasimha avatara, the combination of man and animal in an integral unity. "A" reveals the Akshara swarupa of the Lord, His imperishable and eternal quality. Going by the letters in the name alone, scholars have derived the divine attributes of Krishna as avatar. Some others have regarded Krishna as the very embodiment of Ananda (bliss).

Paramatma and Jivatma

The nature of the Divine, however, is not to be determined by the name of a particular Avatar. Names are related to birth, and any meaning may be attached to a name. But the Divine is birthless. It is present at all times and everywhere. Men may describe the Divine in innumerable ways according to their experience and understanding. These are subjective expressions and do not reveal the real nature of the Divine. Each individual's description is limited by the nature and level of his experience. "The mind and speech turn back, unable to grasp the nature of the Divine", says the Upanishad.

What is important is to recognise that there is no basic difference between the human and the Divine. They are integrally-related to each other like the object and its image. Take, for instance, a seed. There are two halves in it. It is only when the two halves are unbroken, that the seed can sprout when planted in the soil. Likewise the tree of Creation comes into existence when the Paramatma (the Omni-will) and the Jivatma (the individual soul) come together. Without God, there can be no devotee. Without devotee, there is no God. Even as God creates devotees, devotees also "create" God. This is known as Dhyana (meditation). Meditating on the name and form of God constantly, the devotee strives to have the vision of God in the chosen form. Man alone is endowed 'with this capacity to give a name and form to God and to realise it. But how many are conscious of the preciousness of this human birth? Few have any gratitude for the blessings they enjoy from Providence. In this respect, even dogs are better than man. The dog's gratitude towards one who has given it a few crumbs lasts all through its life. The dogs may well ask: "Oh man! How are you better than us? You are lacking in elementary gratitude. All your knowledge, power and position have no meaning if you

have no character and have no sense of gratitude. You are consumed by selfishness. Even your worship is tainted by selfishness. It is not done out of pure love of God."

Unity in diversity

Selfishness will not go as long as man identifies himself with the body and does not realise the divinity in him. Diversity in creation is an obvious fact. No two human beings, not even twins, are identical. But diversity should not lead to differences and conflicts. We must learn to see the unity that underlies the diversity. This unity is based on the divinity that is present in everything in the universe.

The realisation of this unity can come, only through firm faith in God. Prahlada, even as a child of six, was filled with love of God and could teach even his father profound truths. For Godrealisation, neither age nor caste, neither power nor position matters. Valmiki was not a man of high birth. Nandanar was an outcaste. The Gajendra (Lord of the elephants) was an animal. Dhruva was a child. Sabari was an illiterate old woman. All these realised the divine by intense devotion and achieved spiritual eminence. Hanuman was a monkey. But his devotion to Rama was such that when the Rakshasas asked him who he was, he was content to declare himself a humble servant of Rama. Today if some one is asked who he is, he proclaims the string of degrees to his credit. Some advertise their past achievements as ex-ministers or ex-something else! All these are ephemeral attainments. One's true worth is his AtmaSwarupa (divine essence). One should strive to realise it and manifest it. Today we observe the birthday of Krishna as Avatar. In his own time there were many who did not recognise the divinity of Krishna. Kamsa and Sisupala underrated Krishna's powers. There have always been from age to age detractors of the Avatar. Krishna is described as Navaneetha Chora (One who stole butter). What is the butter that Krishna stole? It is the heart of the devotee. The devotee offers his heart to Krishna and Krishna accepts it. How can this be described as stealing? Only when a person takes away something from another without his knowledge can he be called a thief. But Krishna asks for your love, receives it from you when you

offer it. The term "thief" has been applied to Krishna by devotees out of the fullness of their love. It has no pejorative significance at all. According to the level of their understanding and devotion, devotees describe God in different ways. These are expressions of subjective experience. The Divine transcends all limitations and attributes.

19. Sanctified by three Avatars

Date: 15 September 1986 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam / Occasion: Onam

Heaven Is Not Some Remote Place,
Where People Are Virtuous And Of Good Character,
You Will Find Paradise.

BHARAT'S culture is rooted in the Vedas. Music and literature have come from the Vedas. The Sama Veda is the primal source of music. Rig Veda is the source of all literature. Devotion, filled with music, is the form of the Divine. Hence, Lord Narayana declared: "I do not dwell in Vaikunta or in the hearts of yogis. I am present wherever my devotees sing my praise, Oh Narada!"

The Lord resides not only in the hearts of devotees, but also in the hearts of the evil-minded. Once, the child Prahlada approached his mother, Lilavati, and told her, "Mother, there is only one difference between me, who is a devotee of Hari and my father, who hates Hari. Ever contemplating on the nectarine sweetness of the Lord, repeating His name, and constantly remembering Him, I am immersed in the bliss of love of the Lord, like one intoxicated. My father, in his hatred of Narayana, has turned his heart into stone and installed Him in it."

Live in faith to experience happiness

The Lord, who dwelt in the heart of Prahlada, who loved Narayana, and the Lord who was in the heart of Hiranyakasipu, who hated Narayana, was one and the same. Drinking deep the nectar of Divine Love, Prahlada quenched his heart's thirst and found bliss. Installing the Lord in his stony heart, Hiranyakasipu was unable to allay his burning thirst and experienced endless worries. Man has to live in faith to experience happiness. Where there is happiness there is peace. Realising that the Divine is omnipresent, the devotees make their lives sublime by singing the glories of the Lord and ever dwelling on His name. The Divine is present everywhere and in everything. Prahlada declared in the Bhagavatha: "There is no room for the suspicion that

the Lord is here and not there. He can be found wherever He is sought, because He is immanent in everything in the universe. Saint Tyagaraja said the same thing when he sang: "Where is your dwelling place, Oh Lord? Wherever I turn I behold you. You are present everywhere. You are omnipotent and all-knowing." The Divine is present not only in human beings. He dwells in birds and beasts and in all living things. So Tyagaraja sang: "Did not a woman devotee (Aparanji) teach a parrot to recite the name of Rama and enjoy your glory?" The knower of Brahman becomes Brahman Himself. Valmiki, who wrote the Ramayana, was so much immersed in the Rama principle that the inmates of his ashram noticed an effulgence in his face reflective of the splendour of Rama Himself. The face is a reflection of the inner being. Whatever thoughts and emotions fill a man, they are reflected, in his face. Moses, who was ever dwelling on the glories of God, reflected in his face the radiance and splendour of the Divine. This is revealed in the Bible. Darwin, who was a devoted student of Henslow, followed his teacher's exemplary life and became, in later years, a great scientist recognizing the inextricable relationship between man and God.

The three Danava Devotees

The devotee is inseparable from God. When he is filled with the love of God and is totally forgetful of himself, he experiences oneness with God. Prahlada was such a supreme devotee. He was a Rakshasa by birth. His form was human. His heart was centered on God. Prahlada combined in himself these three elements. He adhered to the culture of Bharat and shone as an ideal to his people. In following the four Purusharthas - Dharma, Artha, Kama and Moksha - Prahlada combined the pursuit of Artha (worldly interest) with Dharma and linked them to Kama (desire) for the attainment of Moksha. Because of this, Moksha itself sought Prahlada. Though born among Danavas (Asuras or Rakshasas), there are three notable figures who have achieved distinction in the pursuit of the Purusharthas and sanctified their lives. They are Prahlada, Bali and Vibhishana. As against these, there are countless persons, who, born as human beings, have forgotten Dharma and Moksha and, submerged in Artha and Kama, have wasted their lives.

Emperor Bali was the soul of goodness

Virochana was the son of the great devotee Prahlada. He was, however, different from his father. He was a staunch materialist. He followed the hedonistic philosophy of Charvaka. Emperor Bali, who was the soul of goodness and purity, was Virochana's son. He looked after the welfare of his people as if they were his own children. He earned the love and esteem of his citizens, whom he regarded as limbs of his own body. The people enshrined Bali in their hearts. There was complete harmony between the people and the ruler. Bali once embarked upon the performance of a great sacrifice known as Viswajit (conquest of the Universe). This provoked the apprehension of Indra and the Devas. There have always been in all ages men who are envious of or antagonistic to those who are prosperous, eminent or extremely good. The latter have had to face troubles from such envious persons. Rama was subject to many hardships from evil-minded persons. Harischandra suffered many ordeals from a Rishi. The Pandavas, who were the very embodiment of dharma, had to endure numerous troubles caused by the envious Kauravas. Jesus, who was the personification of self-sacrifice, was a victim of the hatred of those who were envious of his popularity and resented his teachings. The Prophet Mohammed had to flee from Mecca because of the enmity of some people who were opposed to his message.

The Devas propose: The Lord disposes

Bali wanted to ensure peace and prosperity for the entire world under his beneficent reign and commenced the Viswajit Yaga for this purpose. The Devas became apprehensive and jealous when Bali was performing this yaga. They approached Lord Narayana and prayed to Him: "Bali, who is Rakshasa by birth, is attempting to bring the whole Universe under his sway by performing the Viswajit Yaga. You must save the world from this danger (of the whole world coming under the rule of Rakshasas), by diverting his mind from this course. Man proposes, but God disposes. The Lord, who knew the greatness of Bali, his noble qualities and his devotion to God, formally acceded to the Devas' prayers but decided to confer the highest blessings on Bali. For this purpose He incarnated in Siddhasrama as Vamana and went to

Bali's yajnasala to ask for a gift. Pure-hearted as he was, Bali could instantly recognise the radiance on the face of the young Vamana. He asked Vamana: "Swami, what is it you seek at this Yajna? I have decided to renounce everything I possess to redeem my life." Vamanamurthi was short in stature, but the whole universe was immanent in Him. He asked for an apparently small gift from Bali - nothing more than three lengths of ground measured by his feet. Bali felt that for a ruler of the vast earth, this was too small a gift and he agreed. That very moment, Vamana assumed the immeasurable form of Trivikrama, the Supreme Lord of the three worlds. With one step, He covered the entire earth. With the second step, He covered the whole of space and asked Bali where He should place his foot for the third step. Bali knelt before the Lord and said: "Oh Lord! What can I offer you except the body and heart which you have given to me? I pray to you to place your foot on my head." Bali was thus the supreme embodiment of self-sacrifice, who did not hesitate to offer everything he had to the Lord.

Vamana's boon to Emperor Bali

Seeing the anguish of his loving people at this turn of events at the Yajna, Bali made one request to the Lord before he was sent to his heavenly abode by the Lord's third step. He said: "Oh Lord! I am indeed happy that I have been sanctified by your divine feet and achieved the bliss of liberation. I do not, however, wish to leave my loving people in the agony that they are feeling. Please allow me once a year, in the month of Sravan, during the constellation of Sravana, to visit my people." He asked for this boon out of his boundless love for his people. The Lord granted this boon.

The Onam festival signifies the enormous love Bali had for the people of his realm. On Onam day, all the people of Kerala rise early in the morning, take a purifactory bath, put on new clothes, prepare a variety of delicious dishes, spread them on a plantain leaf and offer them first to Emperor Bali as a pious oblation. Then they celebrate the Onam festival in the company of their kith and kin and friends with great rejoicing. The new clothes worn on Onam day are known as "Onakkodi." This name has a special significance. It refers not merely to the new clothes worn by Keralites, but to the new body which

Emperor Bali acquired on that day. Bali, who appears on that day from the netherworld, is considered as appearing in the new garb of love of the people for whose sake he was coming.

How Kerala acquired the name Parasurama Kshetra

Kerala is a land that has won the love of the Lord in a special way. In olden days, it was noted for its devotion and godliness. Kerala is also known as Parasurama Kshetra - the sacred land of Parasurama. How did it acquire that name? Parasurama is one of the avatars of Vishnu. When Parasurama's father (Jamadagni) was beheaded by a Kshatriya king, his mother Renuka, cried in anguish: "Rama! Rama!" Parasurama, who was away from the ashram, could ethereally hear the cries of his mother from afar and rushed home. He counted that his mother had called his name twenty one times. On reaching the ashram he saw his father's head severed from the body. The horrible crime had been committed by Kartavirya's sons. Parasurama took a vow to wage war against the vile kshatriya rulers twenty one times and end their rule all over the earth. Parasurama accomplished his mission by defeating the kshatriya kings twenty one times and came to his ashram to pray to his ancestors for restoring his father's life. The sage Bharadwaja, to whose gotra Jamadagni belonged, appeared before Parasurama and restored Jamadagni to life by placing the head and body together. After this, Parasurama felt that the purpose of his advent had been achieved and as he had no desire to be a ruler, he made a gift of all the territories he had conquered to the Sage Kashyapa. He felt that having given away everything, it would not be right for him to remain on the land he had gifted. He decided to reclaim land from the sea and settle down on that territory for the rest of his life. It is this area that is known as Parasurama Kshetra - also known as Kerala. He performed penance on a mountain called Mahesa, which is situated in Kerala.

Kerala is uniquely blessed by Providence

Kerala is thus a land with sacred traditions. The Onam festival occurs in an auspicious period. Kerala goes through three months of heavy rains before Onam. Nature wears a sombre look. The skies are overcast and the sun is

hardly visible during these months. After the rains, the sun shines in all its glory and it is green everywhere. Nature rejoices at the time of Onam. The entire population is filled with joy, sharing the glory of Nature and enjoying its fruits in abundance. The natural beauty of Kerala cannot be described in words. It has to be seen and enjoyed. Kerala has been uniquely blessed by Providence. In such a sacred and well-endowed country, the whirligig of time has wrought some changes. The passage of time and the vicissitudes of circumstances have affected the minds of people. Differences have arisen between man and man and hatred has grown among various sections. In spite of these changes, however, the spirit of devotion among the people has remained.

Onam is celebrated with joy in Kerala

Kerala is regarded as a communist ridden country. But this is not wholly true. Even today the mass of the people are filled with deep devotion. On Onam day there is no Keralite who does not celebrate the festival with enthusiasm and joy. The temples are jam-packed with devotees on Onam day. Although political differences figure prominently on the surface, deep down there is a sense of unity in the hearts of the people. "What is the difference between man and God?" it is asked. The answer is: the individual jiva is a changing entity. God is unchanging and eternal. Faith in God has remained unchanged in Kerala despite the passage of centuries. This is the unique greatness of the Onam festival. Prahlada was a great devotee of God. Bali, his grandson, was a great emperor and devotee. In between, the father of Bali, Virochana, was a materialist and atheist. In the world, there are any number of persons who derive inspiration from Prahlada and Bali. There are also many who take the cue from Virochana. The Jagat (world) will not be what it is, if such variations did not exist. All through history, the devotees of God have had to endure many ordeals and privations, but they never lost their faith in God. They have stood out as ideals and examples to mankind. Bali was one such great exemplar. Onam is celebrated as the sacred day when Bali achieved liberation. It is also the day when Vamana was born. It is also the day when each year Bali visits the earth to experience the love of the people and participate in their rejoicings. Hence, people should not be content with

enjoying food and raiment but should try to experience the bliss of the Spirit.

The people of Kerala should be proud of the fact that their land is sacred in many ways. It was created by an Avatar of the Divine. It is the land where Prahlada and Bali were born. It witnesses the advent of the Vamana Avatar. Because of these sacred associations, I desire that the people of Kerala should lead pious and virtuous lives and I bless them on this sacred occasion.

20. Atma Jnana

Date: 06 October 1986 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam

EMBODIMENTS of the Divine Atma! Of all categories of knowledge, the highest is Atma Jnana (the knowledge of the Self). You may acquire knowledge of the natural sciences, of all arts and crafts, of literature and music, dance and painting and every conceivable type of worldly knowledge but all of it will not give you peace or bliss if you do not have knowledge of the Self. Worldly knowledge may bring you fame and prosperity. But only Atma Jnana can confer the peace that passeth understanding. Atma Jnana is that which reveals the unity in multiplicity, the eternal in the perishable. One who has attained Atma Jnana is all-knowing. "Tarati sokam Atmavith" ("the knower of the Self overcomes sorrow"), says the Upanishad. All worldly knowledge is concerned with sustaining life. When knowledge of the Spirit which is the basis of all other knowledge of the sciences and the arts is acquired, it is easy to get any kind of knowledge. When communion with the Divine, who is the source of all knowledge, power and wisdom, is established, one has access to every kind of knowledge. Hence each one should strive to attain Self-realisation through purity of mind and heart.

Atma Jnana can be got only by faith and love

Yajnas and yagas, acts of charity and virtue, penances and ceremonial rituals are all designed to promote purity of heart. Purity of mind promotes purity of heart. Purity of mind is achieved by association with noble personages and studying the writings of saintly persons. "Chittasya suddhaye karmah" - the purpose of doing karmas (the duly ordained duties) is to purify the consciousness. Purity of consciousness leads to realisation of the Self. Atma Jnana can be got only by faith. Develop faith in yourself and faith in God. This is the secret of greatness. Self-confidence today is manifest only in matters relating to worldly achievements and selfcentered pursuits. Faith and confidence are not in evidence in the spiritual field. Without unwavering faith, the Divine cannot be experienced. Because of the absence of firm faith, the formal observance of spiritual practices yields no results. The primary

requisite is unqualified and unshakable faith in God. One-pointed devotion promotes spiritual Sraddha (earnestness). The earnest seeker gets knowledge of the Self. The earnest devotee needs no other qualification except deep faith. He needs no other knowledge, no title to lineage or wealth. He may belong to any caste or community. He may be a child or even an animal like Gajendra (the Lord of the elephants). Valimiki, Nanda, Kuchela, Dhruva, Gajendra, Sabari, Vidura and Hanuman are examples of devotees who got God's grace through their deep devotion, without any other special qualification. To realise God it is not necessary to have wealth, gold or other emblems of affluence. Nor is great scholarship necessary. All that is needed is pure, selfless devotion. Today men with selfish and impure minds attempt to worship God. Without purity of thought, speech and action, it is impossible to experience the Divine. God cannot be realised through ostentation and self-conceit. The basic-requisite is the shedding of selfishness and possessiveness so that one can engage oneself in actions in a disinterested spirit. Any person is entitled to embark on this quest without regard to sex, age, caste or community.

Spiritual do's and dont's

The spiritual quest is open to everyone according to his or her capacity and aspirations. However, certain rules and obligations have been laid down for observance by everyone. These are of four kinds: 1) Naimithika Karmas; 2) Kamya Karmas; 3) Nishiddha Karmas and 4) Prayaschitta Karmas. All the four are obligatory for all persons.

Naimithika Karmas: These are duties to be discharged as nimithas or instruments. These relate

to the performance of certain vows or special ceremonies during certain periods or on special occasions. The ceremonies done for the manes fall in this category. Propitiatory ceremonies done during eclipses are also included in this. These are obligatory for those leading a family life.

Kamya Karmas: These relate to karmas (rituals) performed for the

achievement of specific

objectives like seasonal rains, growth of crops, relief from famine, domestic happiness, peace in society, or attaining heaven. All karmas done for the sake of securing happiness here and hereafter are Kamya Karmas. All the prayers that are offered for the good of one's family or the world are in this category. When the prayers are offered with a pure heart, Divine Grace manifests itself.

Acts and food which are to be eschewed

Nishiddha Karmas: These relate to acts which are to be eschewed. For instance, the spiritual

aspirant has to observe certain regulations regarding food. He must totally eschew rajasic food like alcoholic drinks and meat. The nature of the food determines the nature of one's thoughts, feelings and actions. If one's conduct is to be right and proper, one should carefully observe the disciplines regarding diet. To have pure thoughts one should be moderate and wholesome. Eschewing unwholesome and impure food is like clearing a field of weeds so that the crop can grow well. The taboos regarding food have to be observed strictly so that one's life may be cleansed of all impurities.

Prayaschitha Karmas: These karmas have to be done purely by way of expiation for offences

committed knowingly or unwittingly. The ancient sages prescribed these practices as a result of their experiences and the benefits and solace they derived therefrom. Experimenting with different practices they indicated those which were most efficacious and necessary. These include pilgrimages to holy shrines and bathing in sacred rivers. "Darsanam papanasanam; Sambhashanam sankata nasanam" (Seeing sacred places destroys sin; conversing with the holy wipes out worries). Men should undertake pilgrimages to holy places from time to time to get mental peace and to purify the heart. Such journeys should be made with pure minds and genuine devotion without seeking any rewards. Some persons enter into curious

bargains with the Lord. To make trivial offerings to the Divine to secure large benefits is a caricature of devotion. There is one very precious thing in every person. It is his heart. It is this which should be offered to the Lord.

Realisation of the unity constitutes Atma Jnana

Standing in the midst of the Ganga, the Krishna or Godavari, people make offerings of the water to Kesava, Krishna or Narayana as if they are offering something of their own to the Lord! The very idea that they are offering something is itself misconceived. When they cultivate purity of heart, the Lord will take care of everything like a mother who attends to every need of the infant. It is the realisation of the unity that underlies the diversity which constitutes Atma Jnana (Knowledge of the Self). This is the import of the well-known Upanishadic pronouncements: "Isavasyam Idam sarvam" (All this is permeated by the Divine); "Iswaras-sarvabhoothanam" (The Lord dwells in all beings). Many verbally accept these statements and even preach them. But in practice they promote divisions and differences. Some go to the extent of betraying the Divine. But it is not in fact the Divine that is betrayed. They are only betraying themselves and proving false to their real selves. Yajnas and yagas are performed to invoke the blessings of the Divine for the peace and wellbeing of the universe. When the Divine responds with grace, the wellbeing of all is ensured. The yajnas have yet another significance. Offering to the Lord what He has given to man is a basic duty of the spiritual seeker. The offering is to be regarded not as sacrificing something but as an act of love and gratitude in which one rejoices. The individual should cultivate broad mindedness and serve society regarding it as a manifestation of the Divine. Peace in the world depends upon peace among individuals. The individual, the community and the world are intimately interrelated. The individual has to discover within himself the secret of peace and joy. This joy must be extended to the community in which he lives. From the community, it should spread to the world. "Adveshta sarvabhoothanam," declares the Gita. (Bear no ill-will towards any living thing). This should be the guiding principle for everyone. It is to promote this universal fellow-feeling that the sages of yore devised yagas and yajnas.

21. The five Yajnas

Date: 07 October 1986 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam / Occasion: Dasara

Birth occurs owing to Karma. Karma is the cause of pleasure and pain. It is the cause of good and evil. The world is made of Karma stuff. THE world is permeated by Brahman. It is equally permeated by Karma. Creation itself is the outcome of action. Man as a part of creation is also a product of the process. Man represents the jiva sakthi (vital force) encased in the body. The body is the result of Karma (deeds in one's previous life). All activities associated with the body, speech and mind are Karma. In the performance of Karma, five factors are involved. One is the body. The second is the doer. The third comprise the sensory organs. The fourth covers the varied actions. The fifth is the common factor in all beings, the Divine Principle. The Divine underlies all things. Forgetting this fact, and attributing all activities to the sense organs, man is engaged in actions for achieving desired results. Man is reborn to reap the fruits of his actions. He is thus caught up in the cycle of birth and rebirth.

Acts of Swadharma and Paradharma

So, man should aim at performing actions without concern for the fruits thereof. There are two types of actions - described in the Gita as Swadharma and Paradharma. Swadharma is generally regarded as duties related to one's caste, vocation or - stage in life and it is considered meritorious to perform these duties. But Swadharma is not related to community, caste or creed. "Swa" refers to Atma (the Self) and Swadharma means duties relating to the Atma. It is not liable to change in character or form. It is based on the eternal verities. It is unchanging. Swadharma enjoins man to perform the duties relating to the Atma as the primary obligation. Paradharma refers to actions related to the physical entity. Such actions are based on likes and dislikes, on ideas of "Mine" and "thine." They are fraught with danger and hence the Gita has cautioned against them. We are continually worried about what may happen in the future. All that we do in the present have their consequences in due course. Hence we must engage ourselves in good actions to ensure good

results later. In all these actions, there are three categories; Satwic Karma, Rajasic Karma and Tamasic Karma. Satwic actions are those which are done without any selfish or egoistic motives, with no concern for the fruits and as an offering to the Divine. Satwic deeds serve the Divine and win the Grace of God. All actions done out of self-interest and conceit for the sake of the rewards therefrom are Rajasic. Most actions done by common people in ordinary daily life belong to this category. Almost everyone in the world indulges in Rajasic actions. One must strive to convert them into Satwic actions. The third type of actions is Tamasic in nature, They are deeds done out of selfish motives, causing harm to others and inflicting pain on them. They lack compassion and are impelled by narrow mindedness, stemming wholly from self interest. They are pregnant with evil.

Five yajnas prescribed by sastras

In the ordinary course of life, man does many actions which, wittingly or unwittingly, cause harm to other beings. To atone for such actions, five yajnas - propitiatory rites - have been prescribed by the sastras. These are: Deva Yajna, Pitru Yajna, Bhoota Yajna, Manushya Yajna and Rishi Yajna or Brahma Yajna. The inner significance of each of these Yajnas should be clearly understood by everyone. Deva Yajna: In numerous daily activities like walking, breathing, and others, unconsciously people cause the death of many creatures like ants, insects and micro-organisms. To atone for these sins committed unknowingly, Deva Yajnas, to propitiate various deities, have been prescribed. Moreover, in our body, in every organ and limb, the presiding deities are present in the form of rasa (a subtle fluid). Hence these deities are called Angirases (the presiding deities of the Angas or limbs). Because these deities in the subtle form protect the organs concerned, gratitude has to be expressed to them in the form of Deva Yajnas. During the states like sleep, these deities take care of the body. As the body has been given to man for the performance of his duties man should be grateful to the deities who protect it. "The body is essential for the fulfilment of dharma." To meditate on the Anga Devas, to worship them and express gratitude to them is man's first duty.

Sacrifice to the manes as atonement

Pitru Yajnas: When a branch is broken, a flower is plucked or a tree is cut down, many small creatures may be losing their lives. Recognising one's responsibility for this loss of lives, one should perform Pitru Yajna (sacrifice to the manes) by way of atonement. In addition, one should remember that he owes his body and all that it contains, as well as the food that has nourished him in childhood, to his parents. As long as they are alive, it is one's duty to serve them and keep them happy. The obsequies and ceremonies that are performed after their death are laid down to honour their memory. By performing Pitru Yajnas, the ancestors are propitiated. Bhoota Yajnas : When we take a bath or wash our clothes, or sweep the house, many living creatures may be losing their lives. To atone for the death of such creatures, Bhoota Yajnas (offerings to the Bhoothas) have to be made. This practice has come down from the times of ancient sages. The rishis used to maintain deer, cows, and other animals in their ashrams and look after them with loving care as expression of their love for all living beings. Following their example, other people used to scatter sugar or flour near anthills for feeding the ants. To offer the remains of one's food after a meal to cows or dogs or other creatures is also a form of Bhoota Yajna. Even today many people keep dogs, parrots or other pets at home. By showing love towards living things in this way, some atonement is made for the unconscious harm done to various creatures in daily life. Manava or Manushya Yajna: These Yajnas or rituals are done to atone for many offences committed against various beings in the course of daily life, in actions done during work or play. Rishi or Brahma Yajna: Considering human birth as a precious gift, the ancient sages provided through the scriptures, the Upanishads and the Dharma Sastras, a body of principles for guiding man's life so that he may strive to attain the true goal of life - namely Self-realisation. They laid down the four Purusharthas - Dharma, Artha, Kama and Moksha - as guidelines for humanity. These regulations, which are not applicable to animals or birds, have been prescribed for man alone because he alone is endowed with powers of enquiry and discrimination to choose between right and wrong. All laws and Sastras are intended only for man. Sins, Sastras and sapam (curse) are designed only for man. The rishis laid down the royal road of righteous life, for all humanity. It is our duty to

show our gratitude to them by meditating on them and offering worship to them through Rishi Yajnas.

There is no higher dharma than compassion

The practice of absolute non-violence, that is, causing no harm to any living thing, is impossible in daily life, because unconsciously many micro-organisms are being destroyed even in the processes of breathing, walking, talking or eating. What should be avoided is consciously causing harm. The price has to be paid for conscious offences by suffering and retribution. There is no escape from the rule: As you sow, so shall you reap. The results of your past deeds, good or bad, will bind you like a chain. It is to atone for all such actions that worship of the three principal deities during dawn, noon and evening has been prescribed. At dawn the Sun represents the form of Brahma. At noon he has the form of Eswara. In the evening he represents Vishnu. The performance of Sandhya worship (of the sun) in the morning, noon and evening thus becomes worship of the Trimurthis (Brahma, Siva and Vishnu). Very few are aware of the significance of these rituals. These five types of yajnas have to be performed every day to atone for the sins committed in the course of daily activities. There is no need to have elaborate arrangement for performing these yajnas. If you carry out the behests of your parents, meditate on the deities, offer food to the animals in the house or outside or at least give alms to a beggar, you can propitiate the divine and redeem your life. You would do well to remember that there is no greater gift than the gift of food to the hungry, there are no greater gods than one's parents, there is no higher dharma than compassion, no more profitable acquisition than the company of the good, no worse enemy than anger, no worse disease than debt, no worse death than infamy, no higher merit than remembering the Lord. It is futile to expect that merely by reciting a few mantras one can atone for one's sins. Only through right action can expiation take place. Without a clean heart, all worship is useless. Without spiritual purity, religious observances are valueless. How can you have pure food, if the cooking utensils are unclean?

People indulge in high-sounding talk about spiritual matters. But without

application in practice, such talk has no meaning.

Even the thought that you have not benefited from the puja or japam you do, should not pollute your faith. To practise sadhana is your duty, your innermost urge, your genuine activity. Leave the rest to the Will of God.

- *Sathya Sai Baba*

22. The immoral Bhaktas

Date: 08 October 1986 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam

AMONG all forms of Sadhana, Bhakti (devotion to the Lord) is the easiest and holiest. Bhakti is derived from the root "Bhaj", with the suffix "thi." It means Seva (Service). It denotes a feeling of friendship coupled with awe. For one who is a creature of the gunas (Satwa, Rajas, Tamas), to understand what transcends the gunas, an attitude of humility and reverence is required. "Bhaja Sevayam" (worship the Divine through Seva). Bhakti calls for utilising the mind, speech and body to worship the Lord. It represents total love. Devotion and love are inseparable and interdependent. Bhakti is the means to salvation. Love is the expression of Bhakti. Narada declared that worshipping the Lord with boundless love is Bhakti. Vyasa held that performing worship with love and adoration is Bhakti. Garga Rishi declared that serving the Lord with purity of mind, speech and body is Bhakti. Yajnavalkya held that true Bhakti consists in controlling the mind, turning it inwards and enjoying the bliss of communion with the Divine. Another view of Bhakti is concentration of the mind on God and experiencing oneness with the Divine.

Win love through love

Although many sages have expressed different views about the nature of Bhakti, the basic characteristic of devotion is Love. Love is present in every human being in however small a measure. The riva (individual) is an aspect of the Divine, who is the supreme embodiment of Love. Man also is an embodiment of Love, but because his love is directed towards worldly objects, it gets tainted and he is unable to get a vision of God in all His beauty. Ordinarily people regard offering worship to God, reciting His name and meditating on Him as constituting Bhakti. True devotion really means installing the Divine in the heart and enjoying the bliss of that experience. It is the mystic union of the individual soul and the Universal. When the devotee prays ardently from the depths of the heart and his love gushes forth, Bhakti is manifested. Winning love through love is the vital aspect of devotion. Prayer does not mean merely appealing to God for favours. It is a means of

conveying to God one's troubles, desires and aspirations and offering all one's merits and the fruits of one's actions to God. The basic quality of devotion is the yearning for realising oneness with the Divine.

Two kinds of devotion

Devotion is of two kinds. One is acquiring knowledge about God and transforming oneself thereby. This is a natural process by which one starts with the physical, proceeds to the mental and ultimately attains the spiritual goal of mergence in the Divine. But in taking to this path of knowledge, only the individual concerned can benefit. In the second type of devotion, the devotee not only benefits himself, but shares his experience with others and benefits them also. Such a devotee not only saves himself but helps others to save themselves. Love is flowing in an endless stream through humanity all the time. By turning this love towards worldly objects and fleeting pleasures man is missing the opportunity to make life purposeful and to secure enduring bliss. Man should direct this love towards God to attain the true goal of life. Love of the Divine. is not developed by secular education or scriptural studies. It springs from the heart. One who is filled with love of the Divine will not be attracted by anything, else in the world. Nor will he submit to anything demeaning or unworthy. Love is selflessness. The devotee filled with love of the Lord welcomes what may appear as punishing, as something for his good. Even when the Lord appears to be angry, His compassion is evident. Even in punishment, God's kindness will be seen. Hence, no one should cherish a grievance that he is being singled out for punishment. Even punishment is a means of leading one to God. The display of anger is for safeguarding the devotee. The true devotee is one who recognises this truth and welcomes whatever happens to him as intended for his good. Eschewing interest in worldly concerns, he should concentrate on means to realise the Divine.

Nine ways of devotion

Nine ways of expressing devotion to God and attaining Him have been described by the sages. They are: Sravanam (listening to God's glories), Keerthanam (singing the glories of God), Vishnusmaranam (ever

remembering the Lord), Padasevanam (worshipping the Lord's feet), Archanam (offering daily worship), Vandanam (prostration), Dasyam (dedicated service), Sneham (friendliness) and Atmanivedanam (total surrender). Many devotees who have pursued one or other of these methods have been high-souled persons, some of whom have been great emperors.

Sravanam : King Parikshit, the moment he learnt that he had been cursed by Sringi to meet with death in seven days, summoned all the sages to ascertain how best he could utilise every moment of the remaining life span given to him. He felt that waste of time is waste of life. He appealed to the sages to advise him how best he could use the seven days left for him. When the Sage Suka entered the assemblage, the king requested him to redeem his life by converting what was a curse into a blessing. Suka taught the king continuously night and day all about the Supreme Lord and His incarnations and glories. Listening to Suka's words, Parikshit was immersed in an ocean of bliss. All the sages present felt equally ecstatic and were lost in contemplation and love of the Lord. By enjoying the stories about the Lord, Parikshit was filled with devotion and experienced the Lord within him. He exemplifies how devotion can find the highest expression in merely listening to the glories of the Lord. **Keerthanam:** Sage Suka taught how by listening to the exploits of the Lord, singing His glories and constantly reciting His name, the supreme goal of God realisation can be achieved. Suka experienced the bliss of union with the Brahman by revelling in singing His glories. **Vishnusmaranam:** Prahlada is the supreme example of the devotee who always centered his thoughts on Vishnu regardless of whether he was subject to pain or pleasure. "Namo Narayana" was his response to every ordeal. He was ceaselessly repeating the names of the Lord without any concern for the tortures to which he was subjected by the demons deputed by Hiranyakasipu. He was neither afraid nor distressed. Prahlada was fully conscious that the body composed of the five elements was perishable while the Indweller was eternal. Hence he did not care what happened to the body. All his thoughts were ever concentrated on God. **Padasevanam:** Not all devotees get the opportunity to worship the feet of the Lord. Even when the opportunity is available most people use it for material purposes. Goddess Lakshmi, the consort of Vishnu, is the supreme example of one who dedicated herself

totally to the worship of the Lord's feet, regarding the Feet as the source of the entire creation, holding them supremely sacred owing to their being washed by Brahma himself, wondering at them as feet which had measured the whole cosmos, and venerating them as all-pervading. Archanam: Emperor Prithu stands out as the exemplar of this type of devotion. In all circumstances, Prithu adhered to the worship of Hari as his primary occupation. He saw the Lord in everything in the universe. Hence, he dedicated every thought, word and deed to the Divine. Vandanam: Akrura is an illustrious example of a devotee who sanctified his life by constantly prostrating before the Lord and offering obeisance to Him with humility and purity. Vandanam does not mean merely folding the palms together and offering salutations. It means offering to the Lord all that the jnanendriyas and karmendriyas (the sense organs and the organs of action) do in a spirit of total surrender. Akrura worshipped the Lord in this spirit of total submission to the Divine will. Hence he could get a vision of Vishnu everywhere. Dasyam (service): Hanuman is the great exemplar of this type of devotion. Concentrating on the name of Rama and rendering service to Rama were Hanuman's preoccupation all the time. He was no ordinary being. He was a master of the 64 sciences and arts. Rama described him as a hero of peace, who possessed immense strength and wisdom. In everything he handled, Hanuman would examine whether it had Rama's name on it. If it was not there, he would discard even a precious gem as a useless piece of stone. While building the bridge to Lanka, Hanuman hurled rocks into the sea uttering the name of Rama and they rose to the surface. The letters "Ra" and "Ma" were written on separate stones and when they were thrown into the sea they joined together on the surface and thus the bridge was formed. Each hair of Hanuman was echoing the name of Rama. He was a devotee who remembered Rama at all times, whether in joy or sorrow. He had no sense of ego. He had given up all feeling of "mine" and "thine." When the rakshasas asked him in Lanka who he was, he firmly declared: "I am a dasa of the Lord of Kosala (Rama)." In all situations he described himself as a servant of Rama.

Qualities of a real devotee

Those who call themselves devotees these days put on the sacred ash on

their foreheads while going to a temple and rub it off on their return. When they are near Swami they behave like devotees. But when they go to a place where religion is in disfavour, they explain away their visits to Puttaparthi in a casual manner and declare that they are not devotees of Swami. What value is to be attached to the devotion of such pusillanimous persons? Real devotion consists in courageously standing up for your faith anywhere at any time. Hanuman was such a courageous and steadfast devotee. By his devoted services to the Lord he 'redeemed his life and became immortal.

Maithri (friendship): The great exemplar of this kind of devotion is Arjuna. Arjuna and Krishna lived together closely. Arjuna accompanied Krishna like a shadow. He experienced innumerable troubles and was subjected to calumny and abuse. But through all these experiences, he did not allow his faith in Krishna to waver. He always prayed: "Krishna! You are my sole hope and refuge. There is none other to protect me." In this way, looking upon Krishna as friend, kinsman and alter ego, Arjuna relied on Krishna for everything. Krishna, for his part, was even ready to act as Arjuna's charioteer in battle. Arjuna made Krishna the charioteer of his life. Krishna thereby acquired the appellation Parthasarathy - the charioteer of Partha (Arjuna). Atmanivedanam (Or Atmarpanam) (Surrender of the self): Emperor Bali, the grandson of Prahlada, was an example of a devotee who completely surrendered to the Lord, offered everything he possessed to the Lord and thereby sanctified his life. He was totally dedicated in his devotion to the Lord. He was prepared to offer his head to the Lord and go down to the nether-world. No sacrifice was too great for him to win the Lord's grace. When his guru, Sukracharya, advised him to go back on the gift he had promised to Vamana, Bali rejected the advice, declaring that his life, his body and all that he had belonged to the Lord.

Devotion and society

Many high-souled men and great rulers practised these different ways of devotion in the past and held themselves forth as examples to the world. Devotion, the sages felt, should not be solely for achieving individual salvation. It should find expression in some kind of collective action. Offering

worship or prayer in seclusion and for one's own sake savours of some kind of selfishness. The ancients felt that the Divine cannot be attained by one who is self-centered. Even among Christians and Muslims, there is the practice of some one reading passages from the scriptures which are repeated by the congregation that is present. The Indian sages valued community prayers for the welfare of the world as good for the individual and the world. In the year 1459 A.D., Guru Nanak, the first Sikh guru, started the practice of bhajans (community singing). This practice gathered momentum over the years and in 1798, the great South Indian saint-composer Tyagaraja invested Bhajans with raga and tala (musical form and rhythm). Since then bhajans have acquired national vogue in all parts of the country.

Bhajans are intended to harmonise feelings

Bhajans should not be treated as one way of spending time. They are intended to harmonise the feelings, the singing, and the rhythmic beats of the participants so that they experience in unison the oneness of the Divine. Such bhajans are considered spiritually efficacious. Bhakti (devotion) should be given pride of place in Bhajans. They should be surcharged with love. When bhajans were first introduced in villages, Tyagaraja began with the song: "Come, all ye blessed ones, come, and let us join in singing the glory of Sri Rama". He also said that when they have Kodandapani (Rama with the Kodanda bow) on their side, they need not fear Dandapani (Yama, the Lord of Death).

It was in this spirit of intense love for the Lord and pure devotion that bhajans were started in the past. But in bharis today this spirit of holiness is absent. More importance is given to raga and tala (the tune and the rhythm) than to Bhava (the feeling) and raga (the melody). The attempt is more to please the hearers by sweet singing than to promote in them finer feelings of devotion. The feelings expressed in the bhajans should melt the hearts of the participants and move them to their depths.

The essence of Bhakti is Love and not formal exercises in japa or worship of various kinds. Worship should be offered to the Divine who resides in all

beings. Love is God: live in love. Love is the means of realising the bliss of the Self, which is centered in ourselves. It need not be sought elsewhere. It can be found within one's self when all thoughts are controlled and the mind is turned inwards. Dedicate all actions to the Lord. This is the highest knowledge. It is the summum bonum of existence. Love should become a way of life. That alone is true devotion.

You must realise that the grace of the Divine cannot be got by sweet talk or singing songs. When your hearts are pure the Divine will dwell in them. The Divine is not pleased by showy offerings or expensive paraphernalia. A loving heart is the only means to Divine Grace.

- Sathya Sai Baba

23. Duty of resistance to Adharma

Date: 11 October 1986 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam

When the Truth of the Self is known Bliss is experienced;

Without This truth, only anxiety remains; To know Brahman- is to be Brahman. Know ye , this truth.

CLAY is one, but pots are varied. Gold is one. Ornaments are many. Milk is white, though the cows may be of different colours. The Omni-Self is one; but It assumes innumerable bodies. The Divine is one, who is hidden in all selves. He is the embodiment of Truth. His glory is infinite. Though Truth is one, it is experienced in many forms. There are innumerable persons who cannot understand God. There are quite a few who claim to comprehend God. But no one can at any time, anywhere completely grasp the nature of the Divine. "Wherefrom speech and mind turn back without reaching it," says the Upanishad. How can any one describe what is beyond thought and words?

Conversion not creation

God has created all that is needed for man. The earth, fire, water, air and sunlight are the gifts of God. An individual or a scientist produces out of these elements got by the grace of God numerous objects with different forms and names. The scientist may imagine that he is creating these objects. No one can create anything out of nothing. What is being done is to change the form of what exists and give it different shapes. For instance, electricity is generated through water power. But the energy is not the creation of the scientist. What is potential is made usable. There are today numerous scientists and technologists who can harness the energy and potentialities of various natural products. These discoveries are impressive evidence of the advance of science. But it is a mark of ignorance to consider them as examples of man's creative power. Technology is employed to raise to the surface water 'from subterranean sources. This only means that water which is already there is being taken out and not newly created. Nor can man

destroy the basic stuff of matter. Man is incapable of either creating or destroying the primary material. It is only when one realises this truth that he can understand the subtle omnipresent nature of the Divine. The all-pervasive power of the Divine has been ever present. The earth, for instance, has the natural quality of gravitational attraction. Newton enquired into this phenomenon and found how it operates. Gravity existed long before Newton discovered the laws governing it. Similarly, although the power of the Divine has been always present in its subtle but all pervasive form, only the spiritually minded aspirants could experience it according to the intensity of their efforts.

The One and the many

There are numerous faiths, sects, beliefs and practices prevalent among mankind. All these are products of human fancies. The Truth, however, is one. It does not differ from caste to caste or nation to nation or from time to time. It is not governed by time or place. Likewise the basic elements - fire, air, water etc., - are universal in their nature - not varying according to community or place. They belong to all. Likewise, Divinity is One and universal, but men are fragmenting it and experiencing it diversely. It is wrong to limit the Divine in terms of nation, caste, creed, place or time.

Take, for instance, the example of Krishna. He was not the titular deity of Brahmins. Nor did he belong to the Kshatriyas. He was not the Lord of the Vaisyas. He was an incarnation, who appeared for the protection of the world. To claim that Krishna belonged to one or other group is only an index of petty possessiveness. Because the Yadavas boasted that Krishna belonged to their community, they ultimately destroyed themselves. The Divine belongs to every one and is not the sole preserve of any one. There is only one God, but He manifests Himself in many forms to please different people. Sadhana alone is not enough to enable one to understand this truth. The spirit of enquiry is also necessary. Today numerous divisive forces are at work. What is essentially one is being regarded as many. In this process, the true concept of Divinity is lost. In the pursuit of worldly interests and out of commercial considerations, the Divine is being split up. As a result, men are unable to

grasp the true nature of the Divine. This leads to a failure to distinguish between what is true and what is false.

Abettors of adharma

Only the nation in which the goddesses of Dharma (Righteousness) and Santhi (Peace) are adored will genuine prosperity and happiness exist. Today many are indulging in actions opposed to Dharma and truth and, on the basis of their caste or community, are promoting strife and conflict in the country. Elders in the nation are remaining mere spectators of all the unrighteous and violent actions that are being done by the evil elements. Even the scholars and intellectuals are remaining silent. Persons holding high office are merely watching what goes on. No one, however, is making any effort to stop this menace. They are not resisting the evil elements. It appears as if all their knowledge, position and influence have been reduced to nothing. Such persons, though they may not be indulging in unrighteous acts, are giving encouragement to them.

Here is an example from the Mahabharata: Considering that war should be a great universal calamity, Dharmaja (the eldest of the Pandavas) appealed to Krishna to go as an ambassador of peace to the Kauravas. Entering the audience hall of Duryodhana, Krishna described at length the disastrous consequences of war. The great Acharyas - Bhishma, Drona, Kripa and Aswathama - who were present in the court, were intently listening to Krishna's words. But Krishna's appeal was of no use to them. Because of their long association with the wicked Kauravas, they became abettors in the crimes of Duryodhana and others. Vidura, who was a witness to the evil that was being committed, resolved to oppose it. He pleaded with the Kauravas in many ways to listen to the wise words of Krishna. His appeal fell on deaf ears. Rather than stay amongst such evil-minded persons, Vidura felt that it was better to go on a pilgrimage, and left the country immediately.

When silence is a crime

Bhishma, Drona and others, having been beneficiaries of the sustenance

provided by the wicked Kauravas, chose to be loyal to them and stayed on. All of them were great preceptors. They knew well the distinction between righteousness and evil. They had enquired into the nature of the eternal and the permanent. Of what avail was all that knowledge? When it came to practising what they knew, all their knowledge was of no use. In the final outcome, all of them met with the same end in the great war as the evil-minded Kauravas. Krishna looked upon those who, even if they were good in themselves, did not oppose unrighteousness and injustice committed in their presence when they had the capacity to do so, as actual participants in the crimes. When evil and injustice and violence are being perpetrated, if individuals look on unconcerned, they must be regarded as accomplices in the crimes. In the end they also suffer as much as the criminals. By their passive association, they provide encouragement to the evildoers.

Failure to resist evil is an offence

When the good are associated with the wicked and do not oppose them, they share the responsibility for the deeds of the evil doers. The Divine destroys even those who either do not oppose or remain passive while injustice and wrong doing are perpetrated. The Divine will not consider whether they are learned or ignorant, wise or unwise. If they are learned or wise, why did they not stand up for truth and justice? Why did they remain silent? It means they are tainted by the same guilt. The failure to resist evil is their offence. It is only when we resist acts of unrighteousness and injustice and try to put down malpractices in society that we can claim to be assisting in the task of restoring Dharma. In Treta Yuga, Ravana's brother, Vibhishana, could not put up with the wrong deeds being done by Ravana. Opposing these actions, he tried to correct Ravana in all possible ways. But when his efforts failed and he had no alternative, he sought refuge at the feet of the embodiment of Dharma, Sri Rama. The prime offender was Ravana alone. But in the war with Rama, all the Rakshasas who supported him or sided him, perished with him. They paid the penalty for their abetment of his crime.

Whoever may commit an offence, whether a son, a relation or a close associate, one will be free from the taint of being accessory to the crime only

if he opposes the wrong action and tries to correct the offender. If on the contrary, he allows it or encourages it to be done, he will be guilty of abetment.

Devotees faith should be evident

Today we see numerous devotees who may appear to be good persons. But in their conduct, do they really behave like devotees? Their devotion should be judged by what they do. Only then will the omnipresence of God be demonstrated. Their actions should show that they believe in the oneness of God. Wherever they are, their faith should be evident. But today this kind of devotion is not to be seen. What we find are self-centered and selfish persons, who are filled with egoism and acquisitiveness. With such attitudes, there is no limit to the evil propensities they can develop.

The foremost task today is to make men realise their inherent divinity. How far are materialists or scientists qualified to make pronouncements about spiritual matters? Even in the sphere of natural sciences, the expert in chemistry cannot speak with authority on matters relating to physics. A highly qualified doctor has no title to speak about engineering. That being the case regarding the physical sciences, how can those who have confined their studies to these sciences claim to pronounce opinions on matters of the Spirit?

Yantras and mantras

For instance, thanks to modern technology, thousands of persons scattered all over the country are able to listen to radio broadcasts, or see television programmes broadcast from Delhi. The simultaneous listening or viewing of the singing of a musician in Delhi in thousands of homes is rendered possible by technology. But when we read in the Bhagavata that Sri Krishna appeared simultaneously to the gopikas in thousands of homes, questions are asked whether this is credible. People who question this power of mantras, are prepared to believe in the power of yantras (machines). If man-made machines can be so powerful, why doubt the power of mantras?

How is the music produced in one place carried in space to different places? The sound waves are converted into electrical waves and transmitted through the ether. The waves in the ether have a permanence in space and can be recalled by one who is purehearted and can attune himself to receiving the etheric vibrations. A particular radio broadcast cannot be heard by one who has no receiver and who has not tuned in to the particular station. Likewise, if the all-pervasive Divine is received in the radio receiver of the heart by tuning in with one-pointed devotion, the bliss of that experience will reveal the nature of the Divine. All the sound vibrations that are sent out into space remain in the ether. These sound waves have to be converted into waves of light. Then they become Jnana sakti (power of knowledge) and Yoga sakti (yogic power). It is because the gopikas have acquired these capacities, they could experience the omnipresence of Krishna. Their hearts were filled with the form and name of Krishna.

Manifestations of such devotion are beyond investigation and explanation. Such experiences are beyond reason. There cannot be demonstrative proof for every phenomenon. When such proofs are not readily available even for ordinary things in life, how can you have such proofs for the Divine? One who is earnest about spiritual matters will not seek such proofs. Each one knows the workings of his mind and the calibre of his devotion. One cannot understand how another's devotion to God finds expression.

Mystic experiences

From ancient times, sages and saints enjoyed the experience of communion with the Divine and gave expression to their experiences in different ways. Such experiences are common to people of all faiths. In Christianity, there are records of such spiritual experiences. Similar experiences are to be found among Muslims. The principles and rituals of different religions may vary. But the experience of union with the Divine is common to believers in any faith. If persons are not able to attain to this state, it is due to their inadequacy and not because the grace of the Divine is lacking or partial. The Lord's grace is available in abundance everywhere. But people are not making their hearts fit receptacles for receiving the grace. Their hearts are not pure. They are

racked with constant doubts. Man has lost confidence in himself. One who cannot trust another human being for a few minutes, how can he develop faith in God? Firm faith is the primary need. We must be steadfast in our beliefs. God's grace cannot be had by one who is wavering from moment to moment and whose heart is not pure. The Lord judges the devotee by the purity of his heart and not by the kind of worship or japa he performs. Even if you do not practise worship or meditation, it is enough if you have cleansed your heart. The Divine will then enter it.

"Walk beside Me and be My friend".

As one of the students said yesterday the first stage in sadhana is to declare: "You (God) are mine." The second stage is to realise: "This is not correct. If I claim, 'You are mine', my ego is likely to get inflated. 'I am yours' is the proper attitude." The Gopikas declared to Krishna: "We are yours." The Yadavas boasted: "Krishna is our kinsman." This egoistic pride led to the complete self-destruction of the Yadavas. Because of the gopikas' attitude of surrender, they could experience Krishna always in their hearts. In this context I shall recall what I told the students the other day. "Do not walk in front of Me. I may not follow you. Don't walk behind Me. I may not lead you. Walk beside Me and be My friend." If you attempt to walk in front of Me, you may be taking the wrong path. If you walk behind Me, you may possibly desert Me. Walk abreast of Me. Then there is no chance of your going astray or away from Me, because I am with you. The inner meaning of this is: "You and I are one." Divinity is omnipresent. The Divinity is the Indweller in every being. That being the case, there is no need for you to go in front or walk behind. Take the Divine with you, wherever you go. This is the true mark of the Sadhaka. Some may say, "We shall worship Swami wherever we may be." Do they have the spiritual competence to make such a claim? If they are true to their claim, they will have no desires of any kind. Till they have reached that state of desireless devotion, they have to follow some kinds of spiritual discipline. Even Rama and Krishna went through a period of discipline under gurus and tried to earn their benediction. Hence they proclaimed the importance of the Guru-Sishya relationship.

Acquire competence to protest against evil

Today because of the proliferation of improper desires, the deep involvement with worldly pursuits and a materialist approach to life, many evil tendencies have grown in the social system. When evil thoughts fill the minds of men, no knowledge or skill is of any avail. The failure to correct such evil-minded persons is a blot on the life of the devout. As a result, they also get tainted by the same evil. It is the duty of all God-minded persons to plunge into society, protest against the evils rampant in it, and try to reform it to the extent possible. Only the person who is competent to undertake such a task is fit for social service. You must acquire this competence. You must be prepared to face any kind of crisis and meet any type of calumny. Calumny and abuse should not affect one who has firm faith in God. The man who experiences the bliss of union with the Divine has the strength of a thousand elephants. He has boundless courage and knows no fear. The God-centered person has three qualities: Purity, Perseverance and Patience. Without these qualities, a man is a weakling. But with them, he has all the strength and courage he needs to face any challenge.

The name "Rama" means who pleases or causes delight. "Krishna" means He who attracts, draws towards Himself.

This attitude of attraction is characteristic of Divinity. Why does the Divine attract? Is it to deceive or mislead? No. It is to transform, reconstruct, reform - a process called 'samskar.' Samskar means a humble humane servant of those who need help and involve himself in paropakar.

- Sathya Sai Baba

24. Glorify the Lord's Name

Date: 08 November 1986 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam / Occasion: Akhanda Bhajan

EMBODIMENTS of Love! Only when we realise the preciousness of the diamond will we take care to safeguard it. Likewise only when we are aware of the value of chanting the Lord's name will we make the effort to practise it and benefit from it. Devotees recite or sing the names of the Lord in two ways. One is Keerthanam and the other is Sankeerthanam. Keerthanam is done individually and benefits only the devotee concerned.' Sankeerthanam is done collectively for the good of the world as a whole. Keerthanam is of various kinds. First is Guna Keerthana - praising the qualities and attributes of God through song. Second is Bhava Keerthana - expressing the inner feelings and emotions of the devotee. Reflecting the feelings of peace, companionship, yearning, filial love or sweetness experienced by the devotee, these songs give vent to the emotional outpouring of the devotee. The third is Leela Sankeerthanam - praising in song the sports and divine play of the Lord. This is done through singing the Ashtapadi (of Jayadeva) or describing the sports and miraculous deeds of the Lord. The rasa krida is also in this category. The fourth is Nama Sankeerthanam - singing the names of the Lord. This is the most efficacious of all forms of devotional singing. But in actual practice the devotees derive joy from singing all types of devotional songs.

Special significance of Nama Sankeerthana

What is the special significance of Nama Sankeethana - singing the names of the Lord? "Nama" is made up of three letters: "Na" "a", "ma". All music is based on the seven swaras - the seven notes. According to the science of numerology the letters "Na", "a" and "Ma" have the numerical values: 0, 2 and 5 making up seven in all. The seven notes are Sa, ri, ga, ma, pa, da, ni. The Gopikas made use of these seven notes to combine music, rhythm and devotion in the Rasa Krida dance with Krishna. In this group dance, the Gopikas were so completely lost in devotion and song that they experienced oneness with the Divine. In this way, Sankeerthan (community singing) in

praise of Krishna became popular and helped to develop devotion and promote collective prayers for the welfare of the world. Similarly community singing in the name of Rama also came into vogue. Numerologically, the letters in the name of Rama (Ra+a+ma) add up to seven. Besides the seven notes, the mystic number seven is associated with many sacred things like the seven islands, the seven oceans, the seven sages and so on. In accordance with this concept, seven-day festivals and yajnas are held.

Threefold purity essential

Not all realise the potency and efficacy of reciting the Lord's name. The first requisite is purity of thought, word and deed. The name that is uttered by the tongue should be meditated upon by the mind. What is uttered and dwelt upon should be hailed by clapping the hands. This threefold concentration on the Divine name - unity of mind, speech and action - purifies the heart and nourishes the feeling of devotion. Better than recounting the qualities of the Lord, singing His glories or relating His exploits and teachings, the chanting of the name is supremely edifying. If merely the Lord is described as Dayamaya (the embodiment of kindness) there may be many who qualify for that description. If the term "Leelamanusha vighrahu" (One who has assumed the human form as a sport) is used, it may apply to any number of persons. Guru Nanak was the initiator of the practice of community singing of devotional songs. He believed that through such community singing the common man can ennoble his life and experience the presence of the Divine in everyone. Through that experience, one can become a knower of the Brahman (jnani). Ratnakara, who led the life of a highway man, became the sage Valmiki after prolonged meditation on the name of Rama. He got the illumination out of which the Ramayana was born. Moses was another great figure of old times who achieved Godrealisation by continuously dwelling on the name of God.

Community singing of bhajans

When the chanting of the Name is done in community singing, it should be in a form in which the entire group can participate easily. The tune, the rhythm,

etc. should be such that all can follow the bhajan. If the lead singer takes up a song that is not familiar to others, the response from the group will be poor. There will be no enthusiasm or genuine participation. Their minds, will be distracted. When all the devotees participate in the bhajan, the vibrations that are produced will generate joy and harmony. Many who organise mass singing on special occasions are not aware what kind of bhajans should be sung then. A person who has an individual style of his own may sing as he likes in private, but he is not suitable for community singing. There are some rules to be observed in conducting community bhajans. Alapana (elaboration of a raga) may be done in keerthana (individual singing), but it is wholly out of place in community bhajans. Hence, in such bhajans the accent should be entirely on the Name. Today we are having the Akhanda Bhajan (nonstop twenty-four-hour global bhajan by Sai devotees all over the world). This is being done not for the sake of one individual, one nation or one community. It is for the welfare of humanity as a whole. The bhajans that are sung permeate the ether in the form of sound waves and fill the entire atmosphere.

Thereby the whole environment gets purified. Breathing in this purified atmosphere, our hearts get purified. Reciting the Lord's name is a process of give and take. Singing the Lord's name should become an exercise in mutual sharing of joy and holiness. It should be remembered that the sounds we produce reverberate in the atmosphere. They remain permanently in the ether as waves and outlast the individual uttering the sounds. Today the atmosphere is polluted by unholy and vicious sounds. This results in the growth of evil thoughts and feelings, which lead to evil deeds. If the atmosphere has to be purified, it has to be filled with pure and sacred sounds. Hence the need to cultivate purity in thought, word and deed.

Singing should be vibrant and soulful

Community bhajans should not be treated as a pastime. When thousands of persons join in singing bhajans, they should be fully absorbed in the devotional process and the ecstasy of that experience. The singing should be vibrant and soulful and not mechanical or drawling and uninspiring. It should combine bhava (feeling), raga (melody) and tala (rhythm). What delight can

be experienced when all sing in chorus, with the same feeling, in the same tune and to the same timing! When there is such unity the Divine can be experienced. The songs should glorify the Name rather than describe the attributes of the Lord. When attributes are praised some may develop doubts. If for instance, the Lord is described as Karunamaya (the embodiment of compassion), some ailing devotee may ask why the Lord is showing no compassion towards him and offer relief. Similar doubts may arise when the sports or exploits of the Lord are glorified. But when the song is confined to the name alone, these doubts don't arise. Hence, the devotee should install the name firmly in his heart and sing with fervour. Samyag keerthanam = Sankeerthanam. Sankeerthanam means singing extremely well. This means that in community singing, the participant should sing with full-throated joy and deep feeling. He should not bother about his voice or his musical ability. Purity of feeling will make up for everything. Picture the Lord in your heart and utter the Name - then you will feel the joy of singing the Name. You will also evoke joy in others. The name Rama is made up of three bijaksharas (root letters) associated with Fire, Sun and Moon. Symbolically, this means that by uttering the name of Rama, the fire principle will burn away one's sins, the sun principle will dispel the darkness of ignorance, and the moon principle will cool the fevers arising out of desires. (Bhagavan concluded His discourse with the singing of the bhajan, "Harey Rama ! Harey Rama! Rama Rama! Harey Harey!")

25. Equipment for service

Date: 21 November 1986 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam

INDULGING in flimsy gossip and watching scenes of violence and cruelty, men today are wasting and missing a big portion of their precious lives. Time is condemned, because it is too little, or because it runs too fast to fulfill galloping greed. Men are not aware that time sanctified by service offers high rewards to themselves as well as those whom they serve. All acts of service are not equally sanctifying or uniform in the benefits they confer. When service is undertaken by power-hungry people, or under compulsion or by imitative urges, it results in more harm than good. Self-aggrandizement or competition or ostentation are motives that will pollute the sacred Sadhana of Service. The candidate for this Sadhana has to avoid Ahamkara (egotism), Adambara (exhibitionism) and Abhimana (favouritism). Before embarking on a service project one must introspect and examine his equipment for the Sadhana whether his heart is full of selfless love, humility and compassion, whether his head is full of intelligent understanding and knowledge of the problem and its solution, whether his hands are eager to offer the healing touch, whether he can gladly spare and share time, energy and skill to help others in dire need.

Seva must be freed from attachment

These qualities can sprout and grow only when the Reality of Unity is implanted in the consciousness. All men, all living beings, are cells in the Body of God. Their origin, continued existence, and progress are all in God, by God, for God. The individual is a unit in this unity. There are no other aliens. When one is ill, all suffer. When one is happy, all are partners of that happiness. Faith in this truth is the fundamental equipment the Sevak must acquire. Leaders and guides of Seva organisations and institutions and activities are offering charity, claiming that they are motivated by generosity and accepting homage from recipients. This is the reason why such service all over the world does not yield lasting results. In order to deserve the sacred name, Seva, the activity must be freed from all attachment to the Self and

based on firm faith in the Divine resident in every being. Seva has to be considered as worshipping the form that God has assumed to give the Sevak the chance of worship. When a hungry Nara is served a hearty meal, what is being done is Narayana Seva, for, Nara (man) is only "a form and a name" projected by Maya (human ignorance) on Narayana (God). This is a gathering of members of the Seva Dal who are engaged in service among the rural population in this country. You are here busy with what is called a workshop. Do not allow your service activities turn into shops which concentrate on window dressing, in order to attract attention and patronage. Service rendered to villagers, who are denied the ways and means of decent lives, draws Divine Grace, more than service elsewhere. Give a helping hand to the helpless, who are afflicted with many ailments and handicaps.

Action alone can inspire action

But, before attempting to advise them, you must endeavour to advise yourselves; before venturing to reform them, reform yourselves. Care must be taken to avoid boasting before them about your superiority. It will hurt them and keep them away. Do not indulge in lectures. Action alone can inspire action. Example alone can instruct. Tall talk is a barren exercise. Service activities in all lands can thrive only through selfless dedication. Fanfare is a sign of insincerity. Silent, unsullied work alone can appeal. The villager has enough common sense to see through the show. Remember that, though illiterate, he is aware of the ideals propounded by the scriptures, saints and sages of this land, of the core of Bharatiya Culture. Clever propaganda may achieve some temporary results but, in the long run, it will bring disappointment and disillusion. Like the 'rockets' lit by children on Deepavali night, it will flare up and fizzle down. Today, we are confronted everywhere by statistics parading quantities and reports in glowing terms. Do not bother about adding to the number or achieving a target. I value quality, not quantity. Genuine, intensive devoted service offered in a few villages is more fruitful than casual contacts and superficial service offered to a large number. Convince yourselves that life cannot continue long without others serving you and your serving others. Master-servant, ruler-ruled, guru-disciple, employer-employee, parents-children, all these are bound by mutual

service. Every one is a sevak. The farmer and labourer whom you serve produce by their toil your food and clothing as their service to you. Remember that the body, with its senses-mind-brain complex has been awarded to you to be used for helping the helpless - -Paropakartham idam sareeram. Seva is the highest of paths of Devotion which wins the Grace of God. It promotes mental purity, diminishes egoism and enables one to experience, through sympathetic understanding, the unity of mankind. Therefore, I bless your Seva activities in the villages of your motherland.

26. The fourfold exhortation

Date: 22 November 1986 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam / Occasion: Convocation - 5

STUDENTS, Teachers, persons interested and involved in Education! Education has to make a person the concrete embodiment of the higher Reality, that is the basis of the material universe, of life in the world, of the expanding dominions of the mind, and of the human community. He is the mirror which reflects the Divinity inherent in man, evident in every expression of his character. The process of education has to inspire man to discover the Truth seeking it through the study of the objective world. Fulfilment lies in the awareness of that Truth which, when once known, does not need correction or modification or revision. Education aims at this consummation in a life lived in the atmosphere of unity, devoid of the varied demands of diversity. The educated person knows the inter-relation between what appears as distinct.

Real sign of an educated person

Education must reveal the path which enables man to tap the dormant spring of divinity within, without getting entangled with the mass of created objects. It has to lay stress on spiritual transformation as more fundamental than even moral uplift. The real sign of an educated person is his attitude of sameness towards all. He sees in society the manifestation of divinity. Education does not lead from nature to the all pervading Atma. It leads man to study nature, with the unifying Atmic outlook. When the powers of Nature are harnessed to narrow selfishness, they recoil on him as plagues. When they are revered as revelations of the Atma, they become beneficial. Education equips man with this insight. The process by which man foregoes his freedom and is bound in the net of desire can never be education. It has to aim at ensuring peace and stability in each country by continuous precept and practice of the basic unity. After acquiring this sacred vision and inspiration, Brahmacharis moved into the next stage of life, into society for founding and fostering families. The occasion was marked by a Convocation where they were provided with holy guidelines and reminded of their duties. When the young are at the Gurukul, with fellow students and teachers, engaged in study, one had to strive

ceaselessly to cultivate serenity, purity and detachment, and try to identify their truth. For, the stage of Brahmacharya (studentship) sets the pace and decides the fate of three subsequent stages of householder, recluse and monk. Students! When you lag behind and fail to achieve success in study and the practice of ideals, your mothers are steeped in agony. The motherland, Bharathamatha, too suffers the same agony a thousand times more, when you lag behind in acquiring moral and spiritual excellence. Students have the responsibility to save both mother and motherland from the agony and to confer Ananda instead. He alone can be considered a real student, who has realised this obligation.

Everyone of the leaders and elders you know, administrators and officers, in political and other fields has been, while young, students like you. You have to take their roles later. Do not ignore this fact. You have to help the progress of the motherland by work among fellow citizens with sincere effort and patent example.

Absence of spiritual vision

What is the meaning of the expression "human progress"? It means raising the level of moral life and brightening daily lives with goodness and godliness. Life has to be an incessant process of repair and reconstruction, of discarding evil and developing goodness. Paddy grains have to discard the husk in order to become consumable rice. Cotton has to be reformed as yarn to become wearable cloth. Even gold nuggets have to undergo the crucible and get rid of alloys. Man too must purify his instincts, impulses, passions, emotions and desires so that he can progress in good thoughts, deeds and words. The individual is valued only on the basis of the level of transformation he has attained. But, today, the rulers have no capacity to transform the people, nor have the people the urge to transform the rulers. The absence of spiritual vision is the cause for this situation. So, efforts must be directed now to cultivate that vision among students who will be forming the citizens and rulers of tomorrow. Students of today must be encouraged to follow disciplined and devoted habits of thinking and living.

This is the age of novel civilisation

Students form the foundation of a nation; they are the roots that hold it firm. Their moral stamina ensures a home of peace and an era of joy and happiness. Science and technology have expanded vastly today. Their gifts have made life more comfortable and pleasant. But they have brought with them grief and fear, loss and calamity in far greater degree. More than all, they have bred domination and concentration of authority. The reason is absence of proper discrimination while accepting and utilising these gifts. This is the age of a novel civilisation. The emergence of discordant notes has silenced the call of the divine from within man. He is eager to make his life a merry-go-round but it is turning into a painful tangle of troubles. He does not try to discover the cause of this contradiction. Instead, he wastes his years in empty ephemeral pomp and pretense. He is unaware of the value of each passing day. He is caught in the coils of speed and splash - films, planes, radio, video, television etc. He is restless and has to encounter countless worries. Fear of imminent war or famine has gripped man. Fear, while alone at home, fear while on the street! When insecurity prevails, how can man be happy?

The basic reason for this pathetic situation is the spending spree for satisfying sensual desires. To get his child admitted, a middle class employee pays thousands of rupees to the school. He pays lakhs of rupees to secure a seat in a professional college for his son or daughter. He competes with his neighbours in the purchase of gadgets which they parade, with the help of loans or corrupt practices. Technology ruins step by step the character of men. The son secures an LL.B. involving the sacrifice by his parents of their income. He gets no job. So, he decides on a career as lawyer. He has to own a car, though hungry and poor.

Man is no more human

Thus, truth, justice and morality have eroded everywhere and in every field. Man is no more human. Students! I exhort you to recognise this tragic situation and dedicate yourselves to the task of promoting the happiness and

welfare of the people, and presenting shining examples of truth, sincerity and integrity. Give up the notion that you are undergoing education in order to grab jobs. Convince yourselves that you are earning knowledge leading to wisdom, in order to serve others all your lives.

The advice given by gurus during Convocations in hermitages is the same. "Mother and Motherland are more worthy of reverence than Heaven. Your parents are sacrificing their comforts and even necessities in order to ensure your progress. It is your duty to revere them and make them happy. Engage yourselves in acts that others will respect and not in acts of which you feel ashamed. Honour the elders. Love your native land." After receiving such directions from the Gurus, students returned home, with hearts heavy with gratitude and sorrow at the departure from the hermitages. The Convocation marked the close of a sweet chapter in life when the ideals to be pursued in later years were implanted. So the leave taking was fraught with humility and hope. They realised then that life involved both coming together and separation from each other. They engraved in their hearts in golden letters the advice imparted to them on the occasion of departure.

Man has no fear of sin, nor love for God

But today, in the very same land, Convocations are polluted by noisy interruptions, disgusting behaviour and demonstrations of disbelief. Man has become so stupid that he has neither fear of sin nor love for God. How then can he be secure in peace and escape from catastrophe? These two are two eyes of mankind. Without them, man has to totter in darkness, however learned and scholarly he may be. Where can we find students with compassion in their hearts, spreading peace all around, straight and true in behaviour, righteous and virtuous? Individuals who have illumined their innate good nature with such holy qualities and who are eager to be helpful to others are not visible, to the eye. So, you have to acquire and develop the practice of Truth, Righteousness and Serenity.

Do not crave to acquire cultures foreign to ours. We have a treasure of gold in our Bharat. Why seek it outside? The culture of Bharat is sublime, splendrous,

sacred, divine. It can fulfill all your high desires, quench your deepest thirst. I am on the search, I am on the search For one who ever clings to moral path. Can tree cotton fruit ever mango be? Can any stout cane claim sugar within? Can pebbles that shine ever candy become? Let not form deceive; see the nature and judge. So, students have to cultivate character. That is what I am searching for. Students! You must be aware of the implications of studentship. You have to translate that awareness into actual practice. You have to enshrine the experience in your hearts. You must, then, share the joy of that experience with others. Do not allow your minds to get agitated with limitless desires.

First, render your homes bright by pleasing your parents. If you cause grief to them your entire life will be soaked in grief and your children, in turn, are sure to sink you in sorrow. Do not be arrogant towards your parents because you have studied a few things. "Consider the Mother as God; consider the Father as God; consider the Teacher as God; consider the Guest as God." Follow this fourfold exhortation with full faith in its validity, derive Ananda therefrom and inspire others by your example, so that the Motherland may progress and prosper. Fulfil this desire of mine, with my blessings.

27. Inherit Sai Wealth : Love

Date: 23 November 1986 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam / Occasion: Birthday - 61

This great Motherland of ours, which produced highsouled men who spread its glory across the continents; This heroic land which won its freedom from occidental adventurers; This sacred land which achieved eminence in music, literature and the fine arts; Being born in this land of beauty resplendent with artistic achievements,

It is the supreme duty of all ye devotees To protect the treasure of Dharma bequeathed to you by Bharatha Matha!

EMBODIMENTS of the Divine! The land of Bharat resembles an orange fruit. The religions and communities are the pieces in it. The numerous occupations pursued by the people are like the seeds. To be born in a country with such rich variety is itself a blessing. It is a land which should shine in all its glory by manifesting unity. From very early times Bharat has been proclaiming to the world its faith in God and the godly life. "Let all the worlds be happy" has been the avowed ideal of Hindu society. The good fortune of those who are born in such a country is beyond praise.

Both pain and pleasure are impostors

Man is essentially divine in nature. Owing to various factors man tends to forget his inherent divinity (Sat-Chit-Ananda). The veil of ignorance which conceals the divinity in him cannot be removed easily. Neither wealth, position nor scholarship can rid him of this malaise. Atma Jnana (knowledge of the Self) alone can provide the remedy. You should not be misled by the pleasures derived from possessions, position or prosperity. These are transient things, which come and go. Pain and pleasure are incidental to human existence like kith and kin. Man should endeavour to realise his true nature, experience his inherent divinity, and not yield to the temptations of the moment. Both pain and pleasure are impostors. Man should not allow himself to be led astray by them. The Self transcends time and space. It is

eternal and unchanging. Enquiry into the nature of the Self is the message of the perennial philosophy. It is also the primary duty of man. The sages declared that the body is a perishable rag-bag, teeming with ills. Giving up attachment to it, man should seek refuge in God. The five elements can affect only the body but can have no effect on the Spirit.

Purity and Divinity

The body, mind and Atma (spirit) constitute a human being. The three demonstrate the nature of man and enable him to grow to his true stature. They represent the three concepts of Action, Awareness and Realisation. The body is the instrument for practising Dharma. It is the means of discharging all one's duties. The mind is the source of good and bad thoughts. The world is understood only through the mind. It is the instrument for judging between right and wrong, the impermanent and the everlasting. It represents Awareness or understanding. The Atma represents the pure, effulgent, eternal and unchanging Consciousness. It shines within man as illuminating flame. The Sastras have characterised it as Divine. The Upanishads have declared that God dwells in the cave of the heart. The Bible has declared that the Divine can be experienced only through purity of the heart. The Quran also declares that purity of heart is essential for experiencing God. Guru Nanak declared that only through good thoughts, good speech and good actions can one realise the Divine. All faiths are one in proclaiming the supreme importance of purity of heart. Man, however, has forgotten his true divine nature and is immersed in the vain pursuit of material pleasures. In the process he has ignored right conduct and is prey to many ills. Men regard Dharma as merely ethical conduct in daily life. But this is not so. Dharma really means recognition of the Universal consciousness that is in each individual and act on the basis of the unity of that consciousness. When this consciousness in man is enveloped in the ego, it assumes the form of three gunas (Satwa, Rajas, Tamas). When the Divine nature of this consciousness is realized, it is transformed into Atma Dharma - the Dharma of the Self. True Dharma is the realisation of the unity of the Omni-Self.

Atma-dharma and Para-dharma

All worldly duties and activities bear the imprint of three gunas. Swa-Dharma refers to Atma- Dharma (the Dharma of the Spirit). Paradharma is Dharma (duties) relating to the world. The worldly duties are ephemeral and subject to change. They have been changing all through the ages. These should not be treated on a par with Atma-Dharma. Among these worldly duties, there are duties like Varna-Dharma (functional duties), Asrama-Dharma (duties relating to one's stage in life), and others.

These duties have been laid down to help man in leading his worldly life. But beyond them is the Atma Dharma, which has to be observed for Self-realisation. By solely adhering to worldly duties, man remains at the animal level. Through the discipline of the mind, man may rise to the human level. But it is only when the physical and mental duties are linked to the spiritual discipline that Atma Dharma is observed. The body performs actions, the mind distinguishes between right and wrong. The Atma functions as the Witness. Although these three appear to differ from each other, they are inter-related. It is only when the three are integrated and harmonised that man can achieve self-fulfillment. Dharma, Artha, Kama and Moksha - the four Purusharthas - are the aims of life. It is only when Artha (the acquisition of wealth) and Kama (the fulfillment of desires) are linked to Dharma (righteousness) that Moksha (Liberation) can be easily achieved. But if Artha and Kama are divorced from Dharma, there can be no peace or happiness. Moksha is freedom from delusion.

"All this is permeated by the Divine"

The word Manava (man) means one who is not new. Man has been taking many births and is caught up in the endless cycle of desires, differences and discord. He must get out of this vicious circle by recognising that the Divine is immanent in everything. Society itself should be regarded as a manifestation of the Divine. The Upanishad has declared: "Isavasyam idam Sarvam" ("All this is permeated by the Divine"). The stars are Brahman; The Sun is Brahman. The Moon is Brahman; water is Brahman. Heaven is Brahman; Vaikunta is Brahman Father is Brahman; Mother is Brahman. All wealth is

Brahmam; Brahmam is the creator, the protector and the destroyer. Time is Brahmam; The body is Brahmam. Nature is Brahmam; Life is Brahmam. This assemblage is Brahmam; Truth is Brahmam. The Sai who is declaring this is also Brahmam. Brahmam permeates everything in the Cosmos. There is nothing other than Brahmam. When Brahmam is immanent in everything, how can we search for Him? Where is He to be found? When the entire universe is his abode, how can you locate the road or the entrance to it? The Lord of the universe is the Lord enshrined in your heart. If you play on your heart strings with ecstasy, the heart will be Vaikunta itself.

The Divine wealth of love

The Lord has endowed you with all his wealth and Divine potentialities. You are inheritors of this wealth. You have to discover what that wealth is. Sai's wealth is pure, selfless and boundless Love. This is the truth. It is not the edifices you see here that are Sai's wealth. It is pure, selfless Love alone. You must inherit this Love, fill yourselves with it and offer it to the world. This is your supreme responsibility as Sai devotees. What is it that you can offer to the Lord who is omnipotent, omnipresent and all-knowing? The various things you offer to God are given out of delusion. Can the Lord who permeates the Universe be confined in a temple? To one who has the effulgence of a billion suns, what lamp can you light? His truth is beyond the comprehension of Brahma and Hara. How can others comprehend Him? What name can be given to One who is all things? What food can you offer to one who holds the cosmos in His stomach? You become devoted for your own sake. Whatever the name or form in which you worship the Lord, He will respond. He is the provider of everything, who fulfills every wish. Whether the devotee is one in distress or craving for some object, or a seeker or a Jnani, God responds according to the measure of his devotion. Embodiments of the Divine! To realise the divine. Love is the easiest path. Just as you can see the moon only with the light of the moon, God, who is the Embodiment of Love, can be reached through Love. Regard Love as your life breath. Love was the first quality to emerge in the creative process. All other qualities came after it. Therefore, fill your hearts with love and base your life on it.

Who can be regarded as the greatest conqueror?

Man's thoughts are filled with various types of attachments and aversions. Attachment and hatred are dominant qualities in man. They are the evil planets that bedevil man's life. Once, Totaka, a disciple of Sri Sankaracharya, asked the guru: "Master, in this world, who can be regarded as the greatest conqueror?" Sri Sankaracharya replied: "Only the person who has acquired mastery over his senses is the greatest conqueror - not those who may conquer kingdoms, scale the Himalayas or master all knowledge." Prahlada told his father Hiranyakasipu, "You want to conquer the three worlds, but you are failing to conquer your senses." One who has not mastered his internal enemies like anger, hatred etc., how can he hope to conquer his external enemies? The inner enemies can be conquered only by one means. love. It is essential to make our life worthwhile by practising love, by subduing the six internal enemies (anger, envy etc.), and dedicating all our actions to God. The world is in turmoil. At this juncture, it is the duty of devotees to realise the Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man and counteract the evil forces which are inflicting innumerable troubles on mankind. Resorting to the potent weapon of love, they should try to serve humanity and to eradicate the forces of violence and unrighteousness which are rampant today. Even if you cannot perform any other kind of worship or sadhana, service to society will help you to sanctify your life. Of the nine forms of devotion, Seva (service) is most important. Through service, complete surrender of the self can be achieved.

Fellow men and the world must be seen ever in the mirror of Sat- Chit- Ananda. Kinship based on this recognition will alone last. That is the Sai kinship.

- Sathya Sai Baba

28. Truth and Faith

Date: 25 December 1986 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam / Occasion: Christmas

SATHYAM Jnanam, Anantham Brahma. (Truth, Wisdom, Beginning-less and Endless Brahma). Brahman manifested first as Akasa (Space); the Akasa concretised as Vayu (the Atmosphere); the Atmosphere revealed the Fire characterised by Warmth and Energy; fire yielded water; from water, solid matter, earth was produced. Plants grew on earth and fostered man with food. This chain links man with Brahman and persistently draws man up to his distant source. The gross body of man sustained by food encases the subtle mental and the subtler intellect enclosing the still subtler, Ananda, the deepest delight, the innermost urge in man. The progress from the gross corporeal body, which depends on food through the incorporeal sheaths of Prana, Mind and intellect until the Ananda core is the summum bonum of human existence. Living beings concern themselves, mostly with only the food sheath, the breath sheath and the mental sheath, they do not have the capacity to transcend the vagaries and volitions of the mind and the memories stored therein. They are promoted more by instinct and impulse, rather than by intellect, which enables one to discriminate and discard what is harmful and hollow. Man alone can exercise this faculty and decide on a course of action which can lead him to Ananda.

Great need to cultivate a broad outlook

But, man seldom uses this faculty or benefits by it. He gets lost in a maze of multiplying desires and earns, instead of Ananda, frustration and despair. The Ananda (Bliss), for which he is equipped and entitled, eludes him. Ananda is Divine. Caught in the turbulence of the worldly stream, he ignores and forgets his inherent hunger and the need to acquire the awareness of the Divinity within.

The destiny of a nation or community is dependent on the moral fibre of the people. Their character must be deep-rooted in Faith and in Truth: Truth must be revealed as unity of Thought, Word and Deed. Jesus emphasised in his

teachings the importance of Faith and the damage and the danger of hypocrisy. Joining both palms together and offering namsakar is an act of dedication of one's thought and speech. The greeting "Salam" too is a symbol of surrendering all three.

Christ proclaimed that God is all powerful and omnipresent, the One without a second. His teachings have to be interpreted, understood and followed from the universal point of view. This concept of God should not be narrowed down in an exclusive attitude of mind. There is great need, in a world broken into racial and religious units, to cultivate a broad outlook and large hearted attitudes. Narrow loyalties cause friction and conflict. This is the primary message of Jesus. It grew in him by stages. He looked upon himself, at first, only as a Messenger of God. Later, sensing closer relationship with God, he announced himself as the Son of God. As the awareness of Self developed, through contacts and meditation, he realised his identity with God, and he could assert, "I and my Father are One."

Path of Love is a means of merger

Jesus advised one of his foremost disciples, Peter to live in love, for Love is God. Man can experience God only when he becomes the embodiment of Love, which doesn't seek anything or expect even gratitude in return, Love which becomes sacrifice and service, spontaneously. When Peter listened to such exhortations from the Master, he found a new joy welling up within him and a new meaning in the word joy. 'J' meant Jesus and the letter directed him to love Jesus first. 'O' meant others who must be loved next. 'Y' meant yourself who ought to be loved only last. But, look at the human condition today. Man loves himself first, others next and Jesus last! When God occupies the mind, the objective world or nature which is only the product of the mind loses its validity and man, the wave on the ocean, lapses in his source. The individual self and the omniself merge in Unity. Every religion seeks to present this basic truth about God, Nature and Man. Every creed is in essence highlighting this fact and the path of Love as the means of merger. So one must respect all creeds and faiths. They are beacons of light guiding pilgrims along the many paths to the Universal Absolute.

Welcome the chance for sacrificing

The three major paths are known as Karma, Bhakti and Jnana. There are many rivers in this land which act as channels for carrying life blood to the valleys and plains, like the Godavari, Krishna and Kaveri. Of these, Ganga, Yamuna and Saraswathi have symbolised, since ages, the three spiritual paths to God-realisation. The Ganga represents Nishkama Karma or Karma Yoga (selfless activity). The Yamuna proclaims the glory of Divine Love, or the path of Bhakti. Saraswathi which flows underground, unseen represents the Jnana Marga, or the path of relentless inquiry unto the reality. The goal of the inquiry is the discovery of the One without a second - Adwaitha Darsanam, Jnanam - of the unity that appears as Diversity. The junction of these three rivers summarises for every child of Bharath, his three duties to himself - disinterested service to fellow-men as an inescapable obligation, dedication and devotion towards God and achievement of constant awareness of the One that manifests as many. The body is the temple of God and therefore it has to be maintained, unsuffered by disease and distress. It 'has not been offered to man for catering to one's selfish vagaries. Jesus sanctified his body by sacrificing it for saving others. He was conscious of that supreme purpose and duty. With faith in the one-ness of humanity, he stood against opponents and critics and confronted their onslaughts. Every saint and prophet who strove to uplift the downtrodden and open the eyes of the blind to the splendour of God and Grace, had to be ready and willing for the ultimate sacrifice. One has to expect trouble and welcome the chance for sacrificing all that one clings to, while one is upholding Truth and righteousness. Faith in God is the bedrock that can save man from downfall.

When Rama was exiled into the forest, he paid no consideration to the privations he had to encounter there. He was so devoted to Dharma that he was unaffected by events. He allowed the vicissitudes of life to flow along, without harming him. The Pandavas are examples to illustrate how calamities and crises can be overcome by faith in God and the equanimity it confers.

God is in search of the genuine devotee

Likewise, Jesus demonstrated and preached the power of faith and, ultimately, invited on himself the supreme sacrifice of life itself. When his disciples started abusing his tormentors, his voice warned them to desist. "All are one, my son! Be alike to everyone." By a vision he granted to Paul who was reviling him, he transformed him into a penitent disciple, full of faith and ardour. It is only when we look upon the universe as permeated by God that we acquire the strength to fight the forces of evil. Many persons who engage themselves in prayers and pilgrimages for years wonder why they have not been able to realise God. It is unnecessary to go round the world searching for God. God, is in search of the genuine devotee. The devotee who is conscious of the omnipresence of God will find Him everywhere. He must have the firm conviction that there is no place where God is not present. That is the real mark of devotion. Meditation and prayer have value as means of purifying oneself. But they do not lead to God-realisation. Unwavering faith in God grants inexpressible Bliss. One should not give way to doubts which undermine faith. The power of Love is infinite. It can conquer anything. Once while Lord Buddha was journeying, he was confronted by a demoness who threatened to kill him. Smilingly, Buddha said: "You are not a demon; you are a deity! I love you even if you behave like a demon." Hearing these loving words, the demoness turned into a dove and flew away. Love can change the heart of even an inveterate enemy. It is this kind of Universal love that should be cultivated by everyone. There are people professing different faiths in the world - Christians, Muslims, Hindus, Zoroastrians and so on. There should be no difference or distrust amongst them, for all of them uphold Truth and Dharma.

It was to promote unity among people of different faiths that Guru Nanak started community bhajans which generate vibrations of harmony and peace. Today, the world is bedevilled by conflict and violence. Peace and prosperity can emerge only when people turn to the path of love and morality and lead purposeful lives. Regard yourselves as embodiments of Love and dedicate your lives like Jesus to the service of your fellow men.

29. The teacher and tomorrow

Date: 28 December 1986 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam

THE human body is the most wonderous machine in the world. It has a bewildering multiplicity of limbs, organs, veins, nerves and cells which co-operate to maintain it under varied conditions. If anyone of these rebels or refuses to rescue another, the body is bound to suffer. So too, a society, community, or nation can be safe, secure and happy only when the individuals comprising it are mutually helpful and bound together in skillful and sincere service. Every generation has to receive education and training in such intelligent cooperation and service. Or else, the world has to face confusion and chaos. The educational process has not received proper attention from thoughtful persons. The institutions which ought to have been temples of Saraswathi (the Goddess of transformation through learning) have become in all lands temples of Lakshmi (the Goddess of wealth). The ideal held before the tender, innocent, unselfish children is a lucrative job rather than a life of peace, contentment and love. Narrow loyalties, contest and competition are polluting the minds of children. Parents, teachers and all interested in the progress of mankind have to take note of this situation.

Pay attention to pupils spiritual progress

Teaching and learning have both become mechanical routines. They have lost the freshness and joy which vitality alone can give. The value of the teaching process lies in raising the level of consciousness of the learner, in heightening the sense of wonder and awe and in emphasising the unity of one with all. The destiny of a country is decided by the ideals implanted by the teachers in the minds of the boys and girls entrusted to their care. Education must pay attention not merely to the material and intellectual progress of the pupils but, even more, to their moral and spiritual progress. Education should help man to live a meaningful life. It should not direct all efforts to provide a livelihood. Education can claim success only when it results in the student gaining awareness of the Divinity inherent in him and others. No academic degree can confer as much self-confidence and selfsatisfaction and lead man

as quickly and gladly to self-sacrifice and self-realisation as that awareness. It has to be transmitted by teachers who have it through a sense of duty and in a spirit of love. It has to be accepted by students who have cultivated faith in the teacher and reverence for his role. The pot that pours and the pot that receives have to be steady and straight, eager to give and gain. If the teacher has the responsibility to inspire and illumine, the student has the responsibility to respond to the Love and Light, discarding all contrary thoughts. Thoughts that arise from the region of the pleasant (Preyas) cannot co-exist with those which arise from the tough challenges of higher life (Sreyas). The student must be equipped to prefer the latter to the former.

No one should be ridiculed or slandered

The higher life, which makes man human and a fit candidate for unfoldment of the Divinity that is his Reality, depends on the cultivations of the Five Cardinal virtues - Truth, Right Conduct, Love Peace and Non-Violence. These virtues elevate the individual as well as the society of which he is a part. The teacher has to watch every word and gesture of his, every action and reaction of his, in order to avoid any infringement of these virtues. For, the teacher is, for the pupils, the ideal, the example, to whom the parents have entrusted them. Women teachers can discharge this responsibility better than men. Children can be moulded more easily through sweetness and softness which maternal affection implies, rather than by fatherly advice and admonition.

The atmosphere of Love should not be disturbed by any uncharitable remark against any one's faith. Nor should any one be ridiculed or slandered. Children's minds should not be polluted by fear, hatred or disgust. The doors of their hearts must be open to all. Later on as the impact of society and the state grows, pupils can be led to an understanding of the political and religious forces that will affect their lives. Students have to be encouraged to "Follow the Master (the inner voice of Conscience), Face the Devil (the down-dragging anti-social urges), Fight to the End (until one is able to overcome the inner foes of lust, anger, greed, undue attachment, pride and hatred) and Finish the Game (of life on earth)." This duty is referred to in the Gita as Swadharma (one's genuine obligation to oneself); the duties that one gets

involved in, while dealing with others is defined as Paradharma. Of these two, swadharma is more vital and valuable.

The teacher should serve as a signpost for the community. The student determines the future of the nation. Together, they help to promote the greatness and welfare of the nation. Both students and teachers should realise that their welfare is bound up with the well-being of the society as a whole.

- Sathya Sai Baba

30. The primary principle

Date: 30 December 1986

ALL living beings emanated originally from water; humans have bodies built out of food based ultimately on plants sustained by water. Speech is the special acquisition of human beings and the earliest use man made of this talent to utter the glory of God and pray for His grace is the RK of the Rig Veda. The RK was rendered enchanting because it attributed Names to God while paying homage to the Supreme. All such names are subsumed and treasured in the sound OM the audible but not visible sign and symbol. OM indicates the Omniself, the Param Atman, the Cosmic and 'Trans-Cosmic Consciousness. Every moment, in every cell, in every atom, the OM resounds, reverberates and activates. OM energises, sustains and fills the Universe. "OM ithi ekaksharam Brahma" (The one letter OM, the indestructible is Brahma) assert the Upanishads. The Vedas assure us "Ayam Atma Brahma" (This Atma - Soul - is Brahma). The sages were aware that the Atma is OM, even when they defined OM as Brahma. In fact all the three expressions indicate the one and only Entity.

The four phases man passes through everyday

Every one has to achieve the awareness of this Atma in him. Man passes through four phases of life, each single day. He is awake (jagrath), he dreams (svapna), he sleeps (sushupthi) and he reaches the phase beyond the three (thuriya). When awake, the person is involved incessantly with the objective world, through the senses. The eyes are able to distinguish colours; the ears welcome good and bad sounds; the tongue tastes and rejects; the nose gathers information about fragrant and forbidding smells. The basic attributes of the five fundamental elements ether, wind, fire, water and earth - are apprehended by the five senses as sound, touch, form, taste and smell in that order. So the individual is concerned not only with itself but with all the Cosmos around. Therefore the waking stage is named Viswa (global). The soul of man then assumes an omnipresent form, reminiscent of Vishnu, of the Director of sensual activities, the Hrishikesa. During the phase of dreams,

man turns into himself. The senses of perception and action' lie dormant. The individual is busy with his memory and he plans and projects the mind has played with. People sleeping adjacent to one another dream differently according to each one's urges and mental mysteries. The dream has validity for the dreamer; it absorbs light from the deeper levels of consciousness; it reveals the latent through inner luminosity. So, the stage is named *thaijasa*, partaking the nature of *Thejas* (shining). During the phase of *Sushupthi* (deep sleep), the senses, the faculty of reason and the mind are all out of action, and are subsumed in the Self. The person is unaware during sleep of himself or others but he is able to recall every detail as soon as he wakes. He is, during sleep, merged in consciousness, pure and simple. So the phase is named *Prajna*. The fourth stage is *thuriya*, where the person is aware of the Divinity that is his nature. He attains merger with the Absolute or *Samadhi*.

The four parts of Pranava

The sound, OM, known as *pranava* has also four parts or stages. The sound 'A' (as in 'manna') is a basic sound in speech and is universally utilised. It is parallel to the *Viswa* or Wakeful phase of man's daily life. The sound 'U' (as in 'input') is indicative of the breathing process (inhaling and exhaling), which ensures *thejas* (the glow of Vitality). The breath persists in the dream stage and so it corresponds to the dreaming phase. Then we have in OM the 'M' sound (as in 'am'), which closes all externalising and internalising outlets and inlets of consciousness and enables man to be alone with his Reality, *prajna* or *Brahma*. So it symbolises the condition during *sushupthi* and can be defined as the *prajna* phase. The silence into which the OM tapers is the consummation, the *thuriya* phase, when the veil of ignorance, that has prevented the ecstasy of Brahman from illumining the awareness is removed and one is conscious of the mergence. The *Atma* is associated with speech, breath and mind in the body, though it remains unaffected. It is a spark of the all-comprehensive Brahman, the all-pervasive OM, the ever-present 'is' (*Asthi*). Brahman is defined as *Sath* (Being), *Chith* (Awareness) and *Ananda* (Bliss). When it is said that education must result in the manifestation of the Divinity already in man, it is the awareness of the *Atma* that is indicated as the goal.

Matter is saturated with Divine

When the sage Narada approached Sanatkumara for spiritual guidance, he was asked by the Guru to relate what he had learnt up to that moment. The credentials had to be laid bare. Narada reeled off a long list of subjects and texts that he had mastered. He was happy that Sanatkumara was listening to him with attentions. When he finished, Sanatkumara described the entire list as mere 'names' of things and ideas, names devoid of substance. He told Narada, "Speech is more meaningful and weighty than name, the Mind from which speech springs is more significant than Speech; the Will is more fundamental than the mind; Consciousness is the prompter of the Will; both these depend on Vital Energy which is derived from Food. Food. is grown on earth with the help of water; the element Water is a derivative of Fire which itself is a by-product of Air. And Air is a manifestation of Space, the first projection of the Will latent in Brahman. Therefore, unless you know Brahman, your knowledge cannot be total and completely satisfying." This teaching of Sanatkumara reveals that the Cosmos is Brahman, in and through and that OM is activating as the Cosmic Sound. Matter is saturated with the Divine, every molecule of it. Though Matter is the product of Becoming, it is still a genuine fragment of the Being that has become matter. Hence, it is that we are able to see it, deal with it and recognise it as a whirl of energy. Energy, latent or patent, greater or less, exists in all things. It is the Divine characteristic in them. Contemplation on the One and on its symbol OM resounding in us with every breath and reminding us of the One which persists in us during daily wakefulness, dream and sleep, can ensure the awareness of the Sath-Chith-Ananda we really are.

Those who argue that the Spiritual path is for the individual one, and that society should not be involved in it, are committing a great mistake. It is like insisting that there is light inside the house, and saying that it does not matter if there is darkness outside.

- Sathya Sai Baba