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1. Close the windows and save the lamp

Date: **January 1965** / Location: **Prasanthi Nilayam** / Occasion: **Vaikunta Ekadasi**

The Mukkoti Ekadhashi, which happens today, is also known as Vaikuntha Ekadhashi (day sacred to Lord Vishnu). The two speakers who addressed you described the traditional legend of the Samudramanthana (churning of the ocean), with all the details found in the Bhagavatha of the Ksheerasagara (ocean of milk), the Kurma avathara (Vishnu's incarnation as tortoise), the Mandara mountain, Vasuki (venomous serpent), the asuras and suras (demons and celestials) and the various articles and things that appeared from the ocean, culminating in the amritha (nectar that gives immortality)! That legend has great value for you, because you too have to churn the ocean of your heart and win the nectar for yourself. The legend is only a reminder, a cue, a call.

The heart full of sathwaguna (quality of purity and poise) is the ocean of milk. The steady contemplation of the Divine, either as your own reality or as the ideal to be reached, is the Mandara mountain plated in it as the churning rod. Vasuki, the serpent that was wound round the churning rod as a rope, is the group of the senses, emitting poisonous fumes during the process of churning and nearly frightening the Asuras who held the head. The rope is held by the good and the bad impulses and both struggle with the churning process; eager for the results which each has set its heart on.

The lesson of the legend

The Grace of God is the Tortoise incarnation, for the Lord Himself comes to the rescue, once He knows that you are earnestly seeking the secret of Immortality: He comes, silently and unobserved, as the tortoise did, holding the manana (reflection) process unimpaired and serving as the steady base of all spiritual practice. Many things emerge from the mind, when churned, but the wise wait patiently for the appearance of the guarantor of Immortality, and seize upon it with avidity. That is the lesson of the legend. It is a summary of Atmavidya (science of the Self).

The song that the Doctor sang at the beginning of this meeting, Bhajagopalam (be attached to Krishna, the Divine cowherd), carries the same message, perhaps in a simpler and easier form. Remembrance of the Lord's name is the method of crossing over the ocean of the worldly life for this age; remembering the Lord by means of His Name is enough to save man. The Lord is Anandamaya (of the nature of Bliss); He is also Ananda (divine bliss), which is to be tasted through the Name. It is Sath-Chith-Ananda (Being-Awareness-Bliss Absolute). You may doubt whether such a small word like Rama or Sai or Krishna can take you across the boundless sea of worldly life. People cross vast oceans on a tiny raft; they are able to walk through dark jungles with a tiny lamp in their hands. The Name, even the Pranava (Om) which is smaller, has vast potentialities. The raft need not be as big as the sea. The recitation of the Name is like the operation of boring, to tap underground water; it is like the chisel-stroke that will release the image of God imprisoned in the marble. Break the encasement and the Lord will appear; cleave the pillar, as Prahladh (Lord Vishnu's devotee) asked his father to do, and the Lord who is ever there will manifest Himself. Churn and you bring the butter, latent in the milk, into view. That is the experience of every mother that every daughter learns; in the spiritual field, you learn that spiritual practice from yogis, who have gained and offered that navaneetham (fresh butter) to Krishna.

Curing the infection of Samsara

There are many who ridicule these yogis (God-centred men) and scoff at them. They call them selfish, anti-social, self-centred idlers who run away from their obligations and seek asylum in solitude and silence. But, being near does not ensure usefulness. Being far does not imply hatred or fear of company or uselessness. Viruses enter the very blood stream and surely, nothing can be nearer to you; yet, they are mortal enemies. Members of the same family are envious and suspicious of one another; those born as brothers or sisters fight in courts of law and fill the pockets of lawyers. Even twins seldom love each other. It is not being near that counts. These yogis moved out into lonely spots and sought teachers of the inner path, much as young technicians do today, going to Japan or America or Russia in order to

learn skills that will help to build a better India. They do not give up kith and kin and all chances to make a fortune, because they are afraid of facing the hard realities of life; they do not flee from loss or defeat. They go, to seek the secret of eternal joy; they win it for themselves; and, by their lives, they inspire others to win the precious secret, by treading the path they have found useful. No one calls the man who has gone abroad to equip himself better, as an engineer or doctor, selfish; why then should the man who undergoes greater deprivations to equip himself better as an engineer of the mind, utilising its undoubted powers, not for bondage, but, for liberation, be tarred as ego-centric? This only shows ignorance of true values. There are isolation hospitals where patients suffering from chronic infectious diseases are treated and cured. The hermitages in the forests are such hospitals, where people who want to be cured of the infection of worldly life can undergo the treatment and come out free in order to serve other patients.

Ajnani sees the same Self in all

Today is the Day when during the Sagaramathana (churning of the ocean), Amritha (nectar) emerged and was distributed to the Gods. The Gods had slid into the calamity of losing their immortality! Man too is the child of immortality; that is the reason why he cannot force himself into the conviction that he would die. He sees his neighbour die, but believes that he would somehow escape it. The man of realisation (jnani), however, is ever ready to cast off this encumbrance and escape from the prison of name and form. Emperor Janaka was such a person of realisation. He never lost the consciousness of the Oneness. Once, Sulabha, the celebrated woman dialectician, visited his court and during the discussion, she challenged Janaka to treat her also as his queen, for, "as a jnani, you should make no difference between persons," as men of realisation see the 'same self in all. But, Janaka retorted, "As a jnani, you should recognise Oneness; there is no validity in talking of men and women as distinct." Thus he taught her real jnana, the highest wisdom. Mere drinking the Nectar which I create will not confer immortality on you. Everything that is born must die; everything that is constructed will disintegrate. But you can escape death, by not being born again. When you know that you are the limitless atman (self or the soul which

is the infinite consciousness), then you are no longer subjected to the limitation of birth. That is the secret. How to know that? It is the result of a long process of sharpening the intellect and purifying the emotions and the impulses. You may do the most rigorous japa (repetition of holy name or symbols) or practise the direst, of austerities, but if you are not virtuous, all of it is sheer waste.

You are the limitless Atman

You may have the best of vegetables, you may be the most capable cook, but, if the copper vessel in which you prepare the vegetable soup is not tinned, the concoction you cook will be highly poisonous! So "tin" your heart with sathya, dharma, shanthi and prema (truth, right conduct, peace and divine love), it will then become a vessel fit for repeating holy name or symbols, meditation, religious vows, pilgrimage, ritualistic worship and the other dishes that you prepare in it.

It is an uphill task: to reform one's tendencies and character. A man may study all the text-books of spiritual practice, all the scriptures, and he may even lecture for hours on them; but he will slip into error when temptation confronts him. Like land that is parched, the heart may appear to be free from any crop of evil; but when the first showers fall, the seeds and roots underneath the soil change the waste into a carpet of green. There was a wandering mendicant once who refused to reveal his caste or creed, origin or destination. A shrewd housewife discovered it quite easily; she fed him well and when he lay fast asleep snoring, she applied a red-hot rod on the sole and the man shrieked "Allah" The real core can never be altered, or hidden, or suppressed. But, what is the real core ? It is not the particular religious belief or the name or the language that one has learned from the mother's lap. It is the Absolute Reality which you are. You know in the very depths of your being that 'you are and will be,' that is the characteristic of Sath (Existence Being). All beings have it. You are also eager to 'know', 'to expand by knowledge,' 'to reach out.' All beings have it, this urge for expression. That is the characteristic of Chith (Awareness). You seek 'joy'; all beings do so. That is the characteristic of Ananda (Divine Bliss). The ananda in you seeks its

kin everywhere, in everything. That is why it is said, sath-chith-ananda is the link between Thath and thwam, the particular and the universal. Everything is asthi (exists), for, it is sath; it is bhathi (expressing itself), because it is chith; it is priya (pleasant), because it is ananda.

If you are able to equip your mind with this consciousness you are a Person of Realisation. Else, you are a masquerader. There are three types of minds: (1) minds like ginned cotton, ready to receive the spark of highest wisdom and to give up in one instant blaze, the weakness and prejudices of ages, (2) minds - like dry wood, who succeed but only after some little time, and (3) minds, like green logs, which resist the onslaught of the fire of jnana with all their might.

The little game that Lord plays

Herds of cattle run towards a mirage to slake their thirst, but you ought to be wiser. You have discrimination (viveka), and renunciation (vairagya); you can detach yourselves consciously from pursuits which you discover as deleterious. Sit quiet for a few minutes and ponder over the fate of those who run towards the mirage. Are they happy? Have they the strength to bear distress and distinction, with equanimity? Have they a glimpse of the Beauty, the Truth, the Grandeur of the Universe, the Handiwork of God? Have they the vision of themselves as the centre of the Universe?

You have read that the Lord, melted and moved when one performed acute penance, comes and asks, softly and sweetly, "My dear child! What is it you need?" He has manifested Himself to give but, yet, consider the Grace which induces Him to ask, "What is it you need?" He wants you to express in words what you have yearned for and ask the Lord whom you have brought before you through the exercise of silence. That is the little game He plays. And sometimes He wills that the question is answered in the way His plan demands! Ravana's brother Kumbhakarna was blessed with a timely twist of the tongue: so, he asked for nidhra (the power to sleep), instead of nigraha (the power to slaughter)! The see-er should not attach himself to the seen; that is the way to get free. The contact of the senses with the object arouses desire and attachment; this leads to effort and either elation or despair; then,

there is the fear of loss or grief at failure and the train of reactions lengthens. With many doors and windows kept open to all the winds that blow, how can the flame of the lamp within survive? That lamp is the mind, which must burn steadily unaffected by the dual demands of the world outside.

Complete surrender to the Lord is one way of closing the windows and doors, for, then, in that stance of Sharanagathi (complete surrender to God), you are bereft of "ego" and so, you are not buffeted by joy or grief. Complete surrender makes you draw upon the Grace of the Lord for meeting all the crises in your career and so, it renders you heroic, more stalwart, better prepared for the battle.

Resolve on this auspicious day to enter upon the quest of Truth. Uththarayana is Uththamakala (the best time). For the morning of this day the great Bheeshma waited long on his bed of arrows, the morning when the Sun turns North, the direction of the Gods, where Shiva resides. The Sun is the deity that controls the eye, the vision of man, and so these six months, when the Sun is proceeding Shiva-ward, are very propitious for man too, to do likewise.

The real Heavenly Nectar

There are some dealers in timber in the East Godavari district here. They know that logs are floated down the Godavari during the high floods and they are retrieved from the waters after miles and miles of journey, at Rajahmundry or some such place. Railway sleepers are floated down from the Himalayan forests through the Ganga and caught at Haridwar in thousands. Join the flood, the flowing stream and the journey becomes easier. So too, if you practise spiritual discipline to attain the Lord, when the Deity of Vision is moving towards the Divine Region, you get the benefit of the momentum. Today, it is also Vaikuntha Ekadhashi. Many of you expect Me to go to the Chithravathi riverbed and create nectar and give it to all. Well, on the road to the river, you meet herds of cattle that move to the river and return. You have earned this Vagamritham (word-nectar), from this discourse, which you can treasure in your minds and act upon. This is the real Heavenly Nectar; know its worth, do not allow it to be wasted, garner it to become Godly.

Supari is brown, pan is green, chunam is white
but when these are chewed together
the colour is red.

When the three gunas, Sathwa, Rajas and Thamas,
are equated in Sadhana
the result is Shanthi.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

2. The sun at your doorstep

Date: **January 1965** / Location: **Prasanthi Nilayam**

A man in great distress clamoured for a ticket at the booking office of the railway station, but the clerk within was helpless, because the man did not know where he wanted to go. He was anxious only to get away; he had had enough of the place. All men, sooner or later, behave like this; even if one lives a hundred years, he has no desire to continue, for he finds all his kith and kin, his near and dear, have dropped on the roadside and he has been deserted, by death. Life is no unmixed good. No one is happy if he is immersed in worldly life. Man is tossed about on the waves of joy and grief, he is buffeted by fortune, good or bad; he is the target of brickbats or bouquets; the evil around him affects his peace; anxiety robs him of sleep and quiet. It is as if one attempted to sleep on a bug-infested cot. Therefore, man tries to escape from all this, into some thing, some where; he is not sure, which or where! The spiritual teacher (guru) can guide you where to go, which place to seek; but, he cannot make you reach it. You have to trudge along the road yourself. The teacher might take special classes and give special coaching; but, learning has to be accomplished by the pupil himself. There are two kinds of accomplishments: apraptha prapthi and praptha prapthi. The acquisition of something which you did not have is apraptha prapthi; if you do not have a mike, you go and purchase one or hire one. It is praptha prapthi if you become aware of a thing that you had with you, but imagined that you did not have. A friend comes and asks a loan of ten rupees from you, you are sorry that you have not got the tenner and that you are not able to come to his rescue when he is in dire need. An hour later, when you sit down and open the pages of the Geetha, you discover a ten rupee note that you had placed between the leaves long ago and forgotten, How happy you are at this! The ten rupees are so good as newly earned. The Guru asks you to search between the leaves of the book of your heart, and, lo, the treasure is there ready to render you rich beyond compare. Purpose of human effort Krishna did not remove the delusion of Arjuna by His resolve, in a trice, as He doubtless could have done; He made him go through all the steps of hearing, reflection and concentration himself. The patient must take the medicine, not

the doctor; the doctor only prescribes and persuades. One thing too must be said. The aspiring disciple must have an inkling already of the Truth; or else, he cannot master the secret. The telegram is sent in the Morse Code; so the man who sends as well as the man who receives must be aware of the code. The doctor spoke of people who come to Me with various aims; yes; but when some of them do not get exactly what they want, they blame Me and not themselves for wanting things that are not conducive to their progress or for not deserving to get them from Me. Why blame the Sun that he does not illumine your room ? Open the doors and the Sun, who has been waiting at the doorstep for just that moment, floods the room with light. You must use your intelligence to deserve the Grace of God. That is the purpose of human effort. The disciple washed the clothes of the guru and they were hung for drying on a line in the hermitage. The guru wanted them dried quickly, but the disciple could not avoid delay! He had hung them folded into four; human intelligence must have inspired him to hang them in single fold, so that they would have dried quicker. Likewise, one should use his intelligence in the spiritual field and carry on his spiritual practice unimpaired. After all, the quickest way to dry clothes, the best way to prepare a tasty dish, these are secondary skills; the primary one is the skill to overcome the temptations of the senses, to journey inward into the region of the impulses and give them a higher purpose. Of what use is it to cleanse and polish the exterior of a drinkingcup? Cleanse the interior, instead.

Use the stick of intelligence

Remembrance of the Lord's Name is the best detergent for the mind. It is the means of crossing the sea. The Name is the raft that will take you safely across. The Name will remove the veil of illusion, that now hides the Universal from the Individual. When that veil fades out, man finds Himself before himself; he beholds the Universe that he is. Man has infinite power and infinite potentiality, for he is a wave of the Ocean of Infinity. You can be aware of this, if you only dare reason a bit. The fruit won't drop if you mumble manthras (sacred formulae) under the mango tree; you will have to take a heavy stick and throw it at the bunch. Use the stick of intelligence and throw it at the problem of "you and the world"; that will yield fruit.

That is why I insist on your seeking, and remaining, in good company, the association with the holy. Being in the midst of such spiritual heroes, you can fight against evil with greater chance of success. Once when Garuda (the celestial bird of Lord Vishnu), the sworn enemy of snakes, went to kailasa (Abode of Lord Shiva), he saw the snakes that Shiva wore round His neck, His arms, His waist and Feet; the snakes were safe now and they hissed with their puffed hoods at the celestial bird which could not do them any harm, since they were in such Divine Company. Garuda said, "Well! Glide down from that Body and I shall kill every one of you!" That is the value of being in good company, for the spiritual practitioner. For the one who has reached success also, holy company is valuable, for it is like keeping a pot of water inside a tank of water; there will not be any loss through evaporation. If the spiritually advanced person (yogi) lives among worldly men, the chances of his yoga (union with God) evaporating into bhoga (enjoyment) are very great.

Value of good company

Being in company of the holy is like the bit and bridle for the wanton steed, the anicut and canals for the raging flood. The value of holy places, consists in just this; kindred spirits congregate there and contribute to the deepening of spiritual yearning. You can take sweet and sustaining counsel together in such places and strengthen your faith and devotion. If in any place, you do not find such an atmosphere, avoid it and move on, until you secure it. You must be careful about the food you take; for, the jihva (tongue) and the guhya (organ of generation) are the two great foes of man; the cravings of hunger and sex drag you into perdition. Desist from catering to the tongue and its greed; do not be a victim of lust or taste. Have pure food and eat it in company of the pure. Be moderate in food and keep the senses strictly under control.

Also, have an eye on the number and volume of your desires. Discriminate and discard superfluous attachments and acquisitions. A fakir (holy man) is one who has no fikr, (worry). What is the root of worry? Wants; and the efforts to fulfil them; and the fear of not succeeding to the extent desired. Reduce wants and you reduce worry. You congregate here in the Nilayam verandah,

seeking personal interview with Me, with a load of wishes in your heart, wishes that you want Me to fulfil. Why carry all the load? Carry only one load, the desire to win the Grace of God; He will confer what is best for you. Leave the rest to Him.

You have to choose between God and Nature

There was a grandchild once who sat on the lap of his grandfather and asked him the very plain query, "Grandpa, do you love me?" and the old man immediately replied, "I do". The child asked next, "Do you love God?" for which too the old man said, "Yes." Then, the child retorted, "If you love God also, then, you cannot be loving me; if you love me, you cannot be loving God at the same time, or to the same extent." That is true. You have to choose. Love Nature and you have to ignore God; love God and you will realise that Nature is but His Raiment. Perform action, but do not hanker after the fruit. Do not complain that you did not get public recognition for the donations you gave to some Trust. Fruits, whether good or bad, you yourself have to consume; so the best means of liberating yourself from the consequences is to ignore the fruit and do perform action, for the sake of action only. You will not be burdened with either sin or merit if you act so. If you crave for the profit, you will have to be prepared to accept the loss also. If you construct a well where four roads meet expecting to get merit for slaking thirst of men and cattle, you cannot shirk the demerit you will be credited with, when some one falls into it and gets drowned.

If you fan a person out of love, you can leave off when you must; but a servant accepting wages for fanning his master has to continue whether he likes or not. Give up the desire for remuneration and you are free; accept it or ask for it and you get bound. That is the secret of "renunciation of the fruit of action" (karmaphala-thyaga).

Life is unreal as a dream

Above all get convinced that life is as unreal as a dream; do not get attached to it beyond reasonable limits. A man once suddenly gave up hearth and

home and went out of the village, because he was too poor to maintain his wife and children. On his leaving, conditions became even worse and the poor woman had to witness the death of their little child, due to starvation. The next day, the husband happened to come back and when the wife reported the sad news and wept; he said, "Woman! Last night, I slept in a choultry and I had a dream. I was a very rich man, with a fine bungalow and a happy family of six buxom children; I had fine swings and posh chairs in the garden, plenty of servants to order about. When I woke up, I lost all of them. For whom am I to weep now? For the six children I lost in the morning or the child that was lost yesterday? Those six will never play again; this one too cannot run about. When I dreamt, the child was nonexistent; when I awoke those six are non-existent. What exists is only the perceiver of both the dream and the waking state the "I." Know that 'I', know that 'I' is the same as "HE". You can know it only by intense spiritual discipline that is not marred by anger, envy and greed - vices that sprout from the ego. When you get angry, you act as if you are possessed by an evil spirit; your face becomes ugly and frightful. As a matter of fact, like the red bulb winking when danger is approaching, the eyes and face become red as a warning. Heed that signal and betake yourself to a quiet lonely spot; do not give free vent to wicked vocabulary. Envy and greed also emanate from the ego and have to be carefully watched and controlled. Like the tadpole's tail, the ego will fall away when one grows in wisdom. It must fall away; if it is cut, the poor tadpole will die. So, don't worry about the ego; develop wisdom, discriminate, know the ephemeral nature of all objective things; then, the tail will no longer be evident.

Each one from ego takes his birth and clad in ego dies and comes and goes, gives and receives and earns and spends, and deals in lies or speaks the truth, in ego all the while.

Those who do away with their ego attain salvation.

Remove the roots of egoism from the field of your heart. That is enough.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba



3. Follow His footprints

Date: **January 1965** / Location: **Prasanthi Nilayam**

Shastry described the Bhagavatha thathwa to you. This Bhagavth is so called because it deals with the Leela, Mahima and Upadesha (divine sport, greatness and instruction) of the Lord, as manifested during His various appearances in history. The career of the Lord, whenever He appears, is made up of two strands, one earthly and the other Divine - one external and the other, inner. You heard just now of the breaking of butter pots by the infant Krishna. The outer meaning is that the child broke the mud pots wherein the milkmaids of Brindavan kept the butter they had prepared. The inner meaning is that Krishna broke the material casement in which their souls were imprisoned and liberated them from temporary attachments. He then appropriated to Himself what always belonged to Him - the butter of Faith. This butter is the result of the churning of the mind, the spiritual discipline of self-purification. The Lord will manifest Himself only when the pillar is split in twain, with the sword of yearning. Hiranyakashipu did it and immediately, the Lord appeared from within that pillar. He had not hidden Himself there, anticipating the contingency. He is everywhere; and, so, He was there also. The lesson that Hiranyakashipu learnt was that the deha-thathwa must be split as under if the dehi-thathwa must reveal itself. That is to say, the "I-am-body" consciousness must go, if the "Iam-embodied" consciousness, must emerge. So long as you are in the dehi (I-am-embodied) consciousness, no pain or grief, pride or egoism can tarnish you. It is like sea water. Take a small quantity of sea water and keep it separate in a bottle; it will get foul in a few days. But, so long as it was in the sea, nothing could foul it. Be in the sea, as part of it; do not separate yourself, do not individualise yourself, do not feel that you are the deha (body), apart from the dehi ('I').

Unflinching discipline is essential

This must be your deeksha (steady pursuit). And, the deeksha must express itself in actual practice, as nishtha and sikshana. Nishtha means discipline, control; sikshana means training of the senses, the emotions etc. Nashta

(food) should be subordinated to Nishtha. The deha is but an instrument to realise the dehi. Yoga is explained as chiththavritthi nirodha - the curbing of mental agitations. It also means the Union which is possible when mental agitations are curbed and equanimity is achieved. Every chapter of the Geetha is called a yoga, in order to lay stress on this aspect of the Teaching.

Bhakthi or jnana or karma must all lead to the achievement of equanimity; otherwise, they are simply pseudo. Water as such or fire as such cannot move a train; they must both co-operate to produce a third thing, steam. The steam moves the engine forward. The curbing of the mind takes you to the winning post. Kerosene oil and air must both unite to form the gas which ignites in the petromax lamp to give light. To cross safely the flood of "birth-death-continuum" the bridge called nishtha or discipline of an unflinching kind is essential. It must be a sturdy safe bridge. Or else, you will fall into the raging waters and be drawn into the sea, infested with sharks - lust and anger. See how great heroes like Prahlada did not loosen their hold on the Lord, in spite of heavy odds. Prahlada never gave up the repetition of the Name of the Lord, though he was tortured, twisted and burnt. One must have that determination and that faith. Sorrows and disasters are as the clouds that flit across the sky; they cannot injure the blue depths of space. Your duty is to strive on, from this very moment. Do not vacillate or postpone. Who knows when death will knock? May be, he may knock this very night, this very moment! Therefore, do not delay. Do not postpone for tomorrow the dinner of this day? Feed the spirit as scrupulously as you now feed the body.

Seek God with one-pointed attention

Detach yourselves from the senses; then, only can the Atma shine. I do not mean that you should destroy the senses. The mind must be withdrawn from its present comrades, the senses; it must be loyal to its roal master, the intellect or buddhi. That is to say, you must separate the grain from the chaff, through the exercise of viveka and then, fix your desire on the things that last and nourish, rather than on things that are flashy and corroding. Keep a lamp in a room with all its five windows open; the wind will blow it out, for the flame is swayed from all directions. To keep the flame burning straight, close

the windows. The senses are the windows; the flame is the mind concentrating on the single purpose of God-realisation. What do the outward-bound senses know of that sweetness? They are like the frogs that hop about on the petals of the lotus; they are unaware of the nectar in that flower. Only the intellect can reveal that to you. The Shastry said that Yashoda reached the place where the child Krishna had hidden himself, by following the footprints he had left behind him, with his curd-besmeared feet. He could not be caught when she attempted to tie a rope round his waist and drag him to herself. That rope was the rope of ego; how can the Lord be bound by your ego? It was found to be always short, two finger breadths short, every time! What does that indicate? It means that there were two virtues short - and that explains why every rope, however long, was too short. The two virtues were: Dharmanishtha and Brahmanishtha, steadiness in rectitude and in aspiration. It is enough if you seek him, through one-pointed attention and devotion, through his footprints: beauty, strength, truth, morality, love, sacrifice, goodness in Nature and in the heart of Man.

The great mystery of Adhwaitha

Adhwaitha means, all this is Atma; then, why this apparent variety? Variety is the picture drawn by the delusion that you are the body, that you are the 'character' the drama has cast on you! In the drama, you sing and speak, weep and laugh, always aware that you are yourself and not what the apparel and acting make you appear to be. Chandramathi bursts into tears when her 'son' dies of cobra bite; the spectators weep at her plight, but the person who acts so well is untouched by grief. The reflection of the Moon in the lake is broken into bits but the Moon above is unaffected. Do not yield to grief because the reflection is broken; it is due to the weakness of the medium, water. So too, when you think you are the body, which grows and withers, is elated or disheartened, you see the reflection as broken; but the genuine thing, the Reality is unaffected.

You must have heard the beggar at the door calling out in his crude jargon, "I am anadhi" meaning "I am anatha". He wants to tell you that he has none to support him but, his words mean, "I am beginningless." Yes, he is revealing to

you the Great Mystery that makes all beings his kin! And then, when he says, "bhiksham dehi," you take him to mean, "Give me alms." Just consider the word he uses for 'give'. He calls out "dehi" meaning also, he who is the owner of this body, he who resides in this body, the Atma. He is teaching you that you are really the Atma, wearing the apparel of the body and so, you and he are One.

Bhakthi is not a matter of beads

Dwell always on high thoughts. When air fills a football, it takes the form of the ball. When it fills a balloon, it takes the form of the balloon, oval, sausage shaped, spherical or spheroid. The mind assumes the form of the objects with which it is attached. If it gets fixed on small things, it becomes small; if on grand things, it becomes grand. The camera takes a picture of whatever it is pointed at: so take care before you click. Discriminate before you develop attachment. If you have attachment towards wife and children, land and buildings, bank accounts and balances and when these decline, you will come to grief. Develop attachment towards the Universal and you too will grow in love and splendour. That attachment must be sincere and steady. Bhakthi is not a matter of beads and beards; nor does worship consist of flowers and camphor; to address people immersed in these as "bhakthas" (devotees) is blasphemy. With crooked vision, character, thoughts and feelings - how can bhakthi sprout or bloom? Do not be led away by bell ringing or incense-smoke. The field must be cleared of bush and thorns; it must be ploughed and furrowed; watered and dampened to depth; then the seeds have to be planted into the earth; scattered on the surface, they do not germinate, Plant the seeds, water the field, remove the weeds; keep away stray cattle, manure the plants; dust them with pesticides, and then, you can collect the crop. Sadhana (spiritual discipline) means and includes all these steps. You are judged by your spiritual discipline; not by the number of temples you have gone into or the quantity and cost of the offerings you have made in those shrines. Do not calculate the length of time you have spent in the company of the Lord's Name, and exult. Calculate rather the length of time you have wasted, away from that contact, and repent. Have that name ever in your thoughts and you can brave any calamity. Remember how Seetha braved the

taunts, insults and tortures of the aggressors in Lanka; what was it that gave her the mental stamina? It was Ramanama and nothing else. Kama and krodha cannot co-exist with Ramadhyana (meditation on Rama).

Bad karma will spoil sadhana

The action of Rama dhyana will remould your mind. The most tasty dish will become uneatable if a drop of kerosene falls on it. One bad karma will spoil the spiritual discipline. Siddhartha, who was kept long inside the palace grounds, away from the world of grief, asked for a chance to go into the city and when, during that ride through the carefully cleaned streets, he saw one after the other the harrowing scenes of illness, old age and death and the tonic sight of a monk, his buddhi (intellect) was corrected in a trice. Buddhih karmanusarini - intellect follows action - it is said. The efforts of his father to keep him isolated and happy were foiled; Truth dawned on him in a moment; and the train of events which his father dreaded for 22 years did happen. Siddhartha left his wife and child and sought to find the secret of Liberation for all mankind.

Kamsa was himself driving the chariot whereon his newly wedded sister and her husband sat; he was riding on the crest of a wave of unmixed joy; just then, he heard a celestial Voice chiding him for that joy. It said, her eighth child would slay him. That sentence transformed him into a monster of hate. That one karma affected him so much. Engage yourselves in action that will direct your intellect and mind along divine and sublime channels. Win Grace through karma; do karma that will win Grace. If the lamp does not burn, it proves that you have not lit it. The Lord is neither benignant nor malignant; your progress is reflected back as Grace; your decline is reflected back as its absence. The mirror just reflects. It has no partiality or prejudice.

Immerse yourself in meditation

Always have the meaning and purpose of life in view. And experience that purpose and that meaning. You are That; that is the truth. You and the Universal are One; you and the Absolute are One; you and the Eternal are

One. You are not the Individual, the Particular, the Temporary. Feel this, know this. Act in conformity with this. Some one came to Ramanamaharshi and asked him thus' "Swami! I have been doing intense dhyana for the last 18 years; but I have failed to realise the Ideal on which my dhyana is concentrated. How many more years should I continue thus?" Ramana answered, "It is not a question of a certain number of years. You have to continue dhyana until the awareness that you are doing dhyana disappears. "Forget the ego; let it melt and merge, with all its layers of consciousness. There are some who, while meditating, strike at the mosquitoes that pester them! No, Immerse yourselves in dhyanam until you transcend all physical and mental urges and impulses. Valmeeki was covered by the ant-hill that grew over him; people discovered him by the sound of Rama nama that emanated from that mound. Ignore the deha (body) so that you may discover the dehi (indweller); do not get engrossed in outer finery but delve deep and discover the inner splendour.

What does the sadhana of ignoring the body imply? It means turning aside from the temptations of the sense, the overcoming of the six enemies: desire, anger, greed, attachment, pride and malice (kama krodha, lobha; moha, madha and matsarya). Anger turns a man into a drunken brute. The other impulses are equally vicious. Seek only salutary karma; eat only sathwik food - food that will not disturb the equanimity you earn through your sadhana. Do not break the even tenor of your spiritual practice. Remember how Ramadas never gave up his Nama sadhana in spite of jeers and jail. You can be really healthy and happy only when you are immersed in the Universal. If you are in atma thathwa (essential nature of the Self), you will be fresh, happy and healthy. When you separate, and feel that you are in deha thathwa (principle of body), you start declining.

Offer God the fragrance of your virtue

The Bhagavatha says that Krishna was stealthily eating the butter that was stored in the houses of the gopees. What is the significance of this behaviour? Did he go about stealing butter because he had no butter at home? It is not butter that he coveted; it is the cream of virtue kept in the (heart) pot that he

wants. That cream is the genuine Atma, secured after vigorous churning, And, was it 'stealing' that he did ? He is 'Hari', He who robs, who appropriates. He sees all, Himself unseen. As soon as He enters, you awake, your inner consciousness is alerted. You offer Him the fragrance of your virtue, the courage of your heart, the wisdom of your experience. That is the kind of thief He is! Cultivate love towards Him. Likes and dislikes are more the products of habit and training. The senses drag you away from Him; but, do not yield; they will lie low soon. Sincere yearning born of steady discrimination - this alone can help you. I bless you that you may grow in these from day to day. I won't keep you longer. Sing a Namavali or two and then, you can disperse.

4. Kare kankanam

Date: 30 January 1965 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam

You heard the discourse on Krishna thathwa, based on the famous dialogue between Krishna and Rukmini, as the text. That dialogue appears very worldly, but the transcendent can be understood by the common man only through the language of the transitory. The unknowable has to be hinted at through the crude landmarks of the already known. Take the hymn that describes Krishna as, "Kasthuri thilakam". Outwardly, it delineates the beautiful form and describes the ornaments and appurtenances of the Lord. But each of these words has a deeper significance which should not be missed.

The thilakam or dot of kasthuri or musk on the forehead of Krishna is the symbol of the Eye of Wisdom, the Inner Eye, the inward-directed vision, like the third eye on the forehead of Shiva. Kasthuri means jnanam or supersensual knowledge or wisdom. Then the hymn speaks of kowsthubha gem on the chest. It indicates the ananda in the heart, the untarnished ananda of the Lord who is Ananda swaruupi (bliss personified).

Next in the poem is the shining pearl on Krishna's nose-ring. Well, the Navamoukthikam on His nasagra (nose-tip) is indicative of the success that attends one-pointed concentration on His Glory for which the tip of the nose is considered by adepts in yoga as a point of help. And, the pearl is, in Hindu mythology, produced out of the rain drop, from the first, pure, unsullied showers that is swallowed by the oyster that has been waiting long for the precious gift from the heavens. It indicates the transforming effect of yearning and the natural thirst for the pure and the true which irks the human heart. Take the next item in the description, the Flute in the hand. That reminds all of the need to make oneself into a hollow reed, with no trace of the pith of material greed. Become straight, empty yourself of all obstructing desires and the Lord's breath will flow through you, making sweet music that awakens every soul.

The three vows of Lord Krishna

And the kankana, in the description, 'kare kankana'. That does not mean 'bangles', which is the meaning given in the lexicon. Kankana is the word for dedicatory armlet, worn when a person resolves on a vow. You may wonder what the vows are which Krishna took upon Himself! I shall tell you what they are. They are mentioned in the Bhagavad Geetha, for all humanity to read, know, and believe.

There are three vows in all:

(1) Parithranaya sadhoonam, vinasayacha dushkritham, dharma samsthapanarthayasambhavami yuge yuge - "For the protection of the good and the punishment of the bad, for the establishment of the Moral Order, I shall concretise Myself, age after age".

(2) Ananyaschinthayantho mam ye janah paryupasathe, thesham nithya-abhiyukthanamyoga kshemam vahamyaham. - "Whoever is wholly immersed in My contemplation, with no other thought, I shall be ever with Him- and I shall bear the burden of his welfare".

(3) Sarvadarman parithyajya mamekam saranam vraja, aham thwa sarva papebhyomokshayishyami, masucha - "Surrender unto Me, giving up all other duties and obligations; I shall liberate you from all sin; do not grieve."

These are the three vows that Krishna has taken, and the armlets are reminders of these tasks on which He is set.

Feel the truth with subtle intelligence

The poem goes on to another item, the Harichandana (yellow sandalpaste) that He has applied over all His limbs. He wears yellow robes and has the fragrant yellow sandal all over. The yellow is the symbol of Prakrithi, which He wears as His outer apparel and attraction. In fact Prakrithi or Nature is what He is pleased to wear or appear in; He can don it or doff it at will. It is His Atma maya. The poem ends with the beautiful Name by which Krishna is addressed. Gopala choodamani, the Crest Jewel of the cowherds! What are the cows? The 'go's? 'Go' means the 'jeevi,' the individual soul, of which He is the pala, protector; the Lord fosters the cows and leads them into safety and peace. 'Go' also means the indriyas or senses that roam about to graze in the external world and Gopala is the Lord, who curbs and guides the senses into safe secure paths. This meaningful description was the product of the experience of a Yogi, who had the vision in his spiritual ecstasy; so, there is no suggestion of the sensual in the entire poem.

The Bhagavatha epic is related to King Pareekshith by Shuka, the greatest of the sages who was planted in unshakable Brahmacharya; this is enough guarantee that no trace of the sensual has infiltrated into it. This dialogue between Krishna and Rukmini has also to be considered in the same worshipful attitude.

You should cultivate an attitude of inseparable attachment to the Lord, who is your very self. If He is a flower, you should feel yourself a bee that sucks its honey; if He is a tree, be a creeper that clings to it; if a cliff, then feel that you are a cascade running over it; if He is the sky, be a tiny star that twinkles in it; above all, be conscious of the truth that you and He are bound by Supreme Love. If you feel this acutely, not with the gross intelligence, but with the subtle intelligence, then, the journey will be quick and the goal can be won. The sthula buddhi (gross intelligence) keeps you walking but, the subtle intelligence flies you to the destination. The gross is too much weighed down by the body; the subtle transcends the body and lightens the burden.

Free yourself from wish and will

The Shastry mentioned the axiom, Ekamevad-witheeyam, One only, not Two. If it is not two, it may be three; so, it is defined also as One only. It is the inner motivator of all (Sarvantharyami), like the string running through all the beads. If it is inside all, why is it not observable in all, you may ask. Picture a rosary of several types of beads' coral, pearl, tulsi, rudraksha, crystal or conch, etc. The string passes through each and holds all the beads together, no doubt; but it is only in the transparent beads that it is visible. So too, you have to make yourself transparent, free from wish and will, that hide or befog: then only, can the Inner Motivator be seen. You cannot argue that since it is not seen, it is not there. To earn transparency, purity of intention, impulse and instinct is essential; that is achieved by systematic and sincere spiritual discipline. A ladder has to be as tall as the height you want to reach; your sadhana has to be as long as the time taken to reach the goal. When the walls are completed, the scaffolding is removed; when the Vision of the Reality is attained, japa, vratha, puja, archana, sravana, keerthana - forms of spiritual discipline can be dispensed with. You must be watching for every chance to dwell on noble thoughts, do elevating tasks, curb the downward pull of the ego. Let Me give one instance. Take your own name. The name must be resonant of the real Self, not a description of the body, as Nallaiah or Kempiah or Kariyappa - the Black man, the Fair man or the Dark man. Have names that are saturated with divinity, like Rama or Krishna or Lakshmana or Bharatha. And know and follow the implications of the name.

Live up to your name

A son named Rama nowadays files a suit against the father for his share of the property! A son called Lakshmana is the leader of a faction against the elder brother! Live up to the name you are known by. Do not shorten the names and behead them into lifeless corpses, like V. D. Rao, for Vasudeva Rao, or V. A. Dani for Vishweshwara Avadhani. Keep them as they are, so that you as well as others can have the precious chance of uttering the name of the Lord at least when they accost you. It is a crime against your parents and ancestors to defile the name that they have handed down to you, live it

yourself and hand it on to your children, and children's children, unimpaired.

For all types of spiritual discipline, congenial company is very necessary. Man is shaped by the company he keeps; so, be ever vigilant of the air you breathe; it is fouled by the foul thoughts of the men among whom you move. The pure water that falls as rain from the sky is changed into a hundred tastes and colours by the soil on which it falls. But, even the slimy slush of the gutter has some hope of turning into pure water again; for, when the Sun shines, it can rise as vapour into the clouds and regain its pristine nature. To cleanse the mind, prayer is the water and repentance is the soap. Mere water or Vim cannot do the job; repentance must be followed by resolute determination not to repeat the wrong. You must pray for help in sadhana, through Grace.

Where there is duality, there is fear

Guard the wisdom gained from the snares of attachment and aversion - this must be the theme. For, where there is duality, there is fear, there is decline and death. Victory, at the polls ensures power for only five years: when that period ends, the M.L.A. has once again to seek the votes. Good acts done with attachment ensure Heaven, from where one has to come again to Earth, when the deposit is spent out. A man landing at Madras with a thousand rupees is master of all the bazars, cinema houses, hotels, taxis to the extent of that sum, but, when his purse is rendered empty he has to escape back into his village, perhaps as a ticketless traveller, harassed by policemen at every halt. No, heaven is no solution for the hunger of the soul! The river must reach the sea, not the desert sands; the waters have to merge with water. That is the consummation, named Kaivalya, or Sayujya. To keep that goal ever in focus, have the wavering mind continuously in leash. When the Sun is in the sky, the Moon is blazed out of sight. Buddhi, the sharpened intellect, is the Sun; the pale satellite, waxing and waning, the Moon, is the Mind. So, give intelligence full prominence; let the mind subserve the dictates of reason, not of passion. Become the ruler of the senses, not their slave. Hrishikesa, an appellation of Krishna, means Master of the senses; Gudakesa, an appellation of Arjuna, also conveys the same sense. That is the reason why

they two became comrades. The senses drag you into the jungle of nature; so, what use is it for you to flee into the jungle, with the senses wild with hunger? Why did the sages go into the jungle? To sink their minds in the silent calm of the forest; to dwell ever in the thought of God whose voice is heard when all other voices cease. If you close the windows that bring in the other voices, then, your home can be transformed into a Forest of Freedom, a Hermitage of thapas (penance.) "Where Rama is, Ayodhya is" said Sumitra to Lakshmana. Instal Rama in your heart, it becomes Ayodhya, that is to say, 'invincible,' 'incapable of being captured by foes.'

Reduce contacts to a minimum

Be silent yourself; that will induce silence in others. Do not fall into the habit of shouting, talking long and loud. Reduce contacts to the minimum. Carry with you an atmosphere of quiet contemplation, wherever you happen to be. There are some who live in a perpetual hullabaloo, in a tornado of noise. Whether they are in an exhibition or a fair or a hotel, or a temple or the Prasanthi Nilayam, they wag their tongues and will not stop. These will not proceed far on the Godward road.

There are others who relish disputes and arguments; they are never content with obvious facts; they must create doubts where none existed before, and shake faith. They dispute whether Rama is superior to Krishna, or whether Krishna is a fuller or a lower incarnation of Godhead! People who have not touched the outskirts of the Capital City dare dispute about the appearance and glory of the Emperor, who resides in the Palace in the heart of the City! That is the pitiable state of scholarship today.

The Maharajah of Burdwan once held a Conference where the excellences of Shiva and Vishnu were considered. The Panchakshari (five-letter) manthra of Shiva and the Ashtakshari (eightletter) manthra of Vishnu were expounded by rival Pandits and extolled. The Maharajah refused to offer exclusive loyalty to either Shiva or Vishnu; he wanted the Chief Priest of his palace, who was a great scholar and Sadhaka, to pronounce his judgement. He said that none of the Pandits had seen Shiva or Vishnu, though they were all prepared to argue

on behalf of them. He declared that any one who had seen either will be silent about not only what he had seen, but even of what he had not seen. That declaration put an end to the quarrels, and every one returned home rather shamefaced at their inexperience!

The first step of the spiritual discipline

Winnow the real from the apparent. Look inside the event, for the kernel, the meaning. Dwell over on your Athmic reality; you are pure, you are indestructible; you are unaffected by the ups and downs of life; you are the true, the eternal, the unchanging Brahman, the entity which is all this. A mere five-minute inquiry will convince you that you are not the body, or the senses, the mind or the intelligence, the name or the form, but that you are the Atma Itself, the same Atma that appears as all this variety. Once you get a glimpse of this truth, hold on to it; do not allow it to slip. Make it your permanent possession. As a first step towards the acquisition of this viveka (wisdom) and vairagya (detachment), enter from now on into a discipline of Namasmara - the incessant remembrance of God through the Name of the Lord. A fashionable excuse that is trotted out by those who do not like this discipline is 'want of time!' It does not need any special time or extra allotment of time; it can be done always, in the waking stage, whether you are bathing or eating, walking or sitting. All the hours now spent in gossip, in watching sports or films, in hollow conversation can best be used for silent contemplation of the Name and Form, and splendour of the Lord. Now, you complain of want of appetite for God. You have lost appetite because you have eaten unwholesome food, not because you have had a surfeit of good food. You have no knowledge of which food is wholesome, what are its components, etc. You believe that the unwholesome food you get, through the impure gateways of the senses, will keep you healthy! Learn this lesson from here and return, better equipped, to your places. If you fail to learn this, then you have wasted money and time coming and staying here.

Purify the heart by being good and kind to all.

Do not attempt to find fault with others.
Look upon all with love, with respect, with faith in their sincerity.
I would ask you to treat your servants kindly.
Do not entertain hatred or contempt in your heart;
show your resentment if you must, through words, not action.
Repent for the errors that you commit and decide never to repeat them;
pray for strength to carry out your resolutions.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

5. The pleasant and the profitable

Date: **February 1965** / Location: **Penukonda**

Last year too I happened to be here in this town (Penukonda) in the month of February; now I am here again, four days after the year is over! This does not satisfy Me, this annual visit. My mission is to spread Ananda and so I am ready to come among you, not once but twice or thrice, as often as you want Me. The drill and gymnastics exhibited by the boys and girls of this School pleased the eye, by the patterns and the quick skill shown. The songs provided a pleasant background, and I must speak a word in appreciation of the Physical Education Expert, who arranged this show. He is so eager to promote the physical education of the students that he has asked again and again for a first class stadium for the school. He is eager to put this school at the head of all the schools of the State, so far as his field is concerned. Such enthusiasm is commendable. I bless his efforts. You probably think that, since people from all parts of India even from countries outside India pass through your town in continuous flood towards Prasanthi Nilayam at Puttaparthi, they must be pouring their contributions into the coffers of the Nilayam. Let Me declare the truth to you; I do not take anything from any one, except their love and devotion. For the last 29 years, this has been My consistent practice. The people who come there are giving Me just the wealth that you have all given Me today, the wealth of Faith, Devotion and Love, that is all. To understand any one, you must be with them and near them; you must approach them, not with hatred or anger, but in friendship and love. So too in My case. How can you know Me, if you do not come near Me and unto me?

Students! You must win a fair name for yourself, your parents and school by your earnestness in study and enthusiasm to serve others. Your parents are bearing great hardships to keep you here in comfort; they are toiling in the fields, in the sun and rain, and sending you hard earned cash, expecting you to study well and support them. First, pay back the debt of love to them; do not behave in such a way that they repent the day when they put you to school. All other debts come later, even the debt to the motherland or mother-tongue, of which so much is heard now, all over the country.

Meet obstacles with courage

I find that the students of this School have been calm, while all round a storm is raging over this problem of language which is best left to the elders of the land. I am glad you are carrying out this programme of School Day so joyfully and nicely. When such storms brew, parents are overcome by anxiety, for they are in the dark about the movements and activities of their children. Keep them free from worry; show them the gratitude they deserve; return them the Love they pour freely into your hearts. Remember always that it is easy to do what is pleasant; but it is difficult to be engaged in what is beneficial. Not all that is pleasant is profitable. Success comes to those who give up the path strewn with roses, and brave the hammer-blows and swordthrusts of the path fraught with danger. As a matter of fact, no road is strewn with rose petals. Life is a battlefield, a Dharmakshethra, where duties and desires are always in conflict. Smother the fiery fumes of desire, of hatred and anger that rise up in your hearts; it is sheer cowardice to yield to these enemies that turn you into beasts. When obstacles come, meet them with courage. They harden you, make you tough.

Steps that lead to Self-knowledge

The best way to get rid of weakness is to strike at the very taproot of the tree - the mistake that you are the body, with this name and this form, these senses, this intelligence and this mind. These are all the luggage you carry. Don't you say, my nose my mind, my hand, my reason, just as you say, my book, my umbrella? Who is this T that calls all these 'mine'? That is the real 'you'. It was there when you were born, when you were sleeping forgetful of all else, forgetful even of your body with all its equipment, internal and external. That T cannot be harmed; it does not change, it knows no death or birth. Learn the discipline that makes you aware of this Truth and you will be ever free and bold. That is real vidya, the Atmavidya, which the sages have gathered for you. The thousands who come to Puttaparthi are coming there for this precious wealth; you too must, one day or the other, learn this and save yourselves. All men have to reach the goal, travelling along the path of

wisdom. This knowledge comes as soon as you look into yourselves and analyse your own experience. But, in order to get the craving for that analysis, you have to educate yourselves into the attitude. Developing good habits, avoiding bad ones, mixing in the company of the pious, being active in good deeds, serving those in distress - these are all steps that will lead you into the glorious path of Self-knowledge. You can, even now, take to this discipline and save yourselves from grief and distress. I bless that you may get the will to do so and to persist in the sadhana, till success is won.

-School Day, Zilla Parishad Higher Secondary School.

It is dedication to the Lord that sanctifies all activities. He is the *raison d'etre* for all activity.

He is the prompter, the executor, the giver
of the required strength and skill,
the enjoyer of the fruit thereof

So, dedication must come naturally to you,
for, all is His and nothing is yours

Your duty is to believe

He is the impeller of your activities,
and draw strength from that belief.

Until the wound heals and
the new skin hardens,
the bandage must protect the place.

So too, until reality is realised,
the balm of faith, holy company and holy thoughts
must be applied to the ego-affected mind.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

6. The burden of the badge

Date: 24 February 1965 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam

I have called all of you here today so that I may tell you something about the attitude you must cultivate while doing volunteer service at the Nilayam. **I Myself have selected you for this and that itself is a rare privilege.** There are so many among the thousands who have come for the Upanayanam and Shivarathri Festivals who are pleading with all their heart to be given the chance; but you have caught My eye and you alone have been picked. I must tell you that volunteering is not just a momentary spurt; it cannot be done well, without deep discipline, long training and humility. You cannot be ready for that role all of a sudden, as soon as the badge is pinned on your shirt.

First, you must be conscious of the value of ajna, (the command), which so far as I am concerned, is more a Direction, than an Order. The Geetha was the ajna of Krishna, though Krishna supplemented it with copious explanations of the why and the wherefore. Arjuna admitted that he was a prapanna, that he had surrendered to His Will. So, there was no need for Krishna to argue with him or to see that he was convinced of the correctness of His Command. Still, in order that Arjuna might fight with a full heart, He gave him the reasons which supported the course He laid down for him. Likewise, I too want you to know why I desire that you should act in a particular manner and why I do not like you to behave in another manner.

Next, you must develop prema (love) for all. Do not think that a volunteer is a superior person, more devoted than the rest; do not look down upon the rest, as disturbances and nuisances. If you have prema towards Me, you will have prema towards all, since Sai is in every one. You sing at the bhajana (congregational chant),

Anthasayi mayam; ee jagamantha Sayi mayam - "All this is Sayi-full; this World is Sayi-full".

So, how can you have love for this Sai alone? You have on the walls of this Prayer Hall many pictures of Swami; you revere the pictures; you take each of them to be Me. If someone speaks ill of any of them you do not like it, do you? You stand before the picture and exclaim in joy, "O! Swami!" Remember every human being is My Picture. Why, every being is Me. Antha Sai mayam, isn't it? So, when you treat any one harshly, you are treating Me harshly. When you are insulting any one, you are insulting Me.

The six duties of every householder

This is your home and all those who have gathered for these Festivals are athithis (guests) or your kith and kin. There are six duties that every grihastha (householder) has to perform every day: snana, sandhya, japa, homa, puja and athithia sathkar, meaning bath, worship during morning, noon and evening, recitation of the Name of the Lord, offering ritual articles in the sacrificial fire, ritual worship of the Lord, and hospitality to guests. You are to see that the guests are treated in that spirit of hospitality. You are sevaka, dedicated to service. Whether the people whom you serve thank you or traduce you, you must gladly do the task allotted to you. For, you are serving yourselves, not them, remember. Bouquets or brickbats, receive them with equal calm. It is only those who identify themselves with the body that are exulted or pained; you must feel that you are the dehi, not the deha (the self, not the body), that will give you the strength to serve best.

While doing your work do not argue that this particular bit is your jurisdiction and that other one is not; do not be sticklers for boundaries and limits. Support each other, supplement each other in joyful co-operation; strengthen each other. Act as an ideal sathsanga (spiritual gathering), infusing into each other energy and enthusiasm. That does not mean that you should carry a greater burden than that allotted to you. Do not interfere wildly with what other people are doing; or, criticise others sullenly. Be worthy of the status of persons connected with the Prasanthi Nilayam. There should be no place in your hearts for malice or envy or even competition. Spread around you the

atmosphere of Prasanthi (tranquillity); do not rush about, falling on all and sundry, discovering faults where none exists. That is misdirected enthusiasm.

Observe the rules of Prasanthi Nilayam

Do nothing to disturb the calm of others; for, you know how valuable calmness and quietness are in your own case. I hope you know it. Behave towards others as you wish them to behave towards you. That is the measure of your love. Seek out the old, sitting in the sun or darkness, outside the auditorium, for, they are too weak to push to the front lines; seek out those who are of defective vision or hearing; and bring them gently near the dais making room for them, by asking younger persons to vacate their seats. You should not claim any special privilege for your badges, in the Bhajana Hall or at the Auditorium. Those who come first have the first chance; don't argue and create a scene. Let people sit quietly, wherever seats are available, when they arrive; each must earn his or her place and claim it, not in the Auditorium, but in My heart; do not claim it in these brick and mortar halls. In the rules of the Prasanthi Nilayam, it is laid down that those who come after the bhajan or discourse starts, must not distract the attention of those who are immersed in it by striding up to the front lines or to some vacant space in the front. See that this is observed strictly. Nothing should be done by any one to distract attention, once the programme has started. You have come here, away from kith and kin, eager to uplift yourself and progress in the spiritual field; why then should you slide into old habits that breed egoism and hate? Volunteers must not wait for chances of service to come to them; they must be on the look-out for them, alert and ready. Then, they can find them all around. It is the heart of stone that blinds the eye to the pain that others endure.

Look out for chances to serve

I have directed all residents of the Colony to inquire of their neighbours, as the first task of the day, whether they are well. This is not just a courtesy call, but a genuine token of love. Among the thousands who have gathered here, there are many who would be thankful for some help. Some kind hand that

will lead them to food or shelter, the river or the Mandhir, the auditorium or the hospital. Speak to them gently and offer to be of use to them. Do you not see Me and hear Me, moving among them? I speak softly and endearingly; for, I love them ardently, in spite of all their faults. Why then should you be harsh and rude? There is no kinship so dear as the kinship forged by spiritualities. Family relationships are not so firmly based on identity of aims and sameness of effort. You are bound by bonds that are more longstanding and pleasant. Let these people return home and exult in the discovery that, at Prasanthi Nilayam, they have kith and kin who respect them and love them, as no relative has done so far.

Volunteers should give up life of comfort

You must realise now that this badge which I gave you is not a passport for easy life; it means strenuous routine, the giving up of comfort, the acceptance of hard toil, sleeplessness and sacrifice. If you are used to a soft life, you are useless as a volunteer, or for anything else. Reduce your wants to the minimum; do not yield to the temptation of carrying a transistor radio and listening to all that enervating stuff. Examine your room, your table, your wardrobe, your box and find out how many superfluous things you have accumulated. You have acquired them because you saw some one having them and you felt that unless you too possessed them you will look small in their company.

A foolish desire to be esteemed up-to-date, to keep up with fashion, has made you gather needless habits and needless articles. Man can be happy with much less equipment than you seem to think essential. When some article is with you for some little time, you feel it is indispensable and you do not know how to live without it. Like the silkworm, you weave a cocoon for yourself, out of your fancy. Do not allow costly habits to grow, costly from the monetary as well as the spiritual point of view. Watch your likes and dislikes with a vigilant eye and discard anything that threatens to encumber your path. Detachment is generally called vairagya, or the absence of raga. It is a precious spiritual quality, which, if it must sustain you, must be based on jnana. Now, you have here this silver figure of Shirdi Sai Baba; when you think of the silver, its

fineness, its cost, etc., there is no Sai; when you think of Sai, His Mahima, His Leela (miracle power and divine play), there is no silver!

Volunteer's role is a call for personal improvement

At Thirupathi, when you stand before the Venkateshwara idol, if you think about the stone, its colour, its geological structure, its weight, etc., there can be no Venkateshwara in your mind; fill yourself with the thoughts of the Lord of the Seven Hills, and then, there is no stone before you! So also, see everywhere, in this carpet, this towel, this vessel, this wall, the basic Brahman (the Eternal Absolute), and you will be filled with spiritual knowledge, jnana. There will be no attachment; this is the

"Sarvam Brahmanamayam" (All filled with Brahman)

finale of all sadhana (spiritual practice). Do not despair; practice it from now on, step by step; at least see everything as His; offer everything to Him; do everything, as for Him, leave everything to Him. Be an instrument; an instrument has no likes and dislikes; be just a tool; be an efficient tool. Spread joy at all times. Do not pour into others' ears your tales of woe and worry; carry a smile on your face so that every one who sees you can catch that exhilaration. When you tell others of your success, your purpose is to create envy in them. You must not only love others, but you must be so good that others too may love you. Try to console, encourage, strengthen, and enlighten those who are miserable, downhearted, weak or ill-informed. Get yourselves equipped for this role. That is the role into which you are ushered now. This chance that I have given you, to move about as a volunteer here, is a call for personal improvement and sadhana. When thousands are thirsty for this chance, imagine how lucky you are and how great is the responsibility.

When you assist some eager aspirant to do meditation undisturbed, you earn not only gratitude, but, even a share of the merit. For example, a mother may

hasten into the hall, when the bell strikes at 4.30 a.m. for the Pranava (Primal Cosmic sound, OM) recital, leaving her child sleeping in the shed. If the child awakes meanwhile and starts screaming, a lady volunteer can, without calling the mother out, herself take the child on her lap and pacify it with a soft lullaby, until the mother arrives. Serve others gladly; do not serve with an air of superiority or the sour face of disgust. Let people know that you are genuinely glad at the chance to help.

Serve others gladly

Do not pretend or patronise. If you simply say, "Do not talk aloud" or give some such blank direction, you are patronising and treating people with disdain. They deserve to be told why. Tell them that silence is the very first rung of the ladder of sadhana; that it is the hall-mark of Prasanthi Nilayam; that they must learn to make every place where they are, a Prasanthi Nilayam; that loud talk disturbs those who practise Namasmara (remembrance of Lord's name) or dhyana (meditation) or japam (recitation); that noise breeds further noise. This is a workshop, where damaged minds and hearts come for repair or overhaul. In the workshops, there will be the din of hammer, the clang of wheel, the whirr of engine and the clatter of chains. In this workshop, there must be heard only the whisper of the Name of God. With new parts fitted and new coats of paint, cars emerge out of the workshop as good as new and they run smoothly, without trouble, for miles and miles. People must find this place also as a workshop for persons, who are travel-worn, weary, or about to enter upon a long journey.

7. Recruits for my Army

Date: **February 1965** / Location: **Prasanthi Nilayam** / Occasion: **Upanayanam Day**

The samskara (purifying ritual) of Upanayanam (investiture of sacred thread) is beneficial not only to the boys who were initiated, but, for every one of you, who witnessed it and drew inspiration from it. The learned Pandit from Delhi spoke to you now of the meaning of this samskara; it has made all these lads "twice born", "dwithiyam mounji bandhanath" he said. The belt of munja grass has given them that status, he said. The Upanayanam - the ceremony of leading the lad to the teacher - and the recital by the initiate of the Gayathri manthra (sacred formula) which prays for clear intellect, are the first steps towards the ultimate Realisation of the Reality. Pandit Ramasaran explained how the Gayathri is the essence of the Rig, Yajur and Sama Vedas and how the traditional conception of the Gayathri Devatha embodies a harmonious blending of the five divinities - Vishnu, Surya, Maheshwari, Ganapathy and Ishwara, representing the Five Elements - and how prayer to Gayathri confers the material and spiritual needs of man.

Every man is burdened with one body and four births!

He is born a Sudra; for, as a child he has no sense of cleanliness or definite ideas of right and wrong.

By the rite of initiation into spiritual life, that is to say, when he is taken as a pupil by a guru, who takes up the responsibility of leading him to the Goal of Human Life, he becomes dwija, twice-born, entering into the second chapter of his human career.

When he has finished the spiritual disciplines and studied the scriptures, he becomes a Vipra (the wise);

at last, when as a result of those practices and experiences, he visualises Brahman as immanent in all, he is a Brahmana. A Vipra attains Brahmajnanam and becomes a Brahmana. This is therefore the first step, but

the most important step, in the process of self-realisation.

Aim of all human effort

The parents endow you with the material body, the deha; the Guru points out to you the Dweller within the Body, the dehi. So, he is entitled to be honoured as a God, say the Vedas.

MathruDevo bhava, Pithru Devo bhava, Acharya Devo bhava
(Honour mother, father, teacher, each as God).

To make gold more amenable to the operations attendant on ornament making, it is alloyed by the addition of a little silver or copper; so too in order to manifest the multiple variety of Nature, the Brahmathathwam (essential nature of Brahman) is converted into an alloy, with the addition of a little egoism or Mamakaram; the Guru teaches you to regain the pure unalloyed Brahman by the processes of sravanam, mananam, and nididhyasa (listening to, recapitulating and concentrating on God's glories) in the crucible of the intellect. The jeevathathwam and the Brahmathathwam (essential nature of the self and Brahman) are then clearly understood as facets of the same entity. The aim of all human effort is to achieve this One (Ekam), that lies behind all this plurality. Without achieving it, man can have no peace, within or without. No amount of repetition of the shanthi manthra is capable of granting him that. The Guru reveals to the disciple the invisible current that activates the many seemingly distinct instruments, like the bulb, the mike, the fan, the refrigerator, the tape-recorder, the stove, etc. He deserves your gratitude. He is like the stranger who entered the cottage of a poor man and announced that underneath the floor of that hovel, there lies hidden a precious treasure which he can take and own, by a few minutes of digging! The sage Vishwamithra devised the Gayathri manthra as a fine drug for the spiritual aspirant; he is also to be revered, for the drug awakens your buddhi and confers upon you viveka, vichakshana and vairagya - (wisdom,

discrimination, and non-attachment) - the three distinguishing marks of humans, elevating them far above other animals.

Subtle power of Gayathri manthra

Samskara involves double actions, removing dirt and applying paint, when the word is used with reference to a house. This Gayathri has the subtle power of removing evil tendencies and implanting virtuous habits, and so, the Upanayanam is a unique samskara. Man is Divine; he has the Lord dwelling in his heart, but yet he is bound, miserable, limited, weak, agitated. Why? He is ignorant of his reality. He imagines himself weak, limited, bound and he is so shaped by the mind, which is the source of that imagination. How then can you be freed? How are you to overcome this bhrama or delusion? If you desire to overtake a train, you must speed in a car or board a plane. No vehicle slower than the train will help. So too, if you intend to overcome the delusion, you must establish yourself in God; the delusion of Manavasakthi (man-power) can be overcome only by the attainment of Daivasakthi (God-power). The Gayathri promotes the acquisition of Daivasakthi. Gayathri means 'that which saves, when repeated'! It is the torch of jnana, given into the hands of these lads venturing into the regions of intellectual inquiry and sensory restrictions. As paddy is treated to a process of pestling and winnowing and cleaning in order to get rice that can be cooked and eaten, these boys have to de-husk the individual, discover the Atma hiding inside the five sheaths of physical matter, vital energy, mind, intelligence and bliss (Annamaya, Pranamaya, Manomaya, Vijnanamaya and Anandamaya Kosas). The Sandhyavandana rite they are enjoined to do, three times a day, from this very day, is part of this process of dehusking. Time must be found, time can be found, provided they have the will and they get encouragement from the elders. Supplying the calories for the spirit is as necessary a process for happy living as supplying calories for the body; breakfast, lunch and dinner, Prathas sandhya (morning worship), Madhyahnika (noon worship), and Sayamsandhya (evening worship), all six are equally essential. You miss any one of the six at your peril.

Inner cleanliness should be the first aim

Dear boys, you have today got the Gayathri, the milk from the four teats called four Vedas of the udder of the Cow that is Godhead; it has in it the sustenance that will make you shine with spiritual health. You must now carefully use it for your good; do not spill it or spoil it; boil it, make curds out of it, churn it and get the butter that is immanent in it. It will become curds by means of your contemplation on the Lord, (Bhagavathchinthana); with the churning-rod of discipline, collect the butter of ananda (bliss). You were initiated in this holy Presence, remember, the Presence that so many thousands covet; so, you have a special responsibility to fulfil your Brahmacharya (the path of celibacy and learning), that leads to Brahmajnana (knowledge of the Supreme Being). The body is fundamentally unclean, but yet it craves to achieve both cleanliness and Godliness, because its nature is purity and holiness. Inner cleanliness should be your first aim. Which do you cleanse more in a drinking vessel? The interior or the exterior? You may have fine vegetables, excellent tamarind juice, chillies, salt, dal; the cook may be a master of the art; the oven may be the perfect type; but, if the copper vessel is not tinned, the 'sambar' (soup) will be turned into dangerous stuff that cannot be taken. It will act as poison to those that eat it. Sathkarma (virtuous deeds) and sadachara (good habits) act to protect the sambar from contact with copper. For you the Gayathri and the Sandhya rites, three times a day, will act as the 'tin' for the Hridayapathra (the heart-vessel), where emotions, impulses and instincts are cooking. The discipline of Sandhya will tame all instincts even as the mahout's goad subdues the might of the elephant and trains it to perform tricks in the circus ring. Do not fail to make the best of this chance.

Efficacy of unseen merit

As many as 450 boys have had this chance today. Some persons at Prasanthi Nilayam felt that, this being the examination season for school boys, many may not be able to come and get initiated in this sacred presence; but, see how, on account of strikes and consequent disturbances, schools were closed, examinations were postponed and almost all who had written about their desire to come are here before Me! This is another reminder of the efficacy of

unseen merit; the rain falls on barren land and all the seeds hidden underneath the land sprout, making a green carpet to cover the area! No one knew, except Myself, that there were these seeds of earned merit awaiting the showers of Grace in the heritage of these boys. For the revival of Sanathana Dharma (Eternal Religion) these boys will be efficient instruments. They will replenish the glory of Bharathavarsha. They are today recruited into My army. I am achieving the re-establishment of Dharma, the restoration of the Vedas, and it is with that in view that I am initiating in My Presence every year boys from all parts of India. This samskara is fast losing its significance; the recital of the Gayathri and the performance of the Sandhya rite are both being neglected; so, they have to be restored to their pristine glory. This is an important step. Until you see the Akshara (the Unchanging), you must practise the kshara (the changing), which helps you to transcend it. When once you are able to pronounce 'cat', you can give up reading the word as 'c-a-t'. The Gayathri will help you to reach the Akshara; practise it, three times a day, in the Sandhya rite. The Deha-matha (the mother who bore the body), the Loka-matha (the Mother who sustains the Universe) and the Gayathri-matha (the Mother who saves you from bondage and ignorance) - all three deserve your devotion and worship.

Desire is a storm,
greed is a whirlpool,
pride is a precipice,
attachment is an avalanche,
egoism is a volcano.
Keep these away so that,
when you recite the name of God,
or do meditation,
they do not disturb the equanimity.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba



8. Shiva in shava

Date: **01 March 1965** / Location: **Prasanthi Nilayam** / Occasion: **Shivarathri, Flag Hoisting Ceremony**

Today, when from the Himalayan ranges down to Kanyakumari Cape, the entire land is resounding with the declaration, Shivoham, Shivoham, it is indeed your good fortune that you have been able to come here and be with Me. On all such days set apart by tradition for the contemplation of one's innate Divinity, you must examine your own equipment and decide on what to discard and what to retain. All qualities, attitudes, habits that remind you of the Absolute into which you have to merge, have to be retained and developed; all that draw you away into the relative world of Time and Space, have to be discarded or at least recognised as having but temporary value.

All the joy you crave for, is in you; but, like a man who has vast riches in the iron chest, but, who has no idea where the key is, you suffer. With proper directions, dwelling upon them in the silence of meditation, it is possible to secure the key, open the chest and be rich in joy. The flames of anger, pride, hatred, envy are more devastating than other fires; they arise in the mind stealthily and in spurts; they are ever demanding more and more to feed upon. Fire is called anala in the Geetha, for anala means, "not enough!" Fire never says, "Enough" or "I am satisfied." You dread fire when it leaps at a distance; what then is to be said when it is inside your very self? How to put out these awful flames? Well, Sanathana Dharma (the ancient spiritual code) has certain extinguishers tested by experience and guaranteed by sages. They are Sathya, Dharma, Shanthi and Prema. Saturate your heart with these and you are rendered fireproof.

You seek joy and earn pain

Like the frog caught and held in the mouth of a cobra which, unaware of its fate, flicks its tongue at a fly, you too are unaware of Death which holds you in its fangs. You seek joy and earn pain, hunt for pleasure and bag grief. You attach yourselves to the body that decays and let go the God that lasts. Of

course, a thousand wise men have poured this into your ears, but their words have fallen on hard ground and 'refused to sprout. Had they fallen on the soft soil of your heart and been watered by the tears of contrition, certainly they would have germinated and grown. A clean Consciousness is as a lamp; pour into it the oil of Grace; place in it the wick of Selfcontrol; keep in position the chimney of Namasmara, so that the gusts of Joy and Grief might not scotch the flame. Light the lamp, with some Mahavakya (Great Statement), like AhamBrahmasmi (Self is Brahman) or Thath thwam asi (Thou art That). Then, you will not only have Light; you will be a source of Light. The Flag I am hoisting now is a call to light your own lamps. The symbol on it is here on the ground, represented elaborately and clearly for all to see and learn. These concentric circles round the Lotus Pillar mark the stages of the progress of the spiritual aspirant to the Goal. He has to pull himself across the sandy waste of Desire, up the blood-red steps of Anger and Hatred, through the cool green spaces of Bliss, to attain the vast silence of Yoga (union with God). There he must get well established in meditation, like an erect Pillar. You will notice that there are six rings on that Yoga-danda or Pillar in the centre of the Circle. They are the Chakras (energy centres), up which the Kundalini Shakthi (the Serpent Power) of the sadhaka passes towards the Goal. And what is the Goal? The blossoming of the Lotus of the Heart and the emanation of jnana-jyothi (light and wisdom) from it, consuming all delusion and making the Individual Splendour merge in the Universal Splendour.

Three gates of Prasanthi Nilayam

You will also notice that the Prasanthi Nilayam has three gates but, no wall around, or even fence! Some sage has asked' For Him who has the Universe as His residence, which is the front door? Here too, we have entrances everywhere, nothing to keep people out! The first gate is Thamoguna (quality of inertia) and if you enter it, you are drawn by the garden, the decorations, the festoons, and the music into stepping across the Rajoguna (quality of activity) gate, and pass on to the Hall, where Sathwaguna (quality of poise and serenity) prevails. There is a meaning in whatever I do or speak; I never indulge in significance-less acts. These gates too have a lesson for you.

Do not treat a holy day like Shivarathri as a holiday, set apart for picnic, cinema, card-game, revelry, rivalry and fun. The rishis (sages) fixed these days in the calendar for the contemplation of God and the service of God in man, for the removal of the weeds of vices and weakening habits. Contemplate the Atma-linga (spirit of the soul), the Jyothi-linga (the effulgent form), which this day emerges from Me; be convinced that the Linga is in every one of you, for it is a mark of the Shiva that resides in the shava (body shell). Allow the vision of the Atmalinga to enter into your inner consciousness and elevate it into Divine heights; do not waste the few days that you are bent on spending at the Prasanthi Nilayam, into days of hectic chatter, vain disputation, idle curiosity or restless wandering' learn the discipline of the place and limit your talk, your association, your comfort, so that you may live in thoughts Divine, not merely in this atmosphere but later, in your own homes. Take delight in the shanthi (peace) of this place; do not disturb it by thought, word or deed. Utilise this rare chance, this unique opportunity, secured by the merit of many births, for self-improvement. Prasanthi Nilayam: MahaShivarathri: 8 a.m.

Each one from ego
takes his birth and
clad in ego dies
and comes and goes,
gives and receives
and earns and spends,
and deals in lies
or speaks the truth,
in ego all the while.
Those who do away with their ego
attain salvation.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba



9. Deathless though dead

Date: **March 1965** / Location: **Prasanthi Nilayam** / Occasion: **Shivarathri**

Shivarathri is the day on which Maheshwara takes up the Linga form for the benefit of spiritual seekers; what they have to seek from Maheshwara is Jnana (spiritual wisdom). "JnanamMaheswara dhichched." - It is jnanam that makes manifest the Divinity latent in man. It is the final achievement of all thapas (penance), all yoga and yaga. You cannot get that joy or even a fraction of that joy, pursuing earthly pleasure. To cure you of the bite of a cobra in a dream, you have to be awakened, that is all. 'Waking' is the acquisition of jnana. That jnana (knowledge) is got by ceaseless dhyana (meditation) of the glory and potency of the Almighty. Two things are essential for happy life. Dhanya and Dhyana. Dhanya (grains) for the sustenance of the Body and dhyana (contemplation) for entering the temple of the Lord and merging in His Glory. It was said by Shastri that sages retired into the silence of the forest and by means of hard mental toil won for mankind the great treasure of spiritual experience and inspiration. He gave many examples of such seers; but, there are some who condemn this retirement from the jostling crowds and call these heroes, cowards afraid to face the stern demands of life! They label them as selfish, desirous of their own salvation, regardless of the rest.

The real reason for their taking refuge in lonely places is to learn the secret of liberation for the benefit of humanity. It is like the young man who goes abroad now for higher technical training; you cannot condemn him as a coward or socially useless individual, when the very purpose is to sharpen and deepen experience and become more useful! The purpose of the sages is only to keep the senses away from things that delight and deviate, to escape the infection that will damage the springs of joy.

Passions are only apparent

The Atmavidya that they specialise in when they are in the ashramas and thapovans (hermitages) of the forest brings salvation to all those who later come in contact with them. Their calmness and joy will inspire others too. You

find fault with them for leaving you; but what good does the man who stays, achieve? People behave in the same family, though living together, as snakes and scorpions to each other. Many a home reminds you of a menagerie rather than a cosy abode of joy and peace!

This morning, I spoke of anger, hatred, envy and pride as flames of fire consuming the mind. Now, the Shastri from Delhi said that such passions are only apparent and that the real You are not bothered by them! This reminds Me of a story. A boy offered to label the names of the articles contained in tins and cans and pots in the kitchen of his house and his mother agreed; he wrote and pasted correctly on all except the sugar tin. Upon that he placed the label, RED CHILLIES! When reprimanded, the boy said it was only to deceive the ants, which will not swarm over a red chillies tin! Superficial Vedantha (Vedhic philosophy) will not keep the fire away.

Of course these qualities are useful sometimes like the hiss of the cobra to keep the disturbers away. Anger and hatred can be used to ward off the evil that stalks the sadhaka (aspirant); be angry at things that hamper you; hate the habits that brutalise you. Cultivate jnana (Supreme Knowledge) and visualise the Lord in things and activities. That makes this human birth worth while, Do not seek faults in others; for the others are but manifestations of the Lord you are seeking to realise. It is your own fault that you see in others. There are only two things in this world, one apparent, the other, real; the kshethra and the kshethrajna. The kshethra is the deha (body) and the Kshethrajna is the Dehi (Self). The loka (world) is the Form of the Lokeshha (Lord of the world); the World is the Body of God.

Make death a sublime act of liberation

You are awake when you feel that you have full knowledge; but, when awake, you are aware only of the many, not of the One. It is only when you are in deep sleep that all the multiplicity vanishes; then you are not aware of the world and of your deluded picture of it. Examine even while awake the stages of dream and deep sleep and realise that wakefulness is a handicap to the seeker of Truth; the senses are deceptive; they are inefficient instruments.

Ramakrishna Paramahansa once shocked everyone by slapping Rani Rasmani on the cheek, while she was praying before the shrine at Dakshineswar, for he knew that she was asking the Mother not liberation, but bondage! Make use of the chance given to set yourself free; do not foolishly let it go.

Perhaps, when you return to your village, you too will tell people, "There were thousands and thousands of people from all parts of India and even some from foreign countries, at Puttaparthi. There was a big rush to have Baba's darshan (sight), etc." That is not what you should take back from here. There was a lady once who attended the musical recitation of a Puranic story; she sat through all the long hours; she described the gathering, the noise, the lights, the mike, the loudspeakers, but, what the story was which the reciter expounded, she had no idea at all! Learn from here the value of silence, of namasmarana, of bhajana, of japa, of dhyana, of singleminded remembrance of the Lord, of the association with spiritually kin. These will stand you in good stead, when distress assails you. The master of the house was dying and when the wife and children pestered him with their anxiety, "What is to happen to us, when you leave us?" the dying man turned to them in equal despair; "What is to happen to me, when I leave you?" he asked and died. Do not move helplessly on to that doom of despair. Do not die in spirit, though the body may fall away. Know that the real "You" is deathless; make death a sublime act of liberation.

The three Nishthas of spiritual pursuit

Such knowledge can come only through a life devoted to Dharmanishtha (steady pursuit of the moral code) and Karmanishtha (steady devotion to the duties of one's stage of life). These two must end in the evolution of a third Nishtha like fire and Water producing steam to haul the train of wagons, or, like oil and air producing gas in the engine to haul the car. The third Nishtha is Brahmanishtha - the steady contemplation of the One Basis of all this seeming multiplicity, namely, Brahman. The Nishtha becomes steady by practice that your separate individual existence is merged in the great Deluge of Wisdom, which merges you in Him, restores you to Him, rather.

Many thousands have come today to this Prasanthi Nilayam and joined this unique satsanga (holy gathering). Many who were coming regularly for all Shivarathris to witness and be elevated by the sight of the Atmalin-godbhavam (Oval shaped Form of Self) have not come today; many who have not come so far have had the good fortune to be present. It is not mere chance. In the spiritual field, why, in all fields, there is no chance at all. Such fortune is due either to Grace or spiritual practice. Enter into prayerful silence and be blessed by the Great Vision of the Emergence of the Atmalinga.

Mind does not have any powers.
The only power is Atma Shakthi,
the power of Atma.
Mind has no form.
Mind can be said to be woven of desires.
The Atma shines on the heart,
whether the heart be pure or impure.
If the heart is purified
and if the strongest desire is for God,
that is the best.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

10. Root or rope?

Date: **March 1965** / Location: **Prasanthi Nilayam**

In the discourse you heard just now on the methods by which the Shastras have asked man to pay his debt to the gods, the sages and the ancestors, you heard how Sanathana Dharma has laid down a "thornless path" for the progress of man, from humanity to divinity! Thornless or thornful, each has to tread the path, alone and in full confidence. Arjuna was the brother-in-law of Krishna; they were great friends too; there was obviously no time to lose, in elaborate explanations and questionings while on the battlefield. Besides, Krishna had undoubtedly the power to transform in a trice the way-ward mind of his kinsman into an illumined instrument for resolute action. But, Krishna did not use the power! He only prescribed the medicine and the regimen; Arjuna had to swallow the drug and follow the regimen himself, in order to be saved. He said, "You are My friend, you are My kinsman, you are now so near to Me that I am now your charioteer, you are also in great distress; I agree that the delusion which has overpowered you must be removed quickly; but, your ajnana (ignorance) must fall off through your own efforts, not through some miracle of My design." Truth that is won by one's own struggle with untruth will be lasting treasure; the struggle strengthens one to treasure the treasure, for not all can bear the revolutionary consequences of that possession.

Unsteady mind can be tamed

Arjuna confessed to Krishna that the mind is ever agitated and restless; he said he had failed to calm it. He said it was like the wind, blowing where it listeth. There is a fine story about Karna which I shall tell you. He was applying oil to his head, preliminary to bath, from a jewelled cup. Karna had taken the oil in his right hand and rubbed it well into his hair, when Krishna appeared and when Karna rose to revere Him, He said He had come to demand the cup from him as a gift! 'I am surprised that You, the Master of the Universe, have a desire for this paltry thing, but who am I to ask you questions? Here is the cup; I gift it to You,' he said, and placed it in the Lord's

right hand with his left hand. Krishna took him to task for that error in Dharma, offering a gift with the left hand. But, Karna said, "Pardon me, O Lord ! My fight hand is smeared with oil; I was afraid that if I take time to wash the hand and make it fit to give the cup, wayward mind, which now has agreed to the gift, might discover some argument not to accede to your request; I might therefore be deprived of the unique good fortune, by the fickle mind with which I am burdened. This is the reason why I acted on the moment and passed it on to you, regardless of the breach of a rule of etiquette; please sympathise with me and pardon me", Karna pleaded. Karna knew that the mind was unsteady. But, as Krishna advised Arjuna, it can be tamed by detachment and discipline.

The mind must become the servant of the intellect, not the slave of the senses. It must discriminate and detach itself from the body. Like the ripe tamarind fruit, which becomes loose inside the shell, it must be unattached to this shell, this casement called body. Strike a green tamarind fruit with a stone and you cause harm to the pulp inside; but, strike the ripe fruit and see what happens. It is the dry rind that falls off; nothing affects the pulp or the seed. The ripe sadhaka (aspirant) does not feel the blows of fate or fortune; it is the unripe man who is wounded by every blow.

The secret of liberation

A king was once out hunting in the forest and while pursuing a fleeing stag, he fell into a forsaken well which was very deep, No one of his retinue knew of his plight, for the stag had taken him far away into the woods, before his men could get trace Of him. Luckily, even as he fell, he grasped the root of a tree that was hanging aloof from the side of the well, and thus escaped the death that yawned underneath. After a few agonising hours, he heard some one reciting aloud the names of the Lord, near the mouth of the well. It was a holy man and when he caught the faint echo of the unfortunate king's cry, he let down a rope and called out to the King to hold on to it tight, so that he might be pulled up into safety. The question now before the King-was Root or Rope?

Of course the root helped him to survive, but, it had value only until the rope

was offered. It would be folly to stick to the root even after the rope was ready to save. The root must be appreciated, but, thankfulness should not be exaggerated into attachment. Samsara or worldly existence is like the root; the rope is the secret of liberation, through some Mahavakya (sacred utterance of Truth), that discloses in a flash the Truth. Liberation is just the awareness of Truth, the falling off of the scales of delusion from the eye. It is not a special suburb of select souls; it is not a closed monopoly of expert sadhakas. Like the Godavari losing its form, its name and its taste in the sea, liberation dissolves the name and form, aptitudes and attitudes. You are no more a separate, particular, individual. The rain drop has merged in the sea, from where the drop arose. Of course there was no bondage, at any time, and no prison; there was only a fixation in the mind that one was bound, that one was in prison, that one was limited and finite!

Caution to be observed regarding food

To purify the mind and the intellect for the correct reflection of the Truth, the first caution is in regard to food. Indeed, this is a very serious matter for sadhakas. There lived in Malur, Mysore State, a pious Brahmin who was a great scholar. He had an equally pious wife, He was always intent on puja and japa-dhyana and was known far and wide for his virtuous character. One day, a sanyasin (mendicant) called Nithyananda came to his door seeking alms; so, he was happy beyond measure. He invited the monk to take dinner with him the next day so that he might honour him with due hospitality. He hung green festoons over his doors and made elaborate arrangements for the reception.. But, at the eleventh hour physical impurity rendered his wife unfit to prepare food for the honoured guest or for any one else. A neighbour volunteered to cook the meal and she was brought in and introduced into the kitchen. Everything went off well and all were happy as they could be, under the circumstances. Only, the monk was wrung during meals by an overpowering desire to steal the silver cup which the host had placed near his plate. In spite of his best efforts, the evil idea won and the monk hurried to his abode with the cup hidden in the folds of his robe. He could not sleep that night, for his conscience pricked him so. He felt he had brought disgrace on his Guru, and on the rishis (sages) whom he invoked by the manthras he

recited. He could not rest until he ran back into the Brahmin's house and, falling at his feet, restored the article with tears of repentance trickling down his cheeks.

Every one wondered how such a saint could stoop so low; then, some one suggested it might be the fault transmitted to the food he ate, by the person who cooked it. And, when they examined the history of the neighbour, they found that she was an irrepressible thief! The thieving tendency had by subtle contact affected the food she prepared. This is the reason why spiritual aspirants are advised to live on fruits and tubers only when they reach a certain stage of spiritual achievement.

Wants of man are neverending

The sadhaka must welcome obstacles, for, they are but challenges, opportunities to prove one's mettle, to help one in overcoming attachment to the body. Shivam has no fear; only shavam (corpse) fears. This is Shivarathri, the Night of Fearlessness, of Auspiciousness, of Mangalam. You are happy you have come on pilgrimage here' but let Me tell you one thing: unless you control the stream of desire that springs in the mind, this is just wasted opportunity. If your wish is fulfilled, you revere Me; if it is not, you revile Me. That is how desire debases you. When one wish is fulfilled, ten rise in its place. For, there is no dearth of want; the same person has come to Me seeking success at the examination, then, a job, then a father-in-law, then a child, then a rise in the salary, a transfer to a cheaper place, a seat in the Medical College for the son - a never-ending series of wants, until at last, he comes seeking My Grace for an end to worldly pursuits and for initiation into the path of spiritual liberation! Chintha (anxiety) is what such people dwell on. Chintha means, in Telugu, the tamarind tree. They dwell on the tamarind tree, the Chintha tree; but, My tree is the 'Santhosha tree, the Tree of Joy'. Man is worse than even a dog, for he forgets favours received; he denies his master; he trusts the ear, even though the eye belies the ear. He behaves as if he has two tongues; whom he praises to the sky today, he belittles and disbelieves the next. The dog knows its master, whatever role he may put on in the play - king, servant, clown. It is grateful for the leavings on your plates,

which it is allowed to lick after your dinner. But, man has no gratitude even for the amritha he gets.

Give up attachment and be free

No one can liberate you, for no one has bound you. You hold on to the nettle of worldly pleasure and you weep for pain. The kite is pursued by crows so long as it carries the fish in its beak; it twists and turns in the sky trying to dodge the crows who seek to snatch the fish; tired at last, it drops the fish. That moment it is free. So give up the attachment to the senses, then grief and worry can harass you no more. The kite sits on a tree, preening its wings, enjoying its happiness. You too can be so happy, provided you drop the fish you have in your beak. When you know that thieves have broken into your neighbour's house, you become extracautious and every night, before you retire, you examine every lock and bolt in the house. When you know that death has carried away a victim from the house next door, why do you not examine yourselves, whether you are equipped to meet it when it comes for you? Why do you immerse yourselves in distractions like building houses, piling bank-balances, celebrating picnics, contesting elections? Engage yourselves rather in things that will make you immortal, serve your best interests by service to the world. Seek your own reality? That is what a wise man should do.

11. Aspire for the nobler role

Date: 03 March 1965 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam

The body is the temple of the Self; the world is a structure raised on one strong pillar, "I". For, when this "I" is dormant during deep sleep, there is no world, so far as you are concerned. You are alone, when you sleep. Before you were born, there was no world for you. After you die, there is no world of which you are conscious. To get this jnana (knowledge) fixed, you have to pass through the preparatory schools of karma and upasana. Karma (dedicated activity) helps to cleanse the heart of egoistic impulses; upasana (contemplation) helps to focus attention on the Universal and the Absolute. Then jnana emerges. This is what the Shastri referred to as the conjunction of three rivers, in the poem he read now. Once you win that jnana, you are the equal of the wisest, for there is nothing more to know. Karma and upasana depend upon the dharma of the particular stage of your life, as well as the guna that rules you. Even amritha will be harmful to life, if it is drunk through the nose. There is a way of life, a method of uplift, a path of progress, distinct for every seeker, different from those of others. The true Guru knows which suits you best. It does not mean that the Guru is partial or prejudiced; it only means that he is kind and considerate. For, he does not insist on all men wearing the same straitjacket. A washerman had a dog and a donkey; the donkey to carry the clothes to the river and back, the dog to watch the clothes hung to dry. One day, the dog refused to bark, for it was illtreated that morning by the master; it was mum even when a thief was bundling up the clothes. So, the donkey decided to bray in order to warn the washerman. But he mistook it as sheer impertinence and so, without pursuing the thief, he belaboured the poor beast for all its pains! Each must do only one's allotted task; or else, confusion will arise and multiply.

Let God's will prevail

When dharma (which means, that which is worn, the apparel, clothes) was sought to be removed from the wearer, the Lord blessed Dhroupadi, with the grant of an unending series of saris. Today, the Sanathana Dharma which is

the robe of Bharatha matha (Mother India) is sought to be taken away by her unworthy and deluded sons and so, the Lord has come to grant solace and strength. You will see splendid saris pouring into her lap from every door of the Durbar Hall, where she is being insulted. You will witness this great miracle, by the Avathar (God incarnate) come to protect her honour, her heritage of Athmic treasure. The whole secret lies in detachment or vairagya. The tongue has oil, fat and greasy substances rolling over it; but, it is unaffected by these; it does not become greasy. The eye is unaffected by the collyrium. The mind too must be unaffected by the experiences of success and failure, of gain and loss, of well-being and illness; it must be surrendered at the Feet of the Lord. Let His Will prevail. What profit does your little will bring you? Just close your eyes for five minutes and think of the profit your efforts have won for you. One wish leads to another; one bond brings about ten others. You marry; you get a daughter who has to be given in marriage; you struggle to finish your education; you struggle to finish your son's education; he struggles to finish his son's. Thus it goes on, like a never-ending chain. 'This one wish if fulfilled will be enough, I won't ask for anything more', you say; but I know you will come and ask for something else, which is the consequence of that wish. It is in the very nature of human desire; for, the joy one gets through its satisfaction is imperfect, limited, temporary, pregnant with grief. You sow bitter seeds and pray for a harvest of sweetness. You wail over the soil, the plant, the rain. What can they do? The seeds themselves are diseased, defective.

Truth will always win

The Vedhic injunction, given through the sages, is "Sathyam vada; Dharmam chara" - Speak the Truth; walk in the path of Virtue. Harischandra knew the authority behind that injunction. He respected that authority and followed that injunction whatever the consequences. He lost his kingdom, his honour, his everything. He sold his wife and son as slaves; himself, he had to sell for cash! He was reduced from being the occupant of the Imperial Throne to watching over the cremation of corpses and collecting fees therefor. He had to refuse the fight of being burnt, to his own dead son and insist on the fees being paid by his own helpless Queen! But, he stuck to Truth and won. Truth

will win, whatever the obstacle; otherwise, the Vedas would not have commanded man to stick to it.

The Lord has to take the Form that is suitable for the task He has to fulfil. To catch a gang of dacoits, the Police Officer has to move among them as a dacoit. That is why the human form has been taken. But, who, challenged with impunity by their own wives, dare challenge the Avathara and ask for proofs! Of course, if you desire to understand, you are welcome; be near, watch, learn and believe. Put on the role if you have the courage and the conviction that you can enact it well. Are you not tired of playing the parts of beggar and clown, in scene after scene, birth after birth? Aspire for the nobler role, at least now, in this birth.

Have intense craving for God's Grace

The Shastri while describing the various forms of bhakthi mentioned that the bhaktha is like the needle which is always drawn towards the magnet. But the needle has to be near enough; it has also to be clean enough. You stay far away and complain that Grace has not come! You do not scrape off, by the process of repentance, the mud and rust that prevent attachment. You come near for some time and stray away into the distance. I don't mean physical distance at all. You may be physically far, but mentally by My side. I do not measure distance in miles or metres; I am with you, in you, beside you, ever; only you have to be aware of Me and make use of My Presence.

You must become an Artha, torn by intense suffering to sense the Lord. Suffer the pangs of distress. You must realise that mere suffering is fruitless, without the knowledge of the path to attain the Lord. That is to say, you have to be transformed into a jijnasu, a seeker. Analyse the four Purusharthas (four goals of life) and realise that Moksha (Liberation) is the goal, the culmination. Start craving for that, as an Artharthi, the lover of the truest gain. Seek that which, when secured, all else is secured. Finally, when you realise that your true 'Nature is the Atman, you become a jnani. But, this is an arduous path and so, many who are attracted to it leave off and lose themselves. Then, like the winner of a cash prize, who revels in some city like Calcutta or Poona or

Madras or who dwells in some place of pilgrimage like Shirdi or Rishikesh until the entire prize money is spent, later they are harassed by the police for loitering in public places for want of a place to rest their heads. Heaven too is like this' a place where you can stay, until your last pie, but only until then! Moksha alone is unchanging, eternal.

Develop Sath-Guna to earn Grace

You come to Puttaparthi, secure a picture, and taking it home, begin worshipping it every day or every Thursday; but, all that is simply sathkarma (good activity). They won't take you far. You must also develop sath-guna, virtues, good habits, good attitudes, good characteristics, a good character. Otherwise your life is a chain of pluses and minuses, one cancelling the other out, totalling up to a mere zero. When you say, Thath thwam asi (Thou art that), you must have the traits of that which you claim to be. You say, "that and this" are the same; then, reviling that or revering 'that' is the same as reviling 'this' or revering this. There are many who pray to Me to give a name to their children, or to feed them with the first morsel of rice. These are two rites prescribed by the Shasthras. Hence the rite requires that the child be given the Name of God, Panduranga, Venkatesha, Srinivasa, Sathyanarayana, Lakshminarayana, etc. But, you curtail it into L.N. and you forget what the L is for or the N. A 'Rama' does not try to live up to the name he bears; he files a suit against his father and gives his father great misery. A Lakshmana assaults his brother, a Seetha applies for divorce. It is better to be born a boulder than as man with such a character. Why is it that the world reveres Rama and revolts at Ravana? Rama is not its uncle's son or Ravana, its stepmother's child! It is the kinship of the spirit, your innate goodness, responding lovingly, adoringly to the goodness in Rama and reacting revoltingly to the wickedness of Ravana.

It is not enough, nor is it essential that you should repeat the name of Rama loudly; respect it in the fullness of love and admiration. If you have no spring of Love in you, dig into your heart with external instruments like pujas, sthotra (worship and adoration), etc. and it will start to flow.

Welcome problems and suffering

From tomorrow, I shall be seeing you, one by one, the ailing, the old and the sick first, and the others later. Many of you have come with problems of health or mental worry of some sort or other. They are mere baits by which you have been brought here, so that you may contact the Grace, and strengthen your faith in the Divine. Problems and worry are really to be welcomed as they teach you the lessons of humility and reverence. But, not all continue the attachment they are able to establish; they lose the fortune that has fallen into their hands. You will see the day when the Chithravathi sands alone can accommodate the gatherings that assemble here from all parts of the world; when the sky alone can provide a roof for them all. Many hesitate to believe that things will improve, that life for all will be happy and full of joy, that the Golden Age will ever recur. Let me assure you that this Dharmaswaruupa (Righteousness personified) has not come in vain. It will succeed in averting the crisis that has come upon Humanity.

No one has right to advise others,
unless he is already practising what he preaches.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

12. Dharma and dharmashaala

Date: **March 1965** / Location: **Changalamma Temple, Sulurpet**

Bharathavarsha (Indian subcontinent) knew that the secret of peace lay in service and love towards all beings. The culture of this land proclaimed that the best form of service is to foster the practitioners of the good life, the sages and spiritual aspirants. Do not decry the servants of God; do not obstruct the charity of the generous; do not discourage the study of the scriptures even if you cannot positively promote any of these; that is the lesson taught in this land. Peace cannot be ensured by the piling up of atom bombs, the systematic amassing of weapons. Without removing hatred from the heart and planting love therein, mere terror and counter-terror cannot establish cordiality and harmony. "You purchase a bean and demand a gourd as an extra." Your effort is so microscopic: your expectation of fruit is gigantic. How can this wish for peace be realised? Little is done to cleanse the mind of hate, but every one expects international peace tomorrow at dawn.

At present, every one is after sukha (happiness). The hunt for comfortable jobs and positions of influence, the founding of banks and business houses, the growth of bungalows - all this is evidence of the eagerness to live in happiness. But, there is no eagerness to live in shanthi (peace). Sukha (happiness) is confused with shanthi; sukha is taken to be the same as shanthi. No one of the rich or well placed or prosperous or powerful has peace. You can investigate and find out for yourselves the truth of this. Peace is not found in the pass book or many-roomed bungalow or godown or iron safe. Your whole attitude is topsy-turvy. It is as absurd as putting the cart before the horse. The physical is subordinate to the spiritual. The body is the cart and the spirit, the horse. Of course, the cart should be kept in good condition; vice ruins the body and makes it unfit for the journey of life. The mind is the horse and that is neglected and not groomed for the journey. It is starved. In this land where Meera, Jayadeva, Valmeeeki, Thyagaraja, Ramadas and Tukaram, by their intense yearning and fortitude, showed the path of achieving lasting joy, precious years of life are thrown away in silly adventures.

"I am the holy" attitude breeds grief

The four Mahavakyas (great truths) which the Vedas proclaim, announce that all this is Brahman, one unitary uniform substance, appearing only to the diseased eye as many. AhamBrahmasmi - "I am Brahman" - you must assert; then, you transmute yourself into sons of Immortality; (Amrithasya Puthrah); now, since you bleat aham dehasmi - I am the body (the combination of five elements, that one day splits into those elements) - you degrade yourself into Amrithasya Puthrah - sons of Illusion. That attitude breeds grief; it is the root of discontent. People who stay in air-conditioned rooms have no coolness in their heart; people who resided in the caves of the forest had it. It is not external temperature that counts; it is the inner temper. Here, the Mahasakthi (Supreme Power) in the Name and Form of Chengalamma is established and evident. And, this foundation stone for a dharmashala (choultry) for the pilgrims who come to adore Her is being laid by Me. It is significant, for I never do any casual act. Every single act has a deep significance. This temple and this dharmashala are bound to serve mankind more and more. That is the meaning of prathishtha, the establishment of temples and the institutions of service related to them.

Dharma leads you to God

This building is named a Dharmashala, a Hall of Dharma, a School of Dharma. It should not be merely a free lodging house for pilgrims. It should have an atmosphere of dharma, which the pilgrims must inhale and get inspired thereby. The temple will inspire Atmadharma, leading the pilgrim into himself, to search for the Mahasakthi that is behind the Icchasakthi, the Kriyasakthi and the Jnanasakthi (power of the will, the work and the wisdom) that man is endowed with.

The Dharmashala must inspire him to deepen faith in the Vritthidharma, (the moral code that regulates and enriches his profession), the Varnadharmas, (the restrictions and regulations that strive to canalise his impulses and instincts, into fields that are special to his place in society), Ashramadharmas

(disciplines laid down for the blossoming of the spiritual consciousness during the four stages of life as student, as householder, as a recluse, and as ascetic), Viseshadharmā (code of conduct in special situations) and Samanyadharmā (code of conduct common to all). That will make the name Dharmashaala really appropriate. Dharma is the path by which the Mahasakthi in the temple of your heart can be tapped, experienced and realised; without adherence to dharma, it can never happen. Dharma (virtuous conduct) purifies the mind and leads you to God. It creates a taste for the Name and the Form of God. When you love the Name and Form of Krishna, you will naturally respect and obey the command of Krishna, which is found in the Bhagavad Geetha. Have the Name on the tongue and the Form in the eye and the demon called *asha* (unending desire), will fly from your mind, leaving joy and content therein. This kind of constant dwelling on the indwelling God will promote in you love for all beings. You will then see only good in others. You will strive only to do good to others.

Do your duties with God as the witness

Now, all things have gone up in value; man alone has become cheap. Endowed with the costly gems of Reason, Discrimination and Detachment, man has allowed them to slip away and he is beset with dire poverty, as a consequence. He has become cheaper than animals; he is slaughtered in millions without any qualm, because of the terrific growth of anger, hate and greed; he has forgotten his unity with all men, all beings, and all worlds. The contemplation of that unity alone can establish world peace, social peace and peace in the individual. All other efforts are like pouring sweet-scented rose water on a heap of ash, ineffective and foolish. I bless all efforts made by each of you to build shanthi (peace), on this foundation of Atmajnana, knowledge of Athmic unity. Gatherings like this must be arranged to spread the message of the Prasanthi Vidwanmahasabha in order that you may know the truth about yourself and seek to experience it. As Kumararaja said in the beginning, try to practise in your daily life at least one or two of the things I spoke to you now. Do all daily duties, with God in your heart, as the witness. This gathering is like a flood that has come from all the four quarters; it gives an assurance that Sanathana Dharma (Eternal Religion) will certainly rise in

splendour in this land. It teaches man to investigate the truth about himself and the world. Is that not the most proper thing for man to do? What is wrong in prompting man to engage himself in the task? It is mere ignorance that keeps you away from this task. Start now, with the first step, Namasmarana, (remembrance of the Name of the Lord, the Universal Indweller); that will lead you on to the further steps, until the goal is reached.

Whenever there is a vacuum in any heart,
love flows into it
and is glad that it can fill the emptiness.
It is never held back;
it is offered in abundance
without guile or deceit.
it does not wear the cloak of
falsehood, flattery or fear.
The tendrils of love
aspire to cling only to
the garments of God.
It senses that God resides
in His splendour, in every heart
to discover that the seat of God
is real devotion.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

13. The voice of thunder

Date: **March 1965** / Location: **Kakinada**

I must exhort you to make the best use of the fine chance that you have now got, with the opening of the Sai Baba Temple by Me in this town, where you are now struggling in the sea of worldly confusion and anxiety. The chance must be used for the best profit; that is the sign of the intelligent man. As the heart is to the body, so is the temple to a village or community. Building of temples, installation of idols therein, celebrating various festivals in connection with worship there - are all sath karmas, (good deeds); they provide training in service. They give opportunities for sacrifice, detachment. They are a form of thapas (penance). So, I am glad this temple has come up, through the penance of the people. Of late, this is deteriorating into a fashion, this building of temples and mandhirs. First, people must instal the Lord in their hearts. Then they become entitled to engage themselves in building temples for the Lord. Again, the construction of new mandhirs and temples has led to the neglect of old ones, which is a very wrong thing to do. The old temples have been built in strict accordance with Shastraic rules and many generations of devotees have filled them with their piety and prayer. It is a sacrilege to pave the way for their decline. Moreover, this has become a new type of business, this multiplication of temples. In order to raise new ones, (and hasten the ruin of the existing temples), people start collecting funds and in the process, many enrich themselves, at the cost of the gullible public. When there is the anguished cry for food and shelter, money is spent on temples, where they exist in plenty already. This is not to be encouraged; the same Lord is worshipped everywhere, and you need not build a temple for every new Name or Form. Tell people to see in all Forms and under all Names the same God. That is the training they need.

Multiply virtues, not buildings

The search for Truth, the fostering of morality - these have been the ideals of India, and these were considered essential for the realisation of Godhead. That is the reason why into this narrow sector, on this long narrow road and

along the bye-lanes and cross-lanes, this flood of humanity has poured itself. I suggest to this Committee that they should change the venue of the meeting tomorrow so that people may sit comfortably and listen to the discourses. Seeing your devotion and patient suffering, those who doubt the description of the devotion of the Gopas and Gopees of Brindavan in the Bhagavatha can be convinced that the Bhagavatham is right. It is to slake this thirst that you all have for spiritual inspiration and knowledge, that the Prasanthi Vidwanmahasabha, about which Patrudu spoke, has been established by Me. It will perform this duty all over the Country.

In past ages, many sages, kings and ascetics left home and dwelt in the solitude of the forests and having earned unlimited Ananda themselves, they taught others the source of their bliss, namely, the Divine that is encased in the human. Remove the vices of lust and hatred and put out the raging flames of anger and greed; then, they said, the innate shantham and soukhyam (tranquillity and happiness), the swaruupam and swabhavam (one's own form and nature) of Man, will manifest unhindered. Shantham is the swaruupam, soukhyam is the swabhavam of Man.

Individual reconstruction is much more important than the construction of temples. Multiply virtues, not buildings; practise what you preach, that is the real pilgrimage; cleanse your minds of envy and malice, that is the real bath in holy waters. Of what avail is the name of the Lord on the tongue, if the heart within is impure? Injustice and discontent are spreading everywhere due to this one fault in man: saying one thing and doing the opposite, the tongue and the hand going in different directions. Man has to set himself right and correct his food, his recreation, his method of spending his leisure as well as his habits of thought.

World is the 'middleman' between 'I' and 'You'

There are only two entities at first: "I" and "You", Thath and Thwam, Aham and Brahma. But a third, this Prakrithi (world), has come between, or rather deludes us as being in between. You know some people who go about carrying proposals of marriage, the middlemen. They go to the bride's

parents and suggest a certain groom and they praise him to the skies and create a desire for securing him in marriage for the daughter; then they move on to the bridegroom's village and persuade that party to insist on a large sum as groom-price before agreeing to accept the daughter of the first party; when at last the marriage is concluded, they disappear. Prakrithi is like this middleman. When "I" and "You" have united, Prakrithi disappears. Its role is to reveal the "you" to the "I" - that is all.

As a matter of fact, the "I" is of the same nature as "You," like the river and the sea, or like the wave and the sea. That is the reason why I always address you as Amritha-swaruupulara - You, whose nature is immortality! Prema-swaruupulara - You, whose nature is Love? Shanthaswaruupulara - You, whose nature is Tranquillity!. No one addresses a gathering as Dushtulara - O you wicked ones! or Durmargulara - O you vile ones! For such words are not true, they do not describe man's real nature, which is love, tranquillity, goodness, immortality. This wickedness, vileness and vice are errors of judgement, straying away during the pilgrimage, through ignorance, delusion, confusion, etc.

The various brakes operating on man

Go straight along the path of karma (action) and dharma (virtue) towards Brahma (the Supreme Reality); this is your destiny. Karma has to be done, there is no turning away. Each has his allotted task, according to the status, taste, tendency and earned merit. Do it, with the fear of God and of sin, deep in your heart. Welcome pain and grief so that you take both success and failure as hammer strokes to shape you into a sturdy sadhaka. Inner content is more important than outer prosperity.

Dharma is the moral code, the experience of sages, the controlling discipline which checks the mind and the senses. There are many such brakes operating on man' Vyakthi dharma (controls affecting the individual, as such), Sahaja dharma (controls affecting the nature of man, as man), Ashrama dharma (controls affecting the stage of life, like student householder, ascetic), Vamadharm (controls pertaining to the duties cast upon man as a

limb of the community), etc. All these brakes are complementary, they do not cause confusion, they help progress, each in its own way. Krishna reminded Arjuna of his Vama dharma as a Kshatriya, and also of his Sahajadharmas as a jeevi (an instrument in the hands of the Lord). Besides these, there is also the Visesha dharma (obligations on special occasions or when faced with special situations). You must therefore walk warily towards the Goal. This temple is but brick and mortar. This idol is but stone. But, you are determined to see in it the Divine Principle. If you can penetrate behind the stone and see the Divine Basis, how much easier it is to see the Lord who resides in the heart of every living, every human being? Try to realise that first, so that your faith in this idol and this temple can be well settled. Revere Man; that is the first step towards reverence for God; for, Man is prathyaksha (perceptible), God is paroksha (imperceptible).

Recognise that you are Shiva

The Upanishads say that thunder teaches Da, Da, Dha...Daya (compassion) to the ogres, Dama (self-control) to the gods and Dharma to men. Now, since man is all three - part ogre, part god, part man - he must practise all three himself; daya (be kind to all), dama (be the master of your mind and the senses) and dharma (be constantly alert on the path of fight); that is the advice given from the sky in the voice of thunder. The journey of every man is towards the cemetery; every day brings you nearer to the moment of death. So, do not delay the duty you must carry out for your own lasting good. Recognise that you are Shiva (God), ere you become a shava (corpse); that will save you from further deaths. The very first thing you have to do, to impress upon your mind the reality, is to recite the Name of God and dwell on His Glory in the mind, so that the tongue will not stray into lesser topics or the mind drag you away into inferior fields. I shall therefore make you sing a few names now.

14. Awake! Arise!

Date: **March 1965** / Location: **Kakinada**

You must tread the spiritual path with an uncontrollable urge to reach the Goal; you must cultivate the yearning for liberation from all this encumbrance. Remember that you have to dwell in a house built on four stout pillars: dharma, artha, kama, and moksha (righteousness, wealth, desire and liberation); Dharma supporting artha, and moksha being the only kama or desire. However much you may earn either wealth or strength, unless you tap the springs of ananda (bliss) within you, you cannot have peace and lasting content. There is Sathyathwa, Nithyathwa (reality of truth and eternity) in you; you need not earn them from any one else. The four pillars of Purushartha (goals of human effort) are made firm and stable by fixing them on the bedrock of the Nithya Sathya Thathwa (reality of eternal truth) in every man, the Divine in fact, on which the human is superimposed. Manava (man) means a person who has no trace of ignorance! And so, if you seek to deserve that name, you must remove it by incessant activity, moved by good impulses. But, while your efforts are little, your expectations are great. Your achievement is little, your boast is great. When some one asked a water carrier whether his leather bag was clean, he replied, "It is cleaner than the bag into which you pour the water." Look to the inner purity rather than the outer one. Examine yourself, do not venture to judge others. Search for the pearl, not the shell; the gem, not the tinsel.

Everyone can achieve Moksha

You must have heard of people seeking moksha (liberation) and getting moksha; many may be under the impression that it is some rare honour that only a few secure or that it is some area like Paradise or a Colony of the Elect or a Height that some heroic souls alone can climb up to. No; moksha is something which all must achieve, whether they are heroic or not; even those who deny it have to end by realising it. For, every one is even now seeking it when he seeks joy and peace; and, who does not seek joy and peace? Moksha is when you have lasting joy and lasting peace. Tired with temporary joys and

transient peace, man will at last endeavour to know the secret of permanent joy and peace, that is to say, of Moksha, Liberation from the cycle of birth and death.

If only men knew the path to permanent joy and peace, they will not wander distracted among the bye-lanes of sensual pleasure. Just as the joy felt in dreams disappears when you wake, the joy felt in the waking stage disappears when you wake into the higher awareness, called Jnana. So, the Upanishads say, "Get up, arise, awake"; time is fleeing fast. Use the moment while it is available, for the best of uses, the awareness of the Divine in all. When you die, you must die not like a tree or a beast or a worm, but, like a Man who has realised that he is Madhava (God). That is the consummation of all the years you spend in the human frame. This essential teaching is absent in modern curricula; men and women live many years without knowing the secret of joyful, peaceful living. The educated are today more discontented than the uneducated, whereas they ought really to be calmer and less subject to agitations of the mind. Education today is a thin veneer that heightens egoism and hypocrisy.

All are travellers to God

Some one was found writing "pepper" on a tin of sugar and when asked the reason, he said, "It is only to cheat the ants"! The label "education" on the present system of teaching and training the young cannot cheat any thinking person, who looks for the real purpose of education: the unfolding of the Divine in human personality. Humility and an attitude of reverence are essential for man. They are not promoted by the educational process of today; the processes recommended in the Upanishads ensured these two. "Revere the mother as Divine; revere the father as Divine; revere the teacher as Divine; revere the guest as Divine", they exhorted. Every one has the Divine in him; so no one should be slighted or neglected. The parents who gave you this wonderful chance to realise the reality and the teacher who opened your eyes to the treasure within you, the guest who gave you the splendid chance to render service to the living embodiment of God right in your very home, all have to be revered, and served with humility. The

educated man is like the man who asks for a ticket at the booking office of a railway station, but does not know to which place he is going! But all men are travellers, pilgrims rather, to God, who is drawing them to Him.

Never be afraid of death. Never forget God,
Never take this World as real.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

15. The three-day fair

Date: **March 1965** / Location: **Samara**

Man did not come here to sleep and eat; he has come to manifest, by disciplined processes, the divine in him. That is why he is called vyakthi, he who makes vyaktha (clear) the Shakthi (power) that is in him - the Divine energy that motivates him. For this purpose he has come endowed with this body and the intelligence needed to control it and divert it to useful channels of activity. You must achieve this by Dharma-nishtha and Karma-nishtha - steady pursuit of morality and good deeds.

You have been yearning for My coming among you, steadily for over six years now, I have therefore come today to cool your hearts and give you joy. When you suffer from the burning sun, you are refreshed by a dip in the Godavari river. When your hearts are parched by the burning desire for equanimity, you must dip in the cool company of the spiritually great. Have a time-table for spiritual sustenance, just as you have now for physical sustenance. A breakfast of pious repetition of Lord's name (japa) and meditation (dhyana), a lunch hour of ritual worship of the Lord (puja), 'tea and snacks' of reading scriptures or sacred books (pravachana) in the afternoon and a light dinner of devotional music (bhajana) in the early hours of the night. If you follow this regimen, you can sleep soundly and wake up refreshed. Feel that you are born with the dawn of every new day; that you nestle in the lap of death when your eyes close in sleep. For, what happens in deep sleep? The body, the senses, the mind, the intelligence, all are negated and there is not a trace of awareness of the world.

All human beings are part of His Glory

If you do so, there will be no accumulation of the consequences of acts, from day to day; the accounts of every day will be closed with 'death,' at the end of that day, especially since you dedicate every act to Him who motivated it and surrendered the fruits thereof to Him who consummated it. If you plan to give joy to others, you will yourself be joyful. Who are these others? Even when

the Lord has come with a definite human body, all human beings that you come across are but parts of His glory and His splendour. Ishwarassarvabhuthanam hriddeseArjuna thisthathi - "O ! Arjuna, the Lord dwells in the region of the heart in all beings", says the Lord in the Bhagavad Geetha.

You may ask how can we find time for all this, when we have to toil every moment for feeding and clothing ourselves? But you forget that the Lord will grant you these material things, and even immortality, if only you place full reliance on Him. Whatever you do, have the name, Rama or Krishna or Shiva or Haft, on your tongue; no extra time or energy is needed for that. When you rise in the morning, rise with the Name on your tongue, slide into sleep with the Name on your tongue.

You know a story of Narada, I believe. Vishnu once chided him and said a farmer had greater devotion than Narada. The sage felt annoyed and wanted to verify it for himself. He went to that village and sought out the ryot and observed his life for some days. The man repeated the name of the Lord only thrice a day (!), once as he rose from sleep, a second time when he started taking his only meal of the day at noon and a third time when he laid himself down to sleep. Narada felt he was badly insulted by being pronounced inferior in devotion to this casual reciter of Names. He returned to Vishnu and presented his report and hoped that Vishnu would correct His estimate of the ryot's devotion. The Lord asked Narada to undergo a test which at first appeared to be a mere whim. With five pots placed one over the other balanced on his head, He wanted Narada to walk around His Residence. Narada had to comply; he walked warily, slowly, with his entire attention fixed on the five pots uneasily resting on his head, and managed to come safe to the sacred presence, with all the pots intact!, He was surprised when Vishnu asked him, "Now, tell Me, how many times did you remember My Name while walking round?" Narada had to confess that he had cleanly forgotten the Name and did not pronounce it at all. Then, Vishnu declared, "Do you realise now that that farmer, who is carrying the five pots of fortune and misfortune, right and wrong, and attention concentrated on Nature and her vagaries, is really superior because he recites the Name at least thrice a day?"

Consider the cultivation for the spirit

You clear the field of thorny plants and bushes, you plough it and water it, you sow select seeds, you pluck out the weeds, you fence it to keep out cattle, you spray the crops with insecticides and at last, you reap the harvest for which all this struggle was undergone by you. But, you must get busy with another type of cultivation too, for the spirit. Consider the condition of the field of your heart; it is overgrown with the thorn and bush of lust, anger, greed and envy. Remove them, root and all. Do not allow the land to lie fallow. By continuous good works, plough the field and fill the field with the water of prema. Select the nama (divine name) - seed that appeals to you - -and sow it on the field; discipline is the fence which will guard the growing crop against cattle; virtue is the pesticide. Fostering the field with great care you can bring home the precious harvest of Ananda, in due course, provided you do not hurry or get desperate.

Life is a three-day fair

Do not divert all your energy to the cravings of the body, which ages every minute and is fast moving towards the burial ground. Life is a three-day fair; it is like a flower' that fades by eventide. Old age, when physical charm is lost and when you have to depend on others for everything, will soon be upon all. Prepare then for death, have the equipment to meet it calmly, joyfully, with quiet resignation to the Will of the Lord. You cannot get it in a trice, when you want it; it is the result of long years of practice. See the hand of God in everything that happens; then, you will not exult or grieve. Then your life will be one continuous puja or dhyana. I want all of you to develop brotherliness, the feeling of cooperation, of love and respect of each for the rest. Then, this village will be without parallel. Why foul the atmosphere with hatred and envy, when each of you ploughs his own land and eats his own food? You get into all this bother because you do not know how to fill your time with beneficial activities. In order to promote harmony, the first rule you must follow is control of the tongue. Do not give all your thoughts immediate expression; select, ponder, and then, speak out. Speak softly, sweetly,

without malice in your heart; speak as if you are addressing the Sai who resides in every one. 'Use the tongue to recite the Name Of the Lord; use the feet to go on pure and holy errands; use the heart to contain pure thoughts and feelings.

Today, towns and cities with their noise and glare are attracting every one towards them; but, villages are far more desirable. Reverence for holy things, for elders, for moral codes are still strong in the villages; in the towns, men have become as quarrelsome as dogs. Their speech, thought and feeling have all been standardised into patterns. There man is considered to be an animal that has to be petted or tamed, fed and clothed and housed and humoured. The Divinity of Man, the fact that Manava is but Madhava (man is but Divine), is ignored in the rush and worry of town life.

Sign of the genuine devotee

So, learn to be happy and content where you are; do not run towards towns hoping to secure happiness and contentment there; have inner riches, not outer acquisitions. Make your home the seat of virtue, of morality, of love. Control anger and greed. That is the sign of the genuine bhaktha, not unrestricted speech and movements. You may claim to be a devotee and declare yourself as such, when you speak; but, unless your egoism has gone and you love all equally, the Lord will not acknowledge your devotion! From this day, keep all personal animosity away from your conduct. Feel that you are kith and kin of each other belonging to the same family bound together by love and cooperation. Live amicably, live joyfully, undisturbed by faction and hatred; for, some day or other, you have to give up all that you hope to gain through these factions and these hatreds. Listen to the advice of the elders of the village' they have your welfare in their minds.

Keep this Ananda of today in your hearts and develop it by means of manana or rumination. Do not run about excitedly and fall on the car as I move out, causing injuries to women, old men, and children. Bhakthi must be disciplined and controlled. It is because you have that disciplined bhakthi (devotion) that I have come to your place.

16. Types of road to God

Date: **March 1965** / Location: **Kakinada**

This vast sea of aspirants who seek darshan and yearn to learn about spiritual matters may be a new experience to the organisers of this function; and even to the authorities in this city; but, let me tell you, it is nothing strange to me. Nor is the message I bring anything new! It is the message of the Vedas, tested by time and guaranteed by the experience of many who put it into practice. This precious message is being forgotten and neglected for want of persons who continue to bring it to your attention; man is busy with so many trivialities that he has ignored the essential purpose of his sojourn here. The very hands that should have cherished this message that can save man in India as well as in all countries of the world, those very hands are trying to crush it and deny it.

This is the very reason that the people of India have lost the peace and joy that is their heritage; they have lost the key and are suffering. Like the rest of humanity, they are struggling in despair, to squeeze a little joy out of the objective world which is subject to change and chaos. How can joy result from adharma, out of the neglect of morality and virtue? Dharmo rakshathirakshithaha - Righteousness guards its guardian. Without the control of the senses, man is like a horse without blinkers, he is like a bull that refuses to yield to the yoke; his sadhana is a waste of time and energy. The special feature of man's composition is that he has discrimination, detachment and synoptic intellect; he can discover Truth and be fixed in it, and gain unshakable Peace.

Three stages one has to go through

The Vedas have three sections Karma, Upasana and Jnana. Karma is the section dealing with the activities that strengthen and purify faith and devotion; Upasana is the section dealing with worship of the personal God, the dedication Of all acts to the Highest, the Inner Witness, the surrender of all skills and experiences unto the Immanent Power - these two endow man

with one-pointedness, ekagratha. As a result of these two, consciousness is able to recognise in a flash jnana (knowledge)- - the fact of its being Divinity itself. All these three stages have to be gone through. The seed has to be sown, the sapling protected, and the fruit tasted. Instead of this one-pointedness, we have many-pointedness now: one-pointedness for coffee, another for the cinema, a third for the radio and so on! This has led to undue care being bestowed on hollow unrealities, and to the neglect of things which feed and foster the sense of holy discipline. This is the reason why irreverence, injustice and corruption stalk the land. Every one condemns this state of affairs. The very persons who accuse others are ready to commit those wrongs when they get the chance. They are not toughened enough to resist the temptation. No one stands firm for they have not found the rock of the Atma; they have no knowledge of their Athmic reality. The teaching of all the scriptures and of all the sages and saints is to recognise the Atma within and to build life upon that bedrock. What is required for the discovery of that bedrock? You must be able to withdraw into yourself and meditate on your own true nature, and the truth of Nature. It is the privilege of every child of India to know the science of this inquiry and to practise it. It is the right of every seeker from every land. This is the wealth that will really save man from misery; all the rest are mere shadows, mirages, castles in the air, they drop with the body that valued them.

Acts that promote irreligion

Really speaking, it is the so-called asthikas (believers, religious people) who by their conduct are promoting nasthikam (un-belief, irreligion) in the land. They revel in finding faults in holy men, in telling tales against elders, in cynical criticism and hollow ritualism. All this recoils on them. Whether it is Rama, Krishna, Ramakrishna, Sai Baba, Meher, Haranath or Sathya Sai, do not revile, even if you cannot revere! This flood of hatred and blind criticism is caused by the craving for fame, for followers, for pomp and display, for imposing buildings and rich devotees. Where love alone should be evident, hatred prevails. In Kakinada, I know there is rivalry between one Sai Baba temple and another. There is competition for collecting funds and celebrating festivals. By these, you are fouling the sacred name itself. You must have

observed that I do not mention in any place about your worshipping Sai Baba. On the other hand, I strongly discourage attempts to build temples in My Name. I ask them, instead, to renovate and utilise the temples existing all over the country. This "Mandhir Construction Scheme" has become a profitable spiritual business. People go about with lists of likely victims and squeeze donations out of them in My Name. In this business, a great deal of back-biting, malice, envy and greed are generated and it ends with factions blaming each other in every place. Why go about doing Sainatha publicity or Meher publicity or Haranath publicity? Pushing your master's name forward easily degenerates into tarnishing the name of the other man's Guru or God and this leads to defaming both master and disciple.

No short-cuts in the spiritual field

Do not believe if any one comes to you and declares, "Sri Sathya Sai Baba came to me in my dream and commissioned me to do publicity for him. Please help me as far as you can". I do not commission any one for such work, either in dream or while he is awake. Such men are cheats; treat them as such, without mercy. There are others who show you something and say. "Sri Sathya Sai Baba likes me much; He gave this," and then, they beg for help. This is an insult to the Divine Principle itself.

There are no short-cuts in the spiritual field. As a matter of fact, bhakthi is even more difficult than jnana; for, to get the attitude of 'Thou' not 'I' one has to surrender completely to the Higher Power, personified as the Lord. The ego has to be fully curbed; the faith that "not even a blade of grass can shake in the wind without His being aware of it and thus having caused it". has to be implanted in the mind. Bhakthi is not a leisure time job. Erase sensual desire; clear the heart of all blemish; then, the Lord will be reflected therein as in a mirror. Spiritual discipline is very necessary; it is not enough if you place charcoal over the cinders; you must fan vigorously, so that the charcoal too is changed into burning cinders. It is not enough if you are at Puttaparthi. You have to engage in sadhana to win My Sankalpa (resolution). You may ask why the burden of the consequences of acts done in previous births cannot be easily brushed away; no, they can be destroyed, as a heap of cotton is burnt

by a spark of fire. Jnanagni dagdha karmanam - the spark of jnana will destroy the effect of karma, in a trice. These consequences are like the cloud of dust that follows a bus, when it runs on a fair-weather road; when the bus reaches the gravel road or the metalled road, the dust is less, but it is still there. When at last it enters the tarred road there is no dust. The mud track is karma; the metalled road is upasana; the tarred dust-free road is jnana. By human skill and effort it is possible to reduce the burden of past karma.

There is no higher wealth than Peace

You do not wait with folded hands for the cup of coffee to cool down to the required warmth; you ask for an extra cup and you start pouring the coffee from one cup to the other, is it not? The same anxiety, the same sadhana has to be shown in spiritual matters also, to take in the beverage of Divine Grace. Subbarao spoke of Jesus now in his speech. Jesus was great because He showed the value of sadhana and the equanimity that can come through spiritual discipline. There is no higher duty than truth, no higher wealth than shanthi. Give up the senseless pursuit of western fashions and western moral codes that are demeaning the Divinity of Man. Cultivate the virtues of reverence and humility. Now, I must close, because since three hours so many thousands of you have been sitting in this hot sun, without even a stir or a whisper. This is Prasanthi; this is real devotion. In spiritual matters, the more we subject ourselves to discipline, the more joy and peace we are able to enjoy. The Principal of the Engineering College made all arrangements for this vast gathering at a very short notice; the students of the College have under his leadership served you in a very disciplined manner. For their tireless activity and for the ananda they helped you to derive today, you must be thankful to them. Really, among present day Colleges, this Kakinada College has impressed Me by the spiritual urge evident among the students. Students are the real promoters of the prosperity of future India. They must cultivate strong virtues and be courageous, enthusiastic helpers of society. If their future is planned well, in both material and spiritual fields, they will shine and earn a great name for the country.

Life is a market.

In life, giving and taking,
bargaining and speculating,
is a part of the game.

Life has
its ups and downs,
its profits and losses,
its joys and sorrows,
depreciations and appreciations
and balance sheets.

But the giving of bhakthi (devotion)
exchanging for mukthi (liberation)
is the most powerful business for all.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

17. This joy and that

Date: **March 1965** / Location: **Pithapuram**

This ancient fort is a reminder of the evanescence of earthly glory and the essential futility of all efforts to achieve worldly glory and conquests. These walls and bastions were once the symbols of power and wealth; now, they are symbols of the fickleness of fortune. They have themselves become pathetic ruins, teaching you that Time is the greatest conqueror. Everything material undergoes change; nothing can remain the same. Today merges into tomorrow; it is itself the consequence of yesterday. It is a constant flux, samsara, the flow of Time, the flood of change. Really speaking, this Fort built centuries ago for purposes of defence and aggrandizement has realised its goal today, when this vast gathering of eager seekers meets under the shadow of the walls to hear from Me the message of Sathya, Dharma, Shanthi and Prema. The kings of Pithapuram have done many meritorious acts of charity, encouraging the study of the Vedas, Shasthras and scriptures, constructing and maintaining houses of worship and temples. Acts such as these will never go unrewarded; good seeds sown must sprout and yield. Many scholars have flourished here and I must reveal to you that I came here today primarily because of the Prema that Varanasi Subrahmanya Shastri bears towards Me and that I bear towards him. The fact that in spite of the very short notice of My arrival at this place on my way to Yelamanchilli, you have come here in thousands, is to be ascribed to your yearning for the higher life and your earnestness to contact the Divine. I know this already. This too is a reason for my stopping here for some hours.

My message of Prema

The beaming joy on the faces of this vast multitude is the food that I live upon; I am refreshed when you are happy and content. My thirst is quenched by the joy which lights up your eyes. Your ananda is My ahara (food). I do not feel like talking to you at all, for I desire only to communicate to you My Joy and to get into communion with your Joy. This mutual fulfilment is the essential thing; talking and listening are subsidiary. Moreover, this visit was

thought of just while we were starting from Kakinada and you have all gathered at this late hour of night; so, I am not quite pleased at this hurried affair. I shall certainly come again and be with you longer and confer on you more Joy.

I shall leave one message for you to ruminate upon, that is the message of Prema. Love is God, God is Love. Where there is Love, there God is certainly evident. Love more and more people, love them more and more intensely; transform the love into service, transform the service into worship; that is the highest sadhana. There is no living being without the spark of love; even a mad man loves something or somebody intensely. But, you must recognise this love as but a reflection of the Premaswaruupa, (the embodiment of Love) that is your reality, to the God who is residing in your heart. Without that spring of Love that bubbles in your heart, you will not be prompted to love at all. Recognise that spring, rely on it more and more, develop its possibilities, try to irrigate the whole world with it, discard all touch of self from it, do not seek anything in return for it from those to whom you extend it. In your daily affairs, do not create factions, or revel in hatred. See the good in others and the faults in yourselves. Revere others as having God installed in them; revere yourself also as the seat of God. Make your heart pure so He can reside therein.

The best and the simplest karma

The consequence of karma can be wiped out only through karma, as a thorn can be removed only by means of another. Do good karma to assuage the pain of the bad karma which you have done and from which you suffer now. The best and the simplest karma is the repetition of the Name of the Lord; be ever engaged in it. It will keep out evil tendencies and wicked thoughts. It will help you radiate love all round you. The sages of ancient times divided karma into vikarma (that is intentionally done) and akarma (that is done without any intention to gain the consequence). Follow the latter and you will save yourselves from suffering. All other activities - the earning of wealth, of reputation, of fame and publicity - result in suffering. Gain internal peace, internal joy; that can be done only when you act without an eye on the gain.

The act must be its own reward; or rather, the act must be according to the prompting of the God within, so that its consequence is left to Him. Practise this attitude consistently and you will find great Peace welling within you and around you.

Be in the World,
But let not the world be in you.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

18. Maanasa Sarovar

Date: **March 1965** / Location: **Yelamanchili, Vishakapatam**

For three years the people of Yelamanchili have been persuading Me to come to their village and give darshan to the people of this area, and at last, their wish has been fulfilled. I see about fifty thousands have gathered here. This chance to grant you joy has come this day; for, everything has its proper time and cause (kalam and karanam). The Pandit spoke of 'matham' and how it has become quite frequent for people to change their religion, from one to another, without knowing the principles of either or even without any attempt to follow the principles of the one they already know. Matham means opinion, conclusion, point of view. "Ithi me matham," (this is my religion) it is often said by disputants, in Suthra literature. So, when mathi (intelligence) changes or grows or deteriorates, matham also suffers a change. That is only natural. Even among the followers of one matham or religion, since mathi and its standards are different, all are not endowed with the same faith. So, there is no use following reason; very often reason follows the dictates of prejudice or predilections; one must follow the dictates of the rishis who were above all pettiness and egoism. They say, IthiVedanusasanam: "this is what Veda enjoins." They do not even claim it to be their discovery. Chithshakthi (Grace), revealed to them the basic truths for the progress of man. The same God who revealed, out of His Grace, the Vedas, has to come again and again, whenever people seek to pitch their petty intelligences against the Eternal Intelligence. The petty intelligences are but the bond-slaves of the senses; they lead man astray, fascinated by the 'willof- the-wisp' of sensual pleasure. The Vedas, on the other hand, beckon them towards eternal, undiminishable joy; but man does not pay heed. He wanders in the dark, seeking in the outside world what he has lost in the inner world of the spirit!

Spiritual food given by the Vedas

The scriptures lay down various stages of spiritual development and the rigour of the discipline for each stage is tuned to the level reached by the aspirant. As a child is fed on breast milk for some months and then, on cow's

milk, and later given bread and crisp bitable bits when the teeth have grown - so too, man is given by the Vedas spiritual food suited to digestive development. In the early stages, the jnana of the Unity (which is misread as Diversity) cannot be grasped. So bhakthi or upasana is recommended. Bhakthi comes naturally for it is only the expansion of the love that is inherent in man. To get grounded in bhakthi, good activity, good company, good listening and good behaviour are essential. Look at the self-control and humility of Lakshmana. When the ornaments (thrown over by Seetha while being carried through the sky by Ravana) were placed before him by Rama and he was asked to identify those whom he could recognise as Seetha's own, Lakshmana could recognise only the 'toe-rings' of his sister-in-law! He said he used to see them when he fell at her feet in reverence, as the first duty of the day. As regards the other personal ornaments and jewels of Seetha, he could not say anything, for he had never lifted his head and looked at her. How many brothers can claim today that depth of reverence towards their sisters-in-law? Now, young men behave rudely, they peer at girls insultingly, they follow them along the roads and make life miserable for the girls. Or look at Dharmaraja, who preferred the life of a step-mother's son to the life of either Bheema or Arjuna (!) when the Yaksha offered to grant him the life of any one of the four who were dead - Bheema, Arjuna or the stepmother's children, Nakula and Sahadeva; his magnanimity saved the lives of all four! Who will act so today when faced with such a choice?

The essence of Vedhic teaching

There is now no love among even uterine brothers and sisters, what to speak of step-brothers? This high moral standard once ensured individual progress and social cohesion. Now, both are missing. The body - the tongue, the ear, the eye - are all being misused by man. Only wild beasts inflict terror; only cattle get frightened; man is neither and so he should not do either. Man is truly incapable of fear, he is the embodiment of Love; he is a child of Immortality, he is the temple of God. That is the essence of Vedhic teaching, as found in the Upanishads. Love has first to gladden the home. There is no love now between the elders and the youngsters in the home; children do not revere parents. This moral decline will certainly undermine unity and

strength. Moral decline is worse than military decline; it will lead to greater disaster. If you always repeat the idea of "nadhi, na" ("mine, mine"), how can you be useful to others? Sacrifice is the 'salt' of life; yaga or thyaga is the secret of peace and joy. 'Go' means "indriya" or the senses; so, the word 'Go-pala' means, he who controls the senses. And, why should they be controlled? So that they may not stand in the way of thyaga or sacrifice. All the senses are self-centred, egoistic. They must be educated to be "inward-directed", towards the Atma which is Universal. That is gained by trusting to Go-pala by entrusting the senses to Him. Every one must pass through sath-karma or good deeds, into the realm of expanding Love and from Love he learns the lesson of sacrifice, of dedication, of surrender to the One Overlord. This takes him on to faith in the supremacy of Godhead, everything else being but His shadow, His being the One and Only Reality.

I ask for purification of hearts only

Since such things have happened in this region, i must tell you one thing more. There are many Swamis and Gurus who go round from place to place, with the avowed object of collecting money from their devotees. This is a heinous act, especially for Sanyasins (renunciates) to engage in. Many persons have also started using My name for the purpose of collecting money for various purposes or material. If such men come to you, send them back with the admonition that they are doing wrong. I ask for bhakthi, shraddha, sadhana (devotion, faith and spiritual discipline) - purification of hearts - that is all. Only beggars ask for money; I will never associate Myself with the temporary, the tarnished, the tawdry, and the mean. Then, there are some who proclaim that I am "coming upon some one" and speaking through them! They pretend to be My mouthpieces and communicate to others My advice and My suggestions, as if I have 'authorised' them or as if I am Myself telling so through them. Now hear this. I never speak through another; I never possess another or use another as a vehicle of expression. I come direct, I come straight, I come as I am, to confer peace and joy. I do not accept from you flowers that fade, fruits that rot, coins that have no value beyond the national boundary. Give Me the lotus that blooms in your Manasasarovara - the clear pellucid waters of the lake - of your inner consciousness; give Me

the fruits of holiness and steady discipline. I am above all this worldly etiquette, which enjoins you to see elders with some fruit or flower in your hand. My world is the world of the spirit; there, values are different. If you are happy, with faith in God and fear of sin, that is enough "service", enough kankaryam for Me. It pleases Me so. In the East Godavari District and hereabouts, persons who claim to be "possessed" by Me are appearing recently in large numbers, with their own gangs of brokers and agents. Order them out, wherever you come across them. Do not yield to their tactics and lower your own dignity as devotees of the Lord.

Struggle to realise Atma to visualise God, even failure in this struggle is nobler than the success in other worldly affairs.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

19. Pandits have the keys

Date: **March 1965** / Location: **Amalaapuram**

This region is called Konaseema, the Delta, the Endland; it is famous as the home of traditional scholarship in the Vedas and the Shasthras; it has a large number of Sanskrit Schools even today and the number of pandits versed in Vedhic lore still following the rigorous discipline laid down by the Dharmashasthras (religious scriptures) is large enough to win the respect of the people of this country. When the region has won fame as the repository of spiritual learning, it must also be taken to be the teacher of detachment from the pursuit of artha and kama (wealth/power and sense pleasure), both of which have to be restrained and regulated by dharma, the first among Purusharthas. It is indeed a great misfortune that, in this Kali Age, India which upheld the Adhyathmic (spiritual) ideal for centuries and stuck to it, in spite of economic and political upheavals, is entering the competitive struggle for existence, irrespective of the moral code which the ancients laid down. Dharma is the swaruupa (form) of India; Sathya is its swabhava (innate quality). But most people today feel that happiness is to be sought for, by whatever means. This evil doctrine has caused discontent among all classes, and in the attempt to relieve the discontent, further adharma is being resorted to. This is the situation that prompted Me to found the Prasanthi Vidwanmahasabha; many pandits of this region are members of this Sabha. They have now this great chance to use their talents in the service of humanity and to spend life in fruitful activity. Activity results in either joy or grief, due to the attachment with which it is done. 'I' and "mine" are the two fangs of the serpent; pluck them out, then, you can safely handle it and play with it. You need not give up activity. As a matter of fact, you have to be intensely active. In this Karmabhumi, it is only through karma that you can transcend karma. Birds and beasts are not aware of this secret; man alone can select and accept the karma that is most profitable for liberation from the chain of karma. If he seeks happiness by satisfying the demands of the sense, he learns that happiness won by that search is inseparably mixed with misery.

Function of the science of Yoga

You know from experience that deep sleep gives you maximum happiness. Think over it for a while; have you ever, in the waking stage, experienced that degree of calm; of quiet, of equanimity, of happiness? That is why nidhra is said to be the nearest approximation to samadhi. If even the impulses and instincts and thought-waves dormant during sleep disappear, then, the joy becomes perfect and full. This happens when the Sun of jnana illumines you. That drives away even the minutest speck of darkness; in fact, darkness is just the absence of light. There are three principles that have to be overcome before knowledge (jnana) can dawn: the Physical (Dehathathwam); the Sensory (Indriyathathwam) and the Mental (Manasthathwam). Even the mind has to be overcome before the One can be cognised; for, the mind seeks variety and change; it revels in the contact with the objective world called vrittis. The prevention of these vrittis in the mind, of the ever-widening circles in the Manasa- Sarovara (the Lake of the Mind), whenever a wish or thought or a resolution is dropped into it - that is the function of the science called Yoga, Union. Union of what, with which? Union of "Thath" with "thwam", of you and the rest, resulting in the One, without a Second.

Make your mind cling to God

You have met here in such huge numbers so that you may learn from these Pandits and from Me that "Yoga is desirable and possible." The path can be known by a little reasoning and thereafter, it can be trodden step by step until the goal is reached. You have come in hundreds of thousands from all the villages and towns for miles around, spending time, money and exertion. Take back this lesson from here, retain at least this much of knowledge, that attachment causes pain and detachment results in joy. But, you cannot easily detach yourself from activity; the mind clings to some thing or other. Make it cling to God, let it do all things for God and leave the success or failure of the thing done to God, the loss and the profit, the elation or the dejection. Then, you have the secret of Shanthi and contentment. To get this attitude of surrender, of dedication, you must have Faith in God. This world is His play; it is not an empty dream; it has purpose and use. It is the means by which one

can discover God; see Him in the beauty, the grandeur, the order, the majesty of Nature. These are but shadows of His Glory and His Splendour; that is why, the Vedas have three sections or Kandas: Karma, Upasana and Jnana. Karma leads to the consciousness of the ever-present, immanent, all-powerful God. Upasana (adoration of that God), leads to the knowledge that He is in all; when you experience that there is no Second, that is Jnana! In the past, when people were observing the discipline which gave them shanthi and soukhyam (peace and contentment), they were happy; they could not be swept off their feet by fear or disappointment. But, M.A.'s and B.A.'s are today unable to get jobs suited to their standards; the income is too poor for their own sustenance. They are helpless and unhappy; they do not help their parents or make them happy.

Devotees should improve their behaviour

The Vedhic scholars themselves have fallen victims to this rash for jobs and degrees, for their children too run after the glittering tinsel of a degree, which does not fill their stomachs or fulfil the cravings for peace and calm. They have lost faith in the Vedas themselves; else, why should they discard them so fast, in exchange for a few rupees? Nevertheless, there are some, in Andhra Pradesh also, who preserve their faith and who are serene in the face of everything. They are not known to newspapermen, they are not news; they live apart and happy. Nobody worries about them and they do not worry any one. People, nowadays, know the history of film stars, while they are profoundly ignorant of their own history. Pay attention to your real needs; cultivate virtues that will add joy to you and others, not habits that ruin your health and empty your purse and lower you in the estimation of others. I want bhakthas (devotees) to improve their behaviour and character. It is no good attending the temple and sharing loudly, with cymbals in your hands, in the singing of devotional songs there. They are but external signs of enthusiasm. God watches the bhavam, not the bahyam. - the thought power behind, not the pomp above. The two injunctions of the Vedas are: Sathyam Vada, Dharmam chara - Speak the Truth, practise righteousness. Sathkarma (good deed) is the tree, Sad-bhava (good intention) is the root. The Sadbhava is that which serves your best interests, viz. lasting happiness, final liberation from

the cycle of birth and death. Take the mind off the sensory pleasures and fix it upon God; then, bhava gets pure; whatever you think or say or feel will be for the good of yourself and others.

Some people laugh at spiritual aspirants and call them idle visionaries who seek something that is not tangible, that cannot be weighed and valued! How can any one ignore the foundations and be content with the knowledge of the walls and the terrace? You can be free from fear only when you are confident of the strength of the foundation. You do not see your breath or weigh it; but, breath is the very sustenance of life. The unseen is the basis of the seen. If you are caught up in the meshes of the seen, you cannot know the importance of the unseen.

India is the Guru of Humanity

This ought to be known to every one, not the mountains of information that is filling the head now. The key for liberation is contained in the Vedas and these Pandits have it. That is the reason why Bharath lays claim to be the Guru of Humanity. If that claim is to be respected, Indians must themselves live the life. Every one must be immersed in Shanthi (peace), derived from dedicated work, work offered as worship, work done with no desire or attachment for the benefit therefrom. But, what do we see today? There is no peace in the home or in the mind, no cordiality between brothers, no reverence for parents, no love between partners. You must first achieve victory at home; you can then call on others to strive for victory. Mere devotion is not enough. It must be regulated by reason and discrimination. Or else, it will not flow along sane lines. Reason makes devotion a sharp instrument. Reason out the purpose of your sojourn on the earth, the purpose of the intelligence with which you have been endowed. Then, devotion will encourage you to fill your days with steady, controlled activity, towards Liberation.

20. Undernourishment and the cure

Date: **March 1965** / Location: **Amalaapuram**

We hear many people lamenting the state of affairs and talking of the spread of injustice and falsehood, of cruelty and hatred in the world and in this country. This is like shouting for a drug after the illness has set in; prevention is much more beneficial than cure; sometimes, the cure is rendered more difficult on account of the complications due to long neglect. The present decline in morality is due to decreasing faith in the Vedas, Shastras and Upanishads in our country. Some people are in the habit of condemning all those who do not believe in the Vedhic Dharma as atheists; but, there are no atheists at all among men. An atheist, when he declares 'There is no God,' is first affirming. "There is", and then, denying something that he has affirmed. Though he may deny God, he does not deny Love or Reverence or Wonder or Awe; these are all expressions of theistic faith. The 'atheists' too yearn for a goal; they remember a place from where they came, though like all others they are unable to locate it. They know they are proceeding to a place where they get full happiness; they pine for it; they dream about it; they have their plans for reaching it. They have like all others the hunger, the pain, the discontent.

Just as the doctor diagnoses the origin of the pain, the aspirant goes to a guru who is an expert in the different forms of mental yearning for the goal. Every one feels the urge to see and know Unity, where there is multiplicity; this knowledge is contained in the Brahmasuuthra, which like a string penetrates all the different beads of the same rosary.

There are different approaches to God

All the thousands of individuals here before Me now are so many thousand flowers, strung on that one thread, Brahman. In Brahman, you all find unity, the unity you have missed, because you were engrossed in your own separateness. That is the truth; all else is delusion; you have let this unity go un-noticed, because the men who know it are neglected, their declarations

are dismissed as depraved! There is no dearth of sustaining spiritual food in our country; but, yet, we have this pitiable spectacle of a people starving in the midst of plenty. The ills of the country are due to under-nourishment; not so much under-nourishment of the body, but under-nourishment of the spirit, want of spiritual exercise, neglect of spiritual regimen. Allowing the malady the fullest scope, people are engaged in reciting the names of the drugs in the pharmacopoeia! They do not make any attempt to take the drug in. The means of conveying into every home and village the life-giving waters of the spirit have all dried up or got choked up. That is the reason why undernourishment, with all its attendant symptoms of debility, nervous disorder and mania is so rampant today. 'Matham' is a matter of mathi - religion is a matter of the intelligence. Unless you are able to equalise intelligence, you cannot equalise religions. There are different approaches to God for different mathis, suited to the likes and dislikes of individual temperaments. Some are work minded; some are contemplative, some are exterior-oriented; some are prone to examine the inner consciousness, more than the external. There are disciplines suited for each of them in the Sanathana (ancient) scriptures: Bhakthi, Jnana, Karma, Upasana, Yoga, etc. The milk in which butter is immanent, implicit in every particle, in every molecule, is the One. The curd into which it is broken by fermentation has the butter separate, but yet as part; that is the One, with the Second, as an integral part of it, Vishishta - adwaita (qualified non-dualism). The churning separates the butter clearly and it is rolled into a ball, it is kept floating in the liquid from which it has been taken. The two have become clearly distinguishable; they are spoken of as two, dwaitha (dualism). These are but three names for three stages of the same substance.

People should strengthen the hands of Pandits

The One is the reality. It is not to be found exclusively in one place only, however hoary the place. Neither Arunachalam, nor Thirupathi nor Kedaram can claim to be the place where It is to be found. Its address is given in the 61st shloka of the 18th chapter of the Bhagavad Geetha: "in the heart of all." Pandits who are versed in the sacred scriptures of this land are the real leaders of the people, for, they can show the path of self-realisation, which is

the highest duty of man. They must, as the sages and scholars of old used to do, counsel the rulers and guide them in the path of Dharma. But now, the rulers keep them afar, while the people shower ridicule on them! If they now cater to the low demands of the rulers, they will degrade the ideals which they must cherish and promote. It requires a great deal of integrity and courage for them to escape the temptations of the situation and stand firm on the principles laid down for them in the Shastras. Hence, there is not much hope of the Pandits being used by the rulers. There is every chance of the Pandits themselves losing their grip over fundamentals, if they approach the rulers for patronage. So, the people themselves have to take up the task of strengthening the hands of the Pandits and of deriving the utmost benefit out of these repositories of ancient learning.

Faith in Almighty is the strongest foundation

The Pandits themselves are a divided lot; they have lost the capacity for united effort. I am speaking so plainly here, for this Kona Seema is the nursery of many learned Pandits. My task is to bring together the Pandits and make them aware of their noble heritage and their still nobler duty, to develop contact with the rulers who will benefit by the impartial wisdom of the Shastras and the Upanishads and the Vedas, seen and recorded by masters of detachment and thus establish peace and harmony in the world. I will certainly succeed; only, you have to be patient for some time.

The mansion called life must be built on strong foundations; the pursuit of artha, and kama - of wealth and welfare, of all desirable objects - must be regulated by the standard of Dharma. Dharma fosters those who foster it - "Dharmo rakshathi rakshithah." The strongest foundation is ever-present Faith in the Almighty. Some may ask, "If He is Almighty, why then is he not patent?" Well He reveals Himself only to the person who yearns for the answer, not the one who puts questions out of impudence or ignorance. He will be patent only in the transparent heart, the heart that is not clouded by egoism or objective attachment. The string of the rosary is patent only in the sphatika or the crystal beads, not on the coral or rudraksha beads. Though the string runs through these latter also, it can be seen only by splitting those

beads; that is the meaning of the story of Hiranyakashipu who split the pillar; when he did that, he could see for himself the Lord who is the core of every object and being.

Coconut-breaking is symbol for destroying the ego

Try to break the coconut, as it comes from the tree; the shell is covered compactly by a coat of fibre. You cannot break the nut by hitting with a crow-bar even; take off the fibrous armour; breaking it is very easy. When you take a coconut to be offered in the temple, you take it, after removing the fibre; then, you offer it to God, breaking it into two halves. This is the symbol for destroying the ego and surrendering to the Lord. So you have to remove the fibre of desire for sense-objects and then, go before the Lord devoid of kama, and krodha (desire and anger); there you declare that you are ego-less by breaking the coconut into two. You will be accepted then, not before.

This conquest of the ego is a very hard task; years of persistent effort are needed to get success in this endeavour. For getting a Degree you struggle in the University for a number of years, poring over books night and day; how much more difficult is this examination, success in which guarantees lasting happiness, and escape from the weary round of birth and death. Some people have their minds and senses like cotton balls and a spark of jnana will set them ablaze and they achieve victory! Some others have them like dried faggots; they take longer time, but, victory is certain. Most have minds and senses like green fuel and even the raging fire of jnana may be put out by the onslaught of the moisture contained in them. Make your mind and senses like clean finely ginned cotton. How can you do this? By contact with scholars and those who have experience in spiritual practice, like these pandits here. Listen to them; revolve their teachings in the depths of your memory; practise what they advise; yield gladly to their guidance. Start now. Scholarship starts with the alphabet; learn A and B, C and D and go on until the end. The margosa fruit may taste bitter at first but, there are many who enjoy eating it, for, steady practice makes them sweet to the tongue, especially when you get convinced that they are good for curing illness.

Success or failure is your own making

For example, when you sing Namavalis (songs containing Lord's names) try to roll on your tongue the sweetness of the meaning also. On the basis of the material you can ascend to the spiritual; only, you must know that it is possible, and develop the faith that removes all hesitation. When you sing of Radha, as you did just now, "Radha madhava nanda lala!" do not imagine that Radha is a woman and Krishna, a man. You can become Radha, now, here, if only you know what Radha represents. She is the basis (adhara), which is worshipped (aradh) as everflowing stream (dhara); she is the very basis of the world, which is another name for God Himself. Have it as a dhara (flowing from your tongue), the Name of the Lord; avoid all lesser talk. On the Ocean of Milk, (the Ksheerasagara) of the Pure Mind, plant the peak of Mandara, steady faith, in the unity of creation; take the serpent, Grace of the Lord (Ishwaranugraham), and use it as a rope to churn the ocean; churn it through meditation and spiritual discipline (dhyana and sadhana); then, you are able to acquire the Nectar - the essence of Veda, of spiritual knowledge, of spiritual experience. The Lord is impartial; you punish yourself, you reward yourself. A young student who was nervous about the examination in the English language went to a temple and prayed to God for making the questions easy for him. He promised in exchange a Thanks giving Feast. It happened so, and he could answer all the questions to his entire satisfaction in half the time allotted for the purpose. He did not give in the answer sheets immediately; he called for extra sheets and wrote down a list of articles he must purchase for offering the Thanksgiving Feast to God: jaggery, rice, cardamom, ghee, etc. He had many more minutes at his disposal; he noted down the cost and finding it beyond him, he revised the list and found many items which he could score off. While busy with this flippant assignment, the bell rang and the supervisor ran up to him to collect the answer sheets. In the hurry of the moment, he handed over the sheets whereon he had written the list of articles and through sheer miserliness, scored out most of the items! So, the young man failed; it was all his doing. God is impartial; He is like the thermometer that cannot misinterpret, or exaggerate or falsify. Success or failure is your own making, you decide your destiny; the Lord has no share in deciding it.

You have the appetite for spiritual truth

It is already very late, you have to go to your places. There are many old people, women and children among you. I can understand the trouble you have undergone out of your Love for Me, coming long distances, walking or journeying by boat or bullock cart, denying yourselves food, sleep and rest, struggling even for drinking water and a little shade under a tree. Seeing this vast ocean of humanity, one gets assured of the value, the continuing value of the heritage of Bharathavarsha. You have moved enmasse from your villages like ants from ant-hills. Why? Because you have the hunger for God, the appetite for spiritual truth. I must tell you one thing now, for this has grown into quite a sensation, especially in East Godavari, around Amalapuram! I am not blaming any one or laughing at any one; but the truth must be made public. There are quite a few who declare that I am coming "upon them" (!), possessing them rather, and they sway, shake and shiver and say all kinds of things, claiming that I am speaking through them or that they are under My Influence. They answer questions and 'foretell' things and perform many tricks to collect money or things from people who do not know Me and My reality. All this is sheer deceit; it is a disease that is spreading. Do not encourage it; nip it whenever you see cases of people suffering from it. Such people have agents and brokers; scotch them first and their puppets will disappear. They wear the dress of holiness, but their greed announces them as vile. People say 'Baba appeared to me in a dream and commanded me to do this and that, to you, to collect so much from you etc., etc. Do not give heed to such cheats; punish them in the way they deserve. That is the advice I have to give you.

It is easy to conquer anger through love, attachment through reasoning, falsehood through truth, bad thoughts through good, and greed through charity.

- *Sri Sathya Sai Baba*

21. The rare chance

Date: **March 1965** / Location: **Amalapuram**

The one advice that I give you is this: Do not foul a single moment of your precious life. Spend it in the most useful manner, to earn joy for yourself and others unsullied joy. You have come in lakhs from all the villages of this Delta to this Amalapuram. There are many among you who are too old to come to Puttaparthi to have My darshan (audience) and many are suffering from bodily ills, which do not allow them to push forward to the front lines here. Have some consideration for them; stand where you are; do not push and try to rush forward. I am on this high terrace; wherever you are, you can see Me. There is work now only for the eye and the ear; not for the tongue. When you have the chance, it is wise not to miss it. I have come in order to confer ananda (bliss) on you. I am prepared to stand here, until all of you have your fill of ananda. Why then should you raise this clamour? God can be felt and experienced only in the deepest silence. All noise must subside; then, His Voice can be heard clearly.

The tongue is the token of true breeding. "Hey! you clout! Did you hear soldiers march this way?" a man asked a blind farmer. Minutes later, another person accosted him, "Blind man! Open your mouth and tell me whether you heard the noise of soldiers marching this way." Later, a third voice approached him, "Sir, did you hear some soldiers marching along this path?" At last, another person came near and placed his hand upon his shoulder, "My tear man, please tell me whether you heard men marching along this road?" The blind man correctly described his interrogators later in the order of their appearance as a soldier, a Captain, a Minister and the King himself. The words reveal the breeding of the speaker.

The silent man has no enemies

The tongue is the armour of the heart; it guards one's life. Loud talk, long talk, wild talk, talk full of anger and hate - all these affect the health of man. They breed anger and hate in others; they wound, they excite, they enrage,

they estrange. Why is silence said to be golden? The silent man has no enemies, though he may not have friends. He has the leisure and the chance to dive within himself and examine his own faults and failings. He has no more inclination to seek them in others. If your foot slips, you earn a fracture; if your tongue slips, you fracture some one's faith or joy. That fracture can never be set right; that wound will fester for ever. Therefore, use the tongue with great care. The softer you talk, the less you talk, the sweeter you talk, the better for you and the world.

When you crowd so thick and rush round, pushing people forward and backward, it is a good chance for thieves and pick-pockets. You stand lost in your own luck; your attention is concentrated on Me, while the attention of those others is concentrated on your purse or golden necklace.

I know the agitations of your heart and its aspirations, but you do not know My Heart. I react to the pain that you undergo, to the joy that you feel; for, I am in every heart. I am the dweller in that temple. You must know Me better, for how can a telegram sent in Morse code be understood by the receiving office, when the receiver does not know Morse? The prema (love) that you give is of the same Morse Code, as the ananda (bliss) I give you. Bhakthi must be directed along the channels laid down by reason. Your bhakthi is making you behave wildly like the furious flood of a river. You crowd round this place where I am residing, night and day, in sun and rain and raise Jais (cries of victory), to persuade Me to come and give darshan. This is not correct, My dears! This is not bhakthi; this is not prema. Of course, even without your making all this noise, I gladly come on to the terrace and give you the darshan you ask for, in your heart of hearts. That is the voice I hear most; not the voice coming out of your throats.

Use your life to spread joy, not grief

Most of the clamour that you cause is due to wrangling for space, the stronger ones insisting on their rights and even robbing others of their rights. This is a place where you must try to help, not hinder; this is the atmosphere of perfect peace, Prasanthi. Do not behave here as you do when you gather

elsewhere. There is no scope here for envy or malice, hate or competition. When kama (intense desire), and krodha (anger) are rising in hot flames from the heart, how can the cool rays of shanthi (peace), sathya (truth), ahimsa (non-violence) and prema (love) emanate therefrom? This human birth is a rare chance! Use it for spreading joy, not grief. Of course, it is natural for man to resent, to grow angry. But you should not allow anger free and furious scope. The raging floods in the Godavari have to be restrained by bunds, anicuts and dams, so that the water may reach the sea, without scouring the fields on either bank. You too must set limits to your own anger and hate, and honour those limits. You know that first you have to plough the land, feed it with water; then, sow the seed, pluck out the weeds, guard the crop by a fence from cattle and goats and wait patiently for harvest time. So also, the heart has to be ploughed by means of virtues fed with the water of Divine love, before the seeds of Divine Name are sown; later, the field has to be watched and weeds have to be destroyed it is best to prevent the cattle of unsteadiness and doubt, by putting up the fence of Discipline; then, the Name of the Lord will flower into Meditation and the rich harvest of Knowledge can be reaped.

Now, you are allowing the precious fertile field to lie fallow; the field of the heart is infested with thorns and weeds; it yields no joy to any one. Cultivate the heart and garner the grain of Atma-ananda. That ananda is your heritage; it is yours for the asking. But, you do not know how or whom to ask. Ask grief to quit and ananda is patent, as the very basis of your "I-ness", your Sath (existence) and Chith (consciousness) It is very simple. Grief will disappear as soon as you discover its real origin, for it has arisen out of ignorance only.

Let no one suffer
the slightest pain
as a result of your
thought, word or deed.
Let this be your sadhana.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

22. The code of correct conduct

Date: **March 1965** / Location: **Amalapuram**

Indescribable joy and glory come within the reach of man when the Universal Immanent Principle decides to assume human form. You are all standing in the scorching sun for hours and so, you can realise what it is to be offered a cool drink when you get parched in the heat. The Avathar comes to offer this cool comforting drink to parched humanity. Mere repetition of the words, Sathya, Dharma, Shanthi and Prema will not quench the thirst; the words rice, curry and rasam (soup) will not satisfy hunger. How can you get anandam from words? Practise them, that is the message that the Avathar brings, with all the authority that It can wield. What you have heard and seen must be spoken out, without exaggeration or abridgement; that is sathya or truth speaking. Of course, when the mind is controlled, the intelligence is sharpened and purified; you see only the one everywhere, in everything, at all times; then that one becomes the only Truth, which you see, hear and speak of - for, there is nothing else to see or hear. "Sathyannasthiparo dharmah" - "There is no duty higher than Truth." Some people raise the question, "How can we make a living if we adhere to Truth?" Well, you cannot escape death, whatever way you spend your days. It is far better to die, adhering to Truth, than die, sliding into falsehood. Do this duty to yourself first; then, consider the rights of others. Falsehood looks easy and profitable; but, it binds you and pushes you into perdition. Purify your feelings and impulses; do not worry that others are not doing similarly. Each man carries his destiny in his own hands. You will not be bound, because others are not freed. You should strive for your salvation, at your own pace, from where you started when you were born into this chance. One coconut garden may have a thousand fruits; the neighbouring garden which belongs to you may have only eight hundred. But, you are rich only to the limit of the number that grew in your garden. You have no right to the fruits grown on another's tree. Earn yourself, for yourself. Two people may have two acres each in the same village; but, they reap different quantities of grain, depending on the skill and attention they bestow, and the quality of the soil, the seeds and the manure they use.

Do not give up your code of duties

For each person, there is a code of conduct laid down in the Shastras (scriptures), according to age and status, the profession adopted, the stage of spiritual attainment reached, the goal of life accepted, etc. Do not carp at the behaviour of others, or at the efforts they make, to get consolation and courage amidst the turmoils of life, for the path that one has chosen, the Name and the Form of God he prefers! Also do not give up your code of duties and take up that recommended for some one else. Arjuna was overcome by human sympathy when he refused to slaughter his kith and kin and seek regal luxury through such sinful means; he preferred being a mendicant. Then, Krishna had to remind him of other levels of dharma, which override the purely natural dharma. They were: (i) the Varnadharmas of a Kshatriya, which insisted on his fighting the forces of evil and which branded withdrawal from the battlefield as a heinous sin; (ii) Atmadharma, which urges you to concentrate on the Athmic reality, and not worry about defeat or success, fame or dishonour, but be an instrument in the hands of the Lord. Along the lines already familiar to you, continue the worship of the God of your choice; then you will find that you are coming nearer and nearer to Me; for, all Names are Mine and all Forms are Mine. There is no need to change, after you have seen Me and heard Me. That is what I wanted to tell you, since the Shastri spoke to you of Avathars and their significance. You have stood too long in the hot sun: if I speak longer to you, I would only be adding to the misery; so, I shall stop now. Go to your several places now, without rushing or pushing, causing trouble and confusion. There are children, old persons and many sick people among you. So, be careful.

Unity is Divinity.
Purity is Enlightenment.
Let us live together
Let us experience.
the gifts of things together.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

23. Rope round the neck

Date: **March 1965** / Location: **Rajamundry**

This land is the Karmakshetra, the land where all activities are sublimated into sadhana (spiritual practice) and the goal of merging in the Absolute is ever held before the particular, individualised man. But, this land has started pursuing the mirage of sensory pleasure and worldly happiness, forgetting that only spiritual success can give peace. Though people discover soon that no one can be happy fully, by getting rich or becoming an expert in any science or master of any art, or building up a healthy physique, still, they seek happiness through these means alone. What has to be done is to develop detachment step by step, dwelling on God and fixing attention on His grace, power and wisdom. The Vedas have three sections karma, upasana and jnana. Karma or activity engaged in with a dedicatory attitude, regardless of the benefit it may result in, builds up purity of mind. Upasana or systematic worship of God contemplating on the glory and splendour and His manifold expressions equips you with concentration. These two lead to a clear grasp of the Reality, that is to say, you acquire jnana (spiritual wisdom); the veil of delusion drops and glory stands revealed. Now, these three are neglected and even scoffed at. Know that no object is per se pleasing or joygiving. It is you that find it so, the joy is in you. You pour it on the object and ascribe it to the object, by the trick of projection. If an object itself is capable of producing joy, it must be welcomed by all at all times and places. This is not the case so far as any object is concerned; the joy is only projected on it by the mind of the individual.

The innermost core of man is pure

Delusion has to die; then only does the cycle of change end. Then only is man liberated from the bonds of birth, life and death. Call it sayujyam (reaching the goal, or merging in the Absolute or Universal), or Brahmasakshatkaram or Aikyanusandhanam (becoming one with Infinite)- - the names may differ, but the finish is the same' Every mortal must attain immortality; for he is Amrithasya puthrah, a child of Immortality. That is why I dislike people

condemning themselves as sinners, 'born in sin, living in sin, fundamentally sin itself'. I always remind such people that it is treason to their inner reality to heap such stark falsehoods upon their own heads. This becomes clear when you address any one of these people as, "Hey! Sinner!" they will turn round in anger and threaten you with hard pounding. Why? Because that word 'sinner' wounds their innermost core, which is Nirmala, Nischala, Nithya and Nisswartha (Pure, Fixed, Eternal, and selfless). If you hit a tamarind fruit when it is green, the seed too will get the impact; but, hit it with a stone or hammer when it is ripe, the seed will not get hurt. Be like the seed in the ripe fruit; feel that you are unaffected by the blows of fate; when you get thejnana that you are not the body (deha) but the Self (dehi), then. no blow can hurt you. The Shastri versed in Veda spoke of Yama, the God of Death, having kama and krodha, as the leader of the army with which he attacks mankind. But Yama is not an identifiable person riding on a buffalo, with a noose in his hand for roping in the souls of those whom he wants to drag to his realm. No. The God of Death is called Kala, Time. Time is the God of Death; time knows no mercy; when the time is over, you have to leave; each day, your span is shortened by 24 hours. He is as omnipresent and omnipotent as Time. He does not run a rope factory to drag into his home all the millions who die. The dying person has the rope already spun and twisted round his neck. He has only to come and pull! He spins the rope by every act of his, during all the years of his life, now or in the past. All acts done with egoism, self-interest, an eye on the beneficial consequences, the fruits, give a little more length, a stronger twist, to that rope.

Know the true values of yaga and yajna

Good deeds done in a dedicatory spirit do not add to the length or strength of the rope. They give shanthi and santhosha (peace and happiness) in plenty. Why, you had a very good illustration of this just today. The final offering of sacred objects in the sacrificial fire of the Rudrayaga was done here at 10 a.m. and, there was a welcome downpour of unexpected rain at 10-05 a.m.! Those who do not know the true values of yajna (Vedhic ritual of sacrifice) and yaga (ritual of worship) ridicule these rites and shout that they involve the loss of precious ghee and fuel, which could be put to better use. They do

not realise that the food they themselves consume is a colossal waste, for, they do no good to the world or for themselves. Their cigarettes are a waste, indeed, a dangerous waste; their bush coats, the films they, saw, the hours they listened to the radio are all waste.

You see a sculptor working away at a rock with his chisel and you condemn his work of chipping pieces as waste of precious time and valuable stone. You do not know that one day a form of Divine beauty will emerge. You see the ryot scatters valuable seeds on the mushy field; you blame him for wasting eatable stuff! You do not realise that he will harvest it a hundredfold in a few months. Your criticism is born of ignorance and shortsight. The rain that fell this morning and surprised everyone did not surprise Me, for it is the inevitable consequence of the yaga. It is a special science, which these Pandits know; honour them for it. There are many who talk cynically of even Sathya (truth), Dharma (virtue), Shanthi (peace) and Prema (love). They say that if you stick to truth nothing can be got done, that a little lie helps much; that Dharma is what suits the need of the moment; that if you practise Shanthi, you will only receive all the blows on your own back; that if you become famous as a man of prema, the entire village will squat on you and share your hard-earned wealth. Therefore, they conclude, you will be a fool if you decide to practise these four virtues.

Practising what you preach is Dharma

But, just think a little and you will find out the absurdity of the criticism. It is the lie that requires intelligent bolstering, clever avoidance and deeper memory! It is much easier to speak the truth and be done with it. What you have seen or heard or done, speak about these just as you saw or heard or did! And, what is Dharma? Practising what you preach, doing as you say it has to be done, keeping precept and practice in line. Earn virtuously, yearn piously; live in the fear of God, live for reaching God - that is Dharma. Minister Narasinga Rao quoted in his speech some officer-friend who spoke to him about the dangers that lurk in a community that suddenly gets a lift in the standard of living, due to some dam or industry being established in their home land. He said planners must first pay attention to the control of the

recklessness and the spirit of bravado and crime that accompany sudden access to riches. Of course, this is a universal experience, this association of vice with wealth, of madha with dhana. The poor are rich in devotion to God; Kunthi prayed that her difficulties may continue, for they keep the Lord ever in her mind. Riches are a great handicap in the path of spiritual progress. So, though you may be rich, do not cultivate attachment to the bank account or to the mansions, cars and comforts you command. Have them as if they are given to you on trust by the Lord.

Listen to the epics and correct yourself

The Vedas are called Sruthi, because they have to be heard with attention. Sravanam (listening) implants ideas: it inspires you to take stock of your condition, to note your deficiencies and failings and even your excellences and merits. The ear has great potentiality to correct, reform and guide. Listen to the Ramayana and the Mahabharatha; it is a chance that many are losing now. Then discover for yourselves the greatness of Rama, Krishna, Meera and Radha. Dwell on their lives, the example they place before you; correct your habits, your outlook, your attitude to the world, to society, to yourself. That way lies salvation. The ear fills the head; the head directs the arm; the arm acts. So, hear good things; do good things; share good things. That gives joy and contentment.

Speak softly, kindly; that is dharma. Give generously, wisely; wipe the tear and assuage the sigh and the groan; that is dharma. Do not simply throw money at the needy; give with respect and reverence', give with grace. Give also with humility. Try to live with others harmoniously. This is called Kaliyuga (the Iron Age), but it has become worse. It has become Kalahayuga, the Age of Factions! Factions in the family, the village, the community, the country, the nation, the world. The root cause of all this is the emphasis on the ego and the desire for cheap and temporary pleasure.

Earn the riches of jnana, as Janaka did, through association with the great sages of the day, as Dasharatha did from Vasishta. These Brahmins, scholars in the Vedas, have in them the jnana you need; they have preserved them in

spite of poverty and neglect. They have been scorned by the rulers and the ruled, the people and the politicians. Their knowledge heaped in their 'godowns!' is fast getting useless through not seeing the light. You might be wondering why I am taking them with Me from place to place and even sympathising with Me for the task that I have taken upon My back, for, in your opinion, it is a lost cause. No; it is not lost; the Avathar has come to see that it is retrieved and restored. I derive Anandam through them and with them.

To condemn all is unjust

Do not judge them by their dress or their exterior. There may be among them a few who do not live up to the high standard they profess; that percentage is like the few small stones found in a bag of rice, small in quantity and easily recognisable. Do not condemn the clouds which shower sheets of pure water, because after it falls to the ground some water gets dirty. To condemn all is unjust, untrue and unkind. Take My own instance. I never exult when I am extolled, nor shrink when I am reviled. Few have realised My purpose and significance; but I am not worried. When things that are not in Me are attributed to Me, why should I worry? When things that are in Me are mentioned, why should I exult? "Sayee ki Sarvamu yes, yes, yes," (for Sayee it is always s.s.s.). If you say, "Yes; you are the Lord," I am the Lord to you, if you say "No", I am No to you.

I am Ananda, Shantham, Dhairyam (Bliss, Equanimity and Courage). Take Me as your Atmathathwam (Reality of Atma); you won't be wrong. Resolve from this day to see only the good in others, to develop the good in yourselves. That is the best sadhana. Discard anger, hate, envy and greed; do it by dwelling always on the Name that summarises and signifies the Glory of God. Nurturing anger and hatred in the heart is like carrying a pot with many holes for bringing water.

Foster depositories of ancient wisdom

During these days when I am going about in the East Godavari District, people have witnessed the devotion and sincerity of lakhs of men and

women. Spiritual thirst is present in a large measure; the tendency to run towards the. Divine is here. It is latent, but strong. Just as when the showers of rain come, the bare plains become green with grass, since the rain feeds the roots underground, My presence has made the spiritual yearning lying dormant in your hearts, sprout in profusion. That yearning has made you ignore the importunities of hunger and thirst, and given you great joy and contentment. .Foster these repositories of our ancient dharma and wisdom, the Pandits. You run to them only when you need a priest for. marriages or other ceremonies. You never care whether they are fed or clothed, whether they have enough opportunities to study the scriptures, to teach their children, to live as teachers and guides of society. Honour them, make full use of them.

Life is just a chance
to see for yourself
your beginning and your end.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

24. Be above and beyond

Date: **March 1965** / Location: **Rajamundry**

The seed grows slowly into a huge spreading tree; so, too, through tiny acts, soft words and kind deeds, man elevates himself into a Divine Being! The worst action is to do the opposite of what you preach' to deny by the hand what you dole out of your mouth. If you cannot act up to your declarations, keep quiet; do not go about advising and advertise that you are hypocrites. Do not preach dharma (virtue) while decrying it in deed. Dharma is steady, unchanging; it can never decline. What happens is: those who have to practise dharma decline in faith and steadfastness. By practice is a man judged; not by the precepts that he pours forth. One speaker was just now giving a list of sages and saints who were born in this District in the past; but, you must ask yourself the question: "What use have we made of their experience? How have we benefited?" When that list is being elaborated upon, you have to hang down your heads and lament the decline in spiritual development! You have to ask, "How have we deserved this heritage?" The President quoted an English poet who said that life is like a pastime for God, who crushes a butterfly, after playing with it for some time. 'They kill us for their sport'; "Life is a tale told by an idiot", he quoted. He said what Western poets spoke of Fate as blind and cruel and had recently developed despair regarding human progress, in spite of technical and technological advances. This only reveals that they have no deep experience, no illumination.

Separate yourself from the grief

The experience of saints in this country is different. They have known (and you have also to know) that the body, with a form and a name, is just a temporary habitation. Form and name make anything temporary. You hear of the Lord giving darshan (audience) in the temple, wearing a diamond-set hastham (hand) ! That means the Lord is conceived as having a Name and a Form, which are limitations and therefore, temporary, attached to a particular manifestation only. Form and Name are needed for experiencing sukha (pleasure) and sukha involves dukkha (grief) also; they are the obverse and

the reverse of the same coin, this side and the other side of a sheet of paper.

Grief is caused, as joy is caused, by the attachment of the senses to objects; once you know that you are not the senses or the mind, but He, who operates the senses and wields the mind, you cross the bounds of pleasure and pain. The President of India had a recent domestic bereavement; but he did not import that grief into his role as President, did he? No. The duties of the President were performed without any hindrance or loss of interest. Separate yourself from the grief; you are the President of your Realm. The senses and the mind, with all the attendant impulses, desires, attitudes, etc., are your servants, instruments that have to carry out your orders. The Vedas teach you this truth. Once, as part of a marriage procession, an elephant was also pushed along: a wicker-elephant, life-size. People looked at it in wonder and some even dared to find fault with it, saying the legs were too short, the ears were inadequate, etc. But, the thing was filled with crackers and, in a few moments, when it was lit, the whole contraption exploded in a blaze of brilliantly-coloured shooting stars with a tremendous bang. Why should there be so much criticism of a thing which, like the body, will soon go up in flames? The body is but an instrument for a high purpose, the realisation of the Glory that fills the Universe, of which you are a fraction!

Road to God is filled with immense hardships

Use all the talents of your senses, the intelligence and memory, for this purpose. Transform values, sublimate desires; let the higher always overrule the lower. Like the ass that carries sandalwood, without knowing anything more than its weight, man too carries the burden of wordly worries, without being aware of the fragrance which he can really get from the very burden on his back. The senses will drag him away from the higher purpose, so they must be kept under strict control by rigorous training. Without this mastery over the senses, all the elaborate puja (ritual worship), all the long hours of dhyana (meditation), all the vows you observe, are mere mummery.

True devotion must not get dispirited; nor elated or satisfied with lesser gains. It must fight against failure, loss, calumny, calamity, ridicule and against

egoism and pride, impatience and cowardice. Read the lives of Jayadeva, Thukaram, Ramdas and Sakkubai; go through the stories of how the Gopees calumniated Radha; then, you will realise the immensity of the hardships they underwent, when they travelled on the road to God. You find now a number of people who open their mouths wide in admiration of Western countries who prepare rockets to travel to the moon and go round the earth. They may circle lakhs of miles in space, but, they know not how to proceed half an inch more towards their neighbour, or brother; they do not dare explore their inner reality, though they are eager to explore the outer illusion! The Truth that is in all beings is also in you. Search for that; discover that unity; that source of courage, of love, of wisdom. You do not realise that it is He who digests the food that you consume, for, as He says, in the Geetha, "I am the Vaishwanara - fire that is in the bodies of all beings and digests the four types of food they eat." That fire digests food, but, it is careful not to destroy the stomach itself! He is the basis of all activity, though Himself unconcerned.

Do not allow the world to get into you

Be like the lotus, unattached to the slush where it is born and the water in which it is bred; the merits and demerits earned in past births is the slush, where the jeevi is born; maya or the enticing illusion called world is the water, which sustains; but do not allow that enticement to affect you. Be above and beyond the earthly attachments like the lotus. Know that though you may be in it, you should not allow the world to get into you and affect your sense of values. It is the stilted sense of values that makes you carry a radio receiver strapped to your shoulder, even when you come here! This has become a fashion; sons-in-law now try to extract a transistor radio from their fathers-in-law, as quickly as possible. There was a young man in a big town; it so happened that his father arrived on a visit and was received at the railway station by the son himself. They were going home in an auto-rickshaw when the father, already confused by the roar and noise of the traffic, noticed some one carrying a small rectangular box, strapped on his shoulder. He saw many more such boxes, carried proudly by young men, fashionably attired and walking in a strut, with nonchalant gaze. He asked his son what they charged in the town for a shave and when the son answered, a half-rupee, he was

surprised that it was so cheap. 'These barbers going about with those boxes strapped on their shoulders are so well dressed and rich looking that I thought they must be charging five rupees at least,' he said. The poor man thought the transistor radio sets were barber's boxes. In fact, many who carry them and tune in do not know the A B C of music, eastern or western, nor do they know an iota of geography or history or politics to appreciate the news. They carry watches on their wrists, but do not know what hour it is, they have to stretch their wrists before those sitting next to them! They cannot read a watch, nor have they any engagement to keep. All this is but needless multiplication of misery! Know that which, if known, makes known everything that has to be known. This was the advice given to Uddalaka by his Guru, as mentioned in the Upanishads. You are the core, the centre of your world. Without you there is no world for you. Unless you know yourself, you cannot know the world which is your creation. Now, you ask every one you meet, "How do you do?" But have you ever asked the question to yourself, "How do I do?" You ask every third person, "Who is he?" But, have you asked the first person, "Who am I" and searched for the answer? That is what the Vedantha teaches, that is what these Pandits are eager to tell you.

Steady enquiry is essential

Some of you may ask, what is the use of telling all this to such vast gatherings, things that have to be whispered in the ears of ardent seekers only. Well, how do you know that there are not many such here? I know there are many who will treasure what they have heard to-day; they will ruminate over it; perhaps they will remember it, when the need for it becomes urgent and acute; they will then say to themselves, "Ah, Baba told us this that day when we heard Him at Rajahmundry." Nothing that is experienced will go to waste. It will shape the course of events; it will change attitudes and habits; it will purify and clarify situations and outlooks. That is why I want you to read the Bhagavad Geetha; this learning of the Geetha is like learning eetha (swimming). Eetha saves you from drowning. Geetha saves you from drowning in the treacherous flood of worldly desire. The Geetha is the real purpose for which the Avathara of Krishna was undertaken.

Man's four main duties

The Geetha is His command; how can you earn the Master's Grace if you do not carry out the Master's Commands. If the son says, "Leave me to myself. I need no instructions from you", how can he expect the father to give him a share of the property? The Geetha also helps you to recognise the incarnations of God. Usually, when the Lord appears with Form, man is pestered by doubts and he actually loses the precious chance. He asks himself and all those whom he meets "Is it true? Can it be true?" and before his doubts are removed, he deserts the quest and wanders into the wilderness. Of course, steady inquiry is essential; do not be led by others; awaken your own reason, amass your own experience; and, decide for yourself your own path. Then only can you get joy in treading it; if you are forced to take a path by others or persuaded into it by some one else, then, when the first obstacle turns up, you will get dispirited and turn back.

What exactly is your duty? Let Me summarise it for you. First, tend your parents with love and reverence and gratitude. Second, Sathyam vadha, Dharmam chara' Speak the truth and act virtuously. Third, whenever you have a few moments to spare, repeat the Name of the Lord, with the Form in your mind. Fourth, never indulge in talking ill of others or try to discover faults in others. And, finally, do not cause pain to others, in any form. Now, the only thing that is cheap is "man." All else have gone up in value. Man is the thing most defamed, most neglected. The Minister was saying yesterday that when costly projects are planned and finished, when the area becomes rich and prosperous the inevitable result is an unfortunate increase in crime and vice, because there is no plan to build up the moral stamina of the human community the project is intended to benefit! The community can be really happy only if it has fine health, steady peace of mind and intelligence valued and directed to the service of others. The recognition of the evanescence of the body and all things material must over-rule the tendency towards pride and pomp, and check avarice and ambition.

Means have to be as noble as the end

Whatever happens, the path of virtue should not be given up. When Hanuman saw Seetha in the Ashoka Vana at Lanka, surrounded by ogresses, forlorn and helpless in the midst of her captors, he fell into such overpowering agony that he said to himself, "The whole world is sunk in sorrow since this Mother is grieving; I shall take her on my shoulder and leaping across the sea, restore her to Rama and make her happy." He invited Seetha to accept his proposal. But, listen to what Seetha replied. She resisted the temptation to escape from captivity, to reunite with her Lord, to rejoin her people, her kith and kin. She struck to the path of Dharma; "I should not, out of my own will, touch any male other than my Lord. Besides, it will detract from the glory that awaits my Lord, who will certainly liberate me by the prowess of his arm. If you carry me back now, you will be repeating the act for which we now condemn Ravana." The means are as important as the goal; the end does not justify the means; it has to be as noble as the end. The President referred to the Prasanthi Vidwanmaha-sabha as having been founded by Me, but remember, any institution or individual engaged in feeding the roots of Dharma are Mine; I am in every one who does good, speaks good, and thinks good.

If the place you must reach is very near, you can just step across;
if the distance is more, you may need a vehicle, bullock-drawn or horse-drawn;
for longer distances, you may require a car or a plane.
But, the Lord is nearest to you.
Slide ajar the door of delusion;
part the curtain of ignorance; open the closed eye; He is right there, before you.
The fog of sensual pleasure is hiding Him from you.
Switch on the light; the darkness disappears and He becomes visible.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

25. Plenty of holy men

Date: **April 1965** / Location: **Rajamundry**

Matters of the spirit are matters of experience. Devoid of the underground stream of steady striving for experience, man's innate divinity and holiness are fast forgotten and ignored. This can be regained by means of Vedantha (philosophy based on Vedas) and a proper study of the Shastras. Some people carp at Vedantha and say that it makes men lazy and encourages them to run away from their responsibilities; but, the first responsibility of every one is to himself; he is the source and centre of all his attention. This kind of cynical criticism has become a fashion nowadays; it only reveals the ignorance and egoism of the critic. They say that the Sanyasins (monks) are like mistletoes fattening on the toils of others, a set of idle parasites. But, to condemn the institution of Sanyas on the basis of a few individuals is wrong. Who can judge the inner urges, except the Lord? You may be misled by the quantity, variety and cost of flowers, or the tears flowing from the eyes, or the hymns sung by the tongue, or the hours of listening to divine stories that a man might have to his credit; but it is the resident within who knows the genuineness of the feeling. There are countless numbers of such devoted men and women in this country, even now. I know, because, I am with them.

The person who spoke on Saint Thyagaraja lamented that such saints are now so rare. They are not rare. There are many now, alive and happy. Those who seek will be able to discover them. Seek the company of the good, the seekers, the aspirants, the detached. Then, you will see the light. Listen to holy discourses; read sacred books. Your effort and the atmosphere of the place, these two will lead you to success. Holy place, holy river, holy company, holy day - when these conjoin, it is the chance of a lifetime; make the fullest use of it.

Be ever in contact with God

Now, holy days have become holidays when you make merry, eat your fill, go out on picnics and hikes, and generally indulge in sensual pleasures, which

end in dejection, disease and discord. The place has a subtle and powerful influence on the man. Markandeya held tight the Shivalinga and so, Yama's noose bound both himself and Shiva; that was the reason the boy was saved. The story teaches you to be ever in contact with God, for you do not know when the noose will be thrown. Attach yourself to the Highest, call it by any name, conceive it in any form. But, remember, without Dharma you cannot attain it. Don't be led away into the by-paths; keep to the highway.

If you yield to alpabuddhi (inferior thoughts), you will be losing the akhanda-thathwa (principle of the Universal). Never give ear to slander, ridicule or praise. They are all bubbles on the surface. They are mere manipulations of words, the magic of vocabulary, the tamash of style, the dance of phrases. Learn the means of winning Grace and earning purity from those who know; the elders, the scholars who have put their learning into practice. Don't despair; don't hesitate. Grace can wipe off the past; Sath-prayathna, Sath-sanga and Sadachara (good self- effort, good company, good practices) can ensure happiness in future. The three cardinal principles of the Hindu faith are: Belief in a series of births: belief in Avatharas of the Lord for the reestablishment of Dharma and the transformation of those who have strayed from it; and belief in karma, the fact of every activity having its inevitable consequence and of human destiny being shaped by cumulative effect of all these consequences. Karma is the cause of births, the jeevi (soul) being compelled to undergo another ordeal for clearing its accounts and becoming free of both credit and debit.

Develop the inner joy that is everlasting

You might ask, "How is it, then, that, while in this life, we do not remember any single event that happened to us in previous lives?" It is something like a man knowing too many languages; when he speaks in Tamil, no Telugu word will come to his mind; when he speaks in English, his thoughts will be framed in that language only. If you forget this birth, and concentrate on the other, then you can know. But, you seldom give up the attachment to this life! A volcano throws up its lava on the screen of the picture house; a dam bursts and the flood waters it had impounded roar along towards the sea,

submerging vast states; but the screen is not burnt, nor does it get wet in the least. The screen is the truth; the film is an illusion, however realistic it was, however genuine the feelings it aroused. Know this and so direct your life that this knowledge is the background of all your actions. Thus, you will have great peace and great joy.

With a mind full of egoism and hatred, you can never hope to have peace and joy. A tree that bore plenty of fruits dried quickly; some one attributed it to the evil eye of the passers-by. Others said, perhaps it was not watered; but, the owner asserted he was watering it adequately. No one could diagnose the reason, except a forest officer, who said, 'The roots have been affected by a pest,' There was a bhaktha coming to the previous sarira (body) called Radhika at Shirdi; he was always suffering misery, but, only for those who observed his external movements. At heart, he was supremely happy. Develop that inner joy; it is everlasting, full. The seed of the Lord's name has been sown It is now two years since the Prasanthi Vidwan-mahasabha was started. So, it is natural that the question is asked, "What has it achieved?" You will be wrong if you thought I am having all these Pandits about Me and that I am going from place to place with them to get publicity for Myself or for them. I do not need any publicity, nor do they. They have to know themselves and they have to help you to know yourselves, that is all. The Vedas and the Shastras speak only of this. But, you must admit, because it is patent everywhere, that a great change has come as a result of the Prasanthi Vidwanmahasabha. Hitherto, even in these parts, the audience for spiritual talks could be counted on the fingers of one hand, one could easily tick off the names of the persons who usually attend. But, look at the flood of eager humanity that gathers now! The appetite for spiritual knowledge has increased tremendously. This is some progress. The seeds have sprouted; they have become evident in the hearts of the people. Now, by careful fostering, the harvest can be won. The seed of the Lord's name has been sown in lakhs of hearts; the poshana (fostering) is your duty; its rakshana (protection) is My pleasure. Fostering the saplings is your duty; protecting them from harm is My pleasure. The Pandits too, must share with the hungry and the thirsty the knowledge that they have, the inspiration that they alone can give.

26. Matham and mathi

Date: **April 1965** / Location: **Rajamundry** / Occasion: **Rajamundry Hindu Samaaja**

Matham is a matter of mathi; 'religion' is based on the urge that moves the 'mind'; if the urge is divine, we have a divine religion; if it is bestial, then, the things held lovable and desirable will be bestial too. Join the particular with the universal, the limited with the unlimited, the river with the sea. This is the process called Yoga. This can be achieved through Bhakthi or Karma or Jnana.

You must develop this attitude of 'merging' with the divine in all that you do, this attitude of dedication, of surrender to His Will. This is the best means of realising Him. The Geetha, about which all the four Pandits whom you are honouring today spoke, was itself the result of Arjuna's surrender, his prapaththi. The Geetha does not prescribe the same remedy for all; each must get himself diagnosed by an experienced doctor of the spirit and then follow his advice, until he reaches a state of health, when he can restore equanimity to himself by his own effort. You need not learn all the shlokas (verses) and all the commentaries by heart and exhibit your scholarship, engaging in contest with other scholars. It is enough if you put into practice one shloka, the one that suits your spiritual stage, that appeals to you most. That first step will itself take you nearer the second step, the second will make the third easier and so on until the end. If the cow is the representative of Dharma, then, the four Vedas are the teats in its udder, where the life-giving milk is stored; the Gopala (Krishna) milked the cow and gave it to the world, as the Geetha. It has to be taken into the heart. Of what avail is "medicine" if it is poured into the ear? It has to be taken in, so that it might act and strengthen the blood-stream. So too, there is no use in listening for hours to discourses on the Geetha; take the lesson in. Put it into practice: apply it in daily life. Realise the divinity in you, that is the lesson.

Observe truth and justice in every act

There are two statements in the Geetha, both complementary: Shraddhavan labhathe jnanam(the man with steady faith wins wisdom) and samsayatma

vinasyathi (he who doubts perishes). The doubt that overpowered Arjuna was removed by the teaching of Krishna and the necessary shraddha was inculcated. As a matter of fact, the Geetha is a conversation between the jeeva and Brahman, the limited or, rather 'the idea of the limited', with the Unlimited. The dehavasthra is worn by the dehi: the body is but a vesture of God, who is eternal and permanent. Seeing one's own reality is the opening of the doors of liberation; for this, the mirror of the heart has to be prepared, by coating the back of the heart with sathya and dharma. Otherwise, the image will not appear. In every act of yours, if you observe truth and justice, then you can see your own reality revealed. You may say that the burden of past acts and their inevitable consequences have to be borne; but, the Grace of the Lord can burn that burden in a flash; the revelation of reality will, in a flash, save you from that burden. If you see yourself in all and all in you, then, you have known the reality, says Krishna in the Geetha. Therefore, you have to develop the same quantity and quality of Love that you have for Me, towards all others. When you are the Universal, where can you say, your street is or your house is? You are then no longer an individual; you are the Universal. Get that idea fixed in your mind. The Lord will be easily moved; He is like butter, a little warmth is enough to melt His heart. When Prahladha approached Him, the ferocity of the Narasimha Form of the Lord cooled down.

Consider the welfare of humanity as a whole

The three Pandits you have honoured today are preserving and propagating these vital truths of our culture for the last thirty or forty years; there are many more men of this calibre still to be recognised and honoured. Many people condemn Brahmins as a class and charge them with trying to promote their caste interests, writing the Shastras (scriptures) and trying to have a monopoly of the Vedas. But, have you considered how difficult the Shastras have made the life of a Brahmin? No one will willingly impose such restrictions on so many of his own acts and movements, but these people have done it and tried to live accordingly for centuries, and their chief inspiration for subjecting themselves to this restriction has been not power or pomp, but "the welfare of humanity!" Consider this. That is the outlook of Indian culture, the welfare of humanity as a whole. That is also the reason

why it has survived, while all its contemporaries of the past have sunk into oblivion, some without a trace of their influence on posterity. This culture has stood firm because it is built upon the Vedas, the authentic experience of the seers. It is only those who are obsessed by doubt that lose those precious jewels of spiritual wisdom; there are some who hesitate to accept good and useful things that others suggest, though these same people are daily taking countless other facts on trust!

Imagine the enormous efforts of these seers, as a result of which the path of spiritual progress has been cleared by them for the good of all! Why do you not proceed along it? If you take the very first step, you will immediately recognise that their experience is authentic. What is the use of blaming them, instead of trying their prescription? But, you must be aware, of course, of your illness and long for a cure.

Develop confidence in yourself

The Geetha must be carried by this Samaj to the villages and its message must be instilled into the daily lives of our people. In order that you may get the authority to do this, you must yourselves follow the Geetha in your daily life. Develop confidence in yourself and in the culture you have grown up in. There is no advertisement needed for it, it has its own inherent value and the proof of its value is in the shanthi it confers and the courage it implants. I am sorry these Pandits, who are great scholars, did not speak longer because they wished Me to address you for a longer time. Whether they speak or I speak, the subject is essentially the same; liberation from delusion and escape from darkness, by the recognition of the light that is effulgent within.

All good things have to be done the hard way. Ease and elevation cannot go together.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba



27. Uplift of villages

Date: 02 April 1965 / Location: Sathyavada / Occasion: Ugadi

The very first function in the New Year Vishwavasu is this vast gathering at Sathyavada, a veritable ocean of humanity, formed by rivers and streams from miles around, an ocean of joy, rather than an ocean of humanity! Man is born for the attainment of that joy, not for sheer eating and revelling. Real and lasting joy can be won only by a life led along the path of Dharma. Dharma makes the inherent Divinity of Man shine forth; that illumination is the purpose of Life, of the recurring sequence of birth and death. Man has in him the spark of Divinity, which is omnipresent, omniscient, omnipotent and immanent in the entire Universe; in order to become ever aware of this innate Reality, man must learn the technique laid down by the scriptures, revealed by the same Divinity. The very first lesson in the primer of this spiritual text is "the control of speech." Speech is the armament of man; other animals have fleetness of foot, sharpness of claw, fang, horn, tusk, beak, talon. But, man has sweetness of speech, which can disarm all opposition and defeat all the designs of hatred. Sweetness makes you Pashupathi, (Divine); harshness makes you Pashu (bestial). Mere outward politeness or sweetness is hypocrisy! Sincere speech must flow from real sweetness of heart, a heart full of love. Remove all evil from the Manasa sarovara, (the pellucid Lake of your Mind), and make it a fit abode of Godhead.

Dedicate the deed and its consequence to God

Do not aspire to be a servant of God, working for wages; you reduce yourself to that level if you ask for this and that from Him in return for the praise that you offer or the sacrifice you undergo; even if you do not ask, if the bargaining attitude is in your mind, or, if you feel disappointed that God did not give you desirable objects in return for all the trouble you took to please Him. Do not calculate profit; do not count on returns; do not plan for the consequence; do, since you have to Do, since it is your duty. That is real puja. Dedicate the deed as well as the consequence to Him. Then you become His

own, not a cooly, demanding wages. That is the highest level a bhaktha can reach through sadhana. That is the reason why nishkama karma (desireless action) is so highly extolled in the Geetha by Krishna. The heart has the precious treasure of Ananda, but man does not know the key to open the lock; that key is Namasmarana - the repetition of the Name of the Lord - with a pure heart. Purify the heart with the four instruments' sathya, dharma, shanthi and prema. Always endeavour to do good to others, to think well of them and to speak well of others. This endeavour will wear away your egoism and attachment to things that cater to your pleasures. Do not behave like birds and beasts, always engaged in earning a living or rearing a family. Struggle for higher things; use the higher talents with which you are endowed. I am glad this village has responded so well to the call of the higher things in life! All villages must awaken to this Vision of the Supreme. Do not be dispirited; it will happen soon. As a matter of fact, humility and reverence are fast disappearing in the towns; uppishness and irreverence are becoming the fashion there. The fear of sin has faded; there is no faith left in the towns, either in God or in themselves. But, these virtues - humility, reverence, dread of sin, faith in the victory of truth and the efficacy of virtue, the existence of an eternal everpresent witness - these are still existing and flourishing in the villages. People who have themselves fallen ,are now attempting to "uplift" the villages; people who are suffering from the mania to imitate strange cultures are talking of preserving and propagating the genuine culture of India which villages are still nourishing, and planning for the same.

Man becomes a prisoner of his own desires

Some consider themselves great because they have vast territory, some because they have finance, some because they have arms, some because they have vast populations; but, the real wealth, real greatness is virtue which earns the Grace of God. The Kauravas had everything that the world honoured and envied; arms, ambition, friends, allies, forces, riches. But, God was not on their side, for, they were wicked; and they reaped disaster and disgrace. All things that people pride themselves on having, give anandam only when they come, but they have grief when they disappear, as they must some day or other. But the Grace of God is Sathya, that is to say, persisting

without change at all times and at all places; it is Nirmala, uncontaminated by any blemish, full, complete, almighty; it is Nischala, unaffected by modifications. Instead of earning that Grace and the Ananda that flows from it, man spins a cocoon around himself from the sticky fluid of objective attachment and becomes a prisoner of his own desires. "I" and "Mine" are the two poison fangs of the cobra of worldly life. Pluck them from your make-up and you are no longer dangerous to society, and to yourself.

Discover the prime purpose of human life

I know that you have to lead an exacting life in the villages, waking with the cock-crow and sleeping when the birds start sleeping. Of course, you have to work for your food, raiment and housing and for your family, to keep all those depending on you happy and comfortable. But, I want to ask you a question: Is this all? Does this complete the task? What has happened to the prime purpose of human life, which you have earned after ages of struggle? Of what avail is all the long years spent in this body if you have not discovered the answer to the essential question: "who am I?" Know that, become masters of your own realm, the realm of the senses, the intellect, the feelings, the impulses, the instincts, the attitudes, the prejudices. Then only can you claim to have Swarajya. When in your own household, the sons rebel against the parents and brother harbours hatred against brother, how can you call yourself 'master'? So, too, when your senses drag you in one direction and your intellect in another, how can you claim to have Swarajya? I must warn you against two infectious diseases that are rampant in the country now; selfishness and the habit of reviling others. Investigate, examine, and then you have the fight to pronounce judgement. Investigate, examine and then, you will realise that the self is better served by serving others; you will realise that there are far more useful ways of spending time, the little time that you have here in this life than reviling others or praising them. Rather than, concerning yourselves with the faults and excellences of others, care more earnestly for your faults; foster more carefully your own excellences. That is My advice to you today.

28. The bird on the swinging bough

Date: 02 April 1965 / Location: Repalle / Occasion: Ugadi

The New year is called Vishwavasu and you must take it as a call to strengthen your Vishwasa (Faith); faith in your own Atma, your own Divinity, which manifests itself as Love, as desire for immortality, as detachment, as admiration of virtue, the awe and wonder that Nature provokes. But, man is neglecting a grand opportunity, the opportunity of imbibing his own genuine grandeur. He prefers to burn the sandalwood trees for sale as charcoal, for, he does not know the value of the wood. The Divine he takes to be just human; the goal he has set before himself is the winning of sukha and shanthi; that is the proper thing to do, but, he stops after a few steps, mistaking the pseudo for the real, that is the tragedy. He believes that if he gets two full meals a day, a few yards of cloth to wear, and a roof over his head, with a few sundry superfluities, he has reached the goal; but the joy he derives is paltry, mixed with grief, easily turning into pain, harmful to others, full of pride, envy, malice, greed and other harmful ingredients. The body that is sustained on food which will not keep fresh for even a few hours, how can it be fresh for long? That which is made and marred cannot for that very reason be truth; for, truth cannot be made and marred. It is, was and will be, without any modification. What is the immortal part of man? Is it the wealth he has accumulated, the residences he has built, the physique he has developed, the health he has acquired, the family he has reared? No, all that he has done, developed or earned are destroyed; he has to leave them all to the ravages of time. He cannot take with him even a handful of earth, the earth he loved so much. If only the dead could take with them a handful each, earth would have become so scarce that it should have been rationed by now! Discover the immortal 'I' and know that it is the spark of God in you; live in the companionship of the vast measureless Supreme and you will be rendered vast and measureless.

Consider all objects that you collect here as given on 'trust' to be used in this caravanserai, during your pilgrimage, in this Karmakshetra (the field of action). You have to return them when you leave; they belong to another.

When you hold a currency note in your hand and say proudly, 'This is mine' that note laughs at you, for, it says, "O, how many thousand persons have I known, who have prided themselves like this!" The body is but a tent. Don't fondle that delusion; pant for the dehi (indweller), He who resides therein and makes it active, makes it ponder and conclude and act.

The body is but a tent for the pilgrim

As the carpenter shapes the wood, the blacksmith shapes iron, the goldsmith shapes gold, so the Lord shapes in His own way, as the fancy suits Him, Prakrithi or the Created Universe, the Manifold, woven of Space and Time and Guna. Know that the Lord is the basis; and lose all fear. The tiny sparrow sits on the storm-tossed bough, because it knows that its wings are strong; it does not depend upon the tossing bough to sustain it. So too, rely on the Grace of God; earn it and keep it. Then, whatever the strength of the storm, you can survive it without harm. Discriminate; discriminate all the time; use viveka and vijnana (spiritual knowledge) and experience of the waking stage, the dream stage and the stage of deep sleep. In the dream stage the senses are negated; buddhi (intellect) does not work; only the mind is the master: it creates its own 'world'. A tiger mauls you in the dream; a snake strikes deep into your leg. You feel all the pain and all the fear. How do you cure the unhappy man? There is no need to bring a doctor or a magician with his charms. Wake him; he is cured! He knows that there was no tiger or snake or bite or pain. So too, jnana will immediately remove all the dual experiences of joy and grief, derived from these non-real objects.

Sanctify every moment by holy thoughts

You say, "I was awake," "I dreamt," "I slept soundly". Now who is this "I"? Who is this "I" that has none of the three stages, that persists from birth to death, that deals with the body and all the organs and senses, all the various feelings, impulses and experiences as 'its', 'its possessions', 'its instruments'? That 'I' is the thing to be known and once known, you must not allow your mind to stray away from it.

An empty iron box gets valued when it contains jewels; the body is honoured when it contains the jewel of consciousness and the valuables called virtues. Life has to be lived through, for the sake of the chance to unfold the virtues. Otherwise, man is a burden upon the earth, a consumer of food. Whether you like it or not, the length of your life is being clipped every day; the Sun takes a day off it when He sets. You have to pay Him this tribute. You cannot get it back, however hard you pine for it or promise to put it, if given back, to better use' once gone, it is gone for ever. And how can you be sure of the day ahead? You may not live to see it. So, sanctify every moment by holy thoughts, words and deeds. Even if you have no steady faith in God or in any particular Name or Form of that Immanent Power, start by controlling the vagaries of the mind, the pulls of the ego, the attractions of senseattachment. Be helpful to others; then, your conscience itself will appreciate you and keep you happy and content, though others may not thank you. Life is a steady march towards a goal, it is not a meaningless term of imprisonment or a stupid kind of picnic. Be patient, humble; don't rush to conclusions about others and their motives.

You have six fires raging in you

When fire rages, you try to put it out by throwing sand or water, and you keep a stock of these in readiness. But, you have six fires raging inside 'you - lust, anger, greed, attachment, pride and hatred. What have you in store to put them out? Keep ready sathya; shanthi, dharma and prema. They will help you to scotch the flames; they are effective extinguishers. Each one eats to assuage his own hunger; so too each one must discover the best way to appease his own spiritual hunger. Do not be led away by the scorn of others or by the recommendation of others. Contact your own reality in the silence that you create by quietening the senses and controlling the mind. There is a Voice that you can hear in that silence. The true witness of your having listened to that Voice is your behaviour. A tree is held and fed by the roots that go into the silent earth; so also, if the roots go deep into the silence of your inner consciousness, your spiritual blossoming is assured. Yesterday, a very large number of old men, women and children were put to great trouble, since there was great rush and jostling for space. Since all were moved by

prema towards Me, I felt responsible for all that. I sometimes feel that I should not thus move out to places, for when lakhs of people come, quiet becomes difficult. The loudspeakers too joined in adding to the confusion by going out of action. You must learn not to lose patience, but to wait and put the chance to the best use.

You are the whole,
the infinite, the all.
You as body, mind and soul
are a dream;
but what you really are
is Existence, Knowledge and Bliss.
You are the God of Universe.
You are creating the whole Universe and drawing it in.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

29. The immortal guide to immortality

Date: April 1965 / Location: Venkatagiri

These days when anxiety casts its shadow over the land, the recollection of the birth and achievements of Rama acts as armour to the agitated mind. Rama is in truth the Vedas personified. He is Vedadharmā in human form. Today, what you celebrate is not the birth of the son of Dasharatha, called Rama, but of the birth of Dharma itself. You must be happier at that thought; it is a double birthday. When Dharma declines, and the joy of practising it and living it and saturating thoughts and deeds with it, is no longer sought after, when that joy is forgotten and even denied, the Lord incarnates, according to the assurance He has vouchsafed. That is the way of the Lord.

The arena of life is raised on four pillars' Dharma, Artha, Kama and Moksha (Righteousness, Wealth, Desire and Liberation). They sustain and support. When the arena loses two and struggles to stand on the remaining two, viz., artha and kama, naturally, anxiety, pretence, grief and greed afflict mankind. Each pillar must co-operate and complement the parts that the other three play. Dharma must sublimate artha, that is to say, through moral means alone should the means of living be obtained. Artha must be won through dharma and used in dharma. Kama must be primarily for moksha; that is to say, desire must be directed to liberation from bondage, not to the forging of new chains or the addition of further links in the chain of birth and death. The first of the four, Dharma, must interpenetrate and strengthen the next two, so that the fourth may be attained. Devoid of the first and the last, mankind is reduced to the level of beasts and birds.

Dharma subsumes all stages of life

Artha and kama should not be sought after, in isolation. The fact that today there is fear and anxiety in all sections of the people and in all stages of life, shows that men are pursuing only artha and kama and neglecting dharma and moksha. It was once the pride of India that it was a land of peace and fearlessness, of spiritual effort and adventure, which guaranteed social and

individual content. Now, Indians must again dedicate themselves to the revival of that way of living, of Dharma which subsumes all the stages of life. In this campaign, it is the duty of every individual, irrespective of caste, creed, sex or extent of possessions or learning, to join enthusiastically. For, it comes quite naturally to an Indian since it has drawn out the best in him for centuries and the yearning for it is in his blood. How are you to adopt Dharma in the process of living? That is laid down by the Avatharas like Rama. That is the purpose of His coming. Dasharatha had four sons of whom Rama was the foremost. They represent the four Purusharthas, Dharma being the foremost; the other three serve and are strengthened by Rama, who is described as Vighrahan Dharma: the very image of Dharma.

The difference between man and demon (manava and danava), is just this' Manava or man has or ought to have dharma, dhama and dhaya - morality, self-control and charity. The danava or demon does not have these nor does he consider them as desirable qualifications. He spurns them and pays no heed to their promptings. These three Dha's are essential components of humanness. There are as many stages of manavathwam proceeding towards Madhavathwam as there are hearts; for, all are pilgrims from danavathwam or demonhood to manavathwam or humanhood and thence, to Madhavathwam or Godhood. The pilgrims move at their own speed and with the Name-Form that inspires them.

Religion is a mode of the mind

There are some who talk of unifying religions; but religion is a mode of the mind and there are as many religions as there are minds. If you can unify minds, you can unify religions; but, it is an impossible task. Unless the altars of all hearts are made uniform, this attempt is bound to fail. And it is not worthwhile. Jeevo devassanathanam (the self and God are eternal), said the Pandit, now. Yes. The Brahmavathwam or the Universal Principle is nirmala and nischala (pure and immovable) but the Deva imagines itself to be the Jeeva. Brahman feels bound to Name- Form and so, it has to regain the lost awareness. This is done through Dharma. Samartha Ramadas appeared before Shivaji, with his usual call for alms: Bhavathi BhikshamDehi. Shivaji

realised that the Guru is God; so, he wrote something on a piece of paper and deposited it reverentially in the alms bag of Ramadas. "For the relief of hunger how can paper suffice?" asked Ramadas. Shivaji prayed that the paper may be read. The paper recorded a gift of the entire kingdom and all that Sivaji owned to the Guru. Samartha Ramadas replied: "No, My dharma is Dharmabodha, the teaching of dharma, instructing the people in the right way of life; Kshatriyas like you must follow the dharma of ruling the land, ensuring peace and content to the millions under your care." Sage Yajnavalkya too once refused a kingdom, because he cared more for the Kingdom of Moksha, the realm of eternal freedom. Sage Vasishta is also said to have renounced a kingdom, offered him by Rama. That was the ideal in the past; it is only now that men pursue paths that lead them away from Dharma. You have allowed the treasure that the sages gave you to drop from your grasp. Though the medicinal root that you so badly need is lying across your path and has actually tripped your step, you have no eyes to recognise it and realise the value. What a pity, this! Look at the way Rama refused to accept the kingdom out of which he had willingly come, to carry out the wish of his mother, and the plighted word of his father, when Bharatha entreated him piteously to take it from him. Rama taught that artha and kama should not be allowed to over-rule dharma and the discipline of moksha. For, fundamentally, the objects of the world are incapable of conferring joy.

Good deeds will wipe out the tracing of bad

Once when Narada was proceeding to Vaikuntha, the abode of the Lord, he espied a yogi who was engaged in severe ascetic practices. The yogi prayed to Narada to bring back from Vaikuntha information about the date of his becoming entitled to entry there-into. Narada promised to do so. When he stood in the presence of God, he pleaded on behalf of the yogi and asked that he may be informed of the date. The Lord replied, "Tell him that he will be coming here after as many more births as there are leaves on the tree under which he is doing penance." Narada felt sad and dispirited when he thought of the grief into which the yogi would be thrown on hearing this disheartening news. But he mustered courage to announce it nevertheless, for, the yogi insisted on hearing the news that he had promised to bring. When at last

Narada broke the news, the yogi was transported with joy; he was not dispirited at all. He jumped and danced in glee. He was lost in the thrill of his hope being so near fulfilment. All consciousness of the world disappeared from his joy-filled mind. So, the Lord himself appeared before Him and offered him Vaikuntha immediately. But, the Yogi said, he would bide his time, for, he did not like the Lord's word, which Narada had brought, to be falsified! The Lord had to convince him that good deeds and thoughts and feelings will wipe out the tracings of bad; so, he had by his enthusiastic acceptance of the Lord's will got over the consequences of past actions.

The law of karma is not an iron law; by dedication, by purification, which invites benediction, its effects can be modified, and its rigour mitigated. Do not despair; do not lose heart. When vices hold sway over your heart it becomes foul and sooty. The flames of kama, krodha and lobha (desire, anger and greed) char the heart. Grace is proved by the quenching of these flames. Grace confers anandam, which kama, krodha and lobha can never confer.

Practise the discipline laid down by Rama

The word Rama itself indicates Anandam. Rama is Anandaswaruupa. In every being, He is the Ananda in the innermost core, the Atmarama. How then are you being affected by grief? Because you ignore the core, you identify yourselves with the shell, the body. Today, the holy day of Ramanavami, you should immerse yourself in the Atma as Dharmaswaruupa, as the motivator of the moral life. There is no place where Rama is not; no being to whom He denies Grace. He does not arrive or depart; He is immanent, eternal. So, to celebrate a Day as the day on which He was born, is itself a sacrilege. Rama for you should mean the Path He trod, the Ideal He held aloft, the Ordinance He laid down. The path, the ideal and the ordinance are eternal, timeless. Follow the Path, stick to the Ideal, obey the Ordinance - that is the true celebration. Then alone does your life become fruitful. Now, you worship His Form, you repeat His Name; but, you ignore His Orders. This is no real Prema at all. Without actual practice of the discipline laid down by the Lord to purify the mind so that He may be reflected therein, all else is mere show, empty ritual.

Godhood can be reached and realised

Running after momentary joy, people exile themselves from the Kingdom of God. The value of human birth consists in this; it is only from humanhood that Godhood can be reached and realised. Contemplate on this unique good luck today, use it not for feasting but plan your future so that the goal is quickly attained. Such days must be fully dedicated to thoughts of God, thoughts that elevate and inspire. People spend holy days as holidays, when they revel in picnics and hikes, watch films, play games, gamble and quarrel over a game of cards. This is entirely wrong. Days like Gokulashtami, Shivarathri, etc., must be welcomed as opportunities to broaden the heart, deepen faith and enlarge sympathy with fellow beings. To tarnish them by indulging in sensory pleasures is to insult the hoary tradition. I have heard many complain that it is difficult to achieve ekagratha (one-pointedness); even some so-called great men have told me so. But the fault is not with the times, it is in themselves; they have no adequate shraddha - faith and steadiness. The steadiness they exhibit in the pursuit of worldly goods and worldly comfort they do not transfer to the pursuit of inner calm. They complain of lack of time, as if all their waking hours are now utilised for worthwhile purposes! I must also condemn the absence of gratitude, which is rampant today. Ingratitude is the hallmark of wild beasts, not of man. Man today is all humility, all obedience until his wish is fulfilled. Once it is satisfied, he tries even to ruin the person who helped him realise it. This does not benefit man. He must be conscious of benefits derived and eager to repay the debt, or at least, eager to avoid causing harm to the person who saved him while in distress. Manava means "an individual without a trace of ignorance." But, man by his pomp and pride, his egoism and conceit reveals that he is ignorant of his reality and therefore undeserving of that name.

Ingratitude does not benefit man

As far as lies in your power, do good to others. Do not sow fear in others' hearts; do not inflict pain on others; do not promote anxiety or grief. If you take pleasure in the pain of others, you only scotch the divinity in you and

bring to light the demonic nature. "Ishwarassarvabhoothanam" - the Lord resides in all. He is in you as much as in the 'other' whom you try to harm. Know this and give up all efforts to ruin others. You cannot help another; you can only help yourself by that act; you do not harm another, you harm yourself by that wicked act. The attachments are different; but the inner reality is the same in you and "other." You will understand this when you distinguish values, the value of vishaya indriya anandam and Vtshweshwara Anandam, that is to say, the joy derivable from senses and objects and the joy derivable from the contemplation of the glory and the grace of God. Rama strove to uphold Sathya as the main plank of dharma. Whatever the trial, however hard the travail, He did not give up Truth. Sathyam is Dharmam. Dharmam is Sathyam - the two are irrevocably intertwined. Sathyam Vadha, Dharmam Chara, say the Upanishads. Rama will be remembered so long as mountains raise their heads and the oceans exist, because of this strict adherence to Sathyam and Dharmam. If he had argued, "Why should I be bound by the word of my father?" he would not have earned this Immortality. The Immortal had come in the form of Rama to show the way to Immortality. Seetha too kept up the Dharma of women. She declined to return to Rama on the shoulders of Hanuman for she said, she would not of her own will contact another male; nor would she deny Rama the chance of proving his prowess by destroying the wicked person who stealthily carried away His Consort. That is the dharma of a pathivratha (chaste woman). These ideals have weakened now; women as well as men are tempted to yield to the convenience of the moment; they do not attach importance to the deeper springs of righteousness. Tree shade or tent, what we want is sleep, they seem to say. The end justifies the means, that is the philosophy. Fair ends through foul means, how can this be right? He who has to instal Rama in his heart is sheltering a beast therein. What a tragedy!

Trait which man should learn from Rama

Kausalya counselled Rama at the start of his exile in the forest, 'The dharma which you are so scrupulously observing will guard you.' That was the farewell she gave, not a banquet of tasty dishes. The ten-headed Ravana who held the Gods in chains could not stand up to Rama, who had dharma as His

sword and shield. Rama was happy when others were happy. He grieved when others were in grief. That is the trait which He wanted man to learn. So, while avoiding pain from others, be vigilant not to cause pain to others, too. Then, you attract the Grace of the Lord, not when you contrive by tricks to harm others, or revel in the misery of others, or concentrate on your own happiness and progress, irrespective of the injury you cause to others. The grief you cause to others will suffocate you after getting hardened into hatred. It will recoil on your own head, with tenfold force. If you are established in Atmatha-thwam (Reality of Self), you need not fear. Of course you must be afraid of wrong, of injustice, of cruelty, of sin. But why fear when you have the security granted by Sathyam, Dharmam, Nyayam and Premam - Truth, Righteousness, Justice and Love? I had no intention to speak today, but I was pressed to speak for five minutes at least. I have spoken for fifty! I shall now give you a chance to sing a few Namavalis (divine names).

Darkness and light cannot
exist at the same time
and in the same place;
they cannot continue together,
Dhanam (riches) and Daivam (God)
cannot be joint ideals.
When riches are sought
God cannot be achieved.
If both are sought by man
what he will achieve,
will be neither Dhanam nor Daivam
but the Devil.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

30. The basic hypocrisy

Date: **April 1965** / Location: **Prasanthi Nilayam**

This day, as well as yesterday, Pandits spoke to you about Sanathana Dharma (Eternal Religion) and its greatness. I too shall speak only about that, for there is nothing more important than that Dharma for material and spiritual happiness. Sanathana Dharma calls on you to revere the Acharya, for he is seeking to save you from disaster, the flood of birth and death into which you are slipping, through ignorance. You have to learn eetha (swimming) to escape from the swollen river; Geetha or the Lord's teaching you have to learn to escape from the swirling torrent of birth-death. The guru points out the guri (goal) to you; he reveals the Atmathathwam (Reality of Self). A man struggling in a bog cannot be saved by another who is also caught in its slime. Only one standing on firm ground can pull him out. So the guru must have a secure footing, above and beyond the slush of samsara (worldly way). The rishis or sages struggled with themselves and elevated themselves into the purer regions of thought, to discover their own truth. They felt the thrill of that discovery and sang of the freedom they gained. These songs serve as sign-posts and all who derive benefit therefrom have to acknowledge the debt. How to repay the rishi-rna, the debt of the rishis? By study, by reflection on what they have sung of their liberation, by practising the sadhana they adopted, by proving them right out of your own experience.

The three debts to be discharged

There are also three other Rnas (debts), mentioned in the scriptures - Pithr-rna, Mathr-rna and Deva-rna - the debt to the father, to the mother and to the Gods. Once there was a great sage named Uddalaka, famous for his scholarship. He had a son, Shwethakethu, and a daughter Sujatha. Among his disciples was Kaholaka, a young man who was well behaved, virtuous, devoted to the teacher and earnest in his studies. But he could not keep pace with the other bright lads and so became the target for taunts. The Guru loved him all the more on account of this. Sympathy with his lot grew into Grace; Grace resulted in the Guru offering his own daughter in marriage to

Kaholaka! While Sujatha was pregnant, Kaholaka recited the Vedas as laid down in the Disciplinary Rules, but within hearing of the child growing in the womb. It heard the recitation but, since it was already aware of the correct pronunciation of every syllable, whenever Kaholaka spelt a syllable wrong, it squirmed in distress. So, when the baby was born, it had eight bends, crooked in eight places, in fact! Naturally, he was named Ashtavakra. (Eight Bends) When Ashtavakra was still in the womb, Sujatha had persuaded her husband to seek some monetary help from King Janaka to relieve their dire poverty and when Kaholaka went to Mithila, in the midst of a big yaga (ceremonial sacrifice) which the king was celebrating, he had to stay on till it was finished; later, he was forced by circumstances to join a competitive disputation with a celebrated scholar called Vanadena, and accept the terms laid down by the challenger, namely, whoever gets defeated in argument was to be thrown into the sea. Meanwhile, Ashtavakra, in spite of his physical deformity, became an erudite Pandit full of intricate scholarship, even while in his teens. His father's fate was kept from the lad by both Sujatha and Shwethakethu for many years, but, one day, he was taunted by some one as one who was ignorant of his father's fate and the sad tale was revealed to the son. Immediately, he proceeded to Mithila and sought entrance into the audience-hall of King Janaka. The guards laughed when he wanted them to report to the King that a Vedhic scholar eager for disputation with the court pandits had come. They slighted him for his tender age, but he said that age was no criterion. At last, he pleaded that his deformity, at least, entitled him to hospitality and sympathy.

Parents should encourage their sons by good example

Janaka was struck by the boy's persistence and courage; he ordered that he should be admitted and arranged for the disputation the boy sought! If I start telling you the absurd questions that the court pandits teased him with and the replies with which Ashtavakra sparred them with, it will take so much time that perhaps we will have to sit beyond Shivarathri even! Janaka tried his best to dissuade him; he told him that he was too young to risk death in the sea. But, Ashtavakra argued that Atmavidya does not take account of the deha thathwam, the physical principle of the body. Vanadena entered the fray with

the deformed lad resplendent with spiritual scholarship; to the great astonishment of all, the boy gained the upper hand; the aged pandit squirmed under the questions; he failed; he had to be thrown into the sea; the deformed son of Kaholaka had triumphed over the victor who had consigned his father to the waves. The mother was delighted that her son had discharged the debt, and retrieved the honour of the line. The father must encourage the son by example more than by precept. Prahlada told his father that only the parent who directs his progeny to God deserves obedience and respect. All others are, so far as the sons are concerned, human ogres like Hiranyakashipu. There are some parents who are sorry that their sons are coming to Puttaparthi and who dread that they would start doing puja or japam or Narnasmana, and give up the habits of smoking or drinking or gambling, which they have learnt from their fathers! Such people do not know the value of sathsanga (spiritual company), for peace and happiness. They fail to equip their children or themselves with armour against the blows of fate or fortune.

Dive deep into your own Divinity

The Gayathri mantra develops the dheesakthi (power of discrimination) and, so its consequence will be the giving up of evil company, and the seeking of kindred souls. If sathsang is not available, you can keep company with your own higher impulses and noble thoughts. Dive deep into your own divinity. The crocodile is happy and unharmed and it is undefeatable, in the depths of the lake or river. Once it sprawls on land, it becomes the plaything of man, an easy target for death. The depths: they are your refuge; the source of your strength. Do not stray into the shallows or the sands.

You know that the Garuda bird feeds on snakes. Well, once the Garuda went to Mount Kailasa to pay respects to Shiva, who wears snakes on His head, arms, wrists, neck, waist and ankles. When the snakes saw Garuda, they were unafraid; they even dared put out their forked tongues at Garuda and challenged it to come near them. That was the extent of the courage lent to them by the place where they had established themselves. So, establish yourselves in the Atma; no worry or grief or pride can harm you then. Several

types of prema were spoken about today, but all types are based on the 'I' feeling; it is like a drama in a film story, a plot within a plot. You must feel that all this is just a passing show, that you are the central figure, the only figure, the entire figure. Thathwam asi: That thou art. That is this. The external world is fundamentally One, is really Brahman, appearing as many. Thwam is you, yourself. And, what does the experience of all the sages tell him? What is the profound discovery embodied in the wisdom of the Vedas? That is thwam, thwam is That; there is no second, there is only One.

Play your role as the puppet does

If you act or feel or talk contrary to your nature you demean yourself; you deny your reality. The Brahmathwam (Reality of Brahman) is Vimalam, Achalam - Pure, Unshakable; be pure and unshakable. It is thriguna rahitham, devoid of the three qualities: dull, active or balanced; it is pure consciousness. You too must not be agitated by the storms of feeling, or the fog of dullness and sloth. Play your role, as a puppet does; the unseen Director unfolds the drama, which He has willed.

Once it happened that a village drama, Harishchandra, was put on boards, with Harishchandra and his son, Lohithasya, selected from one of the two rival factions and Chandramathi being acted by a man from the other! Lohithasya fell dead, bitten by a cobra, as required by the drama and Chandramathi the mother had to wail. Every one expected the actor to do that very realistically; but, since the boy belonged to the rival party, Chandramathi refused to weep! This led to a minor riot. The 'puppets' had deluded themselves into attachment. They had failed to remember that they were acting 'roles'. This is the basic hypocrisy; claiming to be a character in the play, but, not speaking the lines; exhibiting emotions, going through the movements and not making the role a success.

Many pandits claim to be exponents of the Vedas and Shastras, but it is not what they teach that tells, but how they live. Many sing the glory of the Lord, but, few live in His constant Presence and in the constant awareness of that Glory that fills the Universe. Udipi Krishna!, they sing; but, they don't make

their hearts Udipi, so that Krishna may come and be installed therein.

Revere all human beings as your Lord

There are certain special hours when you have to perform Sandhya and repeat Gayathri. This is very good discipline. Just before the Sun rises, the morning rite has to be gone through. Jonnalagadda Sathyanarayanamurthy described very poetically the calmness, the colour, the eloquent silence of those hours, the waking birds and flowers, the earth that thrills to the touch of dew - that is the time when you too should acclaim the rising Sun with the Gayathri. Yesterday, one speaker described the Gayathri as equal to Rama nama, today another Shastry said it was the elaboration of Krishna nama and the Bhagavatha. I ask you to fix your mind on any name of the Lord that brings up into your consciousness the Glory and the Grace of the Lord. Also, train your hands to do acts that serve the Lord that is shining in every being. All men are He; He shaves as the barber, He makes pots as the potter; He starches and irons clothes as the dhobi. He prompts, He inspires, He devises, He fulfils. You take a sheet of paper on which My Form is printed, as Myself; you revere It; you fall to the ground before It in reverence; why cannot you then revere all human beings, believing that I am in each of them, in an even clearer Form?

The Gayathri is a prayer for the development of your Intellect, so that you might reach this Vision. So let Me advise the elders who are here, this. You have brought your sons or grandsons or wards for Upanayanam and Gayathri upadesham here to My presence. You are happy at their fortune; but, they will repeat the Manthra only if you too repeat it, sincerely. And it is good for you also. Repent, therefore, that you have given up taking that priceless drug; start from today the Sandhyavandanam (worship of Sun God). Learn it from your son or grandson, keeping aside your sense of superiority. When you have the royal road to reach the Goal, why scramble through thorny jungle tracks? Do the Sandhya as prescribed, and you will not be shaken by any storm. You need not flee to a Himalayan valley; you can make your heart that Valley, by the discipline of the Sandhya.

It will surely help you
to achieve the goal
Every religion looks for God
and they look far and wide,
but man should know
that God is Omnipresent
and resides in the heart of man.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

31. The wheels: outer and inner

Date: **May 1965** / Location: **Bengaluru** / Occasion: **Malleswaram**

It is a happy sign that so many thousands of you who are caught up in the noisy waves of worldly pursuits in this city, teeming with distractions and amusements that cater to the senses, have come here today, to listen to the deliberations of this Prasanthi Vidwanmahasabha. This is a sea of eager faces that I see before Me. You are eager to spot the lighthouse that will show you where the harbour lies, to take refuge from the stormy sea. That light is the Atmajyothi (light of self) which the sages proclaim as existing in every one. Some deep visual defect has hidden that light from men and so they struggle in the darkness. It is not enough if one has the human form or even the basic human equipment - physical, mental and emotional. With the help of the discriminating intellect, one must bring it to perfection, as a sculptor does, after the stone is brought to crude shape. Man must be aware of his kinship with God, of the Divinity latent in him, of his immense potentiality. This he can know by the exercise of his viveka and vairagya, (discrimination and dispassion). Only he among all the animals is capable of this.

The royal road to this awareness is shown by the Guru; not every one of the five lakhs of sadhus claiming this status are entitled to it. For, the word Gu-ru means, he who has no darkness in him. (Gu-darkness; ru-without). Most of the Gurus now answer only to the other meaning of the word, which implies weight, heaviness. Most of them, by their weight, are a burden to the earth; that is all the effect they produce by their existence. They are a burden upon their disciples too, for they continuously extend their palms for cash and they have no illumination with which to lighten the burden of others. Leave these gurus to themselves and concentrate on the task of uplifting yourself. When you are earnest about it, the Lord Himself will guide you, either from within or from without, through some one He will send or through illumination from within. Do not despair; march bravely on. Try to fill every moment with thoughts of God, in some form or other.

Place the mind completely at God's service

Repeat Soham (I am He), with every breath: 'So' when you take in and 'ham', when you exhale, 'So' means He and 'ham,' means I and when you complete the inhalation and exhalations, feel that 'So' namely, the Lord, and 'ham', namely, 'I' i.e., (you) are One. Later, after long practice, the idea of He and I as two separate entities will disappear and there will be no more So and ham. Those sounds will be reduced to O and M, that is to say, it will be Om or the Pranava. Repeat that sound afterwards with every breath and that will save you from bondage to birth and death, for it is the Pranavopasana (contemplation on Pranava) recommended in the Vedas. This Soham-recitation is a good means of restraining the mind from running away with you. Let the mind be ever attached to the Lord; then, it will not flee, as it fancies, towards all directions. That is the meaning of the exhortation of Krishna: "Sharvadharmam parithyajya mam ekamsharanam vraja" - "Giving up all other activities, surrender fully to me." Place the mind completely at His service. Then, He will save you from falling.

Be master of your feelings and impulses

Do not pay more attention to the outside world than necessary; but, concentrate more on the inner springs of joy. In a car, the wheels that are underneath are the outer wheels; pay more attention to the wheel inside; the wheel that guides and turns the outer wheels! The driver of the car is inside; you, too, must care more for the inner motivator. If you are master of your feelings and impulses, you can be anywhere, engaged in any profession. You will have peace. Some one visited Kabir in his home and asked him whether the householder's life promoted spiritual development. Kabir did not answer. He called out to his wife and asked her to bring a lamp so that he may fix a broken piece of yarn. It was about midday and the room was well lit. But, the wife did not question or doubt or disobey. She brought the lamp well lit, and held it for Kabir to repair the yarn. Then, he asked her to leave. Kabir then turned his questioner and said, "When you have a wife like this woman, adhering strictly to her dharma, the householder's life will be the best training ground for spiritual development." There was a man who had a wife and a son both of whom did not see eye to eye with his charitable and hospitable

character. One day when he brought a guest and was preparing to feed him, the wife and son thought of a strategem. When the master went out to the shop at the corner of the street to get a leaf-plate for him, the wife put the guest into great terror saying, "What a pity, you of all people fell into his trap today! My husband is daily bringing some poor fellow as if for lunch, but, what he does is to give each one a sound thrashing with a stick, just when they prepare to eat the meal served by me. He believes this will be compensation for some injustice done to him in past births by some one". The guest thought that it was best he ran away from his fate; even while he was fleeing around the corner of the street, the man came home with the leafplate. The wife told him that the guest was a very peculiar man, for he wanted a stick to go to the well for washing his feet and before she could bring it to him, he lost his temper and went out in a huff. So, the master took hold of a stick and with that in his hand, he pursued the guest and called out to him "Stop, Stop." This confirmed the impression of the guest that he was to be beaten and so he ran faster and faster and was soon out of sight. Women today do not appreciate the goodness of their partners or encourage them in the good life. They prove as obstacles rather than helpmates. They should promote Vasudeva dhyanam (meditation on Lord Vasudeva) in the family; and, discourage Vasudeva dhyanam (meditation on Vasu - wealth).

The mind binds and liberates

The Minister was telling you to attend the discourse on Geetha but there is no good in that, if you lean on to a pillar of the Hall and doze off. It is not the sound but it is the meaning that matters; it is not the ear but it is the heart that must drink in the Geetha. He wanted you to seek: and enjoy Sathsangam (good company); along with that sangam, there must be self-examination also, how much you have succeeded in escaping from the senses and nearing the Lord. Mana evamanushyanam karanam bandha mokshayoh - "the mind binds and the mind liberates". So train the mind and win. It is a wild elephant, which can be tamed with the goad of Soham. Do not feed it with conceit, hate, envy and greed. Let the name of the Lord echo ever in the ear and it will be tamed.

When this meeting started and for some time later, there was imminent fear of rain, which came threatening up to this very place. But, let Me tell you, prayers and Grace combined to drive it off. Tomorrow, also, I shall give you the food that will sustain and save.

When the heart is pure, the Lord is revealed.
He is the judge; He cannot be bamboozled.
The doctor may assure you that you have no fever,
but the thermometer cannot lie.
The doctor may say so to save you from panic,
but the thermometer declares the truth.
God knows and God will deal with you as you deserve.
Have the faith.
Repent for all the wrongs done,
and resolve not to repeat the mistake;
then God will extend His grace.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

32. The new year of faith

Date: **May 1965** / Location: **Bengaluru, Malleswaram** / Occasion: **Ugadi**

The Krodhi year has gone and Vishwavasus have come; and, people are happy at the New Year. Well, how many Krodhis have gone and how many Vishwavasus have come, since the years were named and even before that, how many centuries and millennia have elapsed in the history of man! There is no use turning back and watching the road traversed; one's duty is to watch the road ahead and march on towards the goal. Krodhi is related to krodha or anger and Vishwavasus is related to vishwaasa or faith. It is want of faith that causes one to lose temper and fly into fits of anger; want of faith in oneself and in others. If you see yourself as really the undefeatable Atma and others as reflections of yourself, as the Shastras declare them to be, then there can be no provocation to get krodha or anger. What you must resolve upon for the New Year is to manifest your reality, more and more; that is to say, to reveal your Divinity more and more.

Karma is the seed out of which the individual emanates; the jeevi feels separate and limited, on account of the illusion created by karma or activity. As the karma, so the consequence. If it is good, the consequence will tend to attract you towards the means of liberation, that is, towards sadhana and Sharveshwara chintna (spiritual efforts and Godly thoughts). Just as three younger brothers followed the footsteps of the eldest, Rama, so too the other three Purusharthas (Aims of Man) must subserve the demands of the eldest, the first, Dharma.

Practise what you preach

The one dharma that subsumes all else is: the deed must be in conformity with the word. Don't speak one thing and act another; don't advise others to do a thing which you yourself do not practise. Do not start prachara without achara - preaching without practice. There was a man called Ranjodh once, who went about expounding the Geetha, extolling it as the authentic word of God; at the end of his discourse, he sent round a plate for collecting their

contributions in cash; suddenly, one man rose from the gathering challenging him and reminding him that the Lord has spoken against parigraha, or acceptance of help from others. Yes; the Geetha recommends aparigraha, non-acceptance of offerings and those who send round subscription lists and donation lists for Geetha discourses or bargain for fees for the same are all behaving against the express orders of the Lord whose words they propose to explain! This is hypocrisy, indeed.

Only those who feel that God is the highest have the right to build a temple for Him; if he is a servant of the Raja and if he bows before him and deals with him as his master, he should build a temple for the Raja and not for God, who does not get his full loyalty. First fix your devotion exclusively on God; then, think of serving Him. If you collect money from all and sundry and get a Minister to open the temple, then, you are only revealing yourself as a worldly man engaged in a low worldly trick. Get firm in mind; then, your reason also will not deviate. Without that equanimity or shanthi, you can get no soukhyam (happiness), as saint Thyagaraja sang from experience. Many people who give Geetha discourses have themselves no shanthi; they revel in controversies and challenge their rivals to come and contest with them; they parade their victories and their titles, they flaunt their triumphs in the face of all possible rivals. It is all so egoistic; these people have not mastered even the primer of spiritual sadhana. And yet, they expect people to sit at their feet and learn the secret of saving themselves from bondage, these weaklings who are themselves bound.

Let God manifest in and through you

Whatever else you may or may not do, do at least this: know the Lord that resides in you. Recognise Him, let Him manifest Himself in and through you. This is what Varanasi Subrahmanya Shastri meant when he spoke of punya and dharma - good deeds and right conduct. He said that the grihastha (the householder) who is the pillar of society, has forgotten his responsibility and his opportunities and so, the entire structure of society has crumbled. Of course, his estimate is correct; but, I must add that the fourth Order, the Order of Sanyasins (monks) has deteriorated badly, so badly that the

reverence that once was the natural right of the sanyasin has now disappeared. The sanyasin has to live rigorously and with great self-control; but he has fallen from that height and so, has lost respect. Of course there are even now many who adhere strictly to the rigorous rules and are models of ascetic life. Only, they have to be sought after and discovered. The sanyasins who seek you and your patronage are more worldly minded than yourself!

Fundamentally, the fault lies in not understanding that this body and all things connected with it are not permanent. When Bharthrhari the King was lamenting the death of his queen, and weeping over her grace, an old man appeared before him in great distress, weeping as loud as the King himself. His tragedy was that a mud pot he had with him for long had broken. Bharthrhari told him that there was no use weeping over a broken pot; no quantity of tears would ever make it whole. The old man, who was no other than his Chief Minister, said that a person who believed that weeping could bring the dead back to life had no right to tell him that his pot would not be made whole again. This drove some sense into the King's head and he became sane again! When you weep for the dead you are only announcing your colossal ignorance.

Underlying faith should be in the Unity of all

You must use your intelligence to discover what is best under the circumstances and in the situation, considering the status and the profession which you have won. The barber should not treat all things equal and use his razor to peel vegetables, cut pencils and paper, bamboos and beards. Each instrument has its own special uses and purposes; each man has some special skills and responsibilities. The Raja has to be treated as a Raja and the ryot as a ryot. Fish can live only in water and not in milk; keep fish in water and do not put them in milk, on the plea that milk is thicker and costlier!

Though in principle all is Brahman, in dealing with them in the Vyavaharik stage (day-to-day activity), you cannot follow the adhwaitic line. There should be Bhava-adhwaita, not Karmadhwaita, that is to say, the

underlying faith should be in the Unity of all, though the outer activity may be different for different entities. The activity must not leave any scar on the faith in Unity. There is no scar on the sky, though clouds and stars, the sun and moon, all appear to streak across it. So too, let a thousand ideas streak across the mind; but, let it remain unaffected and serene. Kabir had no food for three days; he thanked God that he got the coveted chance of observing a ritual fast. Ramadas was confined in jail; he thanked God that he got a place where he could meditate on God without disturbance. That is the attitude of the saint, the beloved of God. Shivaji brought a palanquin for Saint Tukaram, but he refused the honour, saying that he was not yet ready to be carried on the shoulders of four men! Virtues or sadgunas are like cows yielding health-giving milk. Vices are tigers that fall upon the cows and tear them to pieces. If you build a barricade of Nama, a fort with the Name of the Lord, the tiger cannot harm you, or your virtues. Bangalore is the capital of the Kannada people and Malleswaram is as the head for this city. Here this Bhajana Mandali is being run and it is celebrating the functions in connection with the Prasanthi Vidwanmahasabha, Kannada Branch. Make the best use of this chance, all of you. Beware of some who use My Name for collecting money and for activities that tarnish their claim to be devotees. Do not believe such; where money is asked and offered, I have no place.

The harder the circumstances,
the more trying the environment,
the stronger are the men
who come out of those circumstances.
So welcome all these
outside troubles and anxieties.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

33. Pappu and uppu

Date: 10 April 1965 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam / Occasion: Rama Navami

In the Garudapurana, Sri Hari instructs Garuda about the daily decline of human life, and the attacks that Death deals on him, with His army of diseases, accidents and natural calamities. You have earned this human body by the accumulated merit of many lives as inferior beings and, it is indeed very foolish to fritter away this precious opportunity in activities that are natural only to those inferior beings. Life moves so quick that people often wonder how they grew so old so soon. It appears only yesterday that they were in college or playing in the streets; but they have grandchildren playing about them! While life is carrying people forward towards death so fast, pride makes them force others to fall before them; humility does not induce them to fall before the Almighty!

Since New Moon, the whole country is celebrating the Festival of Ramajananam and today is the actual Ramanavami, the day on which Rama was born. Rama is Dharma, Dharma is Rama. The four ideals of man as laid down in the Vedas are Dharma, Artha, Kama and Moksha; Dharma is the very base. If that is given up or disregarded, sorrow will persist. Rama considered Dharma as all-important. When his brother Bharatha overpowered by grief at his father's death, his mother's greed, and his brother's exile, sought him in the forest and, meeting him, rolled at his feet in terrible anguish. Rama lifted him gently and asked - What do you think he asked? - He asked him, "Are you maintaining Dharma in the Kingdom of Ayodhya, respecting the subjects, the poor, the elders, the scholars, the saints and the sages?" Even when the direst calamity overtakes man, he should not stray away from the path of morality and justice. Rama was wakening Bharatha from the sleep of ignorance; the poor fellow was overcome by his own grief, as if the father, mother, brothers, kingdom, power and position - these mattered, as if they were real, eternal. Rama reminded him that they are all but instruments one must utilise for the exercise of dharma.

In spiritual matters, faith is the very essence

Just as the wild elephant roaming in the forest as the head of the herd is trapped and trained to sit on a three-legged stool in the circus ring, the mind of man too has to be trained by systematic processes of discipline shama, dhama, uparathi, thithiksha; shraddha and samadhana (inner and outer sense control, endurance, steady faith, equipoise) so that it may subserve the best interests of man. To go before a magistrate and plead, one has to pass the LL.B degree examination; to be able to prescribe medicine to a sick man, you must pass the M.B.B.S. degree examination. You have to obtain a licence or have your name entered in the Register of Medical Practitioners. Everywhere for every profession or post they ask you your qualification. How much more is the need for proper qualifications in the spiritual field, for winning the Grace of God? You aim high, but, you make no effort to reach that height. In spiritual matters, faith is the very essence. Doubt shakes the foundations of sadhana and is therefore, to be avoided. Have faith in the wisdom of the ancients; do not pitch your tiny little brain against the intuitions of the saints and their discoveries. For example take the question of offering food in the fire, on the anniversary days of the death of parents, what is called pindapradan. Nowadays, smiles of scorn are cast when such rites are mentioned. "How can the food placed here reach there? The dead man must have taken birth somewhere long ago and his present address is not known. Can a meal given one day in the year satisfy the accumulated hunger of 365 days?" they ask. "Let your father sit on the terrace of your house; then place food for him on the ground floor. Can he reach the food or can the food rise up to him, however many manthras you repeat?" they laugh. "Why are dead men given food, when living men suffer?" they argue.

There is a science of the spirit

You post a letter in the box, and it goes straight to the addressee, wherever he is, however far. Does it mean that the postmaster is your friend, or that he is so sympathetic to your anxiety to correspond with the addressee? If the address is written correct and clear and if the necessary postage is paid in stamps that are valid at the time, the letter is carried by men, by car and bus, train and plane and steamer, right up to the doorstep of the person whose

name is on it. The ritual fire is the authorised post box; the fire is the postal authority, the manthras are the stamps. There is a science of the spirit, as there is a science of matter; it has its own categories; its own modus operandi; its own experts and authoritative theses. Only by sadhana can the secrets of either matter or mind be known, grasped and used for one's benefit. In the Vivekachudamani, Shankara says, "If the Nikshepa or Treasure that is embedded in the bowels of the earth must be brought up, mere calling it up by name will not help. You must know exactly where it is, through the advice of experts; you have to excavate the spot; you have to move away rock and stone and sand that come in the way; you have to grasp it and heave it up to the ground". So, too, the reality of the "self" has to be first learnt by means of instruction from a knower of Brahman; then the processes of manana, dhyana, nididhyasana (reflection, meditation and concentration) have to be gone through; finally when, in a flash, the Truth is revealed, the Self must be firmly established in the Ananda of that moment.

Leave it to Him, let His Will prevail

The Brahmasuuthra begins with the statement, Athatho Brahmajijnasa - "After this the consideration of Brahman". After what? What are the preliminary steps? When does a person become entitled to participate in the discussion and study of Brahman? We have two other texts which have to be studied earlier, one which says, "Athatho Karma jijnasa", "after this consideration of Karma, activity", and the next one begins with, Athatho Dharma jijnasa - "after this, the consideration of Dharma (righteousness)". So, man becomes entitled to the knowledge of the Universal Principle that is the very substance of everything since eternity, only after his mind is purified by karma and dharma. It is only after you place a morsel on your tongue that you discover whether the salt in it is enough or whether it has not been salted at all. Pappu (dhal) requires uppu (salt); that is to say, the boiled dhal must have salt in it for taste. So too, it is only when you have moved in the world and taken a share in its activities according to a moral code, you discover that without the salt of jnana, it does not taste well; take it with a sprinkling of the salt of jnana, the knowledge that you are not the body but the resident of the body, that you are but the witness of the everchanging panorama of

Nature and you feel happy and peaceful. Slowly, step by step, confirm yourself in the thought of the Unity of the World in Brahman. Then, even without praying and pleading, everything worthwhile will be added unto you. That is why Thyagaraja sings "Adigiukhamulewaranubhavinchiri?" - " Who experienced joy and happiness, by means of praying to you?" Leave it to Him, let His Will prevail, do not ask for this or that other thing. He knows best. Did Sabari pray for anything? Did Jatayu call out for His Presence? Did Guha plead that Rama may come to him?

Revival of Dharma is close at hand

Each of you must follow the moral code prescribed for the profession you are engaged in and the age and status which you have reached. Once the King of a large State asked a sanyasin whether it is possible for a man to live up to the height of the code. Some time later, the King died and, according to custom, they sent the Royal elephant round with a garland to choose the successor. The elephant put the garland round the neck of the sanyasin (monk). But, he was resisting the importunities of the people and running towards the forest. He reached the innermost recesses and was happy that he was safe from the calamity that had encompassed him! These moral codes are given in the Shastras and the Prasanthi Vidwanmahasabha has been formed to tell people in simple language their main duties. It is not a limited group of scholars with a limited scope; it is every one's right to utilise the scholars and get the result of their learning for themselves. There is no other motive behind the formation of the Sabha. It is for you all, for all places. It was in connection with the activities of this Sabha that I recently visited several places in East and West Godavari Districts and other areas. It was a triumphal march, resounding with the devotion, the faith and the Ananda of the lakhs of people who attended. The enthusiasm of the people to listen to the message of Sanathana Dharma which I carried was most inspiring to those who came with Me. The scenes reminded one of the Kritha, Thretha and Dwapara yugas, not the Kali Yuga. The pages of the Bhagavatha became alive before us. A twelve-acre expanse of land was found too small for the gathering that assembled in one place. At another place, every tree had many adventurous men clinging to the trunk and branches, even the flail

"drumstick tree!". These are all signs that the revival of Dharma is close at hand.

Welcome hardships to realise the Lord

Only you must have the staunch determination to use this chance to the full. You are near and those who are far are so only with reference to space, not with reference to My Prema. To realise the Lord, you must welcome hardships, trials, and sufferings. You must dwell on the Name and Form steadily and with faith. You must discard all inferior sources of joy. When a son is born, worry too is born with him - worry that he should grow up healthy and pure, learned and good, famous but humble, bringing a fair name to his parents and elders. As a matter of fact, I would advise you to postpone the celebration of the birth of a son until the day when he brings sathkeerthi (good fame) to the lineage and the country. So also, celebrate the accumulation of wealth when it is spent justly and with love, on beneficial and deserving purposes. A tree is justified by fragrant flowers bringing forth sweet fruits. If, on the other hand, its leaves get dry and its flowers fade and the fruits refuse to grow, an agriculturist will examine the roots and discover that they are eaten up by pests or white ants. So too, the roots of Divinity must have been destroyed or harmed if a man's virtues do not blossom and yield sweet fruits. Envy, greed, malice - these pests destroy the roots quickly. By moderating and modulating habits of eating and drinking, one can lay the foundation for spiritual life. One must prefer Sathwick to Rajasik foods. By drinking intoxicating stuff, one loses control over the emotions and passions, the impulses and instincts, the speech and movements, and one even descends to the level of beasts. By eating flesh one develops violent tendencies and animal diseases. The mind becomes more intractable when one indulges in Rajasik food; it can never be remoulded if Thamasik food is consumed with relish. To dwell in Rama thathwa (Rama principle) constantly, one has to be vigilant about food and drink consumed by both body and mind. Rama thathwa is essentially Ananda thatwa. Rama means "He who pleases", "He who fills with Ananda", "He who is the spring of Ananda in every heart." So, when you repeat Ramanama, you are but touching the very source of Ananda, the Atma-Rama (God as self). Just as you have come by various

routes from various villages and towns, all persons have to reach that Source for, there alone can they get the Ananda without which there is no peace.

Out of the long churning of
this milk of the world
comes butter,
and this butter is God.
Men of heart get the butter
and the buttermilk is left
for the intellectuals.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

34. The spring of joy

Date: 13 July 1965 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam / Occasion: Guru Purnima

This is a sacred day. It is the day when we honour Sage Vyasa, who gave mankind the precious gem of *Saguna* worship (worship of God with Form) and the hope and assurance that *Manava* (man) can become *Madhava* (God), that Nara can become Narayana, that Jeeva can become Brahmam, or rather that *Jeeva* (individual soul) is *Brahmam* (Universal soul).

The Bhagavatha and the Brahmasuuthra are the great texts which hold forth these valuable doctrines. Man is a mixture of two strands of the same substance, *maya* and *Madhava*, *moha* and *Rama*, *deha* and *dehi*, *jada* and *chith*, *sareeram* and *sareeri*, *jeeva* and *Brahmam* (Divine illusion and God, delusion and God, body and soul, inert matter and consciousness, body and the embodied, individual soul and the Supreme Soul).

Like the two circular stones of the grinding mill, the Brahmam one is stable, the Jeeva one is revolving. The stable is the base; the revolving is the 'dependent'. The Guru is the Teacher who removes the fundamental ignorance, which hides the knowledge of this truth from us. The Pournami or the Full Moon Day has been fixed for revering him, for, the effect of the knowledge is to put an end to scorching agony and to shed cool comfort instead, on the mind of man. Vyasa is revered as Narayana Himself, for who but God can inspire such Illumination? If your loyalty is to the family, you are a servant of the family; if it is to God, you are a servant of God. But, do not pay heed to the wages He gives. Do not argue and bargain for wages or reward. Only hired labourers clamour for wages and declare they are poor. Be a kinsman, a member of the family, a scion of God, then it behoves Him to maintain you in comfort. Try to be near God, as near as His own kin, do not calculate the number of hours you have spent in serving Him, and pine that He has not compensated you. Be ever in His service, that is to say, in doing good and being good.

Connect yourself with God by the cable of Smarana

Karna knew that death is ever round the corner and so, whenever any one came to him seeking some favour, be it however hard, he satisfied them on the spot, without any delay, for, as he said, "My mind may change, my life may end." People ask each other when they meet, "*Kshemama*?" (Is all well?). The other man repeats automatically, "Quite well, thank you", without noting that his life span has become a day shorter. He has no *kshema* (well-being); he has undergone only *ksheena* (decline). So, arise, and resolve to make the best of your days.

The guru is the person who discovers that you have fallen into a wrong road that leads to further and further darkness. For, he knows the right road and he is full of love for all who strive to escape the travails of the night, without lamps to light their steps. This is a day when the First of Gurus is remembered with gratitude. He is called Narayana, because Narayana is the reality and if you do not get a Guru from outside yourself, if you pray, the Narayana inside you will Himself reveal the road and lead you on. It is always preferable to be prompted by that inner Guru, because most of those who claim to that status are themselves rolling in objective pleasure or are bound by greed, envy or malice. Guru also means 'heavy'; many have only the qualification of physical weight, not of spiritual height! If you must bring the power from the power-house to your residence to illumine your place, you have to put up poles at regular intervals and connect the house with the power house with cables. So too, if you must win the Grace of God, do sadhana at regular timings and connect yourself with God by the cable of *smarana* (remembering the Lord).

Discover the fountain of joy within

The *charavakas* (the materialists) argued that a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush. They said that the pleasure you now have should not be given up in the hope of something promised later on, if this is given up. But, the happiness of renunciation can be enjoyed here and now, and is much more sustaining and inspiring than the happiness derived from grabbing and attachment. Besides, there is a certain joy in being the master of the senses, rather than in being their slave. Now, you are slaves of the coffee habit.

Resolve not to cater to that attachment and stick to that resolution for three days continuously. You become the master and the tongue is your slave. Coffee cannot hold sway over you any longer. If coffee is capable of conferring joy, all should get it equally from that beverage. But, some prefer tea and many find it distasteful. Some delight in taking it without sugar and others without milk. So, it is the mind that gives delight, not the coffee; it is not the object that caters to the senses.

The secret is, discover the fountain of joy within; that is a never-failing, ever-full, ever-cool fountain, for it rises from God. What is the body? It is but the Atma encased in five sheaths, the *Annamaya* (the one composed of food), the *Pranamaya* (the one composed of vitality), the *Manomaya* (the one composed of thought), the *Vijnanamaya* (the one composed of intelligence) and the *Aanandamaya* (the one composed of bliss). By a constant contemplation of these sheaths or *koshas*, the sadhaka attains discrimination to recede from the outer to the inner and the more real. Thus, step by step, he abandons one kosha after another and is able to dissolve away all of them, to achieve the knowledge of his unity with Brahman.

Keep Truth and Love as your guides

Most of you hear me say these things over and over again, year after year. But few take even the first step in sadhana. You ask that I should go on speaking and you take down notes of what I say for the purpose of reading them again. But, without practice, all this is sheer waste. You may talk in a big high-sounding style, but you are judged, not by your tongue, but by your activity and attitude. There was a lady who attended a whole series of Bhagavatha discourses, and picked up a few cliches. She became too lazy to draw water and slept on till a late hour. When her husband reprimanded her, she quoted a shloka which said that one has in oneself all the holy rivers, Ganga, Yamuna, Saraswathi, as the Ida, Pingala and Sushumna nadi (the nerve currents to the left, right and middle of the spinal column)! The husband was astounded at her impudence and pseudospiritual pose. He contrived to feed her on highly salted stuff and he removed all the water pots and jugs from the house. When she suffered from acute thirst, and called out

for water desperately, he quoted the same hymn and wanted her to draw from the Ganga, Yamuna and Saraswathi within her! You have no place for hypocrisy and double dealing in spiritual matters; there, you must walk along the straight and narrow path, with Truth and Love as your guides and companions.

Young men go out to countries overseas and their aged parents are worried about their reactions to the attractions of the strange culture. The father writes to the son pleading with him not to give up the family habits of food and drink, of worship and prayer; the son while reading it gets tears in the eyes; he presses the letter on to his breast; but, that is all. He yields to the temptation and slides away. The paper on which the letter is written is honoured, not the matter for which the letter was written. Sacred books are worshipped in the same way; flowers are showered on them; even food is sanctified by being offered to them; they are carried in procession with pipers and drummers in front, through the streets. But, as to reading them or trying to understand what they contain, or practising a bit of what they were written for - that is an impossible task, for most!

Do not seek to find fault in others

I shall tell you just one thing which those books teach; one thing which I want you to resolve to follow, from this Guru Pournami Day (the full moon day dedicated to the Divine preceptor):

"Do not seek to find fault in others, give up para dushana and para himsa (maligning and injuring others);
do not scandalise any one, do not feel envy or malice.
Be always sweet in temperament, in talk.
Fill your conversation with devotion and humility."

Live with prema, in prema, for prema. Then the Lord who is *Premaswaruupa*

(Divine Love personified) will grant you all that you need in spite of your not asking for anything. He knows; He is the Mother who does not wait to hear the moan of the child to feed it. His prema is so vast and deep; He anticipates every need and rushes with help you must have. You are all waiting anxiously to know, from when I am granting you the 'interviews' so that you can place before Me the long lists of 'korikas' (wishes), which you have brought. These wishes go on multiplying; they never end. The fulfilment of one leads to a new series. Strive to arrive at the stage when His Wish alone will count and you are an instrument in His Hands.

There are different types of 'listening'

The ears relish evil, they do not welcome goodness. They are so warped and perverted. There are different types of 'listening'; the clay type: clay becomes soft when water is added, but, when it evaporates, it is rendered as hard as formerly. The mind becomes soft when religious discourses are heard. But, when you move away, the effect is lost. Then there is the crow type: however much you may teach it to improve its voice and to sing, it does not try nor can it improve; it caws and caws as raucously as before. There is the mosquito type, which goes on harassing you at the very moment when you would much rather have an hour of silence. It cannot be shooed off, it attacks again and again, taking delight in inflicting harm. Do not cater to such low desires; control the listening. The Gopees desired to listen only to Krishna's Glory, Krishna's Charm, Krishna's Words, Krishna's Pranks, Plays, Pastimes, Krishna's Achievements, His Attainments. When you fill yourselves with love for Krishna (Krishna Prem), you achieve *saruupya* and *sayuuja* (likeness of form and absorption into Krishna). Strive for that consummation, not for lesser victories.

Hardship keeps one always alert and in trim.
They reveal hidden resources of skill and intelligence;
they toughen fortitude and deepen the roots of Faith.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

35. The first step

Date: July 1965 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam

Man is endowed with memory, as well as the faculty to forget. Both these are useful skills. Perhaps, the power to forget is even more important, for, otherwise, man will have to lament over the loss of millions of parents and kinsmen he had in millions of previous births; man will remember and resent the many insults and injuries he has suffered in this birth. Luckily, he forgets all that. He remembers only those things that have impressed him as significant, or crucial, namely, the date of his marriage, the names of those who have to pay him money, etc. The tragedy is, he has forgotten the most significant and crucial thing about his earthly career - the key to happiness and liberation, his real Name and Identity! Man cannot afford to forget who he is and for what purpose he has come. He must know the answer to the questions' "Kasthwam, koham, kutha ayathah?" as Shankara said. "Who are you, who am I, where am I going, where did I come from, what is the nature and purpose of all this movement and change, is there any stable base, any goal or aim, direction or director?" - these questions cannot be brushed aside from the mind of man. They come to him and harass him, when he is alone with something grand and awe-inspiring in Nature, or with some incident, terrible and shocking, in his own experience. It is not wise to forgo these precious moments and turn once again to the humdrum of life, without pursuing the inquiry to which one is prompted.

The disciple must have the yearning

But, man forgets: he ignores. He mistakes the unreal to be the real. He is deceived by appearance; he does not peer behind the veil. He misleads himself and others. He takes sunna as venna, (slaked lime as butter), since both are white; but, what a difference in quality and effect? The baby sucks its thumb and derives immense satisfaction and joy therefrom; we know that it has no taste, no sweetness. But, the baby weeps when the thumb is pulled out. The sweetness in the thumb was imposed on it, by the baby itself. So too, the happiness that one derives from the world is not the nature of the world;

it is subjective; it is only the projection, upon the world, of the happiness the Atma (the self) is capable of deriving, of which it is the source and goal. The baby imagines the thumb to be an external object which is providing it with pleasure; but, it is only itself.

The Guru warns and wakens. He reveals the truth and encourages you to progress towards it. Unless, you have the yearning, the questioning heart, the seeking intelligence, he cannot do much. The hungry can be fed; he who has no hunger will discard food as an infliction. The Guru is a gardener, who will tend the plant; but, the sapling must have sprouted before he can take charge. He does not add anything new to the plant; he only helps it to grow according to its own destiny, quicker perhaps, more fully perhaps, but, not against its inner nature. He removes poverty by pointing to the treasure that lies buried in the very habitation of man; he advises the method of recovering it, the vigilance needed to use it to the best advantage, etc.

Money has a fascinating influence

There was a man once who was afflicted with extreme miserliness. He never parted with cash, on any pretext. But, when his father died, he had to get his scalp shaved, in order to satisfy the requirements of the Shastras (scriptures) and public opinion. The barber demanded an impossible sum; the miser higgled quite a lot and the fellow's rate was brought down to one paisa. The miser did not clinch the bargain at that price; he bargained still and asked that he should shave two heads for one paisa! The barber agreed, for, he guessed that since the dead man had only one son, there was no second candidate for the razor. But, the miser after the barber had finished with him, called out his wife and insisted that she too must be shaved, before payment could be made! Money has such a fascinating influence on some foolish individuals. One has to practise detachment at every step, or else, greed and miserliness will overpower the finer natures of man. That nature is Divine, because, God is the very substance of which man is but a name and form. To realise it, one has to possess and develop the discrimination between the unchanging and the changing, the permanent and the temporary. Sadhana-Chatushtaya:Nithyanithya Viveka i.e., knowing that the Universe is constantly

subject to change and modification and that Brahman alone is unmodified; Iha amuthra-phala-bhoga-viraga - detachment from the pleasures of this world as well as the pleasures obtainable in Heaven after attaining the conviction that they are evanescent and fraught with grief; Sama damadi-shatkasampaththi - attaining the six desirable qualifications' the control of external and internal senses and sensory promptings: fortitude in the midst of grief and pain, of joy and victory; uparathi - withdrawal from all activity that brings about consequences that bind; shraddha - firm faith in the Teacher and the Texts that he expounds; samadhanam - even contemplation on the basic Brahman, without being disturbed by other waves of thought. Though milk is under formation throughout the body of the cow, you have to resort to the four teats, in order to get it; so also these four sadhanas or teats have to be pressed (into service) if spiritual knowledge is to be gained.

Reform your habits to win Lord's Grace

This world is 'unreal', in the sense that a dream is unreal. You sleep in the verandah of the Mandhir (temple) here and you dream you are in Kasi, bathing in the Ganga. You feel the cool comfort, the holy satisfaction. It is very real at the time. But, when did you actually go? And how did you transport yourself? The Jnani (the liberated person), from his more genuine awareness, asks the same question about the experiences of your waking state! Here, I must tell you one thing. Which dreams are real? Dreams relating to God are real. You see Me in the dream, I allow you to do Namaskaam (prostration), I bless you, I grant Grace...that is true; that is due to My will and your sadhana (spiritual practice). If the Lord or your Guru appears in dream, it must be the result of sankalpa (His will), not due to any of the other reasons which cause dreams. It can never happen as result of your wish. Above all, try to win Grace by reforming your habits, reducing your desires, and refining your higher nature. One step makes the next one easier; that is the excellence of the spiritual journey. At each step, your strength and confidence increase and you get bigger and bigger instalments of Grace. There was a wicked man once who heard quite by chance a religious discourse which affected him much. He went to a great sage and offered himself as his disciple. He asked him how he spent his days. The reply was, "I

gamble by day and break into houses for theft at night. I revel in falsehood, both day and night." The sage said, "I shall accept you as my disciple, provided you give up one of these three; you must make some sacrifice, to deserve this favour". The man pondered for some little time: "I cannot give up gambling, I find it so exciting; I cannot give up house-breaking, for, that is the only means of earning livelihood that I know; well I shall give up telling lies." So, he gave word that he will no longer utter lies and was accepted. The Sage was glad that he had fallen into the trap; now he could not escape.

'Thief' appointed Minister for speaking truth

That night the man decided to break into the palace itself. He dodged the guards and climbed up to the terrace and was stealthily creeping along the wall on the edge, when some one accosted him, with the question, "Who goes there?" He spoke the truth, "I am a thief; who are you?" The man who accosted him was the King himself; he had come out on the terrace, for the breeze was pleasant there. He replied, "I am also thief". So, they decided on joint efforts, dividing the spoils half and half. The thief proposed that they break into the palace treasury; the new companion said he knew where the keys were; so, he escaped into the darkness and brought the keys. They both got into the treasury and divided the loot half and half. But, they found there three big diamonds, big and beautiful. The King took one, the thief another and the third was left where it was, with mutual consent, for as the thief said, "Let the unfortunate King who has lost his all have at least this one gem as a consolation." Then, they parted, but, not before the thief replied to a question from the King. "Where do you live?" The thief, who had given up lying, had to give his correct address and he did. The next morning, news spread that the treasury had been burgled and the King deputed his Chief Minister to proceed to the treasury and take stock. He went and saw the things lying helter-skelter amidst open boxes and safes. He found one big fine diamond, which had evidently escaped the eyes of the miscreants. He pocketed the precious gem and after a few minutes spent there, he came to the Royal presence and described the scene and the loss. The King asked that the thieves known to the police be brought before him, including one whose address he himself gave. They were brought, but the King interrogated the one whom he had

indicated specially. He revealed that he and 'another' who had already broken into the palace had shared the loot half and half from the treasury the previous night. The King asked him about the diamonds. He said that one of the three was left behind; they took only one each. He was pledged to speak the truth. The king knew that the Minister must have appropriated the third and so, he ordered a search of the minister in open court. Needless to say, it was retrieved from his pocket and the Minister was revealed as an unreliable fellow. The King, thereupon, dismissed him on the spot and appointed the 'thief as the Minister, instead.

The Guru should guide the disciple

Now that he was Minister, the thief gave up stealing, for, there was enough and more, so far as means of livelihood were concerned. There was no time to gamble either. He became famous as an upright efficient Minister. The Guru was drawn by stories of his efficiency to visit the city and, when the Minister saw him, he fell at his feet in gratitude for the way in which he had reformed him.

That is how the first step works. It makes further steps possible with much less effort. The Guru must persuade you to take that first step, by describing the shame of standing still or going back and by pointing out the pleasures of the journey and the magnificence of the goal. Not all Gurus now enjoying that status are capable of this. The disciples rule them and guide them, rather than their guiding the disciples. There was a shepherd boy, who was elevated to the position of a Guru; he uttered two sounds, always the two, Thurrrr thurrr and Thak thak thak. The disciples discovered meanings in those sounds and saved the reputation of the guru. They said that the guru was declaring that a life spent in material pursuits is just thurrrr, and days spent in vain pastimes without seva (service) of the Lord are to be condemned as thak thak thak! If the guru bends and yields to the whims and fancies of the disciples and is afraid to lose their loyalty or is anxious to win it, then, he is the servant of the disciple, not his master! The disciple must learn to follow the commands of the guru; that is the best way to benefit by his wisdom. I command you on this Guru Pournima to do geetha sadhana; that is enough to

grant you liberation. Many people ask Me, "Swami! Give me a Namam (name of God) which I can repeat." Take any Namam you like, any name which appeals to you. All His Names are equally sweet. It is only a crooked intellect that will discover difference between one Name and another. There is an American lady here who is keen on liberation. The nationality does not matter at all. All belong to the State of God.

Perfect freedom is not given to any man on earth.
Lesser the number of wants, the greater is the freedom.
Hence perfect freedom is absolute desirelessness.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

36. How far is God?

Date: 19 August 1965 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam / Occasion: Krishna Jayanthi

It is really unfortunate that the Ashtami and Navamithithis (the eighth and ninth days of the lunar fortnight), are held inauspicious in popular belief; for, the facts are quite contrary. Both these days mark the auspicious arrival of an Avathar of God, the advent of the Formless, Nameless, Timeless, Locationless Absolute as the Formful, Named, Living, Particular. Shri Krishna was born on the eighth day, and Shri Rama on the ninth day of the white half of the lunar fortnight. Ignoring the sacredness of these days and imagining them to be fraught with unpredictable dangers, if new enterprises are started on those days, is sheer perversity, indeed. God takes human form when the Godliness that is inherent in man is submerged, when the moral code and the spiritual discipline that have been prescribed by the experience of godly seekers are neglected, when man slides into beast from which he rose and becomes a terror to brother man. Krishna is a Yogeeshwara (Lord of the Yogis), unattached to the fruits of His labour; God appeared as Krishna to charm humanity by His pranks, His play, His song and sweetness, and to instruct man by His teaching and Grace. He was born on this Janmashtami Day in the prison where His 'parents' were incarcerated by the very evil forces He had come to exterminate. Shri Rama came to lead man into Dharma, and so, He had to be the very embodiment of right, justice and integrity. He taught the Dharma that should guide the lives of the son, the brother, the friend, the ruler, the husband. The stars under which these two Incarnations of God descended on the earth are also significant. When Avathars come, they choose the time and place, clan and the family, and they decide and bring the comrades and the co-workers. When Vishnu incarnated as Rama, Sesa, Shankha, Chakra (the thousand-headed serpent forming the couch of Vishnu, His conch and discus) and other inseparable adjuncts of the Lord also incarnated; the Devas (celestials) also came down, in order to taste the sweetness of the Lord's company and service. Rohini, the star under which Krishna was born, is related to the attainment of yogic success and the powers that flow from it. Punarvasu, the star under which Rama was born, has a mysterious influence on the authority which accepts all who submit, the

Sharanagatha-thrana (protector of those who take refuge in Him) aspect of Rama's glory.

Do not ascribe evil to any day or star

What man has to do on these auspicious days is to dwell on the elevating thoughts centering round the two Avathars and take the first or further steps in sadhana. Use these days as starting points for propitiating the Form of Godhead which you have chosen for offering homage, the Form which appeals to your innermost yearnings. Do not ascribe evil to any day or star. Every day is good when you spend it for God. Every star is good, provided its light guides your feet to God. This is my advice to you, this day. Men are eager to get happiness and when there is a prospect of earning undiminishable happiness, they jump at the idea; but, they are soon tired of the effort. They seek shortcuts, lean on others to carry their weight, and aspire for much fruit in return for little cultivation. But, rigorous discipline and steady faith are absolutely necessary for success in the spiritual struggle. Mere listening to discourses or even delivering discourses will not be of any use. To have that discipline, one has to control the senses which drag the mind towards the pleasurable attractions of the external world; to have the steady faith, one must control the wayward mind, that paints attractive pictures in false colours to lure you on from birth to birth.

God pays heed to devotee's cry

Provided your intellect is sharp and free from prejudices and predilections, the Reality will reveal itself to you in a flash, for it is quite a simple thing. Only, it must be capable of seeing the problem in its basic essence, apart from all the jumble of irrelevancies. Once a very learned Pandit was holding forth in a very pedantic manner the story of Gajendramoksha (liberation of Elephant King) from the Bhagavatha, before the Maharaja in his Durbar Hall, before a large gathering of courtiers. He described how the Lord, on hearing the agonised call for succour from the elephant held by the jaws of the monstrous crocodile, hurried from Heaven (Vaikuntha) without stopping even to collect His insignia and weapons, without even intimating to His consort

whither He was bound and on what mission. Suddenly the Maharaja interrupted him with the question, "Tell me, Pandit, how far is this Vaikuntha?" The learned Pandit did not know the distance; he was nonplussed. Nor did any of the other scholars in the palace know the answer.

But, the servant, who was fanning the King from behind the throne, offered to furnish the answer, if his impertinence was pardoned. The Pandit was shocked at his effrontery, but the Maharaja allowed him to speak. "Your Majesty! Vaikuntha is as far as the cry of the elephant could be heard", he said. Yes; when the anguish of a devotee's heart is expressed as a cry or a groan or a sigh, the Lord is as far only as that sound could reach; He rushes to the rescue. His ear is always on the alert to listen to the cry of His children. His residence, Vaikuntha, is within hearing distance of every cry, from every grief-stricken heart. That illiterate servant knew in a flash the Omnipresence and the compassion of the Lord.

Mahabharatha war is happening within every one

The Lord is devoid of attachment or hatred. He comes on a Mission and is bent only on that task. It is His nature to support the right and admonish the wrong. His task is to restore vision to man, to turn his footsteps along the path of morality and self-control, so that he may achieve Selfknowledge. He is Himself the supreme example of the teachings of the Geetha. He reveals Himself in the Geetha; the Geetha is the one text wherefrom you can get a complete picture of the nature and characteristics of Avathars. He acts as friend, companion, charioteer, teacher, guide and guardian of His devotees. The Mahabharatha War is not a chapter in ancient history; it is taking place in every human breast, between the forces of good and evil. He who recognises the value of installing the Lord, the Yogeeshwara Krishna, as the Charioteer, is certain to win; others fail to foil the forces of evil; they succumb and fall. Accept Him as your Master; surrender all activities to Him; dedicate your words and deeds and thoughts to Him, as flowers at His Feet; He assures you, 'Mokshayishyami' - I shall liberate you; He assuages you, 'Ma suchah' - Do not grieve.

Devotees who loved Krishna's company

Arjuna was a qualified candidate for being told the highest truth. He had discrimination, renunciation and the aspiration to know. He was aware all the time of the glory that was Krishna; he had implicit faith in Krishna's wisdom, power and grace. He belongs to the category of priyanamra sakha - a loved and humble friend. Bheeshma, Uddhava, Bheema, Dhroupadhi - all belong to this category of devotees. Uddhava was such a close friend that Krishna gave him advance information of the destruction and disappearance of the Yadavas. Bheeshma knew that Krishna was the Lord Incarnate; he asserted this in the Kaurava court on many a crucial occasion, and he was happy that he got a vision of Krishna in his last moments. Then there are some who are priya-sakhas (loved friends), with whom Krishna played and joked and kept joyful company. Others were delighted with His darshan, sparshan and sambhashana (sight, touch and conversation) and sought to be in His presence as long as possible. Such were the cowherd boys. They are friends. Then, we have a group of suhrids or senior comrades, well-wishers and companions, who had a parental affection towards Him, anxious about Him and His circumstances, happy when they can fondle Him or serve Him or make Him glad. The Gopees, however, are a class of devotees by themselves. They reached the highest peak of devotion. They had no consciousness of anything other than the Lord; they had renounced the consciousness of the senses and the body. They were attached only to the Principle of Krishna that was resident in that body. They were eager to know the "other", not to experience "this". When King Pareekshith asked Sage Shuka, who was relating to him the wonderful tale of the Gopees and their love towards Krishna, about the nature of that love, Shuka replied that since they had no body-consciousness they were always immersed in God-consciousness only; therefore there was no touch of the gross or material or physical in their love towards the Lord. It is the identification with the body and the slavery to the senses that it breeds that cause all the cruelty, injustice and violence that stalk the world. There was a court clown once who was discovered by the king searching for some lost thing on the top terrace of the palace. The king asked him what he was looking for; he replied that a camel had broken loose and it might have climbed up the steps, on to the terrace; so, he had ascended the

steps to verify. The king laughed at his absurd surmise, but, the clown said, "If you, with all that hump of pride and crookedness of belief, can reach Heaven as you believe you can, a camel too could reach the terrace, climbing up the five stairs." The Gopees knew the secret of spiritual surrender. Their worship was not tainted by any bargaining spirit. For those who bargain and crave for profit, reverence is equated with the returns; they sell homage at so much per unit of satisfactory response. They are like paid servants, clamouring for wages, overtime allowance, bonus, etc. They calculate how much they are able to extract for the service rendered. Be, on the other hand, a member of the family, a kinsman, a friend. Feel that you are the Lord's own. Then, the work will not tire; it will be done much better; it will yield more satisfaction; and, the wages? The master will maintain you in bliss. What more can any one aspire for? Leave the rest to Him; He knows best; He is All; the joy of having Him is enough reward. This is the secret of human happiness. Live out your lives on these lines and you will never come to grief. Na me bhakthah pranashyathi, says Krishna - "My devotees never suffer sorrow".

37. Where the mind ends

Date: **September 1965** / Location: **Prasanthi Nilayam** / Occasion: **Dasara**

This Prasanthi Nilayam is the Nilayam of Nithya Shanthi - of the peace that cannot be disturbed - because it is based on deep discrimination and on unshakable renunciation of attachment to sense objects (vishaya vasana). To be here on this sacred day is indeed a great piece of good fortune. Thousands of aspirants and seekers have assembled here and those who have come into this auspicious company have to make the best use of the chance. Instead of celebrating this Dasara Festival in feasting and catering to the frailties of the senses, I am happy you have determined to spend it in holy thoughts. The Dasara Festival honours the victory of the devas over the asuras - the forces of righteousness over the forces of evil. They were able to win, because Parashakthi (the Dynamic Aspect of Divinity) the Power that has elaborated God into all this variety and all this beauty - came to succour them and fight on their behalf. This country also had to meet the invasion by unrighteous forces and the same Parashakthi has saved it from loss and dishonour. Therefore, we are celebrating this Festival with added significance. Holy company such as this helps to arouse the desire to know oneself, to know the true nature of the world around us and to know how best we can discover and experience the Unity of both, expressed in the Vedhic dictum (Mahavakya), Thath-thwam-asi, "That-thou-art". It is through the subtle influence of the company into which they were inducted that Narada, the son of a maid, was transformed into the foremost practitioner and exponent of Bhakthi-marga; that Valmeeki, a highway robber, was transmuted into a great sage, the first and foremost among poets; that many sinners were shown the path of repentance and redemption.

India is destined to be a huge Prasanthi Nilayam

Bharath has been built on the foundation of Dharma (righteousness), laid down by sages like Narada and Valmeeki, teaching the people that one should not enthuse over victory or droop over defeat, that both are to be welcomed as tests of one's faith in God. This is a land where faith in God is

imbibed at the mother's breast by every child since millennia,, and, so, it will never give way to despair and grief. It will rely on the Lord within and discover inexhaustible reinforcements of courage within each heart. The final victory is for those who have faith in the invincible Atman, Reality. Such men will have no hate in their hearts; they will only be sad that others are greedy and envious and their prayers will be for the granting of wisdom, humility and love to their opponents: "O God, grant them sad-buddhi, discrimination, the power of cool, calm judgement." All sons and daughters of India pray, since Vedhic times, "Lokassamasthah sukhinoBhavanthu" - "May all the denizens of all the worlds be happy." That is why India has been the Teacher, the Guide, for all humanity. That is why she has survived the onslaughts of alien cultures and is ready even today to take up that role. As a matter of fact, India is destined to be, India has all the qualifications to be, a huge Prasanthi Nilayam, from which the message ofPrasanthi (tranquillity) will radiate over the whole world.

Desire ceases when God seizes the mind

But, first, each one of you must make your own heart a Prasanthi Nilayam. The transformation must begin from this very moment. Analyse your words, deeds, and thoughts and get rid of the evil ones that harm you and others; then, cultivate instead the sahana (fortitude), shanthi (firm peace), sathya (speaking only the truth), etc. Now, the mind flutters about and squats on all and sundry objects in the Universe. It refuses to stay only on one idea, God. Like the fly that sits on fair and foul, but denies itself the pleasure of sitting on a hot cinder, the mind too flees from all thought of God. The fly will be destroyed, if it sits on fire; the mind too is destroyed, when it dwells on God, for, the mind is but a pattern of desire woven with the warp and woof of the same material. When Rama enters the mind, kama has no place therein. Desire ceases, when God seizes the mind. In fact, since desire is the very stuff of which the mind is made, it becomes nonexistent and you are free. This stage is called, mano-nigraha, mano-laya or mano-nashana - the death of the mind, the merging of the mind or the killing of the mind. Now I am about to hoist the Prasanthi Flag and I want you to hoist it on your own hearts, at the same time. It is the symbol of spiritual discipline and success. It is

delineated here, in front of this Nilayam, in this Circle. Some of you might have summed that it is here, as a decoration. No; that is not My intention. Everything I do serves two purposes; it must be charming and it must be educative, elevating. It must convey some meaning to those who seek. This Nilayam has no wall around it, since like the heart, it is an expanse; but, it has three gates; the outermost one, representing Thamas (through which people enter with waywardness, doubt, despondency, etc.); the second one, representing Rajas (crossing this, men are attracted by Drsyananda, Nethrananda and Mano-ananda, (the sights that please the eye and the mind), and the third one, leading to the Prayer Hall where people develop the rarer, purer qualities called Sathwik. This circle summarises the progress of the aspirant towards realisation, from the dreary sands of desire, through the wild hushy patches of anger and hate, on to the green lawn ofprema (love); gaining the broad region of ananda (bliss) he sits in yogic contemplation, and the Kundalini shakthi (dormant spiritual power in man) is awakened, until the lotus of the Heart blooms and supreme Flame is kindled, scattering darkness of ajnana (ignorance). Like the pictures in children's books, the circle, with the concrete representation of the symbol on the flag, will serve to remind you and teach you the lesson I am emphasising. The Maharani of Cutch, who is to preside over the Hospital Day this evening, was very much agitated whether she could come in time, on account of the disturbed conditions on the border with Pakistan, or whether Dasara itself will be cancelled by Me, as so many have done in Mysore and elsewhere. But, in spite of all obstacles, the fighting has stopped and news has come that peace is restored. This is another instance of the Grace which Prasanthi Nilayam showers. This is the way Mahima (Divine Glory) works.

38. Well or ill

Date: **September 1965** / Location: **Prasanthi Nilayam** / Occasion: **Dasara**

The Arogyanilayam (hospital), whose anniversary we are celebrating today, is superfluous if the Anandanilayam (the abode of bliss) is efficiently utilised by you, for when the mind is immersed in Ananda, the body will not suffer from illness. The body is the vehicle which you have to use for attaining the state of bliss and so, it has to be kept safe and strong for that high purpose. It is an instrument for spiritual effort, which has been earned by the merit of previous births. Every moment, it is proceeding towards dissolution and so time should not be wasted in vain pursuits. It is even better to think of the body as mean and low, rather than raise it to the level of the be-all and end-all of life. Treat it as a wound, which has to be covered by bandage (clothes), treated with drugs (food) and washed (drink); you can get rid of this inordinate attachment, only by that method. You can get real urge and inspiration to serve others only when you get rid of the identification with the body. When a man suffers from acute stomach pain, his eyes water. Why? Because, the various organs - eye, stomach, etc. - are all of the same body. So too, when one man suffers, your eyes must shed tears and you must be urged to alleviate it. This will happen if you know that you and he are limbs of the self-same Divine Body. The idea of difference (bheda bhava), arises on account of the ignorance of the Truth. When people get angry, they gnash their teeth, but, they take care not to bite the tongue, for the tongue is theirs; if by chance, the tongue is bit, they do not knock the teeth out, for the teeth is theirs. So too, the sick man, the poor man, the suffering man, the illiterate man, the wicked man, are all limbs of the same body, of which we too are parts. The same current activates all. To realise this and to merge in that Unity is the purpose of this life in the human body.

The hall-mark of devotion

For this consummation, the seeds of vishaya vasana (attachment to sense-objects) have to be scrupulously got rid of. A field may look barren and dead; but the first shower of rain will convert it into a green carpet; the seeds of

grass in the soil sprout at the touch of dampness. So too, at the first contact with temptation, the vishaya vasana of people sprouts and prevents the growth of spiritual discipline. To visualise the Lord as resident in all and as responsible for everything (for He is the Director of the Play) is the hall-mark of devotion. There was once a devotee who arranged in his house a week-long Parayana (reading with explanatory elaboration) of the Bhagavad Geetha. Every one thanked him for this signal service and complimented him on his devotion. On the second day, a cow died in his shed; he stopped the discourse, because he felt that the cow died as a consequence of the novel programme he had arranged. Now, what relation can there be between the death of the cow and the devotion of the man? The devotee must be free from worldly desire, from anxiety to preserve cattle and wealth, through his devotion. It is surrender to the Will of God, acceptance of whatever happens, in spite of the fullest utilisation of the faculties man is endowed with.

A devotee who was worshipping the Lord in the form of Shiva, and another, who was revering the Vishnu form met once and entered into conversation. The Vishnubhaktha moaned that those who worshipped Vishnu lost their properties, money, cattle, lands and houses for some unknown reason, through mysterious ways; but, he said, the Shivabhakthas were adding to their wealth, their cattle multiplied, their lands developed fast. The Shivabhaktha moaned that Shiva was not granting that same boon to His devotees! Those who lose their properties will be free from the bother of kinsmen, they can rush to God for succour, unhampered; they have no burden to bear.

Do not reduce spiritual effort to empty routine

When a man dies, if he dies indigent, no one would claim kinship with him. But, if he leaves behind some property, many will fight over his corpse for the privilege of performing the last rites. The giver of the boon knows its use and its benefits. You are not to judge it, for, yours is the short term view. He knows the past, the present and the future. Spiritual practice must be done sincerely, with a full sense of responsibility. It must not be reduced to mere empty routine. There was a Brahmin once who returned from overseas after a

few years spent there in studies; his father had insisted that he should repeat the holy Gayathrimanthra 108 times, both morning and evening, every day, as he used to do before emplaning for the West. But, now that spiritual effort had become a hollow ritual for him; his vision got blurred, his skills had increased. So just to satisfy his old father, he repeated the Gayathri once and said ditto, ditto, ditto, a hundred and seven times, thereafter! You cannot save yourself by tricks; spiritual effort is a hard process.

Janaka's dream that led to his illumination

Reality can be grasped in a flash of illumination, as happened to Emperor Janaka. One evening, Janaka was in his Durbar Hall, surrounded by his courtiers and a bevy of female musicians; they sang sweet melodies and the Emperor enjoyed the music so well he slept off, while on the throne. No one had the temerity to awaken him', they all quietly slipped into the inner apartments, lest their talk and movements should disturb him. He was left alone with an attendant and the queen. At about midnight, he screamed pitiably and awoke at the sound. His queen ran towards him; the Emperor asked her, "Is that real? Or is this real?" She could not find an answer to this question, for how could she know which was 'that' and which was 'this'? The Emperor asked every one the same question; in fact, he spoke no other word. That question was continuously on his lips. News spread that Janaka had gone mad; there was mourning everywhere. A sage who heard of this came to the palace and was brought to the Imperial Presence. He assured Janaka that he will answer his question provided he told him what he saw in his dream, while sleeping on the throne and why he screamed so. Janaka had a dream. He dreamt that rival kings joined forces and invaded his dominion and captured his capital and that to save himself from them he ran into a forest. Fleeing from his foes, he had no food for days together. He was too exhausted to move. But, hunger dragged him on. When he came to the outskirts of a tribal village, he saw a man washing his plate after taking food; he shouted to him asking for a few particles. The man gave him a small morsel, but, as bad luck would have it, a crow flew in at that moment and snatched it away! That was the reason why he screamed in agony.

That was why he asked, "Is that real? Or, is this real?" The hunger was as real as the throne; ruling over the Empire is as real as the loss of empire was, in the dream. The sage told him, "That is unreal; this too is unreal. That was a swapna (dream-state) this is jagrath (wakingstate) - both are mithya (illusory); not false, because they are relatively real, though not absolutely real; they have temporary reality, a reality that is negated by subsequent investigation and experience. But, you dreamed, you woke, you screamed, you asked; therefore, you existed during both stages; so you alone are real. The 'I' that persists in all the three stages - waking, dream, deep sleep - that 'I' is the only reality: it is the 'I' that appears as all this manifested Universe."

The sadhana that will reveal the Reality

In the sathya, there is no mithya; but, in the mithya jagath (illusive world) you have to search for sathya (truth) and experience it. You can do it if you rid your mind of all modifications and modulations. Let it be transformed from its present complex confusion into something like the sky, which does not bear any mark though millions of birds fly through it and thousands of planes move across it. Be unaffected, untouched, unattached. That is the spiritual discipline which will reveal the Reality, and which will ensure both physical and mental equanimity. When I heard the Report that was read now, I was not happy. It said that last year, the number of out-patients treated was 22,000 but, this year it had increased to 23,000. Illnesses are caused not so much by the food people eat or the conditions in which they live, but by mental weakness and mental attitudes, prejudices and predilections. Desires, disappointments, despair - -these also cause diseases. For many illnesses, filling the mind with the thought of God is the curative drug. For the rest, regimented diet, sleep, pastimes and activities are effective cures. The Shastras (scriptures) taught this regimen and the proper mental attitudes and their teachings are invaluable at the present time.

Welcome inspiration from any quarter

Give the body the attention it deserves, but not more. Some people advise that you should cultivate disgust towards it; but, that is not beneficial. Tend it

as an instrument, use it as a boat, as a raft. Disgust is not a desirable attitude towards anything in creation. Everything is God's handiwork, an example of His Glory, His Majesty. Consider the crow, for example. You dislike its cawing but, what does its cry "Kav, Kav!" mean? Kav in Telugu, means "Save, protect". It is reminding you to pray to God. It is praying so, itself, all the while. What a great lesson it teaches!

You know the Ramayana story, of the crow that teased Seetha, that drew upon itself the ire of Rama, that flew in terror all round the world to escape His arrow, that finally fell before both Rama and Seetha in total surrender (Kav, Kav); it was saved thereby. The story says that its eye was damaged by the anger of Rama, but it was granted enough compensation. They both, Rama and Seetha, fondled it and blessed it, pardoning it for its impudence. The cow too when it voices forth "Amba! Amba!" is calling on the Mother, the Jagadamba - the Mother of the Universe as well as its own Mother. Welcome inspiration from any quarter, for your own improvement.

When you cultivate the attitude that you are the body, the body will demand from you more food, more variety in food, more attention to appearance and physical comfort. A large portion of the food now consumed is superfluous; man can live healthily on much less. A good deal of effort and expenditure now spent to cater to taste and to social pomp can be given up, and health too will improve thereby. "Mitha thindi, athi hayi" - "Moderate food gives excellent health". Gourmets only reveal their Thamoguna (quality of inertia and indolence). Eat to live; do not believe that you live in order to eat.

Methods of avoiding illness

Another method of avoiding illness is to diminish mental worry. Now, I find people are increasing their worries, and getting anxious about things that they do not understand; nor can they correct them or reform them. The radio, the newspaper and other means of communication or information cause so much fear and discontent, that worry and anxiety are increased and the mind of man gets weakened. Parents talk about their anxiety before their children and so, they start worrying.

There was a six-year old boy who came to Me the other day, weeping, because his father was involved in debt and was being pestered by his creditors. His father must have lamented before the boy, "Poor fellow! How am I to feed you and clothe you and pay your fees and buy books for you? I am sunk in debt". The boy said that even in the class room, he was worried about the father and his debts. You must not allow the boys to know about all this; their tender minds will be harmed by fear and anxiety. Their health also will be affected. Fear is the biggest cause for illness. When you have slight temperature, you start imagining that it is the beginning of some serious fever. You say to yourself someone whom you knew had also a slight increase of temperature, which later became serious and led to complications and so, you become more prone to illness than formerly. Think rather of the instances where fever was prevented or overcome; think of the Grace of the Lord that restores and saves. Resolve that relying on His Grace, you shall be free from illness from this moment. Transfer the faith that you have in drugs to God; put your trust, not in medicine, but in Madhava. I am astounded at the number of people resorting to tablets and tonics. Resort to prayer, to sadhana, japam and dhyanam. They are the vitamins you need; they will restore you. No tablet is as efficacious as Ramnam. I shall give you Vibhuthi (sacred ash) and that will cure you. Now, you are in two minds, like the man who had to leave his shoes outside the temple. He stood before the shrine with folded hands, muttering a sthuthra, but his mind was filled with anxiety about the safety of the shoes he had to place outside. The hospital is for those who have faith in drugs and doctors. But, what can drugs and doctors do without the Grace of God? The day will surely come when the hospital will be superfluous, since all will be healthy and free from illness, accepting the Sadhana way, the Ananda way, to peace and happiness.

Love as thought is Truth,
Love as action is Righteous Conduct,
Love as feeling is Peace,
Love as understanding is Non-violence.
Love is selflessness,

Selfishness is Lovelessness.
Love gives and forgives,
selfishness gets and forgets.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

39. Vitamin G

Date: **September 1965** / Location: **Prasanthi Nilayam** / Occasion: **Dasara**

In the Sharannavarathri Festival, we have here Vedaparayana, yajna and recitation of manthras and sthothras. Like radio waves, these carry to all quarters the prayers and praise they contain. Just as a yantra (instrument) is needed to listen to the omnipresent radio programmes, a mantra is needed to communicate with the higher regions and their denizens. This journey of the word and the voice are far more subtle and significant than the journeys to the moon or around the world in space. Man must understand that the journey to his own inner realm and the discovery of its treasures are far more important than these engineering feats. That inner journey spreads love; this outer journey infects continents with fear. Man is now mistaking his illness and running after wrong drugs. Or rather, he is mistaking the very nature of his health. He is quite well but he is deluded into the belief that he is unwell and that he must quickly acquire the panacea recommended by the most readily available quack, who flatters you by giving you just the drug that you desire most. Discovering that there is nothing the matter with one, is the illumination one gets, with the dawn of spiritual knowledge. Just as there are four stages in the life of everyone - boyhood, youth, middle age and old age - there are four stages in his acquisition of jnana (knowledge of Supreme Being), contemporaneous with these stages. Jnana is the ripeness of the fruit; which is the consummation of a long process, from the first appearance of the flower in the tree. The first stage is the apprentice stage: being trained by parents, teachers, elders; being led, guided, regulated, warned, reprimanded. The second stage is the junior craftsman stage: eager to establish happiness and justice in society, eager to know the world and its worth and values. The third is the craftsman stage: pouring out energies to reform, reconstruct, remake the human community. The fourth stage is the master stage' realisation that the world is beyond redemption by human effort, that one can at best save oneself by trying to reform the world, that it is all His Will, His Handiwork, His World, Himself.

Let the sense of equality feed all your activity

Along with this dawn of jnana, there must also dawn the will to direct all activity in the light of that vision. When you realise that He is the innermost Reality of all, you can worship one another, with as much fervour as you now employ when you worship an idol. But, since the worship of an idol is more feasible, this is recommended; but the attitude must be that He who is in the idol is also equally found in all. Have the sense of equality feeding all your activity, but do not make all your acts equal with all, and for all. A razor cannot be used for shaving a pencil or a beard or a wooden plank, without distinction. But a beggar who begs for alms, a King who prays for victory, are both beggars at the footstool of God. In order to test whether the King had a correct sense of spiritual values, once both Bharthrhari and Gopichand went to the Court and sent word that they were badly in need of bread. The King was delighted that these great men had come to his capital city. He sent a sizeable quantity of bread; but, when it was handed over to them they fell to fighting for shares. This was reported to the King and he declared immediately that the visiting monks could not be Bharthrhari and Gopichand. They would have no trace of greed or envy, he said. So the saints knew that the King was wise.

Minimum qualification for God's Grace

Reading that Krishna advises in the Geetha the giving up of all Dharmas, an enthusiastic devotee gave up all obligations and limits, but he had to be told that one obligation still remained and could not be given up, if the Grace of God had to be secured: mam ekam sharanam vraja "Surrender to Me only". When that surrender is complete and all acts, words and thoughts are dedicated to Him, along with all their consequences, then, the Lord has promised that He will free you from sin and sorrow. The Ashrama Dharma, the Varna Dharma and the various KulaDharmas (dharma of ascetics, social groups and families) and Deshacharas (customs and laws of the land) - are all means and methods of fostering this attitude of dedication and surrender. Just as you prescribe minimum qualifications for every profession, the minimum qualification for Grace is surrender of egoism, control over senses and regulated Ahara and vihara (food and recreation). A man is made or

marred by the company he keeps. A bad fellow who falls into good company is able to shed his evil quickly and shine forth in virtue. A good man falling into evil company is overcome by the subtle influence and he slides down into evil. The lesser is overpowered by the greater. A drop of sour curd transforms milk, curdling it and separating the butter, turns it into whey. Sacred books are also equally valuable for this transmuting process, but they have to be read and pondered upon and their lessons have to be put into daily practice. The Gayathri is the Vedhic Manthra whispered in the ear during the ceremony of initiation into spiritual life. The Gayathri is a prayer to the Supreme Intelligence that is immanent in the Universe to kindle the intelligence of the supplicant. It is a prayer that can well be spoken with yearning by men and women of all creeds and climes in all centuries. But, some people condemn it as meaningless jumble of words, and, though initiated, they neglect it. Repetition of this manthra will develop the intelligence.

Illness is caused more by malnutrition of mind

When the mind of man is unattached to the ups and downs of life, but is able to maintain equanimity under all circumstances, then even physical health can be assured. The mental firmament must be like the sky, which bears no mark of the passage through it of birds or planes or clouds. Illness is caused more by malnutrition of the mind than of the body. Doctors speak of vitamin deficiency; I will call it the deficiency of Vitamin G, and I will recommend the repetition of the Name of God, with accompanying contemplation of the glory and grace of God. That is the Vitamin G. That is the medicine; regulated life and habits are two-thirds of the treatment, while the medicine is just one-third only. Man must reveal the divine qualities of love, humility, detachment and contentment. If he does not, he becomes worse than a beast and more deadly. There was a dog that pleaded with Rama for a place in the aerial car in which he returned to Ayodhya. When Rama asked the reason for this strange behaviour and request, it said that man had become worse than worms and fleas; he had started tormenting dogs, who were loyally serving him! One should so live that no pain is caused to other being through one's activities. And, one should be ever grateful for kindness received. Karthaveerya was treated with lavish hospitality by Sage Jamadagni but the

wicked man coveted the Kaamadhenu (wish-fulfilling cow) that made the lavishness possible. Bharthrihari, on the death of the queen, was so struck with remorse, that he wept and moaned on the cremation ground itself for days on end. Seeing his inconsolable plight, one sage came before him, with a mud pot in his hand. Right in front of the bereaved man, the pot slipped from his hand, fell on the hard ground and was broken. The sage wept and moaned and was inconsolable. Bharthrihari consoled him and said the broken pot cannot be made whole by any amount of lamentation. Suddenly, he realised the absurdity of his own behaviour and stopped crying; this was the purpose of the sage's ruse! You come to Puttaparthi, listen to these discourses, nod approval and clap hands, in appreciation. But, when you pass through the gate on the way home, it all evaporates. Or, you apply the lessons you learn in an indiscriminate way and suffer. There was a merchant who used to attend discourses and when he heard a speaker say that cows should not be driven off while they are feeding, he looked on when a cow entered his shop and ate of a good portion of the grains he had kept for sale. Later, he was told that he should not take every bit of advice he received as valid for all occasions; and he advised his son, "Look here, you sit on the floor on a towel while listening to the discourse, is it not? When the discourse is over and you rise up, do you not wave the towel forcibly in the wind to shake off all the sand it collected? Shake off from your mind and brain all the ideas and advice you have collected during the discourse and then come home." If you do as that merchant advised, what is the benefit of coming and staying, hearing and being exhorted?

40. Right and left

Date: **September 1965** / Location: **Prasanthi Nilayam** / Occasion: **Dasara**

The Vedas and the Shastras provide illumination to guide the steps of man but, to the blind, it is always dark, however bright the illumination; for those who have lost faith, faltering along, stumbling and falling is the only course: The Shastras and the Vedas point out the means of securing the secret of lasting joy; but, man is attempting to earn shadowy joys, fleeting pleasures, pleasures fraught with evil and harm. He is trying to draw water with a pot full of holes. The senses leak out the joy he draws. They are wild untutored servants who dictate to their master, the mind.

The mind has to be brought under your grip; then, the servants will fawn at your feet. The mind is the monarch; the senses or indriyas are the soldiers; the soldiers are now ruling the king, because he lends his ears to them and not to buddhi (intellect), who is the Prime Minister. Let buddhi take charge; in a moment, the senses will be forced back into camp and the mind can save itself. The Atma is the Sun in the firmament of the Heart. Now, the light of the Sun is obstructed by the thick clouds of vishaya-vasana (desire for sense objects and objective pleasure); let the strong wind of paschath-thapa (repentance and resolution) scatter the clouds, so that the Atma may shine forth brilliantly. Man thinks he is enjoying the pleasures; but really speaking, it is the pleasures that are enjoying man, for, they sap his energies, dry up his discrimination, eat up his allotted years, and worm into his mind, infesting it with egoism, envy, malice, hate, greed and lust. You should not plunge into action spurred by momentary impulse; ponder deeply over the pros and cons; weigh the expected benefits against the likely harm; then act so that you escape pain and you do not inflict pain. This is true in worldly matters as well as in the spiritual field. A woman heard some one expounding Thath-thwam-asi (That thou art); she took it immediately to head and behaved as if she had no need to eat and drink and be in society and family thereafter. The truth of Thath-thwam-asi must lead to Bhava Adwaitam (nonduality of self), not Karma Adwaitam (duality of action), for, when you come down into the field of karma, duality is inevitable.

Truth behind two aspects of God

Saguna and Nirguna (with Form and Formless) aspects of God create the same doubt in the minds of sadhak, whether they can both be true. It is like hardened ghee and liquid ghee. Ice and water are the same; water takes the form of the vessel which contains it. It is formless. But, yet, there is no distinction between ice and water. In sadhana, the saguna worship and the nirguna meditation are like the right and left feet for the journey. During the saguna worship, the basic nirguna aspect of God has to be sustaining the mind; no description can exhaust the Glory, no word can approximate the Majesty. During the nirguna meditation, the faith that God does not diminish His Glory or Majesty by being with Form, attributes and name must be the sustaining force. The final step, however, must be the right foot, considered auspicious, the nirguna step.

The jeeva (individual soul) is destined to lose its separate Name and Form and merge in the formless and the nameless. All must find their ultimate destiny in the nirguna. But, there are some who say that since the jeeva is caught up in birth and death, it can never attain the merger with the Eternal; it has to be eternally separate and distinct. The jeeva is born in sin, immersed in sin, revelling in sin and so it can at best be granted only admission to the presence of the Lord. A person who held this opinion once went to a village and gave a discourse on the impossibility of man attaining merger with the Absolute and the Universal. One adwaithin (non-dualist) who was in the audience got up and said, this declaration is being made by even the most illiterate ryot here; why, our washerman will make it. He called the washerman in and asked him "Who are you, tell me, truly." The fellow got frightened at this sudden invitation to announce his nature. He said, "I am a low mean sinner." Turning to the Pandit on the platform, the adwaithin said, "If you can tell us something more than what this washerman can tell us, then, speak on." Man must strive to break the bonds, to cleanse the sin, to regain lost glory, to attain to the highest majesty. That is the goal worth striving for, with all the equipment he is provided with.

Remove the weeds in the garden of your heart

The Vedas and Shastras have been teaching one thing; but those who claim to revere them are practising another thing. Listening to the teacher at a Vedhic school was one boy, among the many, in the class; he was watching a rat making its way into a hole in the wall opposite. Suddenly the teacher turned towards him and asked, "Has it gone in?", meaning, "Has this point entered your brain?" The boy answered, "The tail is still outside the hole", taking the question to be about the rat which he was watching! That is the condition of Hindus today: listening to Vedas and watching the vanities of the world, the petty problems and personalities that strut on the world stage for a moment and disappear. The Shastras lay down steps in sadhana, so that man can have peace, contentment and joy. Get acquainted with them, through these Pandits who have dedicated their scholarship and their experience for your benefit. The very first step is to remove the weeds in the garden of your heart, plucking by the roots the briar and bush of lust and greed, of hate and pride and plant in the ground thus cleared the fragrant flower plants of prema (love) and the sweet fruit trees of dharma (virtue).

God is Truth,
Truth is Goodness,
Goodness is beauty.
Truth, Goodness, Beauty,
Sathyam, Shivam, Sundaram
is yourself.
Be yourself.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

41. Silence and solitude

Date: **September 1965** / Location: **Prasanthi Nilayam** / Occasion: **Dasara**

Man is journeying through the stream of life from one act to another; it is one continuous activity, marked by karma throughout. But the pity is he does not know the correct technique of karma. The fruit depends upon the seed, the soil, the manure, the care, the fence. The fruit of karma has to take account of the tendencies and consequences of the activities in previous lives also. The potter takes clay and makes pots and pans; they are mnmaya - of the earth, earthy. The potter, Brahma, makes men; they are chinmaya - of the nature of Ananda, Sath and Chith - absolute bliss, existence, consciousness. Note the difference and shape your activity accordingly. Act in accordance with what you profess to be; that is the real Dharma. There was a consummate actor who went to the Darbar of a king, in the role of a monk. The king honoured him as a great monk and asked him various questions on sadhana and philosophy, which he answered using profound vocabulary and appropriate terms. The king was very pleased and he ordered his Minister to bring a plate of gold coins as offerings to the saint. The monk spurned the gift. He said that as a Sarvasanga parithyagi - one who has renounced all attachment and desire - he cannot even glance at it and left. The next day, the same actor came to the palace as a female artiste, a great dancer. Her dance was the most attractive exposition of the art, very orthodox and restrained. The king appreciated it highly and the Minister brought, forth the plateful of gold coins. The dancer refused to accept it, because it was too small a recompense for the skill exhibited! The king suspected from the voice that it was the Sanyasin of the day previous that was standing before him as the female artiste. Finding that his surmise was correct, he asked him why he was asking for more today, when he had refused to take the same gift the previous day. The actor replied, "Yesterday, I was a Sanyasin and so, it was my dharma to refuse; today, I am a dancer and so it is my dharma to earn as much remuneration as I can from my fans".

Practise meditation in silence and solitude

Man's dharma is to cultivate his faculties for the great adventure of realising his oneness with the basic substance of the Universe, a substance that is attributeless, but, yet is mistaken to have attributes like names and forms and functions. This is declared in the Mahavakyas (Vedhic Dicta) enshrined in the Vedas and elaborated in the Upanishads. To get the mind and the intelligence fixed in that oneness, man must meditate on them in silence and solitude, under the guidance of a Guru. If the teacher himself gives the answers for the questions he asks, how can the pupil progress? If the pupil is left to himself, he would be helpless. If he is asked to scribble whatever he can, he can only doodle. So, the teacher has to hold his hand and train him in the movements. The skill of the hand and brain have thus to be reinforced by the guiding hand of the Guru. The pupil has to cultivate concentration. When attention flows in all directions, no progress can be made. A good teacher must love the pupil and lead him, step by step. Practising meditation in silence and solitude, one can in due course establish silence and solitude in the heart, even in the busiest thoroughfares. Now, the puja room or domestic shrines are invariably found next to the kitchen; there, the smells of cooking attack the nostrils, the sounds of frying and boiling attack the ear, the mind is distracted by voices and noises. How can concentration grow in such an atmosphere? Silence has to be started with oneself; that is to say, one must talk less, and think more deliberately, more discriminatingly. One must try to empty the mind of impulses and prejudices and preferences. Thus, man must strive to reach down to his real nature or dharma, which is Divine, Dharmaswaruupa (righteousness personified).

One need not take to asceticism

This sahaja-swabhava (innate nature) is to be found in children; at that stage man is untouched by the pulls and stresses of the senses. So, he revels in his own reality, that is, in joy, in shanthi and in prema. Make that stage steady, so that you may lead a dharmic life. That is the swadharma of Man. This, dharma saves those who rely on it. That is why the Pakistan conflict ended, on the 22nd itself. This Navarathri is the festival when the Mother, Durga, who defeated and destroyed the evil forces is propitiated and pleased; so, it was not cancelled here, as some people, who did not know that the

conflict would end soon, did. To discover one's reality and to dwell in that Divine peace, one need not give up the world and take to asceticism. There was a guru who advised one seeker to go to the forests and live there. "Go," he said. "How can you have peace in the market-square?" To another seeker, he said, "Stay where you are". The two seekers, later met and compared notes. "How is it that he gave such contradictory advice? Perhaps, we did not hear him correctly", they said and returned to him; but, he said, that his advice was based on the attainments of each of them and what was best for each.

Detachment is the crucial gain; one cultivates it either in the jungle or at home. When Shivaji came to the presence of Saint Tukaram and brought with him a decorated palanquin to take him with him to his capital city, Tukaram was rendered sad. "Why have you brought this stretcher? Which corpse are these men to bear?" he queried, in derision! Tukaram knew the dharma that a recluse should follow; he knew the dangers of yielding to the temptation for pomp.

A devotee is more than an emperor

There is no one higher than a bhaktha whose mind is fixed in the Truth. He is more than an emperor. So far as I am concerned, I give consideration to the bhaktha. Still, you may wonder why some are being given special seats and places here. You have heard the adage, "Yatharaja, thatha praja" - "As the king, so are the subjects". The rulers have to be brought here, so that they may see and hear, and know about things that matter, get inspired by the bhakthi that fills the air, so that through them it may be shared by the country at large. The laws they pass, and the administrative system that they operate are some of the means by which the ideals of the nation can be worked in practice. They have been selected by you for this purpose, with this end in view; they have your confidence and they have won the approbation of thousands of people and so they have to be treated with some consideration. Those thousands look upon them with some respect, and so, treating them with care is tantamount to treating those thousands with care. It is to give ananda to the bhakthas that I arrange this festival; I have no other wish. Do

not muddy the pellucid waters of your faith by the slightest trace of doubt.

42. Pay the price

Date: 30 September 1965 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam / Occasion: Dasara

Man's mind is so peculiarly constituted that he puts faith in newspapers and bazar rumours, but refuses to believe that Sri Krishna taught the Geetha to Arjuna or that Vyasa composed the Bhagavatha. This is because the newspaper caters to his senses, to his craze for sensationalism and curiosity about other men and their affairs. Man's sense of values is so degraded that he does not revere the Geetha, as much as he values and scans the pages of the daily newspaper. This is to be attributed to sheer ignorance and perversity, or pitiable fate. People lend their ears and mortgage their brains to wicked and vicious men, revelling in sin. They get the admirers they deserve, the following that fouls the air as much as they. The fear and anxiety that infect humanity today are the results of this degradation of values, this ignorance of what is of significance and what is not, this want of faith in what the elders and sages have handed down as the wisdom of ages. People prefer what is pleasing to what is beneficial. The patient is dictating to the doctor and insisting on the medicine he likes to swallow, the regimen he feels will keep him happy. Persons who do not know a single thing about the higher values raise silly questions and doubts; you, who have inherited the greatest philosophical texts and the most useful texts on spiritual discipline, hesitate to place them before those doubters; you do not know what they contain, nor have you practised them and experienced their efficacy. There are people now who claim to be Indians, but who do not know who Rama is, who refer to his queen as Mrs. Rama since they do not know her name. Such men may have as many degrees as I have hairs on my head, but, they are unworthy to be called the children of this land. What if a person rolls in wealth, goes about in cars, and lives in a multistoreyed mansion? Of what avail is your filling yourself with information regarding film-stars and prize-fighters? As Ramana Maharishi used to tell every one who went to him, "Know who you are". When asked, "Who are you?" you invariably give the name that some one fixed on you as a label. But, who are you, really? Have you tried to know that correctly and well?

Get something divine if you want the Divine

It is the running after vishaya vasana - attachment to sense objects - that produces all this discontent. That vasana, that type of desire, has no end. Once you become a slave to the senses, they will not leave hold of you until your death. It is an unquenchable thirst. But I call you to Me and even grant worldly boom, so that you may turn Godward. No Avathara has done like this before, going among the people, the masses, the millions, and counselling them, guiding them, consoling them, uplifting them, directing them along the path of Sathya, Dharma, Shanthi and Prema. You must have wondered way I have prohibited you from bringing flowers and fruits and other offerings; you argue that the Geetha requires that you must bring at least these when you come to the Lord; that when going to the presence of elders and saints, one should not go empty handed.

Here, in this Prasanthi Nilayam, pathram, pushpam, phalam and thoyam (leaf, flower, fruit and water) - all the four should not be brought by devotees. Of course, I accept your offerings, but I take another four: Sathya, Dharma, Shanthi and Prema (Truth, Virtue, Peace and Love). Bring me these or any one of these and I shall most gladly accept the gift. When you demand a thing, you must be prepared to pay the price, the price equal to its value. You cannot bargain a costly Benares sari for one paisa. Give something divine if you want the Divine. Prema, Shanthi, Dharma and Sathya are Divine. Do not try to get it for a flower that fades, a fruit that rots, a leaf that dries, water that evaporates. There are some who write and speak as if they have known Me, all that is to be known of Me. Well; I can only say this' they can never know Me and My nature, even if they are born and reborn a thousand times. To know Me one has to be like Me, rise to this height. Can ants discover the depth of the Ocean?

God can be won over only by Prema

My activities and movements will never be altered, whoever may pass whatever opinion on them. Meanness may prompt people to remark on My Dress, this gown of colour, or they may talk cynically of My Hair, but I shall

not be affected a bit. My discourses, My plans for Dharmasthapana (establishment of Dharma), My movements, I shall not modify at all. I have stuck to this determination, since 26 years, and I am engaged in the task for which I have come, to inculcate the path of Prasanthi. I shall not stop, nor retract a step. Does a person become holier by wearing rags? Of course, this calumny by mean men who cannot endure the brilliance of the Sun has been with Me in all the Yugas. A fellow, puffed up with pride and envy, dressed himself like Krishna and fixed wooden hands holding Gadha and Chakra; he had the foolish bravado of challenging Krishna and finally he paid for this impertinence pretty heavily! How can darkness conquer or stand up to light? Krishna is Premaswaruupa and He can be won over only by Prema. Audacity cannot approach Him. Actors in films, however correct their accoutrements and intonation, can never be the Real. Not even the biggest scientist can understand Me by means of the categories to which he is accustomed. I always smile at those who deride Me, and even those who praise Me. I am always full of happiness, whatever may happen. Nothing can come in the way of My Smile. Derision and calumny only tend to make it grow better and happier.

Do not undermine the faith of others

That is why I am able to impart joy to you and make your burden lighter. The sambhashana (conversation) with God is said to result in sankata-vimochanam (liberation from the grip of grief). Consider the relief that you experience after conversation with Me and dwell upon that joy. That is enough to give you peace. It is because I am eager to give you that Joy that, for a tenday festival like this, I myself move about so much and look into every detail of the programmes, the arrangements for your stay, etc. Not that there is no one who would do this gladly and well. But, watch Me now, I appear as if I am not worried at all, I am without arty care. I appear as if responsibility sits very light on Me or not at all. The Lord is like the Lotus, unaffected by the environment where He is; that is the reason why His Eyes, His Face, His Feet, are all compared to the Lotus. Do not discard the one Form and one Name - the Form and Name you have selected - when some one's tongue wags. Hold fast; and save yourselves. Do not compare and cavil at

others Ishtadevathas (chosen deities). It is wrong to undermine the faith of another, and to disturb your own. Faith is a plant of slow growth; its roots go deep into the heart. Silence is the best sadhana, to guard faith; that is why I insist on silence here also, as a first step in sadhana for you.

I am telling you all this, not to inform you about Me, but to strengthen you and render your faith firm.

Establish the status
of the mother in the home,
as the upholder of spiritual ideals,
and, therefore,
the Guru of the children.
Every mother
must share in this effort -
the expansion and
steady manifestations of the
God-Consciousness
latent in every child.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

43. Discover and decide

Date: **October 1965** / Location: **Prasanthi Nilayam** / Occasion: **Dasara**

In spite of warnings, admonitions, advice and appeals that he should not submerge himself in the trivial and the transitory, man is still drawn towards misery by defects in his understanding. All the scriptures that are revered in all lands and climes proclaim that love alone prevails, detachment alone is the lasting wealth, unity alone is the truth, God alone is the goal. But, in spite of all the reverence and study that these scriptures have received and are receiving, hatred and greed are in the ascendant everywhere; factions and fights are rampant in every human community; and God is discarded as superfluous or as superstition! Just as when a petromax light gets dull, it helps to brighten it when air is pumped vigorously, so too, it is now time to invigorate the higher impulses of man, so that he can be saved from calamity. Man has to be liberated from the bonds he has woven round himself. The scriptures are the records of the thoughts and experiences of pure, unprejudiced, love-filled seekers of truth; but men do not believe them: they put their trust in the wayward vicious whims of vainglorious individuals. Of course, each one gets the guide he deserves. And, the lamentable plight of the world today is proof of its having been led astray by its blind guides. The patient is clamouring for the medicines that he can relish, not for the medicine that can cure him according to doctors who are experts. The patient chooses the diet and the regimen which are congenial to him; he bids adieu to the directions given by the doctor, for, they restrict and regulate. The patient has his own categories of judgement, his own doubts and hesitations, created by his own fears and foolishness. He does not accept the conclusions of those who know, for, he is afflicted with a perverted egoism.

Derive divine bliss by diving into the depths

Ice and water are but one in two names and forms; hard ghee and liquid ghee are one and the same; so too, the Nirguna (Formless) and the Saguna (with Form) aspects are both the same Godhead. But, yet, man uses this simple problem for perpetual argumentation and dispute. He talks of the

omnipresence of God, but disputes the value of image worship. Even about Me, there are some who have had a glimpse of the Truth; there are others who have not been able to achieve even that. But, My prema is showered equally on all; I do not reveal or refuse; it is for you to discover and decide, derive divine bliss by diving into the depths. How can an ant calculate the depth of the sea? How can a man on the ground describe the features of the pilot of a plane in the sky? Unless you rise to the heights, by following certain disciplines, you cannot experience Godhead. Once you do that, all judgements, all disputations and even sense of victory, disappear.

I know many are puzzled by my practice of listening to your 'korikas', (wants, wishes, desires), calling you individually and spending long hours with you to satisfy you and to speak to you on these 'earthly' demands. They say, no avathara has done this before; it is like catering to worldly things; people come with all kinds of worldly desires and every one is welcomed with sympathy and love. But, I alone know the basic thirst which expresses itself in these desires and wants, the fundamental discontent. It is always preferable to approach God for the fulfilment of wants, rather than cringe before men, who themselves are but tools in the hands of God. In his own silent way, God will transform the mind and turn it towards sadhana and successful spiritual pilgrimage. He cannot allow his children to lose their way and suffer in the jungle. When you approach God and seek his help and guidance, you have taken the first step to save yourself. You are then led to accept His will as your own. Thus, you achieve shanthi.

Come with hands that supplicate, not supply

You know there is a rule here that you should come with empty hands, without even the traditional offerings of pathram, pushpam, phalam, thoyam (leaf, flower, fruit and water). Come with clean hands, hands that supplicate, not supply; hands that proclaim that they have renounced attachment to riches; then, I fill them with Grace. I must say that I accept certain things before giving you that Grace: I demand and take sathya, dharma, shanthi and prema. I seek the gifts of truth, virtue, peace and love. I draw you to me and then re-form and re-shape you. I am a kind of smith who repairs broken, leaky

damaged hardware. I repair broken hearts and fragile minds, warped intellects, feeble resolutions and fading faith Do not be under the impression that all these people come to me seeking worldly favours or blessings for worldly advancement or fortunes. At least ninety among a hundred of them ask from me spiritual guidance only. They do not ask for worldly boons at all. They are eager to be directed along the path of japam, dhyanam, namasmarana or some such sadhana. They are full of prema for the Divine Principle and the Divine is full of prema towards them. It is a question of Prema responding to prema; Prema which is saturated with sathya, as Vivekananda was saturated with viveka.

Do not become a puppet in others' hands

No one has the authority to hate another or condemn him. You have the chance to love him and serve him; or, to keep yourself free from him; that is all. If you are attracted when people praise you or repelled when they defame you, you become a puppet in their hands. I have been steadily fixed on this line since twenty-six years and no amount of calumny or praise will swerve me from the path. I do not agree that torn clothes or shaven head or vows of diet or silence mark out superior claims for spiritual leadership. People may carp at silken gowns or a crown of hair, but I know why I have come and I will not yield. Approach me with prema and I shall reciprocate with prema. That has been my nature even in the past ages. In the Dhwapara age there was a vainglorious individual who set up as a 'double', with the same appurtenances and appearance as Krishna and challenged him with calumnies and scandals. But, can a film-star who plays the role ever become the original itself? Saruupyam and sayujyam (sameness of form and absorption into the diety) are won by love, devotion, faith, humility, wisdom. Rama is described as tenderer than the petal of a rose, but, at the same time, harder than diamond. He pined for Seetha with extreme tenderness; he sent her to the forest as an exile, with a hardness of heart that shocked even Lakshmana. The nature of every Avathara is such. Vasishta and others who were in great sorrow at the fate of Seetha thought of a stratagem to get her back to Ayodhya; they persuaded Rama to agree to the performance of an Ashwamedha sacrifice; the main performer of this yajna must have a legally

wedded wife as an active participant and sharer; otherwise, he cannot claim the right to perform the rite! So since Rama will never take another wife, they hoped Rama will recall Seetha so that he may perform the sacrifice, as agreed upon. But, Rama was too clever for them; he observed the Shastraic rule correctly, by making a golden image of Seetha and allowing it to take the place of the living wife, during the ceremony.

Win Lord's Grace through faith and devotion

Through a desire to judge or estimate or evaluate, you cannot discover the mystery of God; through devotion and faith, you have to win His Grace, which will reveal Him to your understanding and experience. Steady faith alone can earn victory. You cannot be changing your allegiance as and when you please. Hold fast until the realisation is awarded; when a man is suffering from the effects of cobra-bite, they give him chillies to chew; the idea is they will not taste "hot" if the poison is still in his system. So too, when the poison of worldly sensualism is there, worship, japam, dhyanam all will taste drab and dismal. People may laugh at you for going on pilgrimages or coming to Puttaparthi, especially if you are young and have no problems of illness or no crisis in fortune. They cannot appreciate the urge for liberation or for everlasting joy; they cannot sympathise with those who long to answer the call of the vast magnificence that surrounds them. They try to scotch the beginnings of spiritual yearning in children, not knowing that they will grow into a strong armour for them in future years. They are afraid their children may become monks in later life and leave their homes. So they try to plunge them deeper into pleasures, so that by developing their own type of madness they may be cured of divine madness! Above all, insist on the senses obeying you, when you command them to desist from dragging you. Or else, you are like a horse without a bit in the mouth, a car without a brake. With the senses under control, your intelligence will become clear to reflect the Glory of God that pervades the Universe. That is the teaching of the Vedas and of Vedantha.

A man or an institution
is to be judged by his its integrity,
whether acts are according to the principles professed
The mind, the body, the word -
all three must work in unison.
By such disciplined karma
the senses will be sublimated and Prasanthi won;
then, out of this Prasanthi will arise
prakanthi or the great light,
and from that will emerge
Param-jyothi, the supra-splendour of illumination.
That illumination will reveal
Param-atma, the Oversoul, the Universal.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

44. Sustained saadhana

Date: **October 1965** / Location: **Prasanthi Nilayam** / Occasion: **Dasara**

It is an ancient observation - but, it is true even today - that man spends his childhood in pranks and play, his boyhood in sport and games, his youth in pleasure and pastimes, his middle age in plans and schemes to pile up a fortune, and his old age in hospitals and nursing homes trying to bolster up failing health by means of failing wealth. He has no time for anything else; his hands are too full. Earning and spending, he fills his time with work and worry. He has no peace, no spare time for sitting quiet in one place. All appeals to him to pay attention to his essential needs for light and joy are in vain. Of what avail is illumination for a blind man.? Of what avail is good counsel for the man who has closed his ears for things that really matter? Man is busy with a number of attempts to earn happiness, but success is small and short-lived. He does not know the panacea for all his ills, the effort that will result in total victory: the control of mind, which is the master of the senses. Every sense is an outlet for the energy of man in a direction that binds him to the objective world. The senses are induced by the mind to move out and attach themselves to objects. Man must make the mind submit to viveka (wisdom), which discriminates between right and wrong and then, the mind will help him, instead of harming him.

Attachment is a disease

The body is the temple of God; He is resident in the heart; buddhi (intelligence) is the lamp lit in that altar; now, every gust of wind that blows through the windows of the senses affects the flame of the lamp and dulls its light, threatening even to put it out. So, close the windows; do not keep them open for dire attraction from objects. Keep buddhi sharp, so that it may cut the mind like a diamond and convert it into a blaze of light, instead of being a dull pebble. Discrimination, (Nithyanithyavasthu viveka), is an important instrument of spiritual progress. The reasoning faculty must be employed to distinguish between the limited and the unlimited, the temporary and the Eternal. That is its legitimate use. Shankaracharya names his work on the

principles of Adhwaitha as "Viveka-chudamani", for, he wanted to emphasise the value of Viveka for the realisation of the evanescence of life and the Oneness of the Universe. Attachment, affection, interest - these will create prejudice, partiality, illusion; they hide the Truth; they dull the intelligence. Raga is roga (attachment is a disease), so far as the enquirer is concerned. One does not become a yogi to have raga (affection); he must be free from favourites, fancies and fondness. Once you attach yourself to some person or habit or mannerism, it will be difficult for you to shake them off. Like the poor villager who jumped into the flood to salvage a bundle of rugs (really speaking, it was a bear being carried along by the raging waters), but found that the bundle caught hold of him so tight that he could not escape, man too jumps in, to retrieve what he considers a treasure, but is himself caught and bound. That is why the saints of this land have been teaching the people that they are children of immortality, repositories of peace and joy, of truth and justice, and masters of their senses. Of course, man can have some desires, some eagerness to achieve comfort, some attempt to earn content - but, it must be like the diseased man craving for medicine.

Hunger is the disease for which food is the medicine; thirst is the illness for which drink is the medicine. Food and drink, housing and clothing must be subsidiary to the needs of the spirit, the education of the emotions and passions and impulses. They must take the place that salt and pepper take on the dining table today; uppu must be subsidiary to pappu; that is, salt must be little and dhal must be more; you cannot have more salt than the quantity of dhal, not even as much. So too; efforts to achieve health, comfort, etc., must be just enough for the purpose of sustaining the sadhana, not more, not less.

Express purity in your activities

There are some who always condemn themselves and their lives and aspire for the Grace of God to save them. Jeeva and Deva are two separate entities and never can they merge or unite, they declare. The obvious is very often untrue. Sin is not the real nature of man; it is acquired and can be shed. Man is pure, good, loving, wise. That is why in the Nilayam, I have stopped people

from reciting shlokas which proclaim man as sinful, born in sin, revelling in sin, etc. Let the purity, which you are, get manifested; endeavour to express it in your activities; that is what pleases Me and wins My Grace.

You must expand your love to as wide a circle as possible. That is how kulabhimanam, mathabhimanam and deshabhimanam - affection for the community, the religion and the country - becomes desirable and commendable. If, instead of love, these create hatred of other communities, other religions and other countries, then, they become poisonous.

Pray for happiness of all mankind

Love your religion, so that you may practise it with greater faith; and, when each one practises his religion with faith, there can be no hatred in the world, for all religions are built on universal love. Love your country, so that it may become strong, happy and prosperous, an arena for the exercise of all the higher faculties of man. Feel that Delhi or Calcutta is as much a part of yourself as your own town or village; any pain in the toe is as much a matter of concern for you as a pain on the top of the head. Strive to make India strong and happy so that it may not be a drag on other countries, or even a temptation; she was once the Guru of Humanity. Let her assume that role again. Live therefore the life that will make you respected and revered as a child of Bharath, the life that will be an example and inspiration for all. Pray for even those who invade the land out of greed or hate; sympathise with their ignorance and pray that their steps may be directed towards truth, justice and love. Prayer has great efficacy. The Vedhic seers prayed for the peace and happiness of all mankind, of all animate and inanimate things. Cultivate that universal vision.

Prayer must emanate from heart, where God resides, and not from the head where doctrines and doubts clash.

- *Sri Sathya Sai Baba*

45. Every hair's end

Date: **October 1965** / Location: **Prasanthi Nilayam** / Occasion: **Dasara**

Namasmarana saved Prahladha from the agony of torture. He was a Rakshasa boy, but, somehow, he learnt the sacred name and knew how sweet it was. He repeated it and imbibed its nectarine taste. Even when the enraged elephant rushed towards him, he did not cry out, "O Father", or "O Mother", to persuade his physical parents to rescue him; he had no consciousness of their existence at all; he called on Narayana and no one else. Narayana is the source of strength for the weak and the strong; He is the supreme power; so, elephants turned back from the boy, fire could not singe his hair; wind could not lift him; precipices could not fell him; poison could not affect him. The Name was his armour, his shield, his breath, his life. Anjaneya too demonstrates the might of the Name. With the Name imprinted on his heart and rolling on his tongue, he leaped across the sea; temptations called on him to halt on the way; terrors pleaded with him to turn back; but the Name urged him on and carded him forward, through space, to distant Lanka where Seetha was. He had no space in his mind for anything other than the Name of his master.

If your thoughts centre round the body, you will have worries about pains and illnesses, real or imaginary; if they are centred on riches, you will be worried about profit and loss, tax and exemptions, investment and insolvency; if they roam round fame, then, you are bound to suffer from the ups and downs of scandal, calumny and jealousy. So, let them centre round the seat of power and love which deserve willing submission and let your whole being surrender to it. Then, you will be happy for ever. For the sages of the Vedhic culture, the rishis, the Name of the Lord was the very breath; they lived on the sustenance, which contemplation of the glory, inherent in it, provided.

Worship to fulfil desires tarnishes the heart

When the milk-ocean of the Vedas was churned with Intelligence as the rod and Devotion as the rope, the butter of the three great classics - the

Ramayana, the Mahabharatha, the SrimadBhagavatha emerged, for spreading the message of the Namasmarana way to peace and joy. It is to revive this message and to restore faith in the Name that this Avathara has come into the world, in the Kaliyuga. When worship is rendered with a view to fulfil desires and realise wishes, the precious prize will be lost. Worship must cleanse the heart, so that the indwelling God may shine in all His Glory; but desires tarnish, instead of cleansing. Invite a prince who is yet a child to sit on the throne; he will start weeping for, he cannot play on the throne with his toys and pets. The adult sneers at this fondness for toys; he calls it childishness. All those who keep away from the throne of the "sovereignty over themselves" and prefer to play with the toys and pets of material things and men are equally childish, whatever their age or status! Namasmarana is an instrument to realise the Lord. Thyagaraja started the Namajapa of Sri Rama in his twentieth year; he recited it ninety-six crores of times, and took twenty-one years and fifteen days for the vow to be finished. As a result, he had the darshana (vision) of Sri Rama, "the letters of the Name taken shape", he says. The Name signifies the quality of the Lord, His guna, and so constant contemplation arouses the same guna in the reciter.

Rub the Name vigorously and unintermittently

For Namasmarana, no expense is involved; no materials are needed; there is no special place or time to be provided. No qualification of scholarship or caste or sex has to be proved. When a bit of iron is rubbed to and fro on a slab of stone, heat is generated; only, the rubbing has to be vigorous and continuous. When you do so at intervals and with poor pressure, the iron will not get hot. So, too, in order to get sufficient heat to melt the soft heart of the Lord, rub the name Ram Ram Ram Ram vigorously and unintermittently. Then, the Lord will shower His Grace. If you devote but two minutes and a half in the morning and another two minutes and a half in the evening, the little heat will cool off twice a day and His heart will not melt. Gajendra called on Him from a forest lake; Vibheeshana called on Him from the enemy's camp; Droupadhi called on Him while herself unclean, but the Lord answered them nevertheless. He is the very embodiment of Prema. He can be won only through Love. Study the devotion of the Gopees; you will find it constituted

wholly of prema - prema that will pardon 'theft,' 'desertion' and downright rejection. They had no boons to ask from Him, no wish to utilise His Grace for fulfilment; they knew He was the Lord and they needed no other. They had no consciousness of the body or of the world. Their love had but one objective - the Lord in human form. Once Rukmini and Sathyabhama both were taken by surprise by the amount of Grace that Krishna bestowed on Droupadhi, the Queen of the Pandavas, whose story was one long series of humiliations and calamities. Krishna rescued her from dishonour and distress time after time; they were curious to know the nature of the devotion that could draw down on her the Grace of God in such a continuous stream. So, Krishna took them both with Him. One day, when He went to Indraprastha, Arjuna had gone hunting and Droupadhi was drying her hair after her bath. Krishna asked the queens to comb her hair for it had got into too much tangle, as they remarked. When they did so, they heard from the end of each hair the sound of Nama Japam (repetition of Lord's name), "Krishna, Krishna, Krishna" - that was the extent of her deep devotion to the Lord; it had impregnated into each single hair of her head.

Give the Lord the fruits of your own activities

Of Hanuman too it is said, "roma romamu Rama Namame" - every single hair recited "RamaNama". His tail was a formidable flail, for it was suffused with the might of the Name. He is also called Sundara, the charming, the beautiful. Why? Because, he had Rama installed in his heart; since the splendour of Rama reflected on his face, he was charming to behold. He was a charming companion because he spoke of Rama only, sang of Rama alone. I must now tell you something about Me, too, now. It is the custom when you approach the Lord to take something with you; this is an act which people do when they go for the fulfilment of some desire, the grant of Grace for the realisation of some wish. They take pathram, pushpam, phalam, thoyam (leaf, flower, fruit, water), as the Geetha says. The attitude is 'I am jeeva; He is Deva'. But, this is as bad a trick as some men do: they bring one cow when we ask them for milk, and milk another to give us the milk. They give the Lord the leaf, the flower and the fruit grown on some tree, and the reward of Grace goes to the tree, not to them. Give the leaf, the flower, the fruit that has grown on the

tree of your life; the fragrant leaves of your mental resolves and plans, the sweet juicy fruits of your own activities and thoughts. I know the relative value of these two; I require something that is your very own, not something bought in the bazar or grown on some other tree or produced by some one else's intelligence or devotion and steadiness. God has given you "the heart" to use in life; return it to Him as clean and as pure as when He gave it, after using it for storing prema, shanthi, dharma, and sathya, and for distributing them to all who come in contact with you.

Truth, Righteousness, Peace and Love -
these are the four pillars on which the mansion of happiness, here and hereafter, is built.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

46. Have no desh: seek no upadesh

Date: **October 1965** / Location: **Prasanthi Nilayam** / Occasion: **Dasara**

Ramakrishna Rao spoke of the work being done by the Prasanthi Vidwanmahasabha in propagating the teachings of the Vedas and Shastras among the people and arousing in them the Atma-consciousness, which is the greatest single factor enabling men to have courage and confidence in the midst of the travails of life. The discourses of the Pandits during the session of the Vidwanmahasabha are only reminders; they have to kindle the thought-process (vicharanashakthi), in the listeners; then only can they be considered beneficial. In fact, the truth regarding God, man, nature, etc., is so simple that a few minutes of quiet contemplation can reveal it to any one of ordinary intelligence. Everyone will admit that anything which undergoes change cannot be truth. Truth must remain as truth, in the past, present and future. Now the world and all objects of nature are constantly being subjected to change - building up or breaking down, evolving or mutating, flowing or festering, growing or dying. How then can it be true? The subjective feelings, attitudes, impulses, beliefs instincts, intuitions - these too are changing; they are pleasant one moment, unpleasant the next moment; the same thing is welcome at one time, repulsive at another time; malaria makes sweet things turn bitter; jaundice turns all things yellow. So, there must be something stable and permanent and eternal as the background, the base, the foundation, for this changing scene to appear on. Appearance is untrue; reality is eternal.

Have the thirst to know the Creator

Again, a few minutes of investigation will convince any one that he is not the body which he carries about with him, as the snail carries its home; he is not the eye or ear or tongue; he is not the mind or intelligence for, he refers to them as "my mind is not in it" etc., meaning that he is separate from his mind; "my intelligence failed me", meaning that he is different from his intelligence. He is a witness; it is the body that dies; he survives; he is reborn when he takes on a new body. Physical beauty is just a matter of health; a

couple of days of fever or purging makes an angel a scarecrow. Insanity pounces upon a genius some day and reduces his talk to unintelligent blabber. When the mind is deranged, the eyes see strange sights that are not there; the ears hear eerie noises that never were. It is only when man discovers the ultimate unchanging base that he can derive permanent peace; until then, he too will have to swing and sway in the changing world, between joy and grief. Like Vivekananda and Nagamahashaya, people must be urged by the thirst to know the Creator behind Creation, the person behind the puppets. Nagamahashaya started from the attitude of Dasoham (I am the servant), and he made himself so small by shrinking his individuality that he was able to wriggle out of the shackles of delusion and escape into the Universal Eternal Truth. Vivekananda, on the other hand, started from the attitude of Soham (I am He); he made himself so vast and grand, that he broke the shackles and merged with the Supreme Sovereign Truth. When you have earned that jnana of the identity of your reality with the reality behind the Universe, Maya (illusion) cannot affect you. The fly sits on all objects, fair and foul; but, it does not sit on fire, for, it will be scorched to death.

Man does not belong to anywhere except God

There are many who have stacked libraries in their brains; who have visited and venerated all the holy places between the Himalayas and the Cape; who have sat at the feet of every one of the contemporary sages and saints; who have performed all the rites prescribed in the sacred texts, but, who do not know the answer to the simple question: "How to bring about the union betweenjeeva and Brahmam, the individual and the Universal?" Or rather, they do not set about the practice of what they have heard or learnt. The erection of temples, the installation of images or idols, the pomp and show, fireworks and fanfare, processions and pedantries - these are helpless in the realm of jnana. When a seeker went to a Guru for some Upadesh (instruction), he inquired what he had read so far; when the man said, "I have read the Sundarakanda of the Ramayana, the Bhagavad Geetha, and the Yogavasishta", the Guru said, "Why then do you want upadesh from me? If Sri Krishna speaking through the Geetha has not succeeded in creating faith in you, what can poor I do?" and sent him off. When a man has known that he

has no desh (native land), why should he crave for upadesh? Man does not belong to anywhere except to God. That is the desh. Journey to His desh or his native land, is his mission in life. The best upadesh (spiritual instruction) is the Pranava, the sacred syllable OM, which summarises many principles of theology, philosophy and mysticism. Little children just learning to toddle about are given a three-wheeled contraption which they push forward, holding on to the cross-bar. The OM is such a 'vehicle' for the spiritual child. The three wheels are a, u and m, the three components of the manthra. OM is the primal sound inherent in the lifebreath. Every time we breathe, we say Soham; 'so' when we inhale and 'ham' when we exhale, meaning "He-I", instilling into ourselves the conviction that "He" who is all this external world, is "I" who is all this internal world, the conviction of Unity. During deep sleep, when the senses, the brain and the mind are dormant and defunctionalised, the "He" and the "I" are not cognised as separate; the So (He) and the ham (I) both fade and the sound Soham is transformed into OM, indicating the merger of the external with the internal into one Truth. OM has also many other significances and the meditation on the OM is a valuable sadhana for the seeker of reality. It is like the seven colours of the sun's ray merging into one colourless (white) brilliance.

Egoism breeds greed and hate

The ego is the enemy number one of spiritual progress. Egoism is the chief executive of the Kali Raja, the sovereign of the Kali (Iron) Age. It is the egoism and its attendant evils that stalk the world today. Egoism breeds the scourges of greed and hate. Even leaders of ascetic orders and heads of monastic institutions suffer from egoism and indulge in the pastime of competition and conflict with other orders and institutions. Some of them wear elaborate outward symbols of spiritual splendour, especially when the camera is aimed. There is a popular adage which says that a sadhaka must eat like a dog and wander about like a fox, meaning that he must be content with whatever he is able to get and rest wherever he can. Man is but an instrument in God's hands; his plans can win through only when they are in line with His. And, what are His plans? His commands? They are declared in the scriptures, which are revelations of His plan made to the purified intellects of saints.

They are also declared by His Avatharas, who appear in human form so that they may speak to men in their own language to win their confidence and lead them and teach them.

Be in the world, but lessen your attachment to it

Man has to become Divine, the Divine from which he has come. So, he has to lessen his attachment to the world, not by cutting himself off, but, by being in it as an instrument in His hands; by subduing all tendencies towards egoism that raise their heads in him; by single-minded attention to the dictates of God called Dharma. Edison the scientist concentrated so much on the solution of the problems that worried him that he left untouched for days together the food and drink that was pushed in through the doors of his laboratory. You must have the same concentration and shraddha, while engaged in sadhana. The best sadhana is to discover your Athmic reality and to recognise your kinship in the Athmic fold with all others. The body has to be kept trim until this is achieved; its purpose too is just this. Keep it light and bright. It is a boat which can take you across the sea of illusion, of false multiplicity. Don't add to its weight by attachment to things and others; then, it is in danger of sinking during the voyage.

Namasmarana is the most effective sadhana. Remember with each name the glory behind the name. Escape from the clutches of anger, jealousy, hatred, malice and greed. Do not seek to discover other's defects; do not gloat over them; when others point out your defects, be thankful; or keep quiet as Buddha did.

Treat both praise and blame with indifference

Now that I mentioned it, I shall explain that incident in some detail. Buddha was seated alone one day, and later, some men gathered around him. One among them who did not like his teachings and the effect they had on the people got up and started a tirade in very vulgar terms against him. Buddha sat smiling, listening to all that calumny, without a single gesture of disapproval. The man got frothy in the mouth through rage, his vocabulary

was fast getting exhausted, his tongue began to show signs of overwork, but Buddha only asked him with a smile "Brother, have you finished?" The man said, "You have no sense of shame; you do not show any trace of resentment." Then Buddha said, "If a kinsman comes to your door from a far distant place, and when you see him, if you so much as say, "Hello," he will enter in, deposit his things in the house, and stay on as your guest; but, if you do not notice him, if you ignore his arrival, he will return along the road that brought him and you are rid of him, isn't it? So, too I shall take no notice of this tirade; let it go the way it came". Praise and blame are but twists of verbiage, the magic of words in the clever hands of flatterers or traducers. Treat both with a grand indifference; then, your real worth will become patent.

Silence is the first step in Sadhana:
By loud talk you undermine your own
peace and disturb others.
Do not cause more noise than necessary.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

47. Effective armour

Date: **October 1965** / Location: **Prasanthi Nilayam** / Occasion: **Dasara**

A thing must have Form and Substance, both, in order to be genuine; an apple made out of plastic, however realistic and enticing by its correctness of Form, cannot be valued as genuine, for it has no substance. The swaruupa (form) must be saturated with the swabhava (its own quality) too. Fire is no genuine fire, if it does not burn; nor can water be called so, if it does not wet. It is a misnomer to name a person as man, if he does not evince the qualities of humanity. Such persons are cheats, for, by their appearance they induce others to believe that they are good, kind, honest and harmless; they draw others into their company and inflict untold injury, by their very nature.

The Governor was telling us in his speech just now that our country is faced with great dangers today and he exhorted you to use the time profitably, in productive pursuits. Make the country strong and great, he said. The dangers that face this country are part of the malady that affects all human values at the present time - the decline in humanity among men. While speaking about the impression produced in him when he went round the exhibition of pictures, drawings and photographs depicting the Message emanating from Prasanthi Nilayam, he emphasised the importance of your practising these great truths. That message makes men realise that they are inheritors of a precious mission - the mission to reveal themselves as immortals. It calls upon all to give up pettiness and paltriness and rise to the height of this great adventure. The petty cravings for wealth and fame multiply hate and envy; the paltry desire for sensual pleasure produces a harvest of factions. They reduce man to the level of beasts and even worse.

Dharma means certain obligations and duties

It is this pettiness and paltriness that promote internal factions in this country, even when the enemies are marching towards our boundaries. People affected by these are rendered blind to their own grandeur and their country's grandeur. "Dharmo rakshathi rakshithah" Dharma guards those

that guard dharma. Dharma means certain obligations and duties and regulations over actions, words and behaviour. Elders have certain obligations towards younger people as young men have towards elders; neighbours have mutual duties and rights. Even war has to be carried on, under some rules of decency and humanity. The mighty should not grab the possessions of the weak; the pledged word has to be honoured. If India sticks to these principles of dharma, the dharma alone will serve as effective armour against all the foes.

If mathi (intellect) is reformed, that is to say, if one's impulses are transmuted, then one's matha (religion) is praise-worthy. Otherwise, if one obeys the whims of an untutored mind, his religion is bound to be a source of evil. We have to pay attention to the plans that intelligence dictates, not the external signs of orthodoxy. A person may appear strictly orthodox, but his heart may be filled with the poison of hatred and envy. Has he realised that God is the God of all, that He is present in every being - Sahasraseersha-sahas-raksha-sahasrapad - (thousand-headed, thousand-eyed, thousand-legged), as He is? This Vedhic description means that God is Omnipresent, not that He has just a thousand heads only. In that case, He should have had two thousand eyes and two thousand legs, at the rate of two per head. The statement is not as mathematical as all that; it is intended to convey the truth of God being immanent and transcendent at the same time. God is the unseen ever-present immanent energy in all things; this has to be realised by every aspirant, or else, his aspiration can never be fulfilled. Reasoning by itself will lead one to this conclusion of the unity of all matter and of all energy.

Vedantha alone can assure peace and happiness

Today, the Governor is honouring some Pandits who are members of the Central Committee of the Prasanthi Vidwanmahasabha. That Sabha is engaged in spreading this teaching of the Vedantha in every village of this land; the Vedantha alone can assure shanthi and santhosha (peace and happiness) and as a consequence soubhagyam (plenty) to the millions of people who belong to India.

The Pandits have mastered the texts and are also striving to share the knowledge with their brothers and sisters. They will be thankful if you but listen to their exposition, and be glad and grateful that they are available with them. I know that they do not seek to be honoured, but I am asking the Governor to put on their hands these golden kankans, which are the traditional insignia of scholarship in this land. Recognition of their talents in this manner by the Head of this State is an encouragement to them, as well as to others who pursue Vedhic studies under very difficult conditions.

48. The Poet's role

Date: **October 1965** / Location: **Prasanthi Nilayam** / Occasion: **Dasara**

Today we heard these poets reading out and explaining their compositions to us; it is a profitable experience to listen to them, for the poet is able to discover more than the ordinary thinker. The poet is called in the scriptures, Kavi, a word which also means, Manthradrishta - he who is able to visualise essential spiritual formulae in his intuitive moments. The Bhagavad Geetha describes the Lord as Kavi. The kavi or poet is aware of the past, the present and the future (thri-kalajnani); he transcends time; he can dip into the past, roam in the present and peep into the future, for he has sharper vision than ordinary men. Hence he is called sarvajna, the all-knowing; krantha-darsi, he who sees the step which has to be taken next, he who is always in advance of current opinion or attitudes.

The Lord is the poet and His poem is all this. Poets share the divine quality of knowing and recognising the next step. The Lord as Kavi is also purana, (ancient, primeval). He is characterised also as anushasithara, the law-giver who lays down lines and limits. The responsibility of poets is very great, proportionate to the status given to them in the scriptures and in the Geetha. But instead of being sarvajna and purana and anushasithara, they are satisfied with a scrap of knowledge, a superficial polish and the convenient and profitable role of tamely following the whims of the people. The great poets of the past harped on the spiritual disciplines and the heights of spiritual realisation to which they led. They elevated and inspired spiritual adventure. Pichayya Shastri spoke in his poem on this aspect of Bharatheeya culture, this stream of spiritual aspiration that flows from the Vedas and the Upanishads, down the Puranas, the Bhagavatha, Ramayana and Mahabharatha, in order to fertilise the divine urge in man.

Eternal problems that arouse man's enthusiasm

It was mentioned by some speakers that the western scholars revealed the grandeur and glory of the Upanishads to us. I do not appreciate our relying on

scholars, however eminent, to explain to us the meaning and significance of our sacred scriptures; for, what can scholars know of the bliss of practising them? There is no use blaming the long years of rule by the West for the neglect of Sanathana Dharma, as some others do. We must accept responsibility for this ourselves. The rulers did not induce us to give up our dharma. We did it out of our own false sense of values, out of our own weak faith.

Poems that deal with the fundamental problems of life and death, truth and delusion, virtue and vice will last for centuries and will help man in all climes; for, they harness man and harass man at all times. Problems of exterior living change and get changed. So when poems deal with them, they are short lived. Prakrithi and Paramatma (creation and creator), are like the two halves of a bean; and seedling sprouts from between them. The problems of adjustment that man has to make, when he struggles with creation to discover the creator, are also eternal problems that arouse the enthusiasm of man. External nature can be inhibited, negated; it ceases at a certain stage of sadhana, though no one can say when it began. It has no basic reality, though it has validity up to a certain stage. So, it cannot be dismissed from attention; nor can it be accepted as eternally valid. So it is neither true (sathya) nor false (asathya); hence, it is called mithya, something that is partly true (sath) and partly false (asath).

Poets are the pioneers who mark out the road for human progress along the lines of love and unity - love which binds them with all creation and unity of all beings in God.

Poets must regain their own health

One pernicious disease has now begun to infect writers and poets in all countries - the disease which scorns all that is ancient and well-tested by time, which carps and criticises all that is revered by others. Flimsy foppery, fiery cynicism - these are held to be 'modern' and modish. That is the literary fashion now. But, it is doing great harm to the rising generation, for it perverts their tastes and degrades their ideals. He who adores the past is

considered a coward, who has no courage to chalk out a new path for himself; he who indulges in some new antic is acclaimed as a genius. He gets a whole host of imitators. He who throws mud on established beliefs is a hero; he who tries to support them is a poltroon. Poets must try to escape from this disease. They must regain their own health and give health-giving stuff to the people. They must not infect the people with their agitation and worry, their fears and doubts, their anxieties and superstitions. They must rid themselves of at least anger, for, writings steeped in anger are bound to be false and fear-creating. Vishwamithra was upset that, inspite of years of asceticism, his great rival, Vasishta, addressed him only as Rajarishi, and not by the coveted appellation, Brahmarishi; so, he crouched stealthily behind the seat of Vasishta one moonlight night, when he was teaching a group of disciples, determined to kill him with the sharp sword he had taken with him. He sat unseen amidst the bushes for a moment to listen to what Vasishta was telling them. What was his surprise when he heard Vasishta describing the charming moonlight and comparing it to the heart of Vishwamithra, cool, bright, curative, heavenly, universal, all-pleasing! The sword fell from his grasp. He ran forward and prostrating at the feet of his rival, he held the feet. Vasishta recognised Vishwamithra and accosting him, "O Brahmarishi, rise up", he lifted him on to his own seat.

A guide must free himself from hate and malice

Vasishta explained that he could not be styled Brahmarishi, so long as the ego persisted in him. When the swelling of the head disappeared and he fell at the feet of his rival, he became entitled for the honour he no longer coveted, and so deserved. He who aspires to be a guide of the people must first free himself of selfish propensities, of hate and malice. His words must be sweet to the ear and food to the spirit. They must be valued by all men as the panacea they need. If one is not capable of this high poetry, one must try to reach that height by purifying one's nature and clarifying one's outlook on this world and the next.

Do not contemplate on death; it is just an incident in life. Contemplate on God, who is the master of all life; beware of Him all through life.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

49. The lamp at the door

Date: 24 October 1965 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam / Occasion: Diwali

The human being is a composite of man and beast and God, and in the inevitable struggle among the three for ascendancy, you must ensure that God wins, suppressing the merely human and the lowly beast. This festival of Deepavali is to express gratitude at the defeat of the naraka (demonic) tendencies in man, which drag him down from Divinity. Naraka is the name for hell, and the asura whose death at the hands of Krishna is celebrated today is called Narakasura, the personification of all the traits of character that obstruct the upward impulses of man. He is said to be the son of Bhumi (the Earth) and he is also called Bhauma. This is very appropriate, for the earth and all attachments for things earthy lead us down into the regions of pain and grief. Earthly domain, earthly riches are powerless before spiritual domain over the senses, spiritual riches of self-knowledge and self-confidence. Man goes out into space with his rockets and space ships and sputniks, only to acquire superior striking power over his rivals on earth. Man must know the Universe as basically Brahman and so as fundamentally knowledge and love and peace. He and the Universe are one; they are subsumed in the same unique entity. The cosmic vision can be acquired either by watching the Universe or one's own inner Cosmos. Man has only to discover himself. In the citadel of the body, there is the lotus temple of the heart, with subtle akasha (space) within. In it are contained heaven and earth, fire and air, sun and moon, stars and planets - all that is in the visible world and all that sustains it and all into which it submerges. Instead of rotating round the earth in the higher realms of space and planning to land on the moon or Mars, if only man plans and prepares himself to travel into his own inner realm, what sublime joy and peace he can attain! His attainments at present in the vast silence of outer space are all prompted by fear and spread only further fear.

Occasions to be celebrated as festivals

Victory won through weapons and guarded by armour is not something to be

glad about; it is flimsy and fragile. It is fraught with danger and may topple at the lightest gust. But, victory won through love and sympathy transforms the defeated and makes him a willing collaborator for ever. Nara (man) falls into Nara-ka (hell), through over-indulgence in 'ca' or intelligence; 'ca' generally runs wild and like a raging flood, it spells destruction and grief. 'Ka' has to be subdued by humility and devotion, to the source of all intelligence, the Lord. What is a festive occasion? It is when great men are born or when wicked men end their careers of vice. Deepavali celebrates the death of Narakasura; and, how did he meet his end? He died at the hands of Krishna, with the Lord standing before his fading eyes. That is a consummation to be wished for. When virtues grow and vice is given up, man has to make it a festival. When your son evinces a desire to go to a temple or a math to worship or to offer homage to the Swami, do not scorch that tender shoot of devotion; do not tell him that there is time enough for devotion when he reaches old age; encourage him, be happy that you have such a son; celebrate the day. Teach him the value of prayer and contrition; or, learn from him the lesson of yearning for God.

Honesty is always the best policy

When young men realise that God is omnipresent and resident in one's own heart, then, they will certainly follow the Vedhic injunction, Sathyam Vadha, Dharmam Chara (speak truth, practise virtue). They will always speak the truth only; they will practise only moral justice. Some say that since this is Kali yuga, falsehood alone can succeed. But, in spite of all appearances, honesty is still the best policy. One lie has to be buttressed by a hundred others; whereas truth is the easiest, simplest and safest line of behaviour. Be what you profess to be; speak what you intend to do; utter what you have experienced; no more, no less. There was a thief once who broke into a house at night; the master of the house woke up when he heard some noise and when he shouted, "who is there?", the man thought of a ruse to escape his attention. He mewed like a cat, from the room where the iron safe was; the master said, "O, it is only a cat", and bolted that room from outside, shutting out all possibility of the thief escaping from the room into which he had gone! He heard the master tell his wife, "Let it be there the rest of the night. At

dawn we shall open the door and if it is a real cat, we shall let it go its way". A mew will not help, if it is not truly yours. It is a hard job to maintain a false stand and so, it is always safe to be straight and honest. Do not take the first false step and then be led, on and on, to perdition. Truth is one's real nature and when you are yourself, there comes a great flood of joy welling up within you. When you deny yourself and deceive yourself, shame darkens your mind and breeds fear. You take the path of falsehood because of the Rajasik passions of lust, greed, hate and pride. Contentment, humility, detachment - these keep you on the path of Truth. A street-hawker had on his head a basket full of empty bottles, as he walked along to the bazar. He hoped to sell the lot at a profit of ten rupees and, in ten days, he calculated his earnings would have accumulated to a hundred rupees. With that as capital, he planned to switch on to more profitable deals, so that he imagined he could make a pile of a lakh of rupees in a few months and build a bungalow with a lovely garden tended by a regiment of servants, beaming all round the house. There, he saw himself on a sofa in the greenery playing with his grandchildren. He was engrossed in that charming scene; suddenly he saw among his grandchildren, the children of one of the servants; he got angry at this unwanted intrusion. Believing his fantasy to be a reality, he suddenly grabbed the child and gave it a swift hefty push, only to find that the basket of bottles had fallen on the road and all hopes of even the ten rupees lost! That was the end of a dream built on the slender basis of greed.

Steady faith wins true wisdom

Truth will always triumph; do not doubt that in the least. There are two eight-lettered axioms in the Geetha, which support the Vedhic dictum: 'Sathyam eva jayathe na anrtham' (Truth only wins, not falsehood): They are, "Samshayatma vinashyathi" (He who doubts is destroyed), and "Shraddavan labhathe jnanam" (Steady faith wins true wisdom). If people are slaves of doubt, how can they save themselves? Believe that the Name is the Boat, which will take you over the sea of worldly life. The Name is more efficacious than the contemplation of the Form. Droupadhi did not send a chariot to bring Krishna to her rescue; she uttered the Name in her agony and Krishna responded, and saved her from imminent dishonour. In the Thretha yuga,

when the Ramayana story was gone through, Nala and his monkeys were building a bridge over the sea to Lanka; the boulders on which they inscribed the sacred name Rama, floated on the waters, but, they found that the boulders floated away due to wind and wave. They did not form a continuous bridge for the army to pass over. Some ingenious person gave a suggestion to write RAA on one boulder and MA on another and they found that the two stuck hard together. The name will serve as a float for you too; it will keep you attached to God and bring on you His Grace.

Spiritual renunciation gives strength and courage

With the Name as the very breath of your life, you can engage in all life's activities, with no fear of a fall. Meera quaffed the cup of poison with the Name on her tongue and it turned into nectar. Bharthrihari bewailed his lot, "Lord, these pleasures are eating me up; they don't allow me to be myself; no; I will liberate myself from their clutches. I shall take refuge in the undiminishable Bliss, the Reservoir of Joy, the Lord. I shall not crave for padartha (objects); I shall yearn for Parartha (the Highest Good)". Devotion and faith ensure the gift of knowledge of the Spirit - the great prize for the great adventure of birth, life and death. When the mind weds pravriti (worldly activity), the progeny is bondage; when it weds nivriti (spiritual renunciation), the progeny is freedom.

Nivriti confers fearlessness, even while you accept a little of it. It gives strength and courage, for, it is desire that weakens man and makes him cringe before those in authority and with influence. Detachment endows you with selfrespect, and the capacity to stand up to slander and calumny. There are some who weep at the slightest sign of defeat or disappointment. This is despicable behaviour. Why should you have fear or sorrow, with the Lord installed in the altar of your heart? Do you not know He is there, guarding you and guiding you? He is in all beings, at all times. Endeavour to remember this fact whatever you may be doing, whoever you may be contacting, in whatever manner. You will succeed in this, provided you do not give up the recitation of His Name.

The genuine Festival of Lamps

The griha (home) where the Name of the Lord is not heard is a guha (cave), and nothing more. As you enter it, as you leave it, while you are in it, perfume it, illumine it, purify it, with the Name. Light it as a lamp at dusk, welcome it at dawn, as you welcome the sun. That is the genuine Deepavali, the Festival of Lamps. The three basic beliefs of Sanathana Dharma are: (i) the inevitability of karma in life; (ii) the fact of re-birth and (iii) Divine Incarnations. If one has no faith in all these three, he cannot claim to be a Hindu; whoever believes in them can be reckoned as a Bharatheeya, child of Bharath. Mention was made of Krishna avathar and of the Kaliya episode. The inner meaning of that episode is this: The serpent Kaliya and its minions are the desires that lurk in the depths of the human heart; into that depth, the Lord jumps, or rather showers His Grace and so, the poison is expelled and the place made safe and pure. When Krishna dances on the hoods, the serpents are tamed and rendered harmless. Without the extinction of desire, man cannot become Divine. Of what avail is it to repeat Shivo ham, Shivo ham, when you have not endeavoured to equip yourself with the qualities of Shiva? Why assert that you are Shiva and draw blasphemy on your head? Do not get elated at the riches, status, authority, intelligence, etc., which you may have. Consider that they have been given to you on trust, so that you may benefit others. They are all signs of His Grace, opportunities of service, symbols of responsibility. Never seek to exult over others' faults; deal sympathetically with the errors and mistakes of others. Seek the good in others; hear only good tidings about them; do not give ear to scandal. On this Deepavali Day, resolve to light the lamp of Namasmara na and place it at your doorstep, the lips. Feed it with the oil of devotion; have steadiness as the wick. Let the lamp illumine every minute of your life. The splendour of the Name will drive away darkness from outside you as well as from inside you. You will spread joy and peace among all who come near you.

The absence of modesty
makes life for a woman,

however rich in other accomplishments,
a waste and vacuum.

Modesty lifts her to the
heights of sublime holiness.

The modesty of woman wields authority
in the home and outside,
in community as well as in the world.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

50. In ants and men

Date: 25 October 1965 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam / Occasion: Diwali

The pitch darkness of the New Moon night has given place, on account of the death of Narakasura at the hands of God, to the brightness of the white half of the month. Daivathwam and danavathwam (Divinity and devilishness) compete for the possession of the mind of man and pursue him as Light and Darkness. Danavathwam piles upon man misery after misery, while Daivathwam warns him against yielding to despair on that account. They have to be welcomed as beneficial, for misery is the crucible in which the dross is removed and the pure gold separated from alloys. The danava forces are aflame in every person as lust and greed, as hate and envy, as pride and pompousness. The traits of Ravana's lust, of Sisupala's pride, of Kamsa's hate, of Hiranyaksha's envy are tainting every human heart. Only the discipline of the spirit through japam and dhyanam can quench the flames and scotch the conflagration. Today, we celebrate the destruction of those traits, collectively personified as Narakasura, for, they, by their collective effect, lead man into hell or Naraka.

Those traits are the wild weeds that smother the seedlings of love and truth, of sympathy and service, of reverence and renunciation, which man seeks to cultivate in his heart. The Upanishads lay down the means and measure of this inner culture; the thorny bushes that have to be uprooted, the ploughing and levelling, the formation of bunds, the filling of the fields with the waters of love, the seeds, the pests, the fence, the manure and all the other items of this strange new agriculture. The spiritual aspirant is but a ryot who has determined not to allow his inner faculties to lie fallow. He has become aware of the precious harvest of happiness that he can earn and he allows no moment to go waste, without being used for this high purpose.

Three types of spiritual aspirants

Nagayya, who has acted the roles of great devotees like Pothana, Thyagayya and Ramadas, spoke just now of three types of sadhakas and bhakthas: (1)

Those who desire liberation from birth and merging with the Universal and Eternal Supreme Sovereign; (2) those who dedicate everything they experience and act, to the Lord, without getting attached to their consequences; and (3) those who worship the Lord for the benefits He confers, here and hereafter. He confessed with some hesitation that he still belonged to the third category! But, certainly, no one need feel small because he is asking the Lord for worldly benefits. It is to be appreciated that, instead of cringing before man, a person has the good sense and the confidence to fall at the feet of the Lord and ask Him for favours.

Pothana refused to dedicate his work to Singabhupathi, though that ruler himself asked for that distinction, for, he declared that he knew no master other than the Lord. Thyagayya spurned the offer of substantial gifts from the Raja of Tanjore, who was anxious to reward him for his devotion and his musical talents. He said, 'The bliss of nearness to Rama is more pleasing to me than all the treasures man can give'. Thyagaraja was really a raja (king) among the detached. Bhakthi or devotion to God is not to be judged or measured by rosaries or candles, daubings on the forehead or matted hair or jingles on the ankles; purity of motives and intentions is essential, so that prema which is the one component of bhakthi does not leak out of the heart. The genuine outer signs of bhakthi are three' faith, humility and apprehension. Faith in the ultimate victory of truth and love; humility before elders and the wise; apprehension in the presence of evil, fear to mix with bad company, to enter into evil designs, to act counter to the whisperings of conscience.

Be an indefatigable enquirer of Truth

Bhakthi cannot come into man from outside him; it has to be grown from within by an effort to cleanse the mind, to know the nature and origin of man and the universe, to grasp the relation of man with all the external objects which now fascinate and foil him. Janaka was such an indefatigable enquirer. Though the ruler of a vast kingdom, he held court mostly to be in the midst of scholars and sages and learn from their discussions the many facets of Truth. He confronted every scholar who came to him with the question, (which he

put to Yajnavalkya, for instance), "With what object have you come? Desiring some cattle, or, some questions for subtle decisions?" And, most of them answered like Yajnavalkya, "Both, indeed O Emperor". The Brihadaranya Upanishad devotes many sections to these discussions in Janaka's court and to the part played by Yajnavalkya in clarifying many philosophical issues by his mastery of spiritual science, in theory as well as practice. Once Janaka performed a sacrifice during which he gave away a large number of gifts. He had set apart a thousand cows, with gold jewels on the horns and hooves, as a special prize for the person acclaimed by the assembly of scholars as the most learned, the greatest scholar in the science of Brahman. As soon as he came to know of this, Yajnavalkya who was singularly conscious of his unbeatable scholarship, asked his pupil, "Drive these cows home, my son". The Brahmins were enraged at this impudence and they challenged him to answer the questions they showered on him, in order to justify his driving away the cows.

Faith can grow only on conviction

The priest in charge of the sacrifice asked him about the effects of Yajna. Questions were asked about the sense organs and objects and the relationship between them; some scholars like Bhujyu tried to puzzle him and overpower him by suggesting a superhuman source for knowledge. Others moved on to the subject of the Atma, as Sarvantharyamin. The most formidable of the interlocutors was a woman, Gargi who had a plentiful sheaf of arrows to let go at Yajnavalkya. At last she rose from her seat and declared: "I shall now ask him two questions. If he answers those two satisfactorily, then none of us can ever defeat him in expounding Brahman."

"What is it that pervades like the warp and the woof, that which is above heaven and below the earth, that which is heaven and earth, and between them both, that which was, is and will be?" Gargi asked and Yajnavalkya answered, "Akasha". Gargi appreciated the answer. Then, she asked again, "What pervades the Akasha as warp and woof?" And Yajnavalkya replied, "It is the Akshara, neither sthula nor anu, neither short nor long, neither air nor ether, without eyes or ears, with neither exterior nor interior. It is never seen,

but it is the Seer; it is never thought, but it is the Thinker; it is never known, but, it is the Knower." And, Gargi accepted that he was supreme and undefeatable. Janaka grew wise as a result of such deliberations and discussions in his court. Faith can grow only on conviction and one can be convinced only when doubts are dissolved by discussions.

You are moulded by the company you relish. When you make friends with the blacksmith, you are bound to collect black dust on your clothes and skin. That is why sangam (association) is held to be so crucial in spiritual life.

Parents must correct their wards on the spot

You must have a separate room or corner where you do japa or dhyana every day, so that the spiritual fragrance might infuse higher thoughts during the process. If the place is changed, it will be like changing the company; the cumulative effect of association will be squandered. Parents and elders must see that their sons and wards are corrected on the spot, whenever they forget or deviate from the path. Premchand, the Hindi writer, was once proceeding from Lucknow to Allahabad and he had written to his two sons to meet him at the railway station, The younger boy touched the feet of the father on seeing him, but the elder did not. Premchand was enraged at this; his wife tried to quieten him, saying "Poets and writers try to read too much meaning even in slight events." But, Premchand said that the behaviour of the fellow was an indication of ingratitude, a bad strain in his character which will grow into cruelty and hard-heartedness later. You may boast that you have been visiting Puttaparthi since twenty years or that you have made the place your permanent residence; but, unless you follow the lessons I emphasise, that boast is mere empty vanity. If you develop love for all beings, in the faith that God resides in all, you may be anywhere else, but your prayers would reach me and my grace will reach you. While in my previous body, I told Nanasaheb that I am in ants, insects and animals, besides all men. When a dog ate off offerings intended for Baba, it was declared to have reached Baba, for he had eaten it in that form: "Nana says he is giving me food; but when I go in the form of a dog he drives me off".

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

TO believe that God is manifest only in one place or location, and to journey thither is a superstition much to be deplored. He is everywhere, in everyone, at all times. He is the energy that filled space and time and he is the energy that manifests as causation.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

51. The daily diet

Date: **November 1965** / Location: **Hindupur** / Occasion: **Rotary Club**

Rotarians in India have a greater responsibility than in other countries for, this country is from very ancient times striving to become a *Karmabhumi*, a *Yogabhumi* and a *Thyaagabhumi*. It has been endeavouring to justify its description by sages and seers as the land of dedicated activity, of self-control and self-knowledge, and of renunciation. In fact, thousands of years ago, the *Rishis* instructed the people of this land that Immortality can be won not by the cultivation of scholarship, or the fulfilling of the obligations of a householder's life, or by the accumulation of wealth as a means of a pleasure-filled life, but only by renunciation (*thyaaga*). It is said in the scriptures that even gods are anxious to get born in this land so that they may engage in acts of beneficence. That is why it is called *Karmabhumi*. The science of mind-control called *Yoga* has been developed here, since ancient times, and thousands in every age have practised it with success, until they have achieved its fruit, self-realisation. One result of this selfrealisation has been the recognition of every one else as but the reflection of oneself---the true basis of the Unity of mankind. Living in such an ancient land, in the midst of a people whose minds are suffused with these ideals and aspirations, Rotarians will find their activities welcomed here more than anywhere else. The lesson that *Sanaathana Dharma* has been holding forth is "the unity of all created beings, of all sections of the human community, in One Cosmic Body which is God." (*Ishaavaasyamidham Sarvam, Vaasudevassarvamidam*) , The query, "Who belongs to whom?" is alien to Indian thought. Each belongs to all, all belong to ONE---this has been the daily diet of India since the beginning of Time.

The world is the temple of God

When someone suffers from acute stomach pain, his eyes exude tears! For, there is one consciousness pervading and activating all parts of the body, and producing appropriate reactions everywhere. Similarly, the world too is just one body and pain anywhere naturally affects other parts. No single part can

rejoice when another part, however distant, however insignificant, is in pain.

I find that you use the word '*Antharjatheeya*' for indicating that there is an inter-national body. *Anthar* or Inter shows that yours is an inter-connection, an *anthar* or inner link, a wire that supplies current to all, an inner motivator which operates and oversees every part or limb, not only in the body---the dwelling place of the individual---but in the world which is the temple of God. The Lord has declared in the Geetha that He is *Sarvabhootha-antharaathma*---"the Inner Reality of all beings." Try to be ever in the awareness of this Unity in God; this is the one truth that has to be seen, experienced and announced; this is the soundest basis for individual and social life. This will serve as an unshakable foundation for your international outlook. I asked your president what the ideal of Rotary International was and he told me that it was, in one word, *paropakaaram*---"Doing good to others." For this ideal, India is a very congenial country, since you will find willing co-operation from the people and plentiful opportunities for exercising the talent, the skill and the urge for doing good to others and helping others. But I would like to remind you that there are *no para* (others) to receive the *upakaaram* (favour) from you; the '*para*' persons are your own. your very selves. All are waves heaving and falling, rolling and receding, on the ocean of which they are integral parts. Therefore, who can help whom? Who does whom a favour? Whose is the helping hand? All help is to oneself, from oneself. The pain that another suffers from, which you seek to assuage, is really your own pain; when you stop his pain, it is your pain that stops. Service can be effective only when the feelings of 'I' and 'Mine' give place to 'God' and 'God's'. It is only when your attention is monopolised by the body and its needs, that egoism will grow in strength. When you direct your attention to the *Antharaathma* (Inner-self) which is God, then, you find the same God in all and a flood of reverence fills you and fertilises every act of yours. *Saadhana* is needed for redirecting the attention from the *deha* to the *dehi*---body to the soul.

Non-dual attitude will make service more fruitful

All beings are as flowers that bloom and fade before the day is over; but, like

this garland you offered Me when I came amidst you, they are strung on one eternal indestructible thread, the *Suuthra* that is called *Brahmam*. Establish this *Bhaava-adwaitam* (non-dual attitude) in your mind; it will render your service more enjoyable, more fruitful, more sweet and pleasant to the recipient. Without that attitude, *paropakaaram* becomes help, doled out to lesser men and poorer folk, by superior persons. All such help will be suspected and resented; it is contaminated at the source as well as at destination. Of course, one should not treat all equally, have the same prescription for all. Serve each according to the specific need and capacity to benefit by the help. The *Antharaathma* is the same in all, but, you should not give a knife into the hands of a mad man, or a gold necklace to a child. The child will cast it away; the man may gash some one's throat.

Feel the sorrow of others as your own

The most precious possession is mental equanimity; and it is the one thing you cannot give, even if you have it. Each has to acquire it the hard way. But you can enlighten people on the disciplines through which mental equanimity can be gained, and *shaanthy* can be won. It cannot be earned through a higher standard of life, bush shirts, transistors, sofas, air-conditioners, etc. It cannot be got through riches, through the acquisition of power and authority, through developing physical strength and endurance. When you plan for service, remember this estimate of comparative values. The rich, the healthy, the strong, the powerful, the influential---all are afflicted with discontent, worry, fear and anxiety. They have no peace of mind. *Shaanthy* comes from within; contentment is a mental condition. Do not feed the roots of attachment to worldly comforts more than is absolutely necessary. They lead only to anxiety and fear; they can never satisfy the innermost craving of man. Lead them into the path of devotion and dedication; for them that will be the path of contentment and joy. Emphasise the universal *Aathma thathwam*---essential nature of the Self; encourage prayer, meditation, quiet contemplation of the grandeur and glory of God, reflected in Nature; repetition of the Name of the Lord; encourage silence and solitude, for the

sake of introspection and contact with the springs of joy inherent in man. You are all educated persons, experienced in many fields of activity, equipped with many skills and capabilities; you are animated by genuine enthusiasm to help others; you are encouraged by the example of other Clubs to take up many schemes which will benefit the community. These are great assets. Heart has to meet heart, so that service may succeed. Speak soft and sweet; be soft and sweet. Speak with sympathy and with no pretence, no artificiality. Keep away from impure listening, impure acts, impure words, impure thoughts---everything that contaminates the will to serve, and the skill to serve. I am glad you gave Me this chance to share with you your *Aanandam*; I am glad I got this chance to share My *Aanandam* with you. I hope and bless that you will feel the sorrow of others as your own and strive to diminish it; I hope and bless that you will feel the happiness of others as your own and strive to share it and increase it.

Everything is held together by God's strength.

God is present everywhere.

You are only a means through which

God is seeing every one in this world.

You are only imagining

that you are seeing with your eyes,

but you are, in fact, seeing with God's eyes.

First thing to do is to find who you are.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

52. The steady stream

Date: 14 November 1965 / Location: Hindupur

I am glad I came to this newly established College and saw these students who are the builders of India in the coming years. Virtue is the fragrance of the flowers which the tree of life puts forth. Educated people must be identified in society by their strict adherence to virtue, not by more skilled methods of escaping the consequences of vice. Education is now sought after, more for securing a means of livelihood. The attempt of many parents and their children is to learn some skill which will give them a good job, in a factory or business establishment or bank, on a decent salary. Of course, man must live and live comfortably. So, it is necessary that some useful skill is mastered. But, man needs things much more satisfying, much more essential, than comfort. He must have faith in himself, so that he may respect himself. This Atma vishwasa (trust in the Self) lies at the very root of joy. In India, the education that leads to the knowledge of the Atma and faith in the Atma has been perfected since ages. That education teaches a proper sense of values; giving the Vishayas (the objective, world), relative importance for temporary periods, for transient ends and encouraging man to hold fast to disciplines that confer inner peace. The Atma thathwa (principle of the Self) grants Amritha (Immortality). The deha thathwa (principle of the body) is anritha (invalid), and so, cannot give absolute Bliss. Man is not an improved type of monkey; he is a child of this Immortal Entity. That is why he refuses to accept that death is his end. That is why he strives to perpetuate himself for ever. The hunger for escaping death is strong in man; he does not believe that he is a bubble, that can be pricked out of existence by chance.

Teach youth the fundamentals of Indian culture

The system of education has to be recast in order to allow the children of this land to grow up as the seers and sages of this land, to hand over to the sons and daughters of Bharathamatha the precious heritage, which the world too is anxious to share. The significance of yajna, dama and thapas (sacrifice, self-control and penance); of sahana, sadhana, samyama (forbearance, spiritual

discipline and sense restraint); of the great Mahavakyas (Vedhic dicta) enshrined in the Vedas; of the three Yogas - bhakthi, karma and jnana - as elaborated in the Geetha; of the Daivi and Asuri (godly and demonic) natures - all these and many more of the fundamentals of Indian culture have to be taught to the children in schools and colleges. They must be encouraged to practise them, for their own as well as for the country's good. The Principal requested Me to bless all the candidates who have appeared for the examinations so that all of them may pass. My blessings are with them; but, I do not consider passing the examinations as so profoundly important. This College is started on the basis of a big donation of a lakh of rupees, by a merchant of this place. Show by your discipline, character, sacrifice and other traits that he has not donated that amount in vain. Let him be happy that, from the institution he founded, the country is getting a steady stream of honest, efficient, reliable workers, who will enhance the glory of India in the spiritual field as well.

Become worthy children of your Motherland

This is the land where the Upanishads called upon the students to adhere to truth, to follow dharma, and to revere parents and teachers. If you learnt those great lessons, then, certainly there would be no anxiety and grief; but, now, parents are neglected and even disowned. How can a nation that does not revere those deserving to be revered, be revered in its turn? If the teacher is not listened to with the respect due to his age and attainments, how can the student learn from him the ideals on which he should plan his own life? Sathya and dharma are the two rails on which the locomotive of the nation runs; when sathya is given up, chaos prevails; when dharma is discarded, might becomes right. So, whether you have it in the curriculum or not, learn the underlying principles of SanathanaDharma from elders and teachers; practise at least the very first steps in spiritual discipline, like silence, reciting the Name of God, reading of the scriptures, etc. Avoid wasteful and harmful forms of recreation; maintain your health by moderation; become worthy sons and daughters of your Motherland..

Sorrow and pain are caused by desire.
The cure is to use the same desire,
and turn it to God, to desire God.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

53. Let students master

Date: 14 November 1965 / Location: Hindupur / Occasion: Municipal High School
Diamond Jubilee

It is a rare type of Festival, this Diamond Jubilee of a school; I am glad you have asked Me to inaugurate the Celebrations. To illumine a place with the lamp of knowledge for sixty years, to have trained up for life hundreds and thousands of persons, is no ordinary achievement. I am glad you have as a part of the programme, the expression of gratitude for the Headmasters and Teachers who toiled at this School to make it a successful training centre in this region. It is now twenty-five years since I last came to this place, which is so near geographically to Puttaparthi. People in America, Europe and Africa, in Hongkong and Australia are establishing Sathya Sai Bhaktha Mandalis and Study Circles; they are having Telugu Classes, so that they may listen to Me and learn things directly from Me. But, places near Puttaparthi take long to derive the benefit. As for Me, I have no 'near' and 'far'; all are near to Me, except those who keep afar. Even they are close to Me, if only they dedicate themselves to God, under whatever Name and Form. Considering the system of education sixty years ago when this school began and the system prevalent now after many experiments and modifications, one has to say that a great many valuable characteristics of the old system have been lost. Numbers have increased; but, quality has suffered. More information is forced in; less knowledge to meet the fortunes of life is imparted. Skills are added but virtues are subtracted. Respect for the great scriptures and sacred texts has diminished; how then can patriotism strike root? Love for India springs from reverence for her role in the history of the world, in the upliftment of man. Students are not told how the sages and seers of India saw the highest truths that man can ever hope to visualise; they decry their forefathers as fools, and their elders as old-fashioned. They have other lands and other cultures as their ideals, for, they are carried away by material victories like space ships and rockets to the moon. They have no idea of the utter danger which these adventures into space denote and of the vastly grander adventures into the soul which Indian sages have achieved.

Recast the mind as an instrument for Liberation

The Jubilee which has to be celebrated by every individual is not the Diamond, but, the "Diemind", the occasion when through sadhana, the mind is mastered. Modern civilisation is based on competition in which the interests of the individual precede the interests of society. Therefore, fear haunts men wherever they turn, fear of poverty, fear of loss, fear of death and destruction of property. The mind urges the senses to seek and secure softness, sweetness, fragrance, melody and beauty, not in God whose heart is soft as butter, whose story is sweet as nectar, whose renown is fragrant as the jasmine, whose praise is melodious to the ear, whose Form is the embodiment of perfect beauty, but, in the shoddy contraptions of material things. So, the mind has to die, so that it may be recast as an instrument for liberation, through fulfilment. Sixty years ago, and until recently, in some primary schools, Sumathisathaka and the verses of Vemana were passed on to the children and they implanted in the tender minds the seeds of Sanathana Dharma. Today, they have given place to Nursery Rhymes, like "Who killed Cock Robin?", "Jack and Jill went up the Hill", rhymes that cannot grow into goodness or virtue. The neglect of the study of the Sanskrit language and literature is denying our students the spring of wisdom, from which generations have imbibed courage and confidence to face life. Consider first things first - that is the message of the Shastras. The true culture of India can be experienced only then. Bharath is the only country where the process of exploiting the mine of Ananda lying in the inner consciousness of man has been systematically explored.

Basis of the Indian ideal of Ahimsa

India has always laid down disciplines to cultivate Universal Love; the yajnas and yagas (Vedhic sacrifices and worship) which are recommended in the Vedas are for Loka kalyana and Loka sangraha - the welfare and security of all mankind. That is why India is as the engine which drags the wagons along, all wagons that are coupled with it. The wagons are the different nations. Lokassamasthah sukhino bhavanthu - " May all the denizens of all the worlds be happy" - is the prayer that rises from the children of this land, since

thousands of years. God is omnipresent; He is immanent in every being in equal measure. So, man must visualise Him equally in himself and in others. That is to say, he sees only God in all. So, how can he injure others or fear that he will come to harm through others? This is the basis of the Indian ideal of Ahimsa. We have such world-transforming truths embedded in the ancient texts, but having them there or even inside the heads does not help; they have to be put into practice, steadily and with faith, You are happy when you have a watch; you are happy when you have a transistor radio hanging round your neck; the happiness is due to the fact that you have them and that others have no right over them. The sense of possession, the sense of 'mine' (mamakara), that is at the root of the joy. The thing by itself is powerless to evoke joy; for, if the thing itself was the source, every one having it must derive the same quantity of joy. When a neighbour gets a transistor, you do not feel happy at all; you might even feel it a nuisance. Analysis will show that all joy is in us, for us and from us. And it is but a reflection of the boundless joy that the Atman is. So, instead of scattering attention in many directions, man must endeavour to attain that Athmic joy while here, with body. The moon that shines in the waters of a million lakes is one; the shine in the lakes is due to the reflections; look up and know the truth. Do not be deluded that inside each lake, there is a distinct moon. The bodies are many but God is reflected in every one of them. Establish contact with that Almighty Power, that Omniscience, that Omnipresent Entity and all things will be added unto you - power, wisdom, vision, liberation. The way in which schools are now attempting to shape the tender minds of children is full of defects. They are not given the sustaining food of Vedanthic truths; they are not trained to grow straight and strong, breathing the bracing air of virtue. They are not allowed to grow in an atmosphere of love and endurance. The hatreds and factions, which elders indulge in are their examples and inspirations now. Their energies and enthusiasms are not canalised by means of restrictions and directions, precept and example, into beneficial activities. Efforts in these directions, however elementary, will, If persisted in, yield good results. Begin this day this task of rousing in these students the keenness to become masters of their senses and the tasters of lasting joy.

54. The Badge: a call to saadhana

Date: 22 November 1965 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam

Seeing these volunteer badges that I have brought for distribution, you feel happy that you are soon to be decorated, and perhaps you hope, by means of this badge, to exercise authority over others and escape heavy work, during this Birthday Festival. I am not giving these badges to endow you with authority, or confer leisure on you or because it is customary on such occasions to have some women and men moving about with badges. This will impose heavier work on you, but, if you look upon it as work, then you have no right to receive these badges. It entitles you to welcome and serve your kith and kin who are arriving at this place from all parts of the world. The badge should not burden you with the weight of conceit; it should not make you feel superior, as if yours is the upper hand and the recipient of your service has the lower hand. It is not a boon that you drop into his hand but an offering that you dedicate at his feet. It is the expression of kinship between your nature and the nature of those whom you serve. In the Principle of the Self (Atma thathwa), he and you are the same; he and you are but two waves of the selfsame sea.

Take this badge as a call to sadhana, as an introduction to a spiritual adventure, an exercise in the practice of prema. The Vedas teach you that which deserves to be learnt; the Shastras lay down disciplines that help shape man into Madhava; sadhana brings into you the awareness of that which will give a new and truer meaning to every act of yours. I am eager that you must all get to know this and so, I am leading you into the sadhana. A mother cannot ignore the health and progress of the children. Though they may neglect her advice, she will be eager to correct them and lead them into proper habits.

Volunteers have to forgo their comforts

The main plank of the programme of sadhana is the overcoming of the ego, the feeling of "I" and "Mine". That, in a nutshell, is Atma vidya. Now, you as

volunteers have to forgo your comforts and even chances to have darshan and to listen to My discourses, when service calls you somewhere else. This thyaga or renunciation gladly undertaken is a very important qualification for the sadhaka. If you feel the urge, "My need first, the other person's later" then, what you perform is not seva, it is strategy. Give up your seat to someone who is older or infirm, or more deserving, that is seva; not sticking to it, when such people are desperate for accommodation.

' You will earn my Grace more by such service and sacrifice than by sitting in the front line and nodding to whatever I say. Do not push or pull people; speak softly and sweetly; tell the old and the infirm that you will take them to more comfortable vantage positions and they will be extremely grateful to you. See that they are not exposed to the scorching sunlight, for they may suffer from blood pressure and other handicaps and they may be affected. Seek them out from among the gathering and offer to rescue them. Handle them as you would handle a rare flower or a costly fruit.

I have known many volunteers who reel off the excuse, "They won't obey, Swami, if we speak soft; they are accustomed to rough treatment only". I will never pardon such volunteers. The fault is always in their manner of speaking, the way in which they explain their actions, the temper, the attitude, the approach. Have you reflected on the responsibility which is now being endowed on you? What is it that is about to separate you from the thousands who have come here? Not this badge, surely.

Needs of guests should take precedence

You are being invested as Prasanthi Nilayam Representatives, you are being entrusted with the traditional duty of hospitality towards the kinsmen who are arriving. So, you must have Prasanthi in your hearts; you should not be agitated or worried or angry or upset. Behave in keeping with the dignity conferred on you. When guests come, does the wife tell the husband, "We shall feed them after we have eaten"? Their needs take precedence, they are to be attended to with care and consideration. So, too here, the men and women who have come are to be met with love and care, irrespective of your

convenience and comfort. That is the way to please Me and win My grace.

The best way to show respect to them is to treat them as reasonable, devoted, nice, respectable people. If any of them talks loud, not knowing that he must not disturb the silence of the place, do not rush to him and hiss, or place your palm across his mouth. Go near him and whisper in his ear the rules and discipline of this Place, the fact that many are here engaged in meditation, japam and quiet study, the value of silence as a check on the passions and impulses. Then he is certain to co-operate and recruit others too, into the forces of silence. He will also realise the value of the discipline and perhaps decide to practise it even after he leaves the Nilayam. Volunteership should not be a temporary role assumed by you for this one week. It should not be like the role of Harischandra in the drama, played by the champion liar of the town. Harischandra never wavered from the path of truth, whatever the milieu that served as background for life' the palace, the jungle, the cremation ground.

The volunteer is a candidate for Grace

Some feel that the disciplines of the Prasanthi Nilayam are limited to the geographical bounds of this area and so they can be ignored when one is beyond the gates. They smoke and swear, shout and swagger, fight and frighten, talk loose and light, indulge in slander and scandals, in the coffee houses beyond the gate, where they lounge and loll. It is shameful behaviour for any selfrespecting human; it is reprehensible for pilgrims to holy places, who must yearn to soak themselves in spiritual joy; it is ruinous for a volunteer, for, here, a volunteer is also a candidate for Grace and an aspirant for Bliss. For you, the whole world must appear as a Prasanthi Nilayam (abode of Supreme peace), not simply this stone and cement structure. As a matter of fact, the world is, fundamentally, a Prasanthi Nilayam; only, man, by his ignorance and perversity, has fouled it into a snake-pit of crime and hate. I want that each one of you must so transform yourself during this period that you will carry with you the atmosphere of the Prasanthi Nilayam wherever you go, for, you cannot live happily in any surrounding that is not fragrant with love and humility, discipline and control. You will naturally endeavour to

make the place where you are and the men among whom you move, a bit more spiritual than before.

You must have not merely enthusiasm to serve, but the intelligence and the skill; then only can you be efficient and useful. Enthusiasm without efficiency is often a source of loss and grief. There were two friends once who had to sit for an examination. The duller among the two wanted the other chap to supply him in the hall with the answers to the questions asked; but their seats were too far to permit whisperings to be heard; so, their problem was, how to cheat the invigilator and communicate with each other without being noticed and expelled. The sharper one was at one end of the hall and the duller one at the other. So, they hatched a plan, which they felt was fool-proof.

Service must be done intelligently

The school had a cat which used to roam freely in all the halls. The answers were to be tied to the tail of the cat and then, the dull fellow will place some sweets under his bench, which will attract the cat to his side. When the cat eats the sweets and licks the floor where they were kept, he could loosen the paper tied to its tail and spread it before him on the desk. The plan went through, up to a point; the answers were tied. But, the cat was so distracted by the thing on its tail that it scampered round and round in terrific excitement. It attracted the attention of the invigilator and that was the end of the story. You must not be so foolish as to believe in the possibility of such a stratagem. The seva that is entrusted to you, you must do intelligently and to a successful finish. It does not matter if the recipient is not fully satisfied; you must have done your best, without hesitation or favour. What is the good of hurrying along the ranks of persons who are sitting for meals with a basket of laddus, shouting, "Laddus, laddus. Who wants laddus?" without stopping and serving even one laddu on the plate of a single person? The diners have the benefit of the name, but not of the substance. Nowadays, service has become more talk and less deed. But, the Lord cannot be deceived; He is vigilant and all-knowing. Once, Parameshwara and Parathi were going along the sky over Varanasi, on a Shivarathri Day. There were millions of pilgrims crowding the ghats and narrow lanes of the Holy City. The precincts of the

Vishweshwara Temple were filled with devoted men and women singing the praise of Shiva.

Purity and Truth alone can open the gates of Bliss

Parvathi turned to her Lord and asked, "Look at these millions of human beings; they are all certain to win Heaven, for they are full of devotion and they are here on this sacred day; I wonder if heaven can accommodate all of them." Shiva laughed at her innocence. He said, "If every one who comes to Varanasi on Shivarathri Day can secure heaven, then, Varanasi will be heaven. No. We both are in heaven because we have no egoistic desire, no selfish attachments. These people are all so saturated with selfish desire that no one of them can ever hope to have access to heaven. Can a thief who steals and purchases a ticket to Varanasi with the stolen money climb to heaven? Purity, love and truth alone can open the gates of Bliss. Come on, I shall prove my thesis that very few of these can ever enter heaven. Let us go into this city as an old decrepit beggar pair." And, in one of the lanes that led to the temple, in full sight of the hundreds who filed along, with the holy Ganga water in their hands, for being poured ceremonially on the Linga in the Vishweshwara Temple, the bony centenarian lay on the lap of his aged wife, lolling his tongue in the agony of extreme thirst, and the woman was appealing piteously for water to her dying husband. "Water, water; give this man a mouthful and save him for me", was the cry. No one of the devout came near to relieve his distress. Many cursed her for her shrill importunity; some asked her to keep off the road; a few said they will give him water after finishing worship in the temple; a large number swore that beggary must be made a crime and the police must clear the lanes of this nuisance; one or two people laughed and remarked that the lady was putting up a good show to attract attention. No heart melted at the woes of the old helpless pair. At last, one man came near them, moved by sympathy. He was a pickpocket who had come to Varanasi's ghats to ply his wicked trade; he knelt by the side of the old man and pulled out a dried gourd full of water; that was his water bottle. But, Parvathi wanted to test whether he had other virtues too. So, she said, "Thank you, dear brother. But, my husband will drink the water you give only when you describe some good deed you have done so far, while pouring the

water into his parched mouth. He is about to die, so, tell him of some good deed you have done in your life and offer the merit of that to him when you give him the water". The hardened thief replied, "No; I have done no good deed so far; this is the first time my heart has melted at another's misery. Let the Lord of Varanasi, Vishweshwara in the temple yonder, be my witness", he said and poured the precious water. At that, the Lord appeared in His real Form and Parvathi too rose as the Goddess; they blessed him as the only person entitled to Heaven out of that motley throng of millions of empty hearts. Truth and Love won for him the Grace of God.

Seek out opportunities to be of service

The heart of the volunteer must melt in sympathy with the ignorant, the poor, the hungry and thirsty, the children separated from the parents in the rush, the parents searching for missing children, the sick, the infirm and all other cases of distress. Be on the look out for suspicious characters who also come during festivals to ply their trade of theft; warn the pilgrims of such persons and help them to guard their things when they have to leave the places where they have deposited them. Help spread a sense of security and safety. Seek out opportunities to be of service; do not be under the impression that you have certain limits for service and that you should not overstep them. When the buses come and the people alight, there is always confusion while they secure their luggage from the top; see that you provide them help and attention. Also, guide them lovingly to the places where accommodation is available. Do not look on from a distance, because you have not been assigned that particular work. They are coming to your place and they deserve a hearty welcome and kind attention.

Volunteers have no limits for service

Treat the guests as you would like to be treated, if you were in their place, visiting the Nilayam after years of yearning and months of preparation and anticipation of joy. The driver and conductor of the vehicles can leave them and move off; but, if in the confusion the visitors lose any article, it tells upon your vigilance. If you are there to help them, they will say "O, some good

friend helped us to recover our things, he spoke so reassuringly to us, as soon as we reached the place; every one there is more full of prema towards us than our own kith and kin. That is the one place where we can be certain of kind and sympathetic and intelligent service suffused with love, which knows no distinction of caste, creed, status or wealth". Observe Me; what benefit can I derive from all My activity, I who assign all benefits to all activities according to what they deserve? But yet, you will find Me busy from dawn to dusk, from dusk to dawn. I finish My lunch or dinner within minutes so that I can teach you the value of time; I attend to the smallest detail of all the various items of work, for I try to set an example for you, in meticulous attention to, and careful anticipation of, all contingencies. I know many of you idle away hours on end, wasting precious hours in idle gossip, purposeless talk and debate. When you practise the attitude that God is everywhere as the witness of every act of yours, that God is in every being you meet and serve, then, you will certainly be rewarded by a Vision of the Lord.

Do not let go the chance to do seva

When you have the brilliant chance, do not let it go, through ignorance or negligence; grasp the opportunity and advance! The best way to win Grace is to obey instructions, to follow the advice, and to submit to the control exercised with lot of Love. I am worried that people are not benefitting from Me as much as I would like to confer. In the lotus pond there are many frogs; the bees that come from afar are not able to convince the frogs of the nectar in the lotus bloom. Seva done lovingly and well to the people who gather here to have darshan and to listen to the discourses is a great opportunity for you to acquire discrimination and non-attachment, to widen and deepen your bhakthi, and to realise how Sai is the inner motivator of all beings. I wish you well. Be humble, be sweet, be sincere.

Bhakthi merges in Jnana
and becomes identified with it.
Bhakthi ripens into Jnana,

so do not speak of them as different.
At one stage, it is called Bhakthi,
at a later stage,
we refer it to as Jnana.
Once it is cane, later it is sugar.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

55. Pilgrimage to the throne

Date: 23 November 1965 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam / Occasion: Birthday - 40

The search for truth must become your daily spiritual discipline; every moment must be used for this primary duty. Truth can reflect itself in your intelligence only when it is cleaned by thapas. Thapas means all acts undertaken with higher motives; all acts indicating yearning for the spirit; repenting for past blunders; staunch determination to adhere to virtue, self-control; unyielding adherence to equanimity in the face of success or failure. Thapam means heat, burning, intensity, earnestness of endeavour. It is thapas (penance or religious austerity) that fosters renunciation and discipline.

This discipline is essential when, as at present, the temptations to deviate are so many. In this iron age, when darkness is enveloping the mind of man, any little lamp that can light the steps is most welcome. That is why I advise you to resort to sath-karma, sad-achara and sathpravarthana (good deeds, good conduct and good attitudes and outlook), so that you may be established in the constant presence of the Lord. You must also strive to "hear" (shravana) elevating words, to ruminate on these promptings of the spirit (manana) and then, when the validity is recognised, to meditate on it in profound reverence (nididhyasana). All other activity is secondary; this alone is edifying, this alone is beneficial. This day, there is a Solar eclipse and many people wondered whether the Birthday festival will be celebrated or postponed. The shadow of the moon falling upon the sun is not the calamity that people should fear; the shadow of maya falling upon the intelligence is the eclipse that has to be treated as a bad omen, as inauspicious. The mind is the moon, the intelligence is the sun; see that they do not suffer from eclipse. Then, you are safe. Do not worry when something happens in the outer sky; worry when the shadow of some dark desire, some foul passion, some monstrous emotion, some fell intention casts its evil gloom over your inner sky. See that the splendour of the Lord, the cool rays of His Grace are not dimmed in the recesses of your heart.

The emblem of Prasanthi Nilayam

I find that some one has upset the usual seating arrangements; the women are on the left and the men on the right. That is to say, the women have most of the scorching sun and the men are under the shade of the tree. So, I shall not keep you longer. I shall unfurl the flag, which is the symbol of Prasanthi, the higher equanimity when all dualities are superceded and man gains the supreme joy of calm balance, unaffected by ups and downs, pain or pleasure, when the waves are stilled and the storms rage no more. The flag contains the picture of the emblem that is represented in concrete shape in front of the porch here; it is the summary of the progress of the pilgrim to the throne of the Lord in the altar of his heart. The pilgrim must traverse and overstep the vast wastes of worldly desires (kama) and overcome the thick slushy growths of anger and hate (krodha) and negotiate the cliffs of hatred and malice (dwesha), so that he might relax on the green pastures of concord and love (prema). Having thus become master of his inner foes, he has to rest in the silence of his own heart, as a Yogi, with all the agitations of his inner realm stilled. That is the meaning of the six-ringed pillar in the centre of the circle here; the six rings are the six chakras (centres of energy) of yogic discipline in the central spinal nadi (nerve current) of man. Fixed in the undisturbed calm of his deepest consciousness, man finds that the lotus of the heart blooms into a thousand petals and then, the flame of awakening into the truth lights itself, as Prasanthi. That moment, the seeker knows that he and all else are One, that the One is Brahman. This progress that every one has to make, today or tomorrow, in this life or in the next, is outlined as a clear picture in the symbol on the flag; so, when it flutters above this Prasanthi Nilayam, resolve to hoist it on your heart too. Take the first step today, in this long pilgrimage. Give up, in order to gain; restrain, in order to receive; become blind (to the external view), in order to see more clearly (the inner vision).

Anger, malice, greed and envy - all these are obstacles in the path of love and co-operation. They lower man from the Divine to the animal level.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

56. The rules of the game

Date: 23 November 1965 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam / Occasion: Birthday - 40

Every man is engaged in searching for something lost. Life is the chance afforded to him to recover the peace and the joy that he had lost, when last he was here. If he recovers them now, he need not come again. But, he loses them through ignorance of their value and of the means of retaining them. If only he would stay in the consciousness of Shivoham - "I am Shiva; I am immortal, I am the source and spring of Bliss" - he would be supremely content; but, instead of this correct evaluation of himself, this recognition of his innate reality, man goes about weeping at his helplessness, his inadequacy, his poverty, his evanescence. This is the tragic fate from which man has to be rescued.

The deer is trapped, the elephant is drawn into the kheddah (the trap), and the serpent is charmed - all by taking advantage of their slavery to the senses. Man must demonstrate his superiority over the animal, by conquest over the senses. He must wriggle out of his animal shackles and assert his "humanity", which is essentially "divinity". When Emperor Bharthrihari gave up his throne and went into a hermitage in the forest, the subordinate rulers who were his tributaries laughed at the stupid step and asked him how he got the idea and what he gained. Bharthrihari replied, "I have now gained a vaster empire, a richer and more peaceful empire; I gave in exchange a poor barren torn empire; see what profit I have made."

Sacrifice the animality and bestial lust in you

Sacrifice, so that you may be saved. You have to sacrifice, not a bleating sheep or a horse or cow, but your animality, the bestial lust and greed, hate and malice. Sacrifice these and you earn the heaven of unflinching peace. Killing a sheep is a cheap trick, which will not deceive any one; for, you are asked to kill the sheep inside you, the cowardly beast that revels in the mass and perpetrates mob fury in blind anger. Gauthama Buddha saw sheep being driven to be slaughtered at a sacrifice (yajna); he tenderly lifted a sweet little

lamb on his shoulder and followed the sheep to the special enclosure where the ruler of the State was performing the yajna. On being told that the ceremonial killing of the lamb will bring great good to the ruler and the state, Buddha said, "Of course you must admit that a man, a prince, a monk is much more valuable than a tiny trivial lamb. Kill me and win merit a hundredfold", and advised him about the inner weaknesses and vices that are symbolised by the victims of the yajna. Buddha argued him out of his false attachment to the paltry benefits promised for ritual correctitude. He told him that the prayer that rose from every Indian at sunrise and at sunset was "Sarve janah sukhino bhavanthu" - "Let all beings attain happiness." "The sacrifice of a living being to secure happiness here or hereafter though accompanied by the recitation of all the appropriate ritual formulae was a selfish act and so, it deserves discouragement. To kill, so that you may live longer and with fuller joy is a reprehensible act, Buddha declared. It is comparable to the disgraceful pride of those who swagger like bullies because they have the atom bomb which can reduce to ashes entire states and vast cities. They make mankind cower in fear, just as the sacrificer in the yajnas makes the victims shiver in terror. Only those who base their actions on the universal principle of God that dwells in every being and prompts every deed, word and thought, can deserve the gratitude of mankind. All beings are flowers strung on the selfsame string to make a multicoloured garland for the Lord. You talk of international understanding, but it can come only when the idea of difference and separateness inherent in the word "nation" disappears and when man sees the Lord in all men. When a thorn pricks your foot, you get tears in the eye. For, they are of the same body; so too, when a worm is crushed, your heart must react to its pain. This must be cultivated as a sadhana and practised until it becomes one's nature.

God is forgotten when self-interest demurs

A parrot taught to utter Ram Ram Ram was caught by a cat and when the cat dug its teeth into it, it forgot Ram Ram Ram, it screeched like any parrot when it is in great pain. Ram Ram Ram was forgotten! So too, all talk of the unity of mankind, of the immanence of God and the pervasiveness of the Divine is forgotten, when self-interest demurs! There was a Sultan once who

had a daughter always immersed in the meditation of God. She was so pious and pure that the father decided to give her in marriage only to a person who was equally busy in spiritual activities and study, and equally determined in spiritual practices. The Prince of the neighbouring State asked for her hand and pleaded for it so tenaciously that the problem of her marriage had to be faced quick. While searching for a suitable groom, the Sultan one evening saw a young fakir, lost in meditation, in a corner of the mosque, his face lit with the glow of inexpressible inward joy. He watched him silently for hours and when at last, he came into consciousness of the surroundings, he asked him whether he was married, and when he heard he was not he was greatly pleased. He introduced himself and offered his daughter to him. The fakir argued that he was far too poor to maintain a princess as his wife, but, the Sultan described her sadhana and put his mind to rest, on that score. The fakir agreed, but the Sultan was to spend for the wedding ceremony only three paise, one for betel-nut, one for jaggery and one for incense. The conditions were accepted and the princess was sent to live with him in the caravanserai.

Have faith in God's capacity

A few days later, she discovered tied in a corner of his garment a small piece of bread; she asked him how it happened to be there. He replied, "I retained it for the morning." The princess said that by this act, he had declared himself to be an unworthy fakir, to be a non-believer. For, he had, by that act, doubted God's love and God's capacity to feed His children. He had no confidence in God and His Mercy. So saying, she returned to her father and continued her spiritual practices undisturbed. He who has planted the tender seedling .will fulfil his responsibility and water it into a sturdy plant. Have faith; do not simply profess and deny in practice.

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

Once when the Guru of Nanak accosted him, he was writing something with rapt attention. So, Nanak did not answer. When later he was asked why, he said, "My heart was transcribing on my brain (paper) with the pen of God-centred thought using the ink got by burning all sense-pursuits." The fate of the country will depend on the character of its people and character is elevated and purified by sadhana, the hard way of regulation of behaviour and the control of desire. God is the guardian, and as guardian, He has to warn and punish to wean people away from harmful habits. If it is necessary, the guardian will resort to the infliction of pain too, as a curative and corrective treatment.

Rules of behaviour must be observed by all

Limit, control, regulate, set bounds and bounds; that is the way to succeed. If people let loose their thoughts, words and deeds, calamity will be the consequence. Shastra means that which 'lays down limits'; interest in the art of living is created by these rules. Imagine a game of football which has no rules, the ball is never 'out', there is no foul, no corner, no offside, no hands, nothing by which you can decide who plays well or ill, who wins or loses. The game will lose all zest; it will be pandemonium, a free fight. Rules of behaviour must be observed by politicians, rulers, subjects, monks, who are leaders of the community and heads of monasteries, scholars and others, for they are exemplars and guides and their responsibilities are greater. People talk grandly of Adhwaitha, of the one-ness of all, but, they are the very persons who exaggerate every difference and emphasise every distinction. People boast that they have been coming to Puttaparthi since 20, 15 or 10 years, as if we have some grades of senior or junior according to the years during which they have contacted Puttaparthi; but really speaking, one has to value only the beneficial changes brought about by that contact in the character and conduct of the individual. How much have you imbibed, the lessons learnt from here? How much have you succeeded in stopping the leaks which, as outer-faced senses, were draining y our discrimination and drying up the fountain of inner joy? The eye scatters your vision in a hundred directions; the ear drags your mind to many false melodies; the hands hanker after hundred flimsy acts. They degrade and demolish man. Man being divine

must have the divine all around him all the time, in order to be alive; like fish, he must have the water of divine joy all around him. Instead, he is now seeking to keep himself alive by artificial respiration and borrowed blood. He is himself Amritha-swaruupa and Ananda-swaruupa (Immortal and Bliss personified). So, why should he strive to get ananda from outside?

Man must have divine joy all around him

Above all, recognise this truth: Sai is in all. When you hate another, you are hating Sai; when you hate Sai, you are hating yourself. When you inflict pain on another, remember that the other is yourself, in another form, with another name. Envy causes pain on those who are envied. When another's fortune is green, why should your eyes be red? Why get wild when another eats his fill? Give up this vice of envy; be happy when another is happy. That is more pleasing to the Lord than all the manthras you recite, or all the flowers you heap on his picture or image, or even the hours you spend in japam or dhyanam. India is the home of many religions and philosophies; but, no one of them is observed reverentially by its adherents. They are used only as labels to identify persons or communities, or as uniforms for certain purposes on certain occasions. Persons take pride when they resort to clubs or gambling places; but, they are ashamed to go to a temple or a spiritual guide. People live beyond their earnings and enter recklessly into debt, since they are eager to gather all the insignia of high life, like transistors, bush coats, refrigerators and the like. Love of pomp, desire to beat others in standard of living, eagerness to appear superior to the rest - these make men fall into discontent and deceit. Be simple in your method of living, have sathwik food and sathwik recreations; let your mind be fixed on the ideals of service; let your thoughts be guided by sathya, dharma, shanthi and prema. That is the blessing I confer on you today.

The proof of the rain is the wetness of the ground. Likewise, the proof of true devotion is in the peace of mind, that the aspirant has been able to attain, the peace which protects him against the onslaught of failures, the peace in

which he is unruffled by loss and dishonour.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

57. The call and the response

Date: 24 November 1965 / Location: Prasanthi Nilayam

An aspirant after spiritual realisation went off into a jungle and was plodding across the infested region, through the thick undergrowth, when he heard the angry roar of a lion; he climbed a tree to escape from the beast, but the lion saw him among the branches and roamed round and round the trunk in terrific rage. On the tree, he was attacked by a bear and so, he slid down the roots that descended from one of the branches of that banyan tree. Luckily, there were two roots hanging from the branch, so that he could hang on in mid air clinging to them, one in each hand. Just then, he saw two rats, one white and the other black which were gnawing at the base of the roots, endangering his life with every bite. While in this perilous state, a honeycomb which was full of sweet nectar situated on one of the top branches leaked a few drops which fell his way; so, the unfortunate man put out his tongue to catch a drop so that he may taste the delicious honey, But, no drop reached his tongue. In despair and terror, he called on his Guru, "O Guruji come and save me." The Guru who was passing by heard his appeal. He sped to the rescue; he brought bow and arrows and slew the lion and bear, frightened off the rats and saved the disciple from the fear of death. Then, he led the man to his own Ashram and taught him the path of liberation.

The Guru appears when you call out in all sincerity

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

When you call out in all sincerity, the response will certainly come. Give up all low desire and call from the anguished heart. Do not pray from the lips, as you do now, from the puja room which is but a corner of the kitchen. You worship the Lord with an eye on the dishes cooking on the oven, with a nose inhaling hungrily the smells of boiling curries. Your thoughts of God are vitiated by vishaya-vasana - the attachment to sensory objects. There is a vast gap between what you say and what you do, what you are capable of and what you accomplish. You have heard of Uttharakumara, who was a poltroon, in fact, but who boasted that he could overwhelm the enemy forces in a trice. He could hold forth for hours on the theory of battles, but, as to practice he had no iota of it. The inner motive which prompts the deed - that is what the Lord seeks to weigh. Abdullah was sleeping in a corner of a mosque in Mecca, when he was awakened by the conversation of two angels above his head. They were preparing a list of the Blessed and one angel was telling the other that a certain Mahbub of Sikandar city deserved to be ranked first, even though he had not come on pilgrimage to the Holy City. Hearing this, Abdullah went to Sikander City and found that he was a cobbler, repairing the shoes of people. He was famished and poor, for his earnings barely sufficed to keep flesh and bones together. He had by severe sacrifice piled up a few coppers during the course of years; one day, he spent the entire treasure to prepare a special dish which he proposed to place before his pregnant wife as a surprise gift. When he was proceeding home with the gift he heard the cry of a starving beggar who seemed to be in the throes of extreme hunger. Mahbub could not proceed any further; he gave the pot containing the costly delicacy to the man and sat by his side, enjoying the blossoming of satisfaction on his haggard face. That act gave him a place of honour in the register of the Blessed, a place which pilgrims to Mecca who spent millions of dinars in charity could not secure. The Lord cares for the feeling behind the act, not the fanfare and the fuss.

The Lord cares for the feeling behind the act

There was a small temple of Shrinath in the town of Govardhana, some centuries ago. A poor Brahmin of that place had an only son, a little boy of six, who was always exulting in the stories and legends of Krishna and who

delighted only in listening to the leelas of the Lord. One day, he went out into the meadows with the cattle and when he saw the temple and the image of Krishna. inside the shrine, he took it to be the Lord himself. He called out very piteously asking Krishna to come out and play with him in the moonlight. Though the doors were locked by the priest as he went out at noon, the Lord came and, hand in hand, the two walked along the fields in the cool silver light. Krishna had the flute and He sat on a boulder and played on it to the extreme delight of the Brahmin lad. After a few hours, He returned with the friend, whom He called 'brother' and, quite unnoticed, He disappeared into the temple shrine, where the idol could be seen through a slit in the door. The boy could not bear the pangs of separation from his Divine playmate; he spent the night and the morning crying outside the door and he was discovered there by his parents and the priest. The parents beat the boy for giving them so much trouble, but the priest found the idol bleeding as a result of the blow. If you call on him as a little brother, He responds and becomes rollicking playmate for you. Call on him as a Guru; He will instruct and inspire. He never fails those who call on Him sincerely and in faith.

Women are makers of the home,
the nation and the world.
You are the mothers
who shape the generation.
So you must enshrine in your heart
the spiritual urge toward
Light and Love,
Wisdom and Bliss.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba

58. Mother and Motherland

Date: 27 November 1965 / Location: Dharmavaram / Occasion: Zilla Parishad High School Day

I am happy I have come to this place to see so many thousands from this and surrounding villages. Externally as well as internally, there is so much of festivity today, so much of joy and cool content. Cultivate this atmosphere of love and co-operation, and you can ensure joy for ever more. Do not seek arguments to keep away from others; seek rather ways of working together for the common good. Ahamkaram and Mamakaram - the sense of I and Mine - these scotch love and co-operation. Reduce them to the minimum and then start serving the needy and the distressed.

Service is best built on the strong foundation of Thath-thwam-asi - That and This are the same; That is This; This is That. There is no Other; there is only One. Kites fly high; but all are lifted and kept high by the same air, the same wind. The kites have no separate wills. The pots of water in which the Sun is reflected may be many, but the Sun is One and unaffected, when the pots break or the water is dried up. All help you give is therefore help given to yourself; all service is to the Self alone. When another is poor, you cannot be rich; when another is in distress, you cannot have joy. The same current runs through and activates all. Isavasyam idam sarvam - all this is God; Vasudevassarvam idam - all this is Vasudeva (God), nothing more, nothing less.

Revere your mother and Motherland

This is the lesson that Bharath has been teaching her children, since ages. The Vedas say, Mathru devo bhava: Revere your Mother as God. This applies to the country which gave birth to you, also. So, you must revere the country and follow its culture. You must also revere your mother, who has brought you up with love, care and sacrifice. However famous a man may be, if he does not revere his mother, he does not deserve respect. A person whose heart is so hard that it does not melt at the pleadings of the mother deserves

nothing but ridicule. We have won freedom; the land has become free from those who ruled it for more than a century. But, though the rulers went, their influence still persists. The attitudes and habits of the West still dominate the mind of the educated and the leaders. We are still enamoured of the fashions current in the West, in dress, in language, in opinion, and in conduct. The dependence still continues, though we style ourselves as independent. The Sanathana Dharma (Eternal Religion), which is a diamond necklace on the breast of the Mother, is discarded and a plastic necklace sought to be substituted. The authorities of this School and members of the Committee must resolve to see that the children passing out realise the efficacy of Sanathana Dharma, to grant them peace, joy and courage. We see missionaries inspired by Christ moving thousands of miles away from their homes into lands with alien cultures, strange habits of food, drink, and dress, speaking unfamiliar languages and starting schools and hospitals to propagate their Dharma. They come to this country too, from far off lands. But, children of this ancient Dharma ignore, neglect and discard it, losing the valuable heritage left to us by the sages. Children in schools learn to recite, "Ba, ba, black sheep! Have you any wool?" in sheep-like imitation of English children. They are denied the chance to recite the sthothras (prayers) which the village schools of old encouraged children to sing. The sthothras were permanent possessions from which solace and strength could be drawn throughout life. "Ba ba, black sheep" is a ridiculous ditty, which has to be given up, as the child grows.

The source of strength is in yourself, the Atman

This does not mean that you should cultivate a dislike towards any language. While you should revere your own mother-tongue and learn to use it well, you should not develop hatred against the language of others. Protect your mother-tongue and Motherland with all your energy. Make yourselves fit for this, by making the best use of the opportunities in the school. Progress as much as you can, without hesitation. Develop character as well as intelligence and health. The most reliable source of strength is in you, not in money, or kinsmen, or physical acumen, but, in yourself, the Atman. Know it; delve into it; draw sustenance from it; see it in all; serve it in all. This is the stage when

you should learn the value of discipline. You can be disciplined only when the teachers, the parents, the leaders of society, all are disciplined. The entire nation must learn to control the wild nature of passions and emotions; yielding to them brings only ruin in its wake. Discipline, self-control, desire to serve - these are the weapons with which Pakistan and its ally, China, can be overpowered. This is the time for humility and prayer. In the altars of your homes, of the temples in your villages, of your own hearts, pray to the Almighty Lord to rescue and protect. That is a weapon that even the weakest can handle; that can defeat even the strongest enemy. I assure you nothing can bring harm to this ancient and noble mother of SanathanaDharma.

Love should not be rationed, on the basis of caste, creed or economic status, or intellectual attainment of the recipient.

It should flow full and free, regardless of consequence, for, it is one's nature of love, to seek out the dry dreary wastes which love can water and make fertile.

- Sri Sathya Sai Baba