



SRI SATHYA SAI INSTITUTE OF HIGHER LEARNING
(Deemed to be University)

SUMMER COURSE
in Indian Culture and Spirituality

2012



Dedicated to our Beloved Master,
Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba



SRI SATHYA SAI INSTITUTE OF HIGHER LEARNING

(Deemed to be University)

SUMMER COURSE in Indian Culture and Spirituality

8-10 June 2012 | Prasanthi Nilayam

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Preface

The Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning (SSSIHL) organized a Summer Course in Indian Culture and Spirituality from the 8th to 10th June 2012 at Prasanthi Nilayam, to mark the commencement of the new Academic Year. All the students and teachers of the Institute participated in this programme.

A Summer Course on this theme is perhaps the most appropriate way to commence the academic year for an Institution founded by Bhagawan Baba, akin to the ancient Gurukula System, offering values-based integral education. The Summer Course orients students to Bhagawan's educational philosophy and gives them deep insights into what they could imbibe while pursuing their higher learning from this unique Institution. It prepares them to make the best use of the extraordinary opportunity that lies ahead of them.

One of the methods of presenting these thoughts to students was by way of talks on topics that ranged from the salient features of our Indian culture, the philosophy and concepts of the ancient Gurukula system, the relevance of Sai Education philosophy in the contemporary world, the role of values and ethics in education to the Life sketch of Bhagawan as an ideal Student and an ideal Master, and the blending of science and spirituality.

Other components included specially produced video shows on Bhagawan Baba, interactive sessions and presentations based on select

Discourses of Bhagawan Baba from earlier Summer Courses, sharing experiences of being with Bhagawan Baba by devotees, quiz and cultural programmes, etc.

This book is a compilation of the talks delivered by young faculty, research scholars and alumni of the Institute during the three days of the Summer Course. We hope that this assemblage of thoughts on a number of related themes pertaining to Indian Culture and Spirituality will give the reader a glimpse of the vast and ancient wisdom of Bharat. To draw attention to Bhagawan's insights on these topics, select relevant excerpts from His discourses precede each of the talks.

It our earnest hope that this model of education as envisaged and brought to fruition by Bhagawan Baba will inspire other educational institutions to take up such initiatives and share the responsibility of transforming India into the glorious and effulgent Bharat of yore by moulding young minds and orienting them to our rich cultural and spiritual heritage.



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DISCOURSES PRECEDE EACH OF THE TALKS

The Genesis: Summer Course in Indian Culture and Spirituality

Bhagawan Baba organized Summer Courses in Indian Culture and Spirituality for the benefit of students. Typically, the Summer Course would be held in the latter half of May, and, except for one occasion, the venue had always been Brindavan. The main objective of the Course is to give students a strong dose of spirituality, which is achieved in part through lectures delivered by learned scholars, senior devotees and men of esteem. The highlight was the daily discourse by Swami, delivered typically in the evening.

Swami usually chose a theme for every Summer Course; for example, in 1976, Bhagawan's Discourse revolved mostly around the human aspects of the Krishna Avatar and in 1993, it was on the Mind.

Summer Courses in the 70s

The Summer Courses began in the early seventies. At that time, the student strength in Bhagawan's College being relatively small, participation in the Summer Course was open to students from all over India; including at times some overseas participants. However, once the Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning came to be established, participation in the Summer Course was confined to the students of the Institute and some select guests.

As in all such activities, Swami took complete charge. For the entire duration of the Summer Course, food was served free for all - students, teachers, guests, supporting staff, etc. Further, Bhagawan made sure that sweets and fruits of the season, were regularly distributed to one and all. Evening entertainment and cultural programmes were organized almost every day during the entire duration of the Summer Course.

1970s: An Overview

No.	Year	Theme
1	1972	Multiple Themes
2	1973	Adi Shankara and Bhaja Govindam
3	1974	Multiple Themes
4	1976	Mahabharata
5	1977	Ramayana
6	1978	Bhagavatam
7	1979	Bhagavad Gita

Summer Courses in the 90s

After a gap of 11 years, the Summer Courses were resumed once again at Brindavan in the year 1990.

1990s: An Overview

No.	Year	Theme
1	1990	The Glory of Indian Culture: Body, Mind, Buddhi; Egoism and Attachment; The Three Gunas; Self-Knowledge; Freedom; Vedic Wisdom
2	1991	The Upanishads
3	1992	Multiple Themes
4	1993	Shad Darshanas: Six Systems of Indian Philosophy
5	1996	Ramayana
6	2000	Multiple Themes
7	2002	Ramayana

For the benefit of posterity, the Divine Discourses delivered during the Summer Courses are compiled and published under the generic title: Summer Showers in Brindavan. The 1976 volume alone bears the title: Summer Roses in the Blue Mountains, as this was held in Ooty.

Welcome Note

Sri G S Srirangarajan

Controller of Examinations, SSSIHL

This two-and-a-half day summer course, though shorter in duration compared to the fifteen days long summer course organized by Bhagawan, is designed and structured along similar lines. Bhagawan used to organize the summer course in Indian Culture and Spirituality annually, first in the 1970s for around seven years and later in the 1990s for another nine years. The primary focus (both then and now) is to expose the students and all others, to the rich cultural and spiritual heritage of Bharat and to create awareness among us of the profound teachings and lofty ideals of life illustrated in our sacred scriptures and epics, and draw out the distilled essence of our ancient wisdom for practice in our day-to-day life.

Bhagawan refers to Indian culture as Bharatiya Samskruti because as He explains, “Bharat is not just the country India defined by some man-made geographical boundaries. Bharat stands for Bha- God and Rati-love. It is a land that promotes and nurtures love for God. Bharatiya culture stood for Sanathana Dharma, which prescribed the eternal blueprint for creation, stood for unity of all mankind as one family (*Vasudeva Kutumbakam*) and always prayed for universal welfare (*Samasta Loka Sukhino Bhavantu*). It recognized the divine principle immanent in all creation and therefore stressed on the principle of unity in diversity.”

The objective of giving vital inputs to students and others in Indian Culture and Spirituality will be partly achieved by inspiring talks

delivered by our young faculty and research scholars. The topics will cover the major scriptural epics and texts of Bharat like the Vedas, Upanishads, Ramayana, Mahabharata, Srimad Bhagavatam, Bhagavad Gita, Patanjali Yoga Sutras and the major tenets of Bharatiya philosophy. While the goal of summer course as a whole is to provide broad exposure, each speaker will deal with their topic in depth by focusing on a few significant lessons or aspects and elaborating on them. We will also have, as a part of the summer course, especially produced videos on Bhagawan Baba, interactive sessions with groups with intra and inter group presentations based on select discourses of Bhagawan in 1973 on Bhaja Govindam. Additionally, cultural and quiz programs and sharing of experiences with Bhagawan by senior faculty members, are all part of the Summer Course.

We hope that all will benefit immensely from the valuable inputs received in these two and half days. We pray to Bhagawan to bless this occasion and help us internalize and assimilate the insights of Indian Culture and Spirituality, and more importantly practice them in our day-to-day life.



Inaugural Address

Prof. J Shashidhara Prasad

Vice-Chancellor, SSSIHL

Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba, the *Yuga Avatar*, the personification of *Sanathana Dharma* (which are the pathways for recognizing divinity in one's Self and attain the ultimate truth), the embodiment of all religions had Himself initiated and guided the summer courses in Indian Culture and Spirituality in the 1970s. After a few years, these courses were discontinued. In 2010, the idea of reviving these courses was put before Swami. Brainstorming sessions were held for two days in the beginning of 2011, involving only the faculty. We were lucky to have been blessed by Swami in the annexure of *Yajur Mandir*¹. Swami blessed the deliberations by sitting for one full session and received *arati*. It was decided to organize the Summer Course in Indian Culture and Spirituality in the month of June (shortly after the University re-opened for the new academic year) where our students, faculty, research fellows and eminent speakers would share their thoughts.

The first programme was held in June 2011 in the absence of the physical presence of our beloved Swami. We wanted to continue this programme that was so close to His heart. All the more it gave us an opportunity to ponder over the great efforts undertaken by our loving and living God in reviving the *Sanathana Dharma*. The proceedings have been brought out very beautifully in the form of a book by my colleagues. We could feel the presence of Swami during the deliberations of the Summer Course.

1 Divine residence of Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba

This is the second Summer Course involving all the members of the Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning family. This program is very relevant in the present juncture, when our beloved Bhagawan has left the mortal coil and attained a cosmic, formless form. I hope that programmes of this kind will rekindle confidence and give us the faith to perform and carry out the legacy of Swami.

Indian heritage or *Bhartiya* culture has ingrained in it and in its existence a firm foundation of spiritualism, and in the past several centuries, it has been acquiring a new dimension. Several saints and philosophers have contributed in the evolution and spiritual upliftment of humanity. Out of the eight major world religions, four of them, namely Hinduism, Jainism, Buddhism and Sikhism have evolved here. The remaining four of Christianity, Islam, Judaism and Zoroastrianism have come from outside. Current religious studies indicate that almost all the outside religions have borrowed ideas and inspiration from *Sanathana Dharma*, exemplified by *Vedas* and *Upanishads*. It is believed by research findings that Jesus was in India, where he was inspired by our ancient texts and *Upanishads*. All these religions, living in close interactive proximity for several centuries have influenced each other deeply. All have partaken happily in the enriching plurality of *Sanathana Dharma* (which is another name for Hinduism), causing its expansion.

It has been responsible for inspiring great works of literature,

philosophy, metaphysics, architecture, music, dance, sculptor and theatre. We have two classical music forms – *Carnatic* and *Hindustani*, eight schools of classical dance – *Bharatanatyam*, *Kathak*, *Kathakali*, *Kuchipudi*, *Manipuri*, *Mohiniyattam*, *Odissi*, and *Sattriya*. All these music and dance forms have the same ethos, graciously loaded with religious and spiritual symbolism. We have different philosophies – *Advaitism*, *Vishishtadvaita*, *Dvaitism*, *Saivism* and *Vaishnavism*, but the underlying common thread is spiritualism and the pathway to God. We have saints like Jnanadev, Chaitanya, Namdev, Surdas and Meera who composed *abhangas* and devotional songs. *Dasvarenyas* like Purandaradasa and Kanakadasa created many *keerthanas*. Prominent figures like Basaveshwara, *Allama Prabhu* and Akka Mahadevi created *Vachanas*² and Bhajans in the native language that inspired entire communities into the bhakti movement. The contribution of Ramakrishna Paramahansa, Swami Vivekananda and the monastic order of Ramakrishna Paramahansa must be noted, for they aided the resurgence of *Bhartiya* Culture and spirituality. Rich folklore of different parts of this country – be it dance form or singing, is saturated with ecstatic joy and elicits the innate urge for self-realization and to reach the almighty.

Bhagawan took birth at such a critical juncture when irrepressible plurality was at stake. Swami declared that He has not come to start a new religion but establish the fact that every religion is a pathway to God. He expects every Hindu to be a true Hindu, every Christian to be a true Christian and every Muslim to be a true Muslim. The impact of the teachings of Swami on the devotees of different religions can be experienced by the reverential presentations by the followers of various religions, exhibiting communion with Swami. Examples of these include the dance by the Whirling Dervishes of Turkey; the meditations by the monks of Heenyan and Mahayana Buddhism; the melodious and soul-stirring music of Dana Gillespie, Christmas carols by the

2 A form of writing in Kannada which evolved in the 12th Century. Vachanas literally means “(that which is) said”. They are readily intelligible prose texts.

Christian community and the Vedic hymns chanted by the Hindus. There is active participation by members of all communities before Swami and now before the Sai Mahasamadhi, indicating the powerful innate plurality of the *Sanathana Dharma* for the redemption of which God has incarnated twice in this *Yuga* and is about to reincarnate again as Prema Sai. Even at the human level, our beloved Swami is a totally integrated and rounded personality with spiritual power and humane understanding, encompassing everything and everyone.

Swami stresses that every soul in essence has inherent divinity. This was exemplified to eleven of our scientists, including myself, in an interview in the year 2000. The real purpose of life is achieved when we identify with the inherent divinity within and attain self-realization. This is possible with purity, sacrifice and service. This has been time and again discussed by our beloved Bhagawan in His various discourses. Swami also taught us how to chant the Vedas, sing Bhajans and how to connect to Him.

After our Swami left His mortal coil to assume His cosmic form, wherever I go, the question that I continually face is, 'Does Swami continue to bless us and does He guide us? Coming from a scientific background, I want to make it clear that I also started as a doubting Thomas, believing that miracles should not be performed, but ended up believing in Swami as God. I believe that Swami encompasses the entire universe and that He is there for us in His subtle form to guide us. He will answer our prayers only if we have firm faith and surrender to Him. His presence is confirmed by His manifestations in the form of Vibhuti, honey and other such materializations. Recently, a number of such miracles have been happening in a village called Taila in Mandya district, Karnataka, where Swami is supposed to take his third Avatar. We can also appreciate His presence by realizing how he has been working in the minds of some people and in revelations to individuals in creating new institutions for carrying out His legacy.



The universe, and our mother earth in particular, is a creation of God, i.e. our Swami. The Creator and creation cannot be separated or distinguished. All the animate and the inanimate objects, and the laws of nature – be it physical, biological or chemical – which govern their behaviour, are all encompassed in the creator himself. Let us ponder over the beautiful concept of physics known as wave particle duality. The presence of any particle in gross form is identified in the probability amplitude of the wave which is the subtle form. As Swami is the law Himself, He can manifest in gross as well as subtle form. Just like the particle or the wave nature is observed depending upon the experimental situation, Swami's presence is observed by some and not by all depending upon the extent of the faith, surrender and connectivity.

As an example, Sri Sanjay Sahni drew our attention to the swinging of the *jhoola* by itself when a bhajan session was going on in Trayee Brindavan, in front of the *jhoola*. A few days ago I visited a Sai temple near Sri Rangapatnam, which was my base for testing the possibility of miracles in 1970 when I was of the view that miracles should not be performed. The miracles that I experienced four decades back are continuing with the same intensity. Sometimes, we find ourselves bothered by the fact as to why in the kingdom of God we face trials, tribulations, sorrows and difficulties. This can't be understood or solved by the presence of a personal God with form alone. The answer to this can be obtained if we are able to visualize the impersonal, formless God. This is one of the basic tenets of Vedanta. In Vedic literature, we come across a mythical bird called *Homa*, which was half male and half female, reminding me of *Ardhanareeswara*³. This has a mention in Persian mythology and Sufi fables as well. This bird is also supposed to be in perpetual flight without descending to the earth. It builds its nest in the sky and lays its eggs; the eggs fall from the nest, they break open and out come the young ones. The young ones open their eyes, the wings becoming strong and just when they are ready to crash on to

3 A form of Lord Shiva – half man and half woman

the earth, they fly with a bang and reach their mother.

This has a message for us all. Swami is now in His formless form encompassing the whole universe as cosmic energy. We should try to connect ourselves to His cosmic form; all of us bits and fragments of His totality, although we are living on this mother earth like the water on the lotus leaf. Then, we can experience and enjoy His presence in His impersonal aspect.

Our beloved Bhagawan always believed that students of His educational institutions are His property. He wanted the youth of this country to collectively take up the leadership and responsibility without foremanship and hierarchy, bearing in mind that one is working for the mission of Swami and wholeheartedly recognizing that all the achievements are due to His grace. Then, each one of us will be true to oneself. One of the important tenets of *Bharatiya* culture is described by the mantra *Atmano Mokshartham Jagadhitaya cha*⁴. I would like to stretch it little further; apart from attaining *moksha*, i.e. *moksha sadhana*, we should lead a simple, contended life and work for the welfare of society. We should bear in mind what Albert Einstein said: The world is a dangerous place, not because of those who do evil, but because of those who look on and do nothing.

Let us pray to Swami to bless us all in our endeavour to carry out His message and legacy.

4 For the emancipation of one's own self and for the welfare of the world

Excerpts from Bhagawan Baba's Discourses

On the Ramayana

The sacred epic Ramayana is verily the Veda descended from heaven to earth. The Veda is classified into four: *Rig Veda*, *Yajur Veda*, *Sama Veda*, and *Atharvana Veda*. The *Rig Veda* helps, sustains and protects the *yajnas* and *yagas*. In the Ramayana, Rama symbolises *Rig Veda*. Lakshmana signifies *Yajur Veda*, which contains mantras chanted during the performance of *yajnas* and *yagas*. When Rama was away in the forest, Bharata stayed in Nandigrama singing His divine Name day in and day out. Hence, he symbolises *Sama Veda*. Satrughna was the one who annihilated the satrus (enemies) and protected the pious. He was obedient to his brothers. He stands for *Atharvana Veda*. The essence of *Atharvana Veda* lies in destroying wickedness and fostering sacred feelings and activities.

The Ramayana is verily the Veda. The Veda is not different from the Ramayana. True humanness lies in understanding this. Rama, Lakshmana, Bharata, and Satrughna are the four sons of Dasaratha. Merely knowing this will not suffice. One should enquire and understand the inner meaning.

Who is Dasaratha? He represents the human body consisting of ten senses (five senses of perception and five senses of action). Strictly speaking, Rama, Lakshmana, Bharata, and Shatrughna are not the sons of Dasaratha and his three wives. We should not think that they were born like mere mortals. They are the *chaitanya swarupas* (embodiments of divine consciousness) who emerged from the sacrificial fire. They set an ideal to parents, brothers, and sisters in every family and to humanity at large.

Today, due to the impact of Kali age, there is no unity and love among brothers in a family. There are conflicts among them leading to disturbances. On the contrary, Rama, Lakshmana, Bharata, and



Shatrughna had total unity among themselves. They delighted others by their unity.

Rama Navami , 11 Apr 2003, Brindavan

Rama is the Indweller in every Body. He is the Atma-Rama, the Rama (Source of Bliss) in every individual. His blessings upsurging from that inner Spring can confer Peace and Bliss. He is the very embodiment of Dharma of all the Codes of Morality that hold mankind together in Love and Unity. Ramayana, the Rama story, teaches two lessons: the value of detachment and the need to become aware of the Divine in every being. Faith in God and detachment from objective pursuits are the keys for human liberation. Give up sense-objects; you gain Rama. Sita gave up the luxuries of Ayodhya and so, she could be with Rama, in the period of 'exile'. When she cast longing eyes on the golden deer and craved for it, she lost the Presence of Rama. Renunciation leads to joy; attachment brings about grief. Be in the world, but, not of it. The brothers, comrades, companions and collaborators of Rama are each of them examples of persons saturated with dharma. Dasaratha (the King) is the representative of the merely physical, with the ten senses. The three Gunas - Sathwa, Rajas and Thamas - are the three Queens. The four goals of life - the Purusharthas - are the four sons. Lakshmana is the intellect; Sugriva is viveka or Discrimination. Vali is despair. Hanuman is the embodiment of courage. The bridge is built over the ocean of delusion. The three Rakshasa chiefs are personifications of the Rajasic (Ravana), Thamasic (Kumbhakarna) and the Sathwic qualities (Vibhishana). Sita is *brahmajnana* or the awareness of the universal absolute, which the individual must acquire and regain undergoing travails in the crucible of life. Make your heart pure and strong, contemplating the grandeur of the Ramayana. Be established in the faith that Rama is the reality of your existence.

Introduction by Bhagawan, Ramakatha Rasavahini



Ramayana - The key to be near and dear to God

Sri S Sai Giridhar

Doctoral Research Scholar, Dept. of Chemistry, SSSIHL

*Ramaya Ramabhadraya Ramachandraya Vedase
Raghunathaya Nathaya Sithayaha pathaye namaha*

As I stand here, I see both veterans and youth of the Sai army seated.

Ramayana is the greatest epic ever witnessed in human history. No other story has been reproduced in as many versions, languages and varied cultures, across religious borders. I have a fact file, which says that depending on the method of calculation, as many as 300 versions of the Indian epic poem Ramayana are known to exist. The oldest version is, of course, the original version written by sage Valmiki in Sanskrit. Ramayana has spread to many Asian countries like Burma, Indonesia, Cambodia, Laos, Thailand, Philippines and China, to name a few. It has been translated into as many as eighteen Indian languages, including Sanskrit.

I found a very interesting statistic on a website called *Triangulations*. They conducted a study on the popularity of the Indian scriptures based upon thousands of websites and reached a conclusion that The Ramayana is by far the most popular of Indian scriptures all over the world.

Ramayana literally means the journey of Rama. How can a story that happened twenty thousand years ago continue to inspire the current generation? Another question arises – Is Ramayana still relevant today?

In a world where people are ready to do anything to earn name and fame, mother Kaikeyi stands out as a grand example. Lord Rama went up to mother Kaikeyi and said “Mother! I seek your help; I want you to do me a favour.” Mother Kaikeyi said, “Son! You are like my very life breath, I can give my life for you, ask me what you want.”

The Lord then replied, “Mother! What I am going to ask of you is much more than giving up your life. No mother in eons to come will ever name their child after you. Your name will be tarnished for eternity. Are you ready to take up such a task for me?”

Mother said, “My dearest Rama, name and fame are insignificant compared to the mission that you have come to accomplish. I am ready to do anything for you.”

This is how she took the blame of sending the Lord into exile for fourteen years. Mother Kaikeyi is more relevant to us today than ever before.

In a society that is torn by factionalism, which knows only the language of revenge, Angada is a distinctive, great example. He knew perfectly well that his father was slain by Lord Rama himself, yet he fought in Lord Rama’s army like none other, for he knew that dharma was on Rama’s side. He completely surrendered to Lord Rama and was a mighty challenge to any *asura* that came across him.

In a world where friendship is measured by the size of the pocket or by the number of friends that we have on social networking sites, Jatayu stands out as a grand example. He gave up his life trying to protect mother Sita from Ravana in order to honour his friendship to King Dasaratha. Jatayu is more relevant to us today than ever before.

Lord Brahma had told sage Valmiki: *yavat sthasyati girayaha saritasya mahi tale, tavat ramayani katha lokashu pracharishyati*. As long as the mountains and rivers exist, the story of Ramayana will continue to inspire every single individual on the face of the earth. Bhagawan explains this śloka and says that by mountains, Lord Brahma meant men and by rivers he meant women. As long as men and women exist on this earth, Ramayana will serve as a beacon light of hope for each and every one of us.

Today, we will not get into the story or the chronology of the events in the Ramayana. Rather, I am here to share a grand revelation that Bhagawan had made. Once, in Kodaikanal, Bhagawan asked us, “Who are the five most dearest to Rama?” We gave all kinds of answers like Hanuman, Laksmana, Vibhishana, etc. Bhagawan was not satisfied with the answers and said, “Give me the exact five.” Finally we gave up and the Lord Himself summarized the five nearest and dearest to Him. He said, “These five had complete surrender to Lord Sri Rama.” He continued, “The five are – Kausalya Supraja Rama, Vaidehi Priya Rama, Ahalyodharaka Rama, Hanumath Sevitha Rama and Bharatagraja Sri Rama.”

These five revealed to us the grand secret of being near and dear to the Lord himself:

ONE:

Kausalya Supraja Rama: King Dasaratha and mother Kausalya were King Manu and Queen Kshtroopa. As Manu and Kshtroopa had done intense penance and the Lord himself had manifested in front of them

and granted them a boon, together they both asked the Lord that they want somebody just like Him to be born as their child. The Lord smiled and said that in this entire cosmos there is none like Him. So the Lord decided that He Himself would come as their child. Thus Manu and Kshtroopa were born as Dasaratha and Kausalya and Lord Sri Rama was born to them. But mother Kousalya as Kshtroopa had asked for an additional boon. She said, "Lord! In all your *bala leelas*, I might forget who you are, so please grant me an additional boon that I should have absolute faith and conviction about who you are." This too was granted to mother Kousalya. Mother Kousalya represents the very epitome of equanimity in the face of pain and pleasure, joy and sorrow. Though she played her role in the divine drama, be it the patabhishekam, the coronation ceremony, or exile into the forest, she was absolutely aware and inside she was like the deep placid sea. The qualities of absolute equanimity, unconditional love and acceptance for whatever Rama said brought Kausalya near and made her dear to the Lord.

TWO:

Vaidehi Priya Rama: The next personality who was near and dear to the Lord as Bhagawan said is mother Vaidehi or Sita. She was not only dear to Lord Rama because she was his *ardhangini* or better half, but there was a deeper, inner significance to this. Bhagawan once was speaking to MBA students in Ganesh Portico (Sai Kulwant Hall). It was the beginning of the year and the students were pleading Bhagawan to grant them a class interview. Bhagawan as usual smiled and said, "You all get your wives, then I will grant you an interview." Students knew that He always jokes with them, so they continued with their pleading.

Bhagawan was walking away and as He heard them continuing with their pleading, He stopped, turned towards them and asked, "Are you understanding what I am saying?" He added, "Your mind is your wife, atman is the husband." When there is perfect understanding between the mind and the atman, there will be peace and harmony at home, which is the human body. Bhagawan also said that if the mind goes



in one direction and the atman goes in another direction, the result is diverse (pun). He beautifully gave the significance of Sita Rama *kalyanam*.¹ He said that Sita represents the mind and Lord Rama represents the atman. The marriage is the submission of the mind to the wisdom of conscience.

But how did this happen? There is an intermediary for this confluence of mind and atman to occur. Bhagawan beautifully describes how the marriage of Sita and Rama had actually taken place, which is not found in any of the scriptures. Bhagawan says that mother Sita was short in height compared to Lord Rama and was waiting to garland him for the marriage to be complete. But Lord Rama had taken a vow that He will never bow his head in front of anyone except his mother and his guru. He was looking straight into oblivion and mother Sita was trying her best to garland Lord Rama; but in vain. In that very moment Rama glances to Lakṣmana; and Lakṣmana immediately recognizes it, as he represents *sookshma buddhi* (sharp intellect). He falls at Rama's feet and as Rama bends down to pick him up, mother Sita garlands him. Hence the marriage was complete. For the marriage of the mind and atman (conscience) to take effect, what is important for us is to turn our *buddhi* or intellect inwards. Buddhi is a channel between our mind and our conscience.

In fact when Swami declared that these five were dearest to Rama, one of the elders seated asked Swami, "How come Lakṣmana didn't make it into this list. He dedicated his entire life to Rama and served him incessantly." Swami smiled and said, "Bangaru! Lakṣmana is not different from Rama. He is like a shadow, wherever Rama goes, Lakṣmana will follow and hence Rama and Lakṣmana are inseparable."

That is why we see that wherever there is an idol of Sita and Rama, Lakṣmana has to be present there. So for the confluence of mind and conscience, buddhi too is essential. Hence Sita was dearest to Lord

¹ Marriage



Rama as she completely surrendered to the wisdom of the Lord. The lessons learnt from mother Sita is to follow the conscience and practice discrimination to be near and dear to our Lord Sai Rama.

THREE:

Ahalyodharaka Rama: We all were surprised as there are many mighty personalities in Ramayana like Vibhishana, Angada and Sugriva. However, what we miss to notice in this grand epic is that there are a few wonderful devotees of the Lord whose mention in the story is negligible but their devotion to the Lord is of epic proportions. Mother Sabari is one such devotee. She was told by her guru Matanga Muni that one day, the Lord Himself will come to her hermitage. With complete faith in her guru's words she would clean the entire hermitage, make a seat ready for the Lord to sit on, pick wonderful flowers, and get the tastiest of fruits ready for Him. She did this everyday for years as she did not know on what day or time her Lord would arrive. She is the very embodiment of purity, patience and perseverance; qualities that are dearest to Bhagawan.

Mother Ahalya too knowingly or unknowingly committed mistakes, but the moment she came to know that her redemption lies at the touch of the lotus feet of the Lord, she forgot all her agony. She was transported into transcendental bliss. In that moment, she vowed to be dedicated in unending love and devotion to the Lord and undertook an eternal wait. Patience and perseverance are grand ideas that can take us near and dear to the Lord. What is important is not only to have purity, patience and perseverance, but also to be ready to be transformed in the Lord's hands. This is the reason all of us have been given the opportunity to be in this divine portal. We have committed ourselves here to be transformed in the divine hands and become the agents of transformation for the rest of the world.

FOUR:

Hanumath Sevitha Rama: The next personality is my personal favour-



ite. Service is dearest to the Lord, and who has served Him more diligently with absolute pure love like Hanuman? We all know the story that after Rama's *Pattabhishekam*², Lakṣmana, Bharata, Shatrughna and mother Sita had all divided various responsibilities among themselves, and in doing so they completely neglected Hanuman's name in any of these responsibilities for they felt that Hanuman had served Rama enough. So in the royal durbar, as the responsibilities were being read out, Hanuman was patiently listening to each and every duty in service to the Lord and his name never came up even once. Stunned, he walked up to the Lord with moist eyes and said, "Lord! What is the duty that I have to perform? How can I be of service to you?" The Lord in His divine drama said, "I have nothing to do with this list; it was made by Lakṣmana, Bharata and others; you please ask them."

Hanuman, because of his pure love for the Lord was divinely inspired with an idea. He requests Rama to grant him a very small and trivial job. Everyone was eager to know about the job that they had missed out, but one that Hanuman is able to recognize, however trivial it might be. Hanuman immediately said, "When the Lord yawns, let me be there to snap my fingers for Him." Lakṣmana, Bharata and the others did not recognize the consequences of this and readily agreed to it, thinking that it is a very small, trivial job as the Lord will yawn only a few times in a day.

They soon learnt that Hanuman was all over the place. Wherever Lord Rama went, Hanuman followed him. Others stopped Hanuman and asked, "What is it that you are doing? You said that you will only snap your fingers when the Lord yawns, and now you are walking behind Him, following Him wherever He goes." Hanuman smiled and submitted very humbly, "How do I know when my Lord will yawn; so I have to be with him all the time." That is his love for the Lord.

Once to test Hanuman, Rama started praising Lakṣmana in Hanuman's

² Coronation

presence. Rama said, “There is none who served me like Lakṣmana. If I have to single out one person who has done extraordinary service to me all through these years, it is Lakṣmana and none other.” One would expect that Hanuman will think, “What is it that Lord is saying, it is I who got the *Sanjeevani parvat* and revived Lakṣmana, it is I who crossed the ocean and found where mother Sita is.” But these thoughts never occurred to Hanuman. In that very moment, the thought that came to him was, “My Lord is indicating to me that Lakṣmana has served me diligently, you have served me enough, now spend some time in serving Lakṣmana too.” From that moment onwards Hanuman started dedicating some of his time in serving Lakṣmana. That was his attitude of selfless service to the Lord without a trace of ego. He is the true example of how Bhagawan expects us to be, i.e. to go from *dasoham* to *soham*.

When Hanuman went to Ravana’s court and Ravana enquired, “Who are you, introduce yourself to me O! monkey.” Hanuman did not say that he is the strongest person in the world with all the *astha siddhis* at his disposal. He said, ‘*Dasoham Kosalendrasya*’ – I am the servant of Lord Rama. When Rama asks him, “Who are you Hanuman, you are dedicating yourself in such selfless love and service to me. Hanuman said, “Lord! When I think I am the body, I am your servant, when I identify myself with my mind, I am your humble devotee, and at the Atmic level, I and you are one.”

This is what is implied by the name Hanuman. It can be divided into three parts – H-ANU-MAN. H represents “His”; ANU in Sanskrit represents “atomic”; meaning the Lord’s atomic form is MAN. Hanuman was constantly aware of this truth, so he verily represents the journey from *dasoham* to *soham*.

FIVE:

Bharatagraja Sri Rama: The next personality who was dearest to Rama was His younger brother Bharata. One day in their childhood, all the



four brothers were playing a particular game. In the middle of the game, Bharata came running to mother Kausalya and started weeping. Kausalya enquired whether he had lost the game (as he was weeping). Bharata replied, "No mother, every time Rama wins, but this time He deliberately lost so that I could win, and I can't accept this." What an ideal feeling of brotherhood! Bharata dedicated himself to the life of a hermit, because he could not imagine his brother living such a life in the forest of *Dandakaranya*.

What did he do in those fourteen years of separation? Every single moment he contemplated on Lord Sri Rama. Bharata's contemplation was so intense that when Lord Sri Rama returned after fourteen years to Ayodhya, no one – including the three mothers – could tell the difference between Bharata and Rama. They looked absolutely the same. *Saroopyam*, Bhagwan says, is the result of constant contemplation of the Lord during His physical separation. *Saroopyam* also means absolute surrender to the Lord's words. Whenever any task came Bharata's way, he would think what Rama would do regarding this task. He used to contemplate that if he performed that task in a particular manner, would it please Lord Rama? This inspired him in all his actions and in the end, Bharata's life became Rama's message.

Bhagawan says that adherence to the Lord's lotus feet and to become one with Him is to follow His words diligently.

Earlier this year, when we went to Himalayas, we met a sadhu; a yogi. He said, "You are all fools if you think that the Lord has left you, because the Avatar is not just this beautiful form but it is the name and this name is eternal. His words are eternal."

He added, "In order to gain proximity and dearness to the Lord, constantly contemplate on His form, constantly chant His name and more importantly follow His footsteps, follow His words. In following His words, you will find that He is not just walking beside you, but He



is walking through you."

Do constant contemplation (*Nitya Chintana*) and follow the master to have darshan of the feet of the guru (*tat padam darshetamyena*). Swami says Guru means *gunateeta* and *roopavarjita*, meaning one who is beyond attributes and one who does not have a form. How would the lotus feet of one who has no form look like? Bhagawan explains that the lotus feet of the guru signify His message, His life. Many a time He has told us that *His life is His message* and that to worship and have *darshan* of His lotus feet implies that we follow His footsteps and make our life His message.

I pray to Bhagawan that each of us should gain inspiration from these personalities from the wonderful epic Ramayana and imbibe those values in our day-to-day lives and become nearest and dearest to Him.



Excerpts from Bhagawan Baba's Discourses

On the Mahabharata

Krishna operates “Cancer” in the body politic

Dharmaraja once asked Krishna: “Krishna! Why did you bring about this disastrous war for the sake of this contemptible rulership over a kingdom? Forty lakhs of warriors died in this battle. Only the Pandavas have survived. Is there any justice in sacrificing the lives of forty lakhs of men for the sake of the five Pandavas?” Krishna replied “Dharmaraja! You are looking at the numbers involved, I am looking at the principles at hand. Can any crores of insects equal a lion?

“*Kurukshestra* is comparable to the body. *Kuru* means work. The body is the instrument of action. Because it is the field in which action takes place, it is called *Kshetra* (field). Supposing in the back of the body, there is a gangrene. If it is allowed to grow, it will spread throughout the body. If the gangrene is on the arm or the leg, you can remove it by the amputation of the limb concerned. But when it is in the back, how do you deal with it? A major operation will be necessary. Likewise, the evil qualities in the Kauravas were like cancer in the body politic. If they had been ignored, the entire nation would have got infected. Hence, acting as a surgeon, I carried out the operation of the Mahabharata war, with Arjuna as my assistant. In the process, forty lakhs of “microbes” died. For the sake of saving these microbes should we let the patients die? To save the individual you have to eliminate the cancerous microbes. Likewise, persons with evil qualities are like cancer cells. I saved the nation by destroying these bacteria. There is no sin in this,” declared Krishna.

*Prasanthi Nilayam Campus Hostel,
Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning, 21 Feb 1988*

The Pandavas adhered to righteous norms and were loyal to Sri Krishna, whom they revered as God. On their behalf, Arjuna hurried to Dwaraka to secure the most precious armament they knew, namely, Krishna's blessings. When Duryodhana knew that Arjuna had left for Dwaraka, he wanted to forestall his enemy and journeyed to Dwaraka as fast as he could. The Divine Play-actor sensed the approach of the rival claimants for his favour. So, he quietly laid himself on the bed and pretended to be fast asleep.

Arrogance versus Faith

Krishna was amused at the restlessness of the Kaurava supplicant, who dared to eject a few fake coughs in order to awaken him. Arjuna, however, was struggling to breathe softly and silently. At last, Krishna sat up and noticing Arjuna facing him with folded palms accosted him with his characteristic sweetness. "Oh! when did yogi arrive? How do you do? How is Draupadi? And your brothers?" Duryodhana was consumed by envy, anger and pride. Krishna stoked the fire. He enjoyed the scene, this picture and that. "An Emperor has honoured his home! Yet this bundle of conceit talks to that commoner so long and so fast, as if I am nonexistent," thought Duryodhana. "Is this the way of treating his guests?" he asked himself.

At that moment, Krishna turned to him, with the question, "When did you arrive? Are your parents doing well? How are your brothers faring?" Duryodhana replied, "The war, will soon be on. I seek your help." On hearing this, Krishna questioned Arjuna, "What are you seeking?" Arjuna replied, "I seek your blessings." Krishna designed a dilemma for both. Krishna proposed to give his army of ten thousand warriors to one party and himself alone to the other. "I shall not wield any weapon. I will not fight. At least, I can serve as a charioteer. Now, announce your choice", said Krishna to Arjuna. Duryodhana was furious. "This is a calculated insult, allowing him to choose," he said to himself. "The ten thousand will be his and I will be burdened with a

dark-skinned log,” he feared.

Preferring the Lord’s grace ensures victory

Krishna wanted Arjuna to decide which of the two he wanted. “I saw you first, so you choose first”, Krishna prodded Arjuna. Duryodhana was on tenter-hooks. Arjuna placed his head on the Feet of Krishna and said, “You are all we need.” He knew that Krishna was God, the embodiment of power, wisdom and Love. He pleaded, “Be the Charioteer of my vehicle and, I pray, for the journey of my Life as well.” Duryodhana was relieved. He preferred Nature to Nature’s Master. He led the ten thousand to his camp. Arjuna had God, installed before him in the chariot, guiding him to Victory. Duryodhana was punished with defeat, death and disgrace for preferring the world to God, who is its life-breath.

*Auditorium, Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning,
Prashaanthi Nilayam, 11 Jul 1985*



Insights from Mahabharata

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*Yatra Yogeshwarah Krishno, Yatra Partho Dhanurdhara
Tatra Shreer Vijayo Bhooti, Dhruvaa Neetir Matir Mama.*

Where there is *Yogeshwarah* (Krishna) and *Dhanurdhara* (Arjuna), there exists prosperity, success and justice.

This is a fantastic couplet from Mahabharata, which Swami often refers to. Mahabharata is relevant to every citizen of this world. *Maha* means great and *Bharata* means one who belongs to this country or one who understands the perspective of this nation.

Swami has told us the greatness of this country. He says:

Khanda Khandāntara khyāati nār chinchina mahaneeyulanu ganna mātru bhoomi

Pāschātya veerula para drōlinchiyu, swatantrayamunu ganna samara bhūmi

Paandithyamuna Chaala Prakhyāathi Ganchiya Prathibha Choopinchina Bharata bhūmi

Sangeeta Sābithya sāstriya vidyala, dheeshakti chūpina divya bhūmi

Chitra kalalatooda Chitra kalalatooda chitramai unnatti bharata bhoomi yandu jananamūndi

Bharata mata dharma bhāgyambukaapada bhādya tantayu meedae bhaktu lāra

This land of Bharat is the motherland for great people, who acquired name and fame in different continents. This land of Bharat is the battlefield where the warriors of the foreign country were driven out and freedom from foreign rule was acquired. This land of Bharat has acquired great name and fame for erudite scholarship. The land of Bharat is a divine land which has produced great intellectuals in the fields of music, art, literature and various sciences. Having been born in such a great land that is Bharat, Oh Devotees! The responsibility to protect and uphold the righteousness of this country is yours.

At the trip to Kodaikanal in 1992, which I was fortunate to be part of, Swami said that to know the culture of this country, all that you need to know is the stories of the sages and seers and the great heroes of this country. The Mahabharata is infested with such heroes.

What comes to our mind if we think of the Mahabharata?

Several instances flash in front of our minds. Moments of intensity; be it sorrow, ecstasy, happiness or celebration:

- » Krishna reminding Duryodhana and the Kauravas about the dire consequences of Dharmaja's anger.

*Algutayee yerungani mahamahitmajatashatuvve algina naadu
Saagarambulu ekambu kakapovu.*



When a person like Dharamaja who does not have any enemies due to his goodness, loses temper, the oceans will unite.

- » Bhisma falling (in the battlefield) after being hit by the arrows of Arjuna, which was the consequence of him keeping bad company.
- » The Bhagavad Gita being delivered to Arjuna. This depicts the tremendous dilemma that Arjuna went through for the sake of the world. Arjuna *vishada*¹ became Vishad Yoga as he did not have even an iota of selfishness in his sadness. When our tears flow for humanity it becomes Yoga hence it is called Arjuna Vishad Yoga.

Pashyami devam tava deva deha sarvamstatha bhoota visesa sanghan

Na antam na madyam na punastavadim pasyami visweswara vishwa roopa

Arjuna was able to perceive all the Gods – Brahma, Vishnu, Maheswara, Maruts, Rudras and all creatures in the divine cosmic form. He perceived neither the beginning nor the end in the vision granted to him.

- » Karna's valour, and (despite which) his eventual fall.
- » Bhima's unmatched strength. Whenever Bhima entered into battle, to match him in strength, the *gaja sena* (army of elephants) was directed to him by the Kauravas.
- » Vidura's advice falling on deaf years of Dhritarashtra. Dhritarashtra was a prominent character in Mahabharata. There is a small example for this. Whenever one doesn't get sleep due to restlessness or turmoil in one's mind, generally a sleeping pill is taken. Similarly, Dhritarashtra used to take the sleeping pill of Vidura's counsel whenever he was in a dilemma, whenever he was not able of

¹ Despondency



distinguish between *swadharma* and *paradharma*. Vidura used to pacify Dhritarashtra by his good words but next day he was back to his old self, without any improvement.

- » The various curses of sages that resulted in the gradual reduction of the Kauravas' strength. For example, Karna coming under the curse of sage Parasurama or Duryodhana coming under the curse of Gautama Maharishi. When Gautama Maharishi meets Dhritarashtra to counsel him on giving the Pandavas their rightful share (of the kingdom), Duryodhana enters without permission and strikes his thighs, thus insulting the sage. The sage curses him that he will meet his end by someone breaking his thighs, which came true.
- » Bhima strongly advising Dharmaraja by saying, “Let us not keep our hands tied and sit silently, let us go to war righteously.”

Kondalu pindijeyagala kurimi tammula mina memu ni andaga nunda

(I was fortunate enough to hear this from Swami when I had the chance to be a director of one of the dramas.)

Bhima says that all four of us are ready to fight on your side. One another occasion Bhima says: *Krishna Paramatmaudu pettani kota vale neekunda*, meaning, Lord Krishna is like an invisible fort protecting you all the time.

Ranammu lona jayonnati gurpaganenchuchunda, meaning, O! Dharmaja! Pandavas are ready to go to battle; please don't stop now and do not take any weak decisions.

These are the intense moments that come to our mind. Also there are raging controversies, but really, Mahabharata is not meant for these things. There are much greater insights in it. Swami has said that historians and intellectual perverts have distorted the very theme of



this great epic and therefore there is a need for us to study Mahabharata.

The motto of Mahabharata is *how to live in peace*. Krishna was never a warmonger; he always wanted all to live in peace. He never tried to fight with Indra when he was in Gokul or with Jarasandha in Madhura; He always tried to avoid war and the killing of innocent people. He requested the ocean Lord to give way and shifted overnight from Mathura to Dwaraka in order to avoid mindless battles.

At the battle of kurukshetra, Krishna never took to weapons. He always lived a life of simplicity and hard work. However, Krishna was never allowed to live in peace, and right from his birth he was haunted by demons, be it at Brindavan or Mathura. In spite of this, he always kept a cheerful face, which is a lesson we have to learn from him.

Swami always says, “Be cheerful and don’t put on castor oil faces.”

What is the quintessence of the Mahabharata?

Two words are continuously stressed which are *Swadharma* and *Paradharma*. Swami has given a very novel and wonderful meaning to these terms. Many people describe *Swadharma* as dharma pertaining to your *varna* (profession) or the culture of the land to which you belong to and *Paradharma* as the dharma of other lands, which are very narrow definitions, according to Bhagawan.

Swami says, “*Swadharma nidhanam shreyaha paradharma bhayavahaha*,” meaning, *Swadharma* is the Dharma of the atman. This means that whenever we meet someone, we have to believe that the principle by which we are driven – which is the atmic principle, is also present in that human being. When people deviated from this and gave more importance to *varna* dharma or the dharma of profession and used it for their selfish deeds like Dronacharya or Eklavya, it became *bhayavaha* which means fearsome. Krishna never killed anybody; it was their karma that killed them; this is a very important lesson from



Mahabharata.

Swami would use examples to explain concepts, bringing smiles on all the faces present there, and I was fortunate to be one of them. Examples, according to him, were heart-filling.

Swami quoted the following śloka of Bhagavad Gita:

*Sarvadharman parityagya mamekam sharanam vraja
Aham tvam sarvapapebhyo mokshayisyami masucah*

(Abandon all varieties of religion and just surrender unto Me. I shall deliver you from all sinful reaction. Do not fear.)

He elaborated on this with a beautiful example. He said, “When we have too many coins like a hundred one rupee coins, we go to the banker; the banker gives us back a fresh hundred rupee note. The value has not diminished but on the contrary it has become very light. Similarly, by offering our professional dharma, household dharma etc. to the Lord, we feel light and it becomes easy for us to follow our dharma.” According to Swami, *parityajya* doesn’t mean abandoning dharma but rather offering it to Him.

Sarva Karma Bhagavad Preetyartham (let all your actions be pleasing to God) is the essence of the Mahabharata.

From an academic standpoint, why should we read the Mahabharata?

Veda Vyasa said, “People in the Kali age are of a very short life span, they live for only one hundred years! Their intellectual levels are not very high and cannot penetrate the deep aspects of the Vedas and the Upanishads; they have no patience and perseverance; therefore there is a need to compose a text which imbibes all the knowledge of all the Śāstras.”

Hence he wrote the Mahabharata.

Mahabharata is like a capsule. If you want to take medicine, generally it is very bitter and difficult to swallow; hence it is put in a sweet pill and swallowed so that the bitterness is not felt but the medicine has its effect on the body. Mahabharata is like a sweet capsule where all the teachings of the śāstras are put. Mahabharata is considered as the *Pancham veda*, says Swami. Vedas are *apourusheya*, i.e., not composed by a human being. The same status has been given to the Mahabharata because most of the prominent characters of Mahabharata didn't have a natural birth, be it Pandavas, Kauravas, Drustadyumna or Draupadi. Swami also says *yenna bharate tanna Bharata*, what is not in this land of *Bharath* is not there anywhere else.

Let me share here a small anecdote often quoted with regard to the Mahabharata:

All the Gods wanted to determine the power of the Mahabharata, so they put all the Vedas in one pan of a scale and the Mahabharata in the other. They found the Mahabharata heavier not because of number of pages but because of the value it can give to humanity. On a lighter note, the Ramayana is very popular no doubt, but the Mahabharata has the essence of every śāstra, hence one must read Mahabharata.

Mahabharata is a delightful text for poets as it is very beautifully written. It is an enchanting experience to go through this text for a person of literature. There are around 1,00,000 verses in the Mahabharata out of which 24,000 alone describe the story of Pandavas and Kauravas. The remaining 76,000 verses pertain to *upakathas* – short stories that emanated during the conversations between prominent characters such as Dharmaja and the sages and seers during the *aranya vasa*², Narada and Dhritarashtra (*Neeti Vakyas*), etc. Therefore, three-fourths of Mahabharata teaches us the good lessons and things about life and

2 Stay in forests

not the battle as we often presume. Unfortunately however, we have learned people with myopic vision trying to divert the attention of generations of the country by providing a false view of Mahabharata. Geetacharya or Sri Krishna who descended as our Swami, has given enough instances and insight into the Mahabharata. This is one more very important reason why we should read Mahabharata.

Let us delve into some insights of the Mahabharata.

Poorvataapi and *Paschataapi*: *Poorvataapi* is the one who broods over an event before it has even occurred and *Paschaatapi* is the one who laments after the event has occurred. Swami says *chetulu kalinaaka aakulu pattukodamu*, i.e., resort to medicinal leaves after the hands are burnt. Dharmaja is a best example of this. On the other hand, Arjuna went into depression even before the commencement of the war, and his depression became a lesson for many of us. Mahabharata is not only a text about principles; it is also about strategy, good politics. It is *moksha śāstra* and *arthsha śāstra*, all rolled into one.

Why Arjuna alone was given the Bhagavad Gita?

Swami clarified this very beautifully. He said that unlike Dharmaja, Arjuna was a *Poorvataapi*. To know more about Arjuna's character we should look into the following. Arjuna faced a similar situation on two occasions. First, while teaching archery to the Pandava and Kaurava princes, Dronacharya, pointing to a bird on a tree asks them, "what do you see"? Arjuna replies that he is able to see only the bird and nothing else whereas others were able to see the branches of the tree, a mountain behind it, a lake in the backdrop, in addition to the parrot. Arjuna had the focus and concentration, and hence he deserved the Bhagavad Gita.

The second instance is when once, Krishna takes Arjuna for a stroll just before the commencement of the war and points out to the top of a



tree and asks him, “What do you see?”

Arjuna replies, “Lord! I am able to see a parrot.”

Krishna says, “Look carefully, it is not a parrot, it is a crow.”

Arjuna replies, “Yes, Lord it is a crow.”

Krishna adds, “It is a crane.”

Arjuna replies, “Yes Lord it is indeed a crane.”

Krishna is a little surprised and asks, “Tomorrow is the war and you are not sure, what is there on the tree. How can we fight a battle if you are in this state of mind?”

Arjuna replies, “I have more faith in your words than in my vision because if I say that it is not a parrot, you have the power to change it into a parrot.” This tremendous *daiva bhakti* and *guru bhakti* of Arjuna gave him the deservedness to receive the Bhagavad Gita directly from the Lord.

Swami also mentions nearness and dearness. Once, some of us were sitting around Swami, and one asked, “Swami, is it enough if we all chant your name in our hearts, regardless of whether we are physically close to you or not.”

Swami said, “No, it is wrong. My physical aspect is as powerful as the formless aspect. You have to be close to me and also dear to me like the example of coal and fire. If coal is kept away from fire, it will not catch fire, or fire will not enter it. It has to be near the fire, i.e. nearness. It should have the capability to allow the fire to enter itself, which is dearness. Nearness means thinking about God and dearness means following Swami’s ideals in real life.” When these two are present, God automatically takes the devotee into His hands, which happened in the case of the Pandavas.

Gandhari asked Krishna, “Both the Pandavas and the Kauravas are related to you; then how come you are so biased towards the Pandavas?”

Krishna replies, “Mother! You have been tying a cloth to your eyes all the while. Sons who have not experienced the looks of their own mother, how can they experience the *kataksha* or the grace of the Lord?” The Pandavas were like Krishna’s limbs. On the other hand, the Kauravas never respected His words.

Unity is another aspect very beautifully portrayed in the Mahabharata. Dharmaraja once said to Krishna, “when an outsider comes face to face with us we are one hundred and five, but if there is an issue between us we are just five and they are one hundred.”

This portrays Dharmaja’s deep commitment to unity. On another occasion, the Pandavas are going for *vanavasa* when Dharmaja calls aside Draupadi and tells her, “Life in the forest is not easy; I suggest that you stay back and serve Gandhari and Dhritarashtra.” This is the nobility of Dharmaraja. Although Dhritarashtra caused a lot of misery to the Pandavas, Dharamaja continued to respect him. Even after the war, Dhramaraja took care of Gandhari and Dhritarashtra.

Another very important aspect is bad company. It is very difficult to identify bad company as everything looks very good in the beginning and when one realizes this fact, it is too late. Karna is an excellent example for this.

*Karnudu antati vadu kadapadiki ami aaye
Bhujabalamu buddhibalam anni undiyu
Daiva balam leka khinnudagunu*

Without the grace of God, if one has intellectual powers, the knowledge of śāstras or great physical strength, it is of no use. The grace of God is very important.

Dronacharya agreed to be the preceptor for Bhishmacharya as he had a lot of reverence him. However, in the court, when Draupadi was



being insulted, Drona looked up to Bhishma for support. Bhishma maintained silence. Had Bhishma and Drona been firm, stating that they will not allow this to happen, the Mahabharata war would not have taken place. As our revered Vice-chancellor said, bad happens because the good don't get up and speak. This is a very important lesson from Mahabharata. Swami illustrates another incident to bring out the impact of bad company.

After the war was over, Krishna took the Pandavas to Bhishmacharya, who was on the bed of arrows, for a good counsel from him. At that point, Draupadi smiles – which enrages Dharmaja, Bhima and Arjuna. However, Bhishma says, “Draupadi is not an ordinary lady.

*Patula palumaatalaku eduru cheppangabodu
vaari sevalu seyaaga teeradanadu
tanaku unnadanito truptiganuchundu
Draupadiki saateye pativratayu leedu*

i.e., there is no woman as chaste as Draupadi.”

On one occasion Swami called upon a boy and asked him to sing this song and made him stress on the word Draupadi. This shows how passionate Swami was in explaining the chastity of Draupadi. Draupadi took care of the Pandavas during the exile. Let us throw some light at this juncture on the sterling qualities of Draupadi.

When the Pandavas lost the game of dice, Draupadi went to Dhritarashtra and questioned him as to how he allowed this immoral game of dice to take place. Dhritarashtra, in an effort to undo his faults, requested Draupadi to ask him for boons. Draupadi asked that Dhramaja be freed, and then as a second boon she asked that her remaining four husbands be freed. When Dhritarashtra requested her to ask a third boon, she emphatically refused, saying that according to *Dharmashastra* one should not ask for more than two boons.



Duryodhana thought that as Draupadi had not asked for her own freedom, she is still a servant. Draupadi however had already clarified this aspect when she was being dragged to the court. She asked, “*Tannodi nannodena nannodi tannodena*”; meaning, did Dhramaja lose himself before losing me or did he lose me first, before losing himself.” She added, “If Dharmaja didn’t lose himself, he would never bet me or if he put me for a bet after losing himself, he has no right to put me at stake.” Draupadi demonstrated such caliber, even under such circumstances.

When she smiled in front of Bhishma, the Pandavas got angry but Bhishma pacified them saying that Draupadi can never commit a mistake, and requested them to ask her the reason for her smile. Draupadi said, “All the good words which you were supposed to tell the Kauravas, you are (now) saying to my husbands, which they already know. I am wondering, why didn’t you say these things when I faced humiliation in court.”

Bhishma says, “The money I earned and the food I ate was not righteous. The people I met and moved about with were not righteous; all of that spoiled my blood. Every particle of my blood was suffused with that *adharma*. Arjuna’s arrows helped me get rid of all the bad blood from my body, hence all the good qualities are now coming to the fore.”

This episode was narrated by Swami to tell us the importance of good company. It is very easy to fall into the trap of bad company, but later it becomes very difficult to come out of it.

Draupadi was an epitome of *kshama*, which according to Swami has no equivalent word in English. The word which comes closest to its meaning is forbearance. When Aswathama killed the sons of pandavas, he was brought into the presence of Draupadi. Bhima was about to kill him when Draupadi stops him, and addressing Aswathama she says, “My husbands have learnt archery from your father Dronacharya, you are the very form of Dronacharya. How could you kill these small

innocent kids of mine? They don't even know how to wield a weapon." She turns to Bhima and tells him, "Just as I am suffering now due to the loss of my own sons, Drona's wife also will suffer if you kill him. She is already lamenting the loss of Drona, her husband. So please leave him."

Finally I will touch upon the *bhaktaparayana* (dearness to His devotees) facet of God. I was very fascinated by the Mahabharata, especially the *Yuddhaporva*. I used to get fascinated by the names of *astras* like *Brahmastra*, *Pasupatastra*, *Aindrastra*, *Brahma shironamakastra*. One can start the Mahabharata from *Yuddhaporva* as it is very exciting and finally it will lead one to the good aspects of it. If we just read the different *astras* wielded by Arjuna on the guidance of Krishna, we will know the greatness of Krishna. Pandavas would have never attained victory but for the timely advises of Krishna. Dronacharya, Aswathama, Kripacharya, Bhishma or Karna; either of them were enough to vanquish the Pandavas single-handedly. Moreover, the Pandavas had only seven *Akshauhinis*³ where as the Kauravas had eleven *Akshauhinis* in their army.

When Arjuna and Duryodhana approach Krishna for His help, Krishna says to Arjuna, "Be careful Arjuna, you have a choice between my formidable *Narayani sena* and me. I will not wield weapons in this war and advise you with whatever comes to my mind." Arjuna

without an iota of doubt chose Krishna as He knew His worth. Arjuna requested Krishna to be on his side in the war and not his *Narayani sena*. This *Narayani sena* was very happily accepted by the arrogant Duryodhana, who thought he got a very good deal.

When Dronacharya was killed by Pandavas, Ashwatthama approaches

³ An ancient battle formation that consisted of 21,870 chariots; 21,870 elephants; 65,610 cavalry and 109,350 infantry

Duryodhana, with blood shot eyes and fire of revenge burning in his heart and said, “Today I will destroy the Pandavas. They do not know that my father (Drona) has blessed me with the *narayan astra*. Nobody on the Pandavas’ side has this *astra*. I will fire it on them and there is no antidote to it.” He shoots the *astra* at the Pandavas and as a result, the entire battlefield of Kurukshetra was engulfed in fire. Bhima tried to retaliate with the *Brahmaastra* but it had no effect. Arjuna was not able to remember any *astra* that he could use to retaliate. Krishna as always came to the rescue. He commanded, “All the warriors, get down from their chariots, leave their footwear, leave their weapons and with folded hands chant the name of Narayana. This is the only way to quell the fury of this *astra*.” All stood and prostrated to the *astra* and it returned. Ashwatthama was in tears seeing this and he gets transformed for a moment. He goes to Duryodhana and says, “O! Duryodhana, let us stop this war, you can’t win as long as Krishna is on their side. He is Narayana himself. The response He gave for this *astra* proves that he is Narayana. Let us go for truce. Krishna had told us right from the beginning that we should have truce.”

Swami has said many times, “*Bharatamata dharma bhagyambu kapadanganu badhyatantayu meede vidyarthulaara.*” When the intellectuals are coming out with distorted views on Mahabharata, the responsibilities lies with you students to go through these sacred texts, understand, practice, and to some extent walk the spiritual path which Swami has shown to us.

Excerpts from Bhagawan Baba's Discourses

On the Vedas

The Vedas are the most ancient among the world's scriptures. They are a vast storehouse of wisdom. They enabled man to have an over-view of the universe. Historically, they are the earliest known book of knowledge. They are the roots of human culture and striving. Manu has declared: "Everything is derived from the Vedas." All knowledge, all the principles of right living, all qualities are derived from the Vedas. "*Anantho Vai Vedaah*" (The *Vedas* are infinite). The *Vedas* are immeasurable, unrivalled and filled with bliss. *Veda* is derived from the verb *Vid*, to know. Knowledge of the Supreme is *veda*. It represents *AtmaJnana* (Knowledge of the Spirit), *Brahma Jnana* (Knowledge of the Universal Consciousness) and *Advaita Jnana* (Knowledge of the One that subsumes the many). These different terms are synonymous.

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"*Vetthi ithi Vedah*"; knowing knowledge is *veda*. That is to say, man can know from the *Vedas*, the Code of right activity and the body of right knowledge. The *Vedas* teach man his duties from birth to death. They describe his rights and duties, obligations and responsibilities in all stages of life—as a student, householder, recluse and monk.

p89, *Sathya Sai Vahini*

As a matter of fact, many in other countries revere the *Vedas*. Max Mueller made a thorough study of the origin and content of the *Vedas* and wrote tomes about them. He studied the *Vedas* diligently to understand the meanings of the hymns. He devoted a lifetime to these studies. From "Max Mueller" he became known as "*Mokshamula*."

The tragedy of the present situation is that Bharatiyas do not esteem the Vedas as highly as foreigners. Destitution in India has grown with the decline of respect for the Vedas, which had been the fountain-source of its prosperity.

Be fearless in propagating Vedas

Every individual should take a pledge to nourish the Vedas on the right lines. The welfare of the nation and the prosperity of the world are dependent on the Vedas. Within another ten to twenty years, even the few who possess the Vedic knowledge may not remain. Hence there is urgent need to take concerted measures to provide the resources and the encouragement for the propagation of the Vedic studies. The Vedas are not to be used as a means of earning a livelihood. The Vedas are a means of establishing a link with the Divine. They are not to be used for entertaining the public. Those who have studied the Vedas must dedicate their lives to promote the Vedas. Only then would they be serving the cause of restoring the glory of Bharat's ancient heritage.

Today all the ceremonies prescribed by the Vedas are being given up. Most people are engaged in meaningless superstitions. How many are adhering to the injunctions of the Vedas? People must be prepared to adhere to them even at the cost of their lives. The Vedas must be considered as their life itself. Only those who have this determination and conviction are competent to propagate the Vedas. Be fearless in propagating the Vedas among the people. When you are proclaiming the Truth, why have any fear? Only those who preach falsehood have to be afraid. Is your life in danger? What if life goes? There is nothing nobler than giving up one's life in defence of the Vedas. It is in such a spirit of dauntless determination that you should undertake revival of Vedic knowledge. You must practise what you profess and then impart the knowledge to others.

Poornachandra Auditorium, Prasanthi Nilayam, 28 Sep 1987

Vedas – The Breath of God

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The word religion has its roots in the Latin word *religare*, which literally means to tie, to bind, to fasten and to connect. In the meaning of this word lies the keynote of my presentation. If we understand the deeper meaning; the inner significance; the spiritual significance of religion; it helps us to connect to a deeper part of ourselves, which we call God. If we don't understand the inner significance of religion and only consider it as a series of codes, morals and ethics, it binds us to the form. Every religion has a primary text from which they gather their inspiration. Christians have the Bible, Muslims have the Koran, and the Hindus gather all their inspiration and authority primarily from the Vedas.

In all there are fourteen texts that form the *dharma Pramana* or the authority in Hinduism. They are the four Vedas, the six *vedāngās*¹ and four auxiliary texts. The six *vedāngās* are *Shiksha*, *Vyakarana*, *Jyotish*, *Kalpa*, *Chandas* and *Niruktam*. Among these, the most important is *Shiksha*, as it deals with the most primary aspect of the Vedas – phonetics². We know that the Vedas have a tradition of passing orally from generation to generation and not through the written word. The importance of phonetics in Vedas cannot be overemphasized. We know the importance of intonations like *uddatta* (middle pitch), *anudatta* (lower pitch), *swarita* (higher pitch). There is also the principle of

¹ Limbs of Vedas

² A branch of linguistics that comprises the study of the sounds of human speech

akshara shuddhi, meaning the *akshara* or syllable should be pronounced in the duration allotted to it. Once we have the syllable and tonal purity of chanting, only then will there be a benefit from Vedic mantras.

Vykarana is the second limb of Veda, which is Sanskrit grammar. The primary text is Panini's *Ashtadhyayi*, which is a collection of 8000 sutras on the grammar of Sanskrit. There are several commentaries that have been written on this *Vykarana*.

We then have the *Niruktam*. This limb of the Vedas is supposed to be the dictionary of the Vedas, dealing with its etymology³.

Then, we have the science of astrology, *Jyotisha*, and the *Kalpa* which deals with the rituals to be performed in various times and contexts. Finally there is one important limb of *Chandas*, which deals with the science of metres. Every Vedic mantra is composed in a particular metre; for e.g. *Gayatri Chandas*, *Anusthup Chandas*, *Trushup Chandas*, *Jagati Chandas*. The *Chandas* not only directly point out the context, the purpose and the significance of the mantras, but also acts as a great defense against errors.

The four auxiliary texts are the *Mimamsa*- that helps us to understand the Vedas, the *Nyaya* - which deals with the science of logic, the

³ The study of the history of words, their origins, and how their form and meaning have changed over time.



Puranas - which deal with the mythology aspect of Hindu religion, and the *Dharmashastra* - which deals with the ethical and moral codes of the Hindu way of life.

Hindus revere the Vedas as the sacred book of wisdom; as a collective inspired mass of mystical poetry. The contribution of the *Rishis*⁴ is that they put forth their revelations in the sources of power called as the *mantras*. These rishis have been called *kavis* in the Vedas. Unlike today where any poet is called a *kavi*, in Vedic times, a *kavi* meant a seer, a saint or a sage.

The Rigveda says *kavyaha satya srutaha*, meaning the seer who hears directly the truth.

The Vedas – generally speaking – consists of *Samhitas*, *Brahmanas*, *Aranyakas* and the *Upanishads*. But what exactly are the Vedas and what do they point to and what is their fundamental context? A section of oriental scholars will have us believe that the Vedas are the collective barbaric prayers of an unevolved race of people gripped by the fear of nature and propelled by fear, chanting to propitiate the nature gods. Another section of scholars will have us believe that the Vedas at best provide the early history of India, their customs, traditions – a civilizational snapshot of India. But the most popular view propagated by most modern scholars, first propounded by *Sayana*⁵, clearly states that they are classified in two sections – the *karma kanda* and the *jnana kanda*. The former deals with ritualistic aspects and the latter with education, philosophy and higher ideas. This school says that the Vedas are mainly a collection of prayers and sacrificial liturgy. Seers of the Vedas are priests in the sacrifices taking part in the rites and rituals and seek outward reward of health, wealth, prosperity and victory over

⁴ Sages and seers who received in their illumine minds a great universal, eternal and impersonal truth

⁵ A great commentators on the Vedas (14th century AD), and prime minister in courts of the Vijayanagara empire

enemies. They provide a strictly ritualistic interpretation of the Vedas with scanty scattering of higher ideas, mainly in the latter section of the Vedas known as Upanishads – almost like an afterthought or an addendum.

In this presentation, I humbly beg to disagree with the above portrayal and the images of the Vedas and I present a hypothesis. The whole of the Vedas are nothing but mystical outpourings of *rishis*, seers and sages whose only occupation in life was to unite their consciousness with the divine. Their one precept for humanity was: know thyself, know thyself, know thyself. These mystics had discovered a greater reality in themselves and in the outside universe. To seek, to find, to follow, and to realize this truth was the one, all consuming aspiration of these seers and sages of the Vedas. But this work needed a great deal of purification of one's nature and it could not have been carried out by just anybody. Therefore utmost secrecy had to be maintained (so that the purity of the Vedas is maintained). The knowledge was passed on using a veil of symbols created, behind which the mystery could hide and which could be penetrated only by the initiated and taken by others only in an outer sense.

In this manner, the Vedas are a spiritual text written in a symbolic language whose outer meaning was concerned with rites, rituals and sacrifices but the inner meaning was revealed only to initiates who were concerned with inner spiritual knowledge and whose sole aim was to unite the consciousness with the divine.

Let us briefly look at the symbology of the Vedas. For example, The *Indra* of the Vedas is the Lord of the mind controlling the senses; *Vayu* is the Lord of air in the exoteric sense, but in an esoteric sense it represents *Prana*, the life force. So when the Vedas call upon *Indra* and *Vayu* to come and partake of *soma rasa*, what they are essentially saying is that we should use the mind, the senses and the life force to attain divine bliss. *Soma rasa* literally means the wine of the Gods but actually



it means divine bliss.

Agni – one of the most important Gods of the Rigveda, and the most important constituents in a ritualistic sacrifice. *Agni* literally means fire in an external sense, but symbolically, its inner meaning is the all consuming spiritual will. *Ghrita* means ghee or clarified butter, which is a component of a sacrifice, but it also means light or shining from the root *ghri*, which means to shine. Similarly the cow of the Vedas, ‘*Go*’ also means a ray of light. The inner meaning of the horse of the Vedas is the spiritual power or the power of penance or the power of determination. The thieves, the *dasyus*, described in such elaborate detail in Vedas, are the forces of darkness who veil our inner light from ourselves. So when the sage prays to *agni* to help him save his cows and horses from the *dasyus* and the thieves, he is essentially summoning his spiritual will to help him be victorious against the dark forces inside him that are veiling his own inner light. We also have the sun God whose inner significance is the supreme truth invoked in the *Gayatri* mantra to impel our thoughts towards the divine. At many places the sages ask for the birth of a son, which actually means an inner spiritual birth. So we have to understand that the Vedas are deeply spiritual texts primarily concerned with man’s spiritual evolution and mergence in the divine.

Although the *Puranas* are not strictly related to this presentation, I would like to mention the symbolism of *Hiranyakashyapu* from the *Puranas*, which is relevant in this context. *Prahala* prays to Lord *Narayana* and *Narayana* comes as half man, half lion, at neither dawn nor dusk, neither land nor air, neither inside nor outside; and slays *Hiranyakashyapu*. If we consider the inner meaning, *Hiranyakashyapu* is the dark force of arrogance, the personification of ego. When does this ego die? The ego dies at that place, at the centre of our consciousness where there is no form, where there is no time and there is no space. When the mind is stilled in meditation we can directly experience the place within ourselves which is beyond form consciousness, beyond



time and space. It is at this place where *Hiranyakashyapu* is slain, as the ego can't exist in the centrality of this moment, as it needs time, space and form. This is the symbolism of the bizarre form of the lion head and human form. We don't know whether such a thing happened and it is irrelevant, because the inner meaning is important to us and we should always keep it in our mind.

For the longest time, the Vedas were not books, and probably were never meant to be books. It was the great sage *Veda Vyasa* who understood, by the will of God, that the generations that will follow would not have the same sharpness of intellect to be able to understand and grasp the oceanic wisdom of the Vedas. He therefore classified part of them as four books that we call the Vedas. The Vedas is that eternal and ever present truth accessible to each one of us here and now if we have the sincerity, the love and the inner silence.

Silence is all that we need. Swami is the Lord of silence. He might have done so many things, mixed with so many people, delivered more than five-thousand discourses, granted thousands of interviews, started institutions, organizations and led such an active and public life; but lets make no mistake, Swami was the incarnation of the absolute silence. The only way to connect to Swami is through silence.

There is a beautiful Zen story, which is relevant here, that I would like to share. There was a Zen master who was visiting a village and delivering discourses in the evening and at the end of these discourses, he welcomed questions. He would answer all the questions and clarifications posed by the villagers very patiently and humbly. This went on for fifteen days and at the end of the fifteenth day, the Zen master bowed down to all his devotees, bid them goodbye and left the village. Everyday, one woman would come sit quietly and listen to his discourse but never ever ventured to ask a single question. After the sage left, the other devotees said to her, "You have missed a great chance. When again, will we see such a wise and great man? You didn't



ask a single question, a single clarification. Did you not understand his discourses?" She replied with an answer which all of us ought to embed in our hearts. She said, "The Master's silence was so loud that I could not hear his discourses." This is the silence which all of us should make a sincere effort to cultivate, if we want to experience in this lifetime what Swami is. What is the meaning of His coming? What is our nature?

Permanent peace cannot come by sitting in Sai Kulwant Hall. Permanent peace is beyond space, beyond geography. It can only come when we sit inside ourselves. Once I complained to Bhagawan that I am not getting a good place to sit in Kulwant Hall. He said, "Do you know, what is the best place to sit in Kulwant Hall?" I thought that there is a mystery and which He is going to reveal to me. Swami said, "The best place to sit in the Kulwant Hall is to sit within yourself." Only when we sit within ourselves, we can find lasting peace.

Swami always used to say, "Be clear and the rest will follow". But clear about what? About the essentials.

There is a very beautiful but funny story, which I like very much. A boatman is helping a scholarly Vedic pundit to cross over to the other bank. As they are boating along, the pundit – a good and noble man – asks the boatman, " My dear boatman! Do you know Sanskrit." The boatman replies, "Sorry sir, I have absolutely no exposure to Sanskrit." The pundit exclaims, "O! My God, you have wasted 25% of your life my son." They boat along a little further when the pundit asks the boatman, "My son! Have you read the Vedas." The boatman says, "Whose is that sir, I have never heard of him, I am really sorry." The pundit was shocked and said, "O! My son you have wasted 50% of your life." After sometime the pundit asks him, "Have you at least read the great *Puranas*," the boatman says, " I am deeply sorry and embarrassed and I am not worthy of sitting in your divine presence. I have never ever heard of the Puranas and I never had time." The punditji says,

“Don’t worry there is always a chance, but you have wasted 75% of his life.” They boat along a little more and they find that there is a hole in the boat and water is gushing into the boat, when the boatman asks the punditji, “Sir! I hope you have learnt swimming.” The pundit replies in terror, “No! I have never had the time.” The boatman adds, “Punditji, you are about to waste 100% of your life.”

So what is essential? What are the Vedas and what is the relation? If the Vedas are the ever present reality accessible to all, if they are the flowering of human consciousness’ if they are the story of a small seed becoming a tree and bearing beautiful fruits and flowers; if they are the story of a human reaching his final potentiality of divine consciousness; if Vedas is the story of this divine process called *life*; how else can we tune into the Vedas but by living life with awareness. We have to talk with awareness, eat with awareness, stand with awareness, sleep with awareness, walk with awareness, teach with awareness and live with awareness. This is the only way to tune into the Vedas and know their deep inner significance. Let me narrate one more story.

There is a man who is searching for a Zen master when someone tells him that at the top of a hill he will find a very great Zen master. He trudges along, climbs the hill when someone tells him, “O! My God in fifteen minutes, the ashram gates are going to close; so rush.” He runs, finds the ashram, finds footwear scattered all over, leaves his footwear and rushes inside the hall and sees the Zen master silently sitting. He prostrates, supplicates with great humility and requests, “Master! Please accept me as your disciple.”

Master says, “Sure! I will accept you as my disciple if you give the right answer to my question. Where did you keep your footwear, on the left side or on the right side?” The man had no answer to this question, so the master said, “If you can’t bring awareness to where you are keeping your footwear, there is still time before you to enter this monastery, because here you have to bring awareness into every single aspect of



your life.”

To conclude, I want to share a small incident with Swami. It was when Swami asked me to commence my doctoral program. I complained to Swami, “Swami! Please I don’t want to do all this.” Swami said, “Listen to me and do a Ph.D.” I was frustrated and thought that the solution to all the problems of life is to run away from them. But it is never the solution to run away from anything. Everything has to be faced right in its eye. I said, “Swami please give me *sanyasa*, I will sit somewhere and meditate, I don’t want to do all this.” Who can hoodwink our great master, our Swami? He knew that it is not coming from a great urge to merge in the divine but coming out of frustration. So He said, “Shut up! Just go and meet the Vice-Chancellor.” Three years later when I was finishing my Ph.D., there was some mental problem, and in those days we had access to Bhagawan and used to run to him for every little thing. I went to Swami and told Him the problem. I was surprised with his reply. He remembered what had happened in a short interview three years before and said, “Anyway you wanted *sanyasa*, now live like a *sanyasin*, why do you worry? Just do what is necessary and be happy. Everything will be taken care of, live without worry and fear and do what is necessary. Live freely, joyfully, happily and don’t have any connections inside.”

Sisters and Brothers, let us all live like *sanyasins* at heart with the hands of Janaka, the head of Sankara and the heart of Buddha. Let us live like valiant spiritual heroes and heroines. Let us live freely, joyfully and let us enjoy this play of life with awareness. Let our feet be firmly grounded but let our spirits soar, uninhibited in the ethereal atmosphere of spiritual freedom and wisdom.





Excerpts from Bhagawan Baba's Discourses

On the Upanishads

All the utterances of God only demonstrate to us His closeness to us. The *Upanishads* also demonstrate exactly this closeness of God to us. What does it mean? Close to whom? It implies our going close to God or *Paramatma*. What is the consequence of our going close to *Paramatma*? I will give you a small example and thereafter go into the *Upanishads*. We have an airconditioner inside the house. When we are close to the airconditioner, naturally it will exhilarate us to some extent. The external heat is at a distance from you, and the airconditioner gives you some happiness and pleasure. In the same manner, in winter, we go and sit near a fire. Then the heat of the fire will remove the cold that is troubling you and will give you some amount of comfort and ease. So what the air conditioner is doing is to remove the heat that is in us and give us comfort.

Similarly, what the fire is doing is to remove the troublesome cold that is near you and give you some comfort by giving the heat. In the same manner, when we go closer to God, what He is doing is to remove all the material desires which are in us, make them go farther away from us and give us the comfort of getting rid of those material desires. The *jiva*, which is surrounded and encompassed by the five elements, is being retrieved from the bondage that is caused by the five elements. This can be referred to as *Kaivalya*. That which establishes such a *Kaivalya*, that which gives you the *Kaivalya* and shows the path by which you can reach *Kaivalya*, is simply equivalent to getting relief from bondage to the five elements. This is what the *Upanishads* do.

When an individual, whom we do not know, comes close to us and wants to get acquainted with us, the first questions that we generally ask of such a new individual are: Where are you coming from and who are you? What business do you have with me?



In the same way, those of you students who have come here for the first time and who are not acquainted with *Upanishads* have to ask of the *Upanishads* the questions, who are you and where do you come from and what good can you do for us? What good can we do for you? If we ask such questions, the *Upanishads* will reply to us that they as such have been repeated many times by the *maharishis* and seers of this country and also that they are the essence of what God's breath has given to us in the form of the *Vedas*.

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Man is essentially Divine. However, he believes himself to be an individual, limited and temporary, because he is entangled in the characteristics of the five elements; namely, sound, touch, form, taste and smell. This error brings about joy and grief, good and bad, birth and death. To escape from this association with the elements, to rid oneself of the pulls of their characteristics, is the sign of liberation, called in sanskrit as *kaivalya*, *moksha* or *mukti*. Names may change; but the achievement is the same.

While entangled in the five elements, man is attracted, distracted or disappointed by them; all this causes distress. Wealth, possessions - vehicles, buildings etc. - all these are transmutations of the elements. Man craves for them, and when he loses them or fails to get them, he spurns them.

Seeking to reach that Param-atma, the source and core of the Universe, the Individual or Jivi, who has entangled himself in the elements, has to overcome, by discrimination and steady practice of detachment, the bonds one by one; such a person is a Sadhaka; he who wins in this struggle is the Jivan-muktha, 'Liberated even while alive.'

For the exercise of such discrimination and for the visualisation of one's



innate reality, one has to study the Upanishads. They are collectively called Vedanta. They form the Jnana kanda of the Vedas, the section that deals with the higher wisdom. Liberation from the consequences of Ignorance can be secured only by Knowledge or Jnana. The Upanishads themselves declare: *Jnaanaad eva thu kaivalyam*; by knowledge alone can freedom be won.

The Vedas are reputed to be ‘three sectioned’; *Kaanda-thrayaathmakam* - the three sections being Jnana, Upasana and Karma. These three are found in the Upanishads too; they provided the basis for the *Adwaita*, *Visishtadvaita* and the *Dwaiata* systems of philosophy also.

The term Upanishad denotes the study and practice of the innate truth. The term Brahmanavidya denotes the supremacy of spiritual contemplation. The term Yogasastra denotes the mental churning that brings success. What is the fundamental activity which is required of man? What is the basic thing to be known? It is only one’s basic reality. The Upanishads describe the various stages and the various modes of this search for realising this.

The name is full of significance. ‘Upa’ means the process of studying with ‘Nishta’ or steadfastness; ‘shad’ means the attainment of the ultimate reality. The name Upa-ni-shad arose for these reasons. The Upanishads teach not only the principles of Atmavidya; they indicate also the practical means of realisation. They point out not only the duties and obligations one has to bear, but also the actions to be done and those to be avoided.

Ch.1, Upanishad Vahini



Lessons for Life from the Upanishads

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*Shivashakte namastubhyam varade Sairoopini
Bhasyarambham kareshyami siddhir bhavatume sada*

The Upanishads are the last section of the Vedas considered and known as the Vedanta. There are many Upanishads, but ten of them are the principle ones, and commentaries have been written on them by the great Adi Sankara.

Isha kena katha prashna munda mandukya taitirihi, aitareyacha chandogyam bridharanyakam tatha. These are the ten principle Upanishads, the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad being the longest of these and the Mandukya Upanishad being the shortest. The Father of our nation, Mahatma Gandhi often used to quote the first line of the Ishavasyopanishad. It goes like this:

*Om Isavasyam idam sarvam yat kim ca jagatyam jagat
tena tyaktena bhunjitha, ma gridhah kasyasvid dhanam*

This was chanted by Mahatma Gandhi to develop the principle of trusteeship, meaning accepting whatever is conferred upon us by God and living without any covetousness.

Our Institute logo contains the words *satyam vada dharmam chara*¹, which are part of the Taittiriya Upanishad. The Upanishads contain

¹ Speak the truth, Lead a righteous life

the highest spiritual and moral truths, which all of us can practice in daily life. I would like to elaborate on a few such lessons, not by concentrating on any specific Upanishad, but by dwelling upon the meaning of the word Upanishad itself.

Upanishad is derived by the combination of three words – *Upa-Ni-Shad*. *Upa* means near *Ni* means down and *Shad* means sit. This means sitting down near the guru or God. I will try to elaborate the meaning of these three words and derive lessons from it as takeaways of this presentation.

Upa means near or living near the guru or living with God for all of us. Swami often used to say that living with God is true education. As the Taittiriya Upanishad says

*Bhrugur vai varunehi
varunam pitarmupasasara
adhihi bhagavo brahamati
tasmat etat provacha
Annam pranam chakushusha srotram manovacham iti
tagum hovacha
yatho va emanibhootani jayante
Yena jatani jeevante
yatprayantyabhi samvishante
tad vi jigyansasva*



*tad brahmeti
sa tapo tapyata
sa tapas taptwā*

Bhrugu learnt the highest truth by being near his guru and his father Varuna. The biggest secrets of life are learnt by being near God or near a great master. Nearness could be either physical or spiritual. We had the great opportunity of being very physically close to Bhagawan.

We were once very near to Bhagawan during a trip to Kodaikanal, since on these trips we live with Bhagawan throughout the stay. I learnt some very interesting lessons on this trip. We spend all the food sessions with Bhagawan and once when we were sitting for lunch, food had been served and Swami wanted us to chant the Brahmarpanam². As I finished chanting the prayer and opened my eyes, I saw Swami intently watching me. I was delighted and at the same time surprised as Swami wanted to convey something serious to me. He said, “Can’t you remain steady and remain fully concentrated in those few moments of chanting Brahmarpanam?” I was stunned, as I didn’t know what I had done. In those few moments accidentally without even my knowledge, I had scratched my nose and my back, which Swami very clearly noticed. He commented, “Be steady when you are chanting the Brahmarpanam because that is the moment when you offer your food to the Lord.” It was a very important lesson I learnt, being physically near to Bhagawan.

During the same Kodaikanal trip I realised that how much concern Bhagawan has towards all of us. We were all sitting for breakfast and Swami enquired about a boy, finding that he is not present. Other students informed Swami that this particular boy was not feeling well and was sleeping in the room. As we were having breakfast, Swami quietly went into the kitchen and got a cup of coffee. Some of us who had finished breakfast slowly followed Swami, as He walked up the

² Food prayer

stairs into the room where that boy was sleeping. We went ahead of Swami and prodded that student and he got up. He saw Swami coming and as he was about to get up Swami said, "No! No! Just keep lying down and take this coffee, which I have brought for you." The boy was so happy to see Swami physically coming and taking care of him. He tried to get up to hold the cup of coffee. But Swami, the ocean of mercy, said, "Don't get up, just raise your head." We saw how the Lord serves His devotees. Swami kept the cup of coffee near the lips of the boy held it in his hand and asked the boy to just sip the coffee from that cup. This is how Swami teaches us how to serve others and we learnt it from the physical nearness to the Lord.

On another occasion in Trayee Brindavan, a great scholar Sri G V Subba Rao was speaking about the *Purusha suktam*. He was elaborating on the following lines:

*Deva yad yagnam tanvanaha abadhnā purusham pashum
Tam yagnam barihi shi proukhashann purusham jata magrataha*

The original meaning of this is that in the process of creation, the *Purusha* Himself was tied to the sacrificial post. As he was finishing, Swami said, "it can be *abadham purusham pashum* but you can chant it as *appadham purusham pashum*." None of us, including the great scholar understood the meaning of 'appadham'. Swami expounded it in the simplest of ways and said, "*appadham purusham pashum* means (in Telugu) that the one who speaks lies is a *pashu* or an animal." This we all learnt from the physical nearness to the Lord.

We all know now that we have to replace the physical nearness with spiritual nearness. The Quran states that spiritual nearness endows a person with great realities of the world, that can't be known by ordinary methods of learning. Here I would like to quote an example of spiritual nearness. This is a story of a person who never studied in the Sai educational institutions, and yet was spiritually close to Swami as we



understand. From a very young age he was attracted to Swami and was part of *Balvikas*, and later on, was a very active member of the service organization. In his state, he was a part of every single service activity that the organization undertook. Everybody knew that this person was an active member and at a later stage he could motivate several people to the path of service. However a tragedy struck and he suffered with an incurable disease and within a short time this person passed away. Everyone was stunned and questioned ‘why Swami didn’t bless this person?’ His body was being taken for cremation and there was a large crowd following the procession. One of the devotees, seeing the huge following, thought of taking pictures, thinking that it will motivate others to follow his example. He took photographs of the final procession. When these photos were shown to others, everyone was able to see in every, single photo of the procession, Swami physically standing. All were so happy to know that this person had spiritual nearness with Swami.

How can we get the spiritual nearness? We can get this spiritual nearness by actively participating in the schedule of the University and ensuring that we do our duty sincerely. The first takeaway of this aspect, *Upa*, is that let us strive everyday to cultivate this spiritual nearness to Swami. This, over a period will definitely protect us.

The second aspect of this word Upanishad is *Ni*, which means down. Why should this word ‘down’ be stressed so much? We know from Physics that things fall down, water flows down as it is a natural process. The symbolic meaning of ‘Ni’ is humility. If we are humble, knowledge and wisdom will automatically flow to us, just as water flows automatically from a higher plane to a lower plane. Knowledge will effortlessly flow from the Him to us if we are humble.

To illustrate this, Swami praised a disciple of Adi Sankara by the name of Thotaka. This particular student was not considered initially to be a great scholar. In fact, he was considered by all other students

as a dullard. Yet he used to do all the simple jobs assigned by the guru and Thotaka would be ready to serve the guru always in total humility. Swami said that this particular characteristic of humility made Thotaka a great acharya. One particular day as he was washing the clothes of the guru, Adi Sankara beckoned him from far. Thotaka came near Adi Sankara, bowed down to him and immediately started singing great Sanskrit verses, which are popularly known today as the *Thotaka astakam*. Nobody expected him to compose verses and yet the knowledge shown in *Thotaka astakam* astounded everyone. People then understood that his humility gave him the wisdom that he deserved.

The modern scientific examination technique of MRI (magnetic resonance imaging) explains the importance of humility. When a person is stress free and humble, the MRI images of the brain show a natural expansion and the brain easily absorbs more knowledge and wisdom. On the other hand when the mind is stressed, the brain contracts and doesn't absorb additional knowledge. Hence the second takeaway stresses on the virtue of humility. When students enter a class they should start with a feeling of humility and with an attitude of learning a new lesson in class. When we start with this attitude, we will always learn something new when we enter the class and this, over a period of time, will accrue to our knowledge and wisdom. However, if we start with the idea that I already know everything, nothing additional or incremental will accrue to us. This is the second aspect of humility that is greatly stressed in the word Upanishad.

The final takeaway from this word Upanishad is 'Shad' which means sitting. Why is the student asked to sit? Is it just the physical act of sitting or is it something more? The true meaning of the word 'shad' is that it represents stability. There is this famous story from the Kathopanishad where Nachiketa sees his father giving away famished cows in charity. Rather surprised, he asks his father, "Father! You are giving away famished cows, it will not give you any result. To whom are you going to give me in charity." His father thinks that it is a prank



and later gets angry and says, “I give you in charity to Lord Yama.” Nachiketa takes this literally and goes to Yamapuri. There he is told that Lord Yama has gone out and will return after three days. Nachiketa, as explained by Kathopanishad, stands for three days with utmost steadfastness at the entrance of Yamapuri without any movement and vacillation. Lord Yama is delighted to see this boy and grants him three boons. That is how the entire story of the Kathopanishad unfolds and we are given the secrets of immortality. We are enlightened on the concept of *ratha sharira*.

In the Bhagavad Gita, Arjuna asks Krishna about the mind: *Chancalam hi manaha Krishna pramadi balavadrudham*, meaning ‘Oh! Krishna, the mind is so fickle. How can it be controlled? Krishna says in another verse: *abhyasa yogena tato mamicchaptum dhanajaya*; meaning through practice, the vacillation of this mind can be controlled. The word ‘shad’ represents the control of the vacillation of the mind.

Swami gives a very simple technique to get more and more steadfast and inculcate equipoise. Patanjali Yoga Sutras talk of Dharana, Dhyana and Samadhi. Swami said that intense concentration without any vacillation for a period of eleven seconds is one event of Dharana. Eleven such events of Dharana become Dhyana and eleven such Dhyanas will lead one to Samadhi. He said that it is actually a matter of twenty minutes when you can achieve the state of Samadhi. Swami said that for this to happen, the most fundamental prerequisite is steadfastness and equanimity. With this equanimity, we can face every event of life in a very happy way.

Let me narrate to you a very interesting story of a student of Brindavan who contracted jaundice and the doctors told him to take rest and prescribed strict dietary restrictions. Swami was at that time staying in Brindavan. This boy took special permission of the warden to sit in the first row thinking that Swami will bless him and give him Vibhuti *prasadam* for his disease. This student waited for Swami to come and



as soon as Swami came near, he told Swami that he has jaundice. To the astonishment of this boy, Swami said, ‘Be Happy’ and went away. He was surprised because he wanted *prasadam* and all Swami said was: be happy. Later he analyzed the statement of Swami of asking him to be happy. He thought of two different possibilities. The first was where he would feel unhappy because, of all the boys in the hostel, he got this disease; and the second possibility where he would accept this as Swami’s blessing thinking that even with this disease Swami wants him to be happy. He thought to himself, “Let me remain happy, let me take the medicines and proper food; anyway the jaundice will be cured in one month.” With either of the attitudes, the jaundice would get cured, but the mental state would be different. In the first case, the student would always be unhappy and in the second case he would always be happy. Swami wanted this boy to understand this idea of always being happy. Swami also wanted us to learn that how we should be steadfast in our quest for knowledge.

One of the previous speakers narrated the story of the Mahabharata when Arjuna accepts whatever Krishna says regarding the bird sitting on the tree. Krishna asks Arjuna, “Don’t you have your own discrimination? You say it is a pigeon, and then change it to a crow when I say it.” Arjuna says, “O! Krishna, I have more faith in your words than in my own wisdom.” Swami enacted a similar story in front of us in the bhajan hall. Swami came inside the bhajan hall and created a ring, and asked the students as to what colour the stone of the ring was. We all shouted that it is green in colour. Swami kept it in his hands, blew at it and showed it to all of us and asked, “What is the colour of the stone now. We were surprised to see that it had changed to white colour and shouted in unison, “Swami! White.” Again, Swami kept the ring in his palms and blew at it and asked us, “Now tell me what is the colour?” Swami wanted us to learn that His word is more important than the colour of the ring. We all shouted in unison, “Swami! Whatever colour you tell.” This is what Swami wants us to learn and this is the third takeaway lesson which all of us can cultivate. Let us strive to have

those few moments of equipoise and equal mindedness so that, over a period of time, we will have that equal mindedness always.

These are the three major aspects of the word Upanishad that were elaborated upon. *Upa* means spiritual nearness to Swami everyday, *Ni* meaning humility; let us go to the class with the feeling of humility that we will learn something new, and *Shad* meaning steadiness; let us cultivate steadiness for a few moments so that it grows in future.

These are some of the important lessons of life that the Upanishads teach us. They also teach us several other spiritual truths, yet if we start with these simple lessons, we will grow into better individuals. I want to close my talk with this great quote from the Brihadarnyaka Upanishad which we chant everyday:

*asato ma sad gamaya
tamaso ma jyotir gamaya
mrutyor ma amritam gamaya*

From ignorance lead me to truth
From darkness lead me to light
From death lead me to immortality

I pray to Bhagawan that he blesses all of us with the strength and character to live up to his expectations so that we will be able to do our simple work in His grand mission.



Excerpts from Bhagawan Baba's Discourses

On the Bhagavatha

The name Bhagavatha can be applied to every account of the experiences of those who have contacted God and the Godly (Bhagawan and Bhaktha). God assumes many forms and enacts many activities. The name Bhagavatha is given to the descriptions of the experiences of those who have realised Him in those forms and of those who have been blessed by His grace and chosen as His instruments.

The great work known by that name is honoured by all masters of the Vedas. It is a panacea which cures physical, mental and spiritual illnesses. The Bhagavatha is saturated with sweetness of nectar; it shines with the splendour of God.

The principle of Avatara or the descent of God on earth, the incarnation of the formless with form, for the uplift of beings - this is the basic fact that makes the Bhagavatha authentic. By Bhagavatha we also mean those with attachment to God, those who seek the companionship of God. For such, the book, Bhagavatha, is most precious; it is the breath of their life. To be in the midst of such Bhagavathas is to foster one's own devotion. Unless you have a taste for God-ward thoughts, you will not derive joy therefrom. To create that taste, the Bhagavatha relates stories relating to incarnations to the earnest inquirer. Then, one develops the yearning to experience the thrill of God, through all the levels of consciousness. He who has this intense yearning can be a true Bhagavatha.

People believe that incarnations of God happen only for two reasons: the punishment of the wicked and the protection of the righteous. But, these represent only one aspect of the task. The granting of peace and joy, of a sense of fulfilment to seekers who have striven long - this too is the task.



The Avatar or form incarnate is only the concretisation of the yearning of the seekers. It is the solidified sweetness of the devotion of godly aspirants. The formless assumes the form for the sake of these aspirants and seekers.

They are the prime cause. The cow secretes milk for the sustenance of the calf. That is the chief beneficiary. But, as we see, others too benefit from that milk. So too, though the Bhakthas are the prime cause and their joy and sustenance the prime purpose, other incidental benefits also accrue, such as the fostering of Dharma, the suppression of evil, and the overwhelming of the wicked.

Ch.1, Bhagavatha Vahini



Insights from the Srimad Bhagavatam

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Let me provide you all with an overview of this presentation. We will be looking at what is Srimad Bhagavatam. How did it come into existence? Why is it important to us in terms of day to day relevance? What are the lessons that we can learn from Bhagavatam and practice them in our daily life?

Swami describes the Bhagavatam as *bhakti, jnana, vairagya tatwa mukti sagaram*. It fills one with devotion, wisdom, detachment, *tatwa bodhana* or knowing the principles of nature, and brings the urge for *mukti* or liberation. It is a sojourn that starts in *bhakti* and culminates in *mukti*. Swami extrapolates this to explain the prerequisite of *bhakti*. *Bhagawanta* or God is like the maharaja or the emperor. Bhagavatam, which is derived from God, is like the *Yuvraj* or the crown prince. The *bhakta* or devotee who is dependent on both the Bhagavatam and the *Bhagawanta*, is like the *Kumararaj* or the prince. Only a prince can access the court of the king and likewise only the *bbakta* can enter the kingdom of God, making *bhakti* a prerequisite or a starting point on this journey.

The Bhagavatam is the essence of all scriptures; it is verily the goal of all paths. Adi Sankaracharya says that there are three things that are very rare to come by; they are *manusyatwam* – human birth, *mumukshatwam* – the urge for liberation and *mahapurusha samshrayaha* – to be in the company of the godly. Once born a human, coming in contact with Bhagavatam ensures that it kindles in us the urge for *mukti*, for it

is verily the repository of experiences of all the devotees who have come in contact with God and the godly. This summer course is verily reliving the Sai Bhagavatam: His stories, and His love for His devotees, especially His students.

Moving on to how Bhagavatam came into existence; Sage Veda Vyasa, after composing the Mahabharata was restless at heart, so when he was searching for peace of mind, he comes in contact with Sage Narada who tells him thus, “when you contemplated on the wicked deeds of Duryodhana and Dushasana, the evil entered your mind and sullied your heart.”

Yad Bhavam Tad Bhavati – as you think so you become; God you think God you are, dust you think dust you are. In this context Bhagawan gives the beautiful analogy of a camera. When a camera is focused on a particular object of view and clicked, it creates an image. Likewise, the body is the camera, the vision is the lens, the thoughts form the image and this image is imprinted on the film of the heart, using the intellect as the shutter. So if we contemplate on the faults of others, they will be imprinted on our hearts and likewise if we dwell on the goodness of others, that gets imprinted on our hearts. So what we contemplate on from within gets projected on this universe outside and what gets projected outside, reaffirms us from inside. It is a cycle.

This is something that happens 24/7 all through our life. So we



continuously have this recording going on – we reflect, we react and resound. Hence sage Narada tells Veda Vyasa, “You have been contemplating on *prakriti* so far looking at its good and bad attributes; let go of the attributes, contemplate on the *Purusha* henceforth. Contemplate on His pure, attribute-less form.” *Brahmavid Brahmaiva Bhavati* – the knower and seeker of Brahman verily becomes Brahman.

The Bhagavatam begins with a dialogue that is taking place between sage Suka and emperor Parikshit, who is under the sentence of death. Why has this situation has come about? It all began with the thirst of Parikshit. Emperor Parikshit goes on a hunting expedition, gets separated from rest of the group, becomes thirsty, starts looking for a source of water and reaches the hermitage of sage Samika. He enters the hermitage and calls out to people for water but gets no response. He sees a sage meditating in one corner, goes out to him and asks him for water. But the sage is lost in his inner realm and doesn't respond. This kindles the ego and anger of the emperor, and finding a dead snake; he picks it up and places it around the neck of this sage. Shringi, the son of Sage Saamika, gets to know of this and immediately runs to that place and pronounces a curse that whoever has done this evil act be bitten by snake Takshaka in seven days' time. This leads to a series of events resulting in sage Suka counseling emperor Parikshit to face the ultimate examination of life, i.e. death. This indeed is the relevance of the Bhagavatam.

The Bhagavatam is not just the archival of the incarnations of the Lord. It provides spiritual, scientific and psychological counselling to elevate a stressed and depressed mind that is caught in the fear of an inevitable destiny; fear that is born out of unexpected and undesirable events. Hence Bhagavatam is truly an eye opener. It is a guide for our future and for the future generations to come. It installs courage in the mind of every person, courage born out of understanding one's own Self, which is the *ātman*.

The Bhagavatam revolves around the journey of an individual soul (Parikshit in this case), right from his birth till his exit from this world. When the powerful *Brahmastra* was let go by Aswathama at the fetus growing in the womb of Uttara, the child sees a small beautiful form with a wheel in his hand that shatters the arrow into a thousand pieces and vanishes. From that time onwards, the questions that plagued the mind of this child were, ‘who is this beautiful form? How did he get there? How did he disappear?’ As this constant remembrance (*manana* and *nidhidhyasana*) went on in the mind of this child, it was radiant when born into this world. But it continued to stare questioningly at every face, hence got the name Parikshit. The child’s stare turned into a smile only when he was picked up by Lord Krishna, for he instantly recognized that this was verily the form it had seen in the womb. After this, however much the placing of toys and other things in its way distracted it, it would push all of it aside, go straight to the feet of the Lord and yearn pleadingly to be lifted up.

Likewise, each and every one of us in this world have several things come along our way, right from the time we are born. We have toys in our childhood, academics and good schooling in our teenage years, degrees, professional careers and family life in our adulthood, etc. However, it is for us to realize that the very purpose for which we are here is God. He is the reason for our very sustenance and we should constantly remind ourselves of that. Each one of us born in the university of this universe has to go through the ultimate examination to pass with a degree; the degree that confers on us the knowledge of how not to be born again. But then going back to the story of Parikshit, if he had such a noble birth, such a noble upbringing, why did he get cursed?

Verily thoughts are the looking glass; *Yatha drusthi, tatha srusthi* – as we see (our vision), so we perceive (our reality). Parikshit, at the time of being cursed, had a vision of anger and ego in him. This action got a reaction of the curse from Shringi. But moving further along, when he took this curse as a blessing or a boon in disguise, let go of



his kingdom, crowned his son Janmejaya as the king, and left to the banks of the river, he got the reaction of the blessing of the sage Suka's company who put him on the path to immortality.

This can be explained with a story involving both Yudhistira and Duryodhana. Lord Krishna sends both of them out to the empire asking them to look for good and bad people. Duryodhana finds out that all the people in the kingdom are wicked and only he is virtuous. Yudhistira comes back to answer that he only saw good people everywhere and there is much scope of improvement in him. Hence what we perceive, we create. Each of one us is a walking universe. We create our own universe and live in it and when each one of us does this we have a *multiverse* happening. What we think, we attract. If we think good, speak good and do good acts, we attract good. If we do bad, we attract the like of it. This is fundamental in how the societal network came about. In the past, our ancients were happy and contended from within and the society too was happy and contended.

In the current scenario, we see restlessness in the world, mirroring the restlessness that is deep down within each one of us. How do we understand or perceive our perception? This can be understood by studying the functioning of the brain and the mind. The mind is the cause and the brain reflects the effect. Positron emission tomography (PET) images are used in nuclear medicine imaging technology to study the functioning of different body organs. Several sections of the brain get highlighted to show us what is leaning, what is perception and what is emotion. We can further see the receptors for pain and the receptors for pleasure. The latest findings in the journal of neuroscience show that the receptors for pain and pleasure are so close to one another that the distance between them blurs. It is more like a continuum of pain and pleasure. No wonder Swami says that pleasure is an interval between two pains. In fact, they identified a neurotransmitter – dopamine – which was initially thought to be the brain's chemical, to generate a reward mechanism or the sensation of pleasure, which is

also the one involved in the pathway of pain. In this manner, what we see in essence is that the same regions of the brain are involved in both pleasure and pain. This happens at the level of the brain.

What happens beyond this is what is felt by the mind. The mind sees pain as suffering and pleasure as happiness. What sage Suka did for Parikshit was that from the time of his getting cursed to the time he left his mortal coil, sage Suka ensured that the working of the Parikshit's mind decreased, finally taking him to the stage of being an *Amanaska*, i.e., the stage of mindlessness. That is how Suka counseled emperor Parikshit, so that he embraces the ultimate examination of life.

However, to understand the functioning of the mind we can use the analogy of a sonometer. I am sure all of us would have had a chance to use a sonometer in our 10th or 11th grade. A sonometer has a vibrating tuning fork, which is taken near a plucked string and when the frequency of the string matches with that of the tuning fork, we have a phenomenon known as resonance. Resonance results in a rider or a piece of paper sitting on the string to fall away. Extend this principle to the name and form of the Lord. Name or the form can be used as the tuning fork, taken to the string of the mind and when the mind resonates, the mind lets go of all its thoughts. We become thought free. Extending this to the case of Parikshit; he was constantly contemplating on the Bhagavatam, that is nothing but the name and the form, taking him to a state of *Amanaska*, and finally conferring liberation on him.

Looking at it from our perspective, we have *suprabhatam* whereby we chant 21 Omkarams to ensure that we have a clean slate before starting the day's activities. Becoming an *Amanaska* is not easy, so Swami gives a simple solution. It starts with *Tyaja durjana samsargam* – run away from bad company, *bhaja sadhu samagamam* – be in the company of the good and the godly, *kuru punyamahoratram* – engage in meritorious deeds day and night, and *smara nitya anityatam* – contemplate on



what is permanent and what is transient. We don't have to do anything regarding the first two *slokas* as Swami has ensured that we are already in the company of the good and the godly when we enter the portals of this university. We are already in the stage three due to our involvement in the day-to-day self-reliance activities of the hostel or the Institute. All these activities are to sharpen the intellect to ensure that we are in the state of analyzing what is constant and what is transient. This will lead to the state of *Amanaska* or the state of *Jeevanmukta*.

To conclude, let us review the lessons to be learnt from the Bhagavatam. It starts in *bhakti* and culminates in *mukti*. The true bhakta is the one who knows no fear and whom none fears. Bhagavatam is the touchstone that converts the worldly thirst of the emperor to a spiritual thirst. It transforms a curse to a boon, fear to freedom, untruth to truth, darkness to light, mortality to immortality. Bhagawan says *Bhagavatamu chadivithe, bāgāvutāvu* – if we read the Bhagavatam, we become good. Bhagawan we are here to tell you that you have touched us and so we are indeed good, you have touched us and so we have grown and we will continue to grow.

*Anyatha saranam nasthi twameva saranam mama
tasmat karunya bhavena raksha raksha Sayeeshwara*

You are my only refuge for there is none else. Therefore, O Sayeeshwara, protect me compassionately.





Excerpts from Bhagawan Baba's Discourses

On the Bhagavad Gita

Just by reading and repeating the text of the *Bhagavad Gita* you are not going to get any help. On the other hand, it is by assimilating the essence and enjoying it that you will be able to derive the much-needed benefit. It is only when we are able to picture in our minds how Arjuna and Krishna were seated when the *Bhagavad Gita* was being preached by the latter, when we are able to picture other details such as, what kind of clothes they were wearing, what were the horses that were tied to the chariot and how was the chariot made and so on; and when we are able to picture the details of the entire situation will we be able to get the essence of the *Bhagavad Gita*.

In this situation, there is a chariot, there is one who is charioting it or the charioteer, there is one who is sitting in the chariot and is being led; then there are the horses that are leading the chariot and then there are the reins, which are controlling the horses. All these things together constitute one full picture of the chariot. But where was this chariot taken? It was taken right into the midst of two fighting armies. When we make proper enquiry as to what this chariot is, where it has gone, what the two armies are, who the charioteer is, who the horses are and what each detail is in this whole situation, it is only then that we will be able to understand the fullness of this picture, which is only a picture of life and all the significance of everything that is contained in life.

This is what the *Gita* teaches us in a simple and easy way. The chariot is the body. The *jiva* is Arjuna. The *Atma* is Krishna. The reins are the mind. Our sense organs are the horses. The whole picture has to be interpreted by saying that Krishna, who represents the *Atma*, is leading the chariot which represents the body, into the middle of two armies, the horses being our sense organs and the reins which control the sense organs simply standing for the mind. The body is being led into

the midst of two armies by *Atma*, which is Krishna. The two fighting armies can be looked at as *Iha* and *Para*, that is this world and the other world or good and bad, or *Atma* and *Anatma*, or what is temporary and what is indestructible, and so on. The body is being led to face these antagonistic situations, which represent the two armies.

We should forget that the battle of *Mahabharatha* was fought in Kurukshetra. That may be a historical fact, but we should regard the battle of *Mahabharatha* as something that has been fought between the Kauravas and the Pandavas. Kauravas represent the bad qualities. Pandavas represent the good qualities. The fight that is said to have gone on in Kurukshetra is actually going on every day in our hearts. The fight is between the bad qualities in us with the good qualities in us.

There is also another interpretation. This body is the *kshetra* or field and childhood, during which man is pure and selfless, is Dharmakshetra. As man grows in years, desires, evil qualities and evil thoughts enter the body and the body becomes Kurukshetra. The inner significance lies in the fact that Dharmakshetra and Kurukshetra both exist in our *hridayakshetra* (heart). By cultivating good conduct and good thoughts, we can live in “childhood” throughout our lives and thereby live in Dharmakshetra.

*Summer Course in Indian Culture & Spirituality,
Brindavan, 1972*

What is the teaching of the *Bhagavad Gita*? Some people say that the path of action is the main teaching of the *Bhagavad Gita*. Some others point to the path of wisdom as the main teaching of the *Bhagavad Gita*. But none of these are correct. What is the first sloka in the *Gita*?

*Dharmakshetre Kurukshetre Samaveta Yuyutsava,
Mamaka Pandavaschiva Kimakurvata Sanjaya?*

And the last sloka reads as follows:

*Yatra Yogeshwara Krishno, Yatra Partho Dhanurdhara,
Tatra Srivijayo Bhutir Dhruva Neetirmathirmama.*

When you join the last *word* of the last verse and the first word of the first verse, it becomes *Mama dharma*, meaning ‘my dharma’. This is what the Gita teaches. What is your dharma? Your dharma is to lead the life of a human being. Remain yourself, so that you are a human being, not an animal. Having been born as a human being, you should cultivate human values. Do not behave like an animal. Adhere to truth and righteousness.

Krishna Janmashtami, Prasanthi Nilayam, 22 Aug 2000



Sanathana Dharma: Lessons from Srimad Bhagavad Gita

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*Yaa Devi Sarvabhooteshu Buddhi Roopena Samsthitha,
Namastasye namastasye namastasye namo namaha.
Yad Devi Sarvabhooteshu Shakti Roopena Samsthitha,
Namastasye namastasye namastasye namo namaha.*

Someone has very rightly said, it is not the eyes that see but it is the mind that sees through the eyes. It is not the ears that hear, it is the mind that hears through the ears. It is not the tongue that speaks, but again, the mind that speaks through the tongue. The main objective of education is to train the mind, educate the mind, to see things in a deeper sense, in a better light.

Sanathana Dharma stands for *Ritam*, the changeless, absolute truth. Just like the sun that dispels the physical darkness outside, what is it that dispels the inner darkness of ignorance? It is *Ritam*. Times may change, the continents may appear and disappear, but the eternal values of *Sathya, Dharma, Shanti, Prema, Ahimsa, Mathru Devo Bhava, Pithru Devo Bhava, Acharya Devo Bhava*, the reality of Atman, the eternal life principle will never cease to exist.

'Imam Vivaswathe Yogam, prokhtamanahamavyayam'

I taught this imperishable yoga to the Sun god, declared Krishna to Arjuna in the fourth chapter of *Bhagavad Gita*. Arjuna immediately got a doubt! Krishna's age was seventy-five years at the time of the Mahabharata war. Arjuna thought within himself that how is it that

Krishna taught this imperishable yoga to the Sun god who has been there for millions of years. But actually when Krishna declared this, He was only revealing to Arjuna that He is the Creator and that the principles of *Bhagavad Gita* are dateless.

Let us try to understand the meaning of *Dharma*. Swami has always said that the highest *Dharma* is Atma Dharma. I have always had the passion of implementing anything that I have learnt. So when Bhagawan spoke about Atma Dharma, I pondered deeply over questions like what is *Dharma*, what is *Atma Dharma*? We understand it as righteousness.

Dharma has come from the root word ‘*Dhri*’ meaning *dharana*, that which holds. The fundamental property of any object (making it what it is), is its *Dharma*. *Dharma* of the sun is to give light; without light the sun doesn’t exist. The fundamental *Dharma* of fire is to give heat; without the quality of giving heat, fire doesn’t exist. Similarly the fundamental *Dharma* of man is *Atma Dharma*, because without the Atma, man doesn’t exist.

As I have said earlier, it is the mind that sees through the eyes. Let us go a step further in this process of learning and understanding this process of conditioning. Whenever we listen to a discourse, or read a book, we get highly inspired but the very next moment we go back to our mundane thought levels. It has always been my quest to find out



how to internalize the beautiful teachings of *Bhagavatam*, *Ramayana*, *Mahabharata*. Let us all undertake a small exercise of 10-15 seconds, which will reveal this process of conditioning.

Exercise

I request the house to follow as I say. Please raise your right hand above like this. Now gradually bring it down and touch your nose.

(At this juncture the speaker was actually touching his head. Almost the entire hall of over 1500 participants had their right hand on their head. The speaker then continued).

As you all can see for yourself, almost all of you are having your right hand on your head. I had clearly told you to follow as I ‘say’ and not as I ‘do’! This exercise clearly shows that our mind is trained to grasp what it sees more strongly and quickly than what it hears. The first language of the mind is video and not audio. This also goes to show us the importance of practicing what we preach. There is famous saying, ‘What you do, speaks much louder than what you speak.’

A few years back, one of my juniors, who was probably three or four years younger than me, approached me and asked for guidance for a problem which was bothering him for quite some time. He said, “I am not able to concentrate on my studies, my mind is wavering a lot, bad thoughts are coming, different type of thoughts are coming.” I replied immediately, “Do *Namasmaranam*.” I had read this somewhere so I told this boy, but I was not able to see the satisfaction in his eyes. This is because most of things we know intellectually have not yet been internalized. I tried to tell him to attend bhajan sessions regularly, focus on the meaning of the bhajans and he just nodded, as he didn’t want to hurt me. I was still unable to see the joy of satisfaction on his face.

A few days later, I was talking to a senior teacher and he shared an incident that occurred in one of the Trayee sessions. In that session, whilst holding a letter, a student told Swami that a lot of bad thoughts were troubling him. The boy had written all the problems that he was facing in that letter. Swami didn't utter a single word. He just took the letter, opened it, rolled the letter and gave it back to the boy. Swami asked him to open the letter and the boy tried to open it. As we all have experienced, when we get a new calendar from Bhagawan, the minute we try opening it, it rolls back. The boy tried this two to three times without any success. Bhagawan took back the letter and rolled it in the reverse direction. The letter stood straight! Bhagawan then said, "Instead of fighting with your wayward thoughts or bad thoughts, start doing good things." Bhagawan essentially stressed on *Namasmaranam* but because this boy was able to see how it works in the analogy of the letter, he was able to understand the meaning and the role of good things, sadhana, *Namasmaranam*, seva etc.

The main endeavour of today's presentation is to share with you the insights that I have gathered from my elders on how to internalize the teachings of Bhagawan. We are attending this three-day summer course and as a part of it, lot of good things will be shared, but how do we make it a part of ourselves? Only when we make it a part of ourselves, the cycle is complete. It is said that the essence of knowledge is action. Only when we practice what we know, the purpose gets served.

The *Bhagavad Gita* is a text book which has prescriptions for all type of *sadhanas*. We have *Karma Yoga*, *Jnana Yoga*, *Bhakti Yoga*, *Buddhi Yoga*, *Sanyasa Yoga* etc. Instead of describing all these Yogas, I will try to focus on how to internalize sadhana into our day-to-day life. Most of us feel that although we know that we have to do sadhana, *namasmarana* and other spiritual practices, we never do it since we don't feel the urgency of doing it and end up postpone them.

I would like to share a story that Bhagawan narrated to the Balvikas



gurus in this very Poornachandra Hall in the year 2001. It was a few years following the Mahabharata war. Krishna and Arjuna were walking together, when suddenly Krishna tells Arjuna, “Arjuna! Will you do a small favour for me?” Arjuna replied, “Definitely, I will do it Lord. You just have to give a command!” Krishna replied, “The time has come for Subhadra¹ to leave her mortal coil. Take her to Yamuna and leave her inside the Yamuna. But be careful of one thing! When you leave her there, don’t ever turn back and look behind.” Arjuna was suddenly saddened about Subhadra’s leaving and the fact that Krishna entrusted him the job of taking her to Yamuna saddened him even more. After some hesitation, Arjuna had to finally agree as he had already given a word to Krishna.

As Arjuna was taking Subhadra to the Yamuna, he was plunged in sorrow because that was the last time he would be seeing her. But, unknown to this fact she was joyful. Both of them entered the Yamuna, and Arjuna started retracing after leaving Subhadra inside the waters. All said and done, being a husband, he had a strong emotional attachment towards Subhadra and he took a cursory glance back where he had left her. To his utter horror, he saw a demoness flying into the sky. He was utterly shocked as he thought that how could Subhadra, his wife and Krishna’s own sister be a demoness. Arjuna immediately rushed back to Krishna, and Krishna, the all-knowing One that He was, knew already what had happened. He chided Arjuna for looking behind. Arjuna accepted that he had gone against Krishna’s instruction but still demanded an explanation of Subhadra being a demoness. Krishna then smilingly revealed, “When I came down as Rama and when Sita was at the Aśoka vatika, there was a demoness by name Trijata. When I came to receive Sita, Trijata saw me and instantly she had a desire to be very close to me either as a wife or a sister. As she had the merit of taking care of Mother Sita, and the desire was genuine, she became the sister of Me (Narayana) and the wife of you Arjuna (Nara)” The story ended there but Bhagawan continued, “Though Subhadra was

¹ The half-sister of Krishna, wife of Arjuna, and mother of Abhimanyu.

Krishna's own sister, she lived only like a queen. She never worshipped Krishna as God, she just loved him as a brother. She didn't do any sadhana. When the Pandavas went for *vanavasa*, it was only Draupadi who accompanied them. Subhadra didn't do the dharma of even a wife by accompanying Arjuna in vanavasa. She had the merit of taking care of Sita but when the merit got over, she had to go back to her older self."

This is very relevant to all of us especially after coming to Bhagawan's fold and after having His *Darshana*, *Sparshna* and *Sambhashana*, we think our highest goal is achieved. Swami has stressed repeatedly that personal sadhana is a never-ending process. We must never stop our sadhana.

In fact, a devotee had once asked Swami in an interview, "Up to when ought we do our sadhana?" To this, Swami replied, "We should do our sadhana until our very last breath. The fact that you are breathing only shows that your sadhana is still left." The devotee posed one more question, "I have heard that you are *Poornavatar*, the one with sixteen *kalas*. I want to hear from you, your true nature." Bhagawan replied, "Only this Avatar can clean off all your *Sanchita karma* of millions of births, if you win His grace. No other Avatar can do that."

This story would have given all of us a strong reason to undertake our personal sadhana. But we have to understand a few more things. The following is an illustration of the concept of Karma. (*The Speaker refers to a slide on his presentation*). Here are two concentric circles. The inner circle is the karma that takes us towards God, who is inside. The outer circle represents the karma which takes us away from God. Whatever karma we do, the focus should be to turn within.

We all know that when we start something new, it is very difficult in the beginning as it is not natural to us. Let us take the example of a rocket. The rocket uses 60-70% of its fuel to break out of the earth's



gravitational pull. Once it is out of the gravitational field, the fuel that the rocket uses is minimal compared to what it uses in the beginning. Similarly when we start a sadhana, we find difficulty only in the beginning. It might be a few days or a few weeks. 90-95% of us give-up in those first few days thinking that this difficulty is unbearable and it will be the same forever!

The next important aspect that helps us better understand sadhana is the factor of time. We feel that we have been doing our sadhana for one year, two years, ten years or twenty years, but there is no increase in inner peace and the mind is still as disturbed as ever. Why is it so? We have read quotes like *Shradhavan labhate jnanam* – purity, patience, perseverance; but how do we make the mind visualize and understand it? How we behave in a particular situation depends on our perception. Let us understand this with a small illustration: we have seen the generation of fire from a piece of wood at the time of the *yagnam* during Dasara. If the wood is rotated between the palms slowly, even for the longest time, fire is not generated because the required intensity is missing. Some of us during Bhajans or while listening to Bhagawan's miracles, develop lot of intensity but it stays just for a few seconds or minutes. We are unable to sustain it because the required perseverance is lacking. So perseverance and intensity, both are critical when we do our sadhana, resulting in the fire of knowledge.

Once Bhagawan asked a devotee, "How is your sadhana going on?" The devotee replied, "Swami there is no *trupti*, satisfaction." Swami said, "I have told you to do certain things. Then why you are not getting any satisfaction?" The devotee said, "I am doing exactly as per the letter and spirit of what you have told me to do Swami, but I don't know whether I am progressing or not." This is a very common doubt, which all of us have experienced at some point or the other of our sadhana. How to know whether we are progressing or not?

Bhagawan asked the devotee whether he had ever travelled on an

aeroplane to which the devotee nodded in affirmative. Then Bhagawan said, "When the plane takes off, you don't find any apparent movement, everything inside seems to be stationary. Does it mean that you are not traveling? Your choice as a devotee is just to board the plane. Once the plane is boarded and it has taken off, you have to just be there."

Most of us think that nothing is happening, but actually a lot is happening because when we surrender to God he takes care of everything, as He is the pilot. At that time, we should not allow the play of the mind in the form of questions like, are we progressing, should we leave, etc. to take over our mind. When we sit at a particular seat on the plane and see another person smiling, we think that that particular place is good and try to go there. This is our usual tendency. We change our deities; first we worship Kali, then we move to Krishna and similarly we change our gurus, which will not serve any purpose. The only choice that we have to make is start the sadhana, and once started, not to worry about what pace (and place) it is going, as that will be taken care by the pilot. The last thing to do is to stop doing sadhana, which correlates to jumping out of the plane.

Krishna has instructed in The *Bhagavad Gita*, *Tasmat sarveshu kaaleshu maamanusmara yuddya cha*, think of me and fight. Bhagawan also has said, 'Don't walk in front of me, I may not follow you, don't walk behind me, you may get lost; walk with me, always keep me with you. I tried to understand the meaning of this statement of Bhagawan. If I am doing a complex mathematical problem or if I am doing a very serious experiment, which requires all my attention, how can I simultaneously think of Him? Again Bhagawan solved this problem by giving an analogy! This analogy of a car driver is something that we see in our daily lives. When a driver is driving a car, he might be driving on a very busy street, and yet he might be talking to the person next to him; at times he may even turn talk to the person sitting behind; he might be listening to music or Bhajans; and sometimes he might even be talking on a cell phone (which is generally not advisable). How is it that he is



able to do all these different activities even in such a chaotic situation? This is because he is *mindful*, he is *conscious* of what is happening on the road. Similarly, in our day-to-day life, we can always be mindful of His presence. One may say that he is not having an inclination towards God even if he knows that He is present with him. But one important thing is that with God our life gains sweetness. It gains a meaning.

How is it that with God, life gains sweetness and purpose?

Once upon a time there was an old man who had written a will in anticipation of his imminent death. According to his will, once he passes away, half (50%) of his property will be given to his first son, one-fourth (25%) of his property to his second son and one-fifth (20%) of his property to his daughter. Very soon the old man passed away and his children discovered that the only property that the old man had left behind were nineteen camels. They started calculating and found out that 50% of the property equating to 8.5 camels did not make any sense. Hence, the eldest son demanded an extra camel and other siblings didn't agree to that, and a fight started between them. A wise man came by and learning about the problem he offered his camel to be added to their number of nineteen; making it twenty. The eldest son now got his 50% share of ten camels, the second son got five (25%) and the daughter got four camels (20%) and the man took back his one remaining camel!

This story was narrated in Chennai in front of Bhagawan by one of our brothers. Swami was very happy listening to this story and asked one of the elderly gentlemen the meaning of it. The elderly devotee said that it was the magic of the number 1, the beauty of mathematics. Swami corrected him and said, "That One camel is actually God, if you have God in your life then only it will become meaningful. If you are finding confusion and chaos in your mind it is because God is absent from your life." God solves the most complex of the problems, not by participating directly, but by just being present. The engineers of Sri

Sathya Sai Water Supply project and the Super Specialty Hospitals got the most complicated of their problems solved by Bhagawan in a trice. When God is on our side, he simplifies all our challenges.

The next understanding that we should have is that of the mind. A *sadhaka* will face two types of enemies, the outer and the inner. It is easy to conquer the outer enemy but very difficult to conquer the inner enemy. It is said that once the inner enemies are conquered the outer enemies cease to affect the individual. In the outer realm, enemies are the ones who will discourage you from taking to the path of *sadhana*. Let us understand it with a story. There were two friends. One of them used to chant the Gayatri mantra for an hour every day. The second person asked him, "Have you ever seen Mother Gayatri? Can you prove to me that She exists? If She doesn't exist, you are wasting one hour of your time, daily." The first person replied, "Assuming that Mother Gayatri is not there, I am wasting one hour of my time every day, but if She exists, you are wasting all the 24 hours of every day and your whole life." We have to use *yukti* (tact) to dissuade people from disturbing our *sadhana*.

Talking about the inner enemy; the mind can be compared to a rope. If the mind has friendship with the intellect, it will go up and if it has friendship with the senses it will go down. Another observation is that it takes effort to climb up a rope, whilst it is easy to go down. Hence, *sadhana* always requires effort. Sometimes our mind plays tricks with us and tries to distort spirituality. God has created good and the same God has created bad too; everything is God's creation. Once, in an awareness class, one boy got up and asked, "Sir you are talking about terrorism. If God has created it, why we should oppose it?" There is an inherent folly in this type of thinking.

Once, Bhagawan gave a task to an elderly devotee Sri V K Narasimhan, the then editor of Sanathana Sarathi. The following day, Swami came to him and asked him whether the task was completed. Sri Narasimhan



had a blank face and Swami knew that he had not done the work. Swami demanded an explanation from him, "Why have you not done the job?" Sri Narasimhan replied, "I forgot Swami." Swami showed a little anger and said, "Thousands are waiting for one instruction from Me; how can you forget the job given by Me?" Sri Narasimhan gave the reason of old age and forgetfulness but Swami didn't accept the reasoning. Sri Narasimhan then said, "Swami everything is Your Will. Even my forgetting is nothing but Your Will as you are the *Mayaswaroopa* (embodiment of this delusory world) and this maya (cosmic delusion) made me forget." Swami became furious and declared, "I am not *Mayaswaroopa*, I am *Jyoti Swaroopa* (Embodiment of Supreme Light)." He then took two or three steps, retraced back His steps and clarified, "Don't blame the sun for the shadow. The shadow is not because of sun, it because of the object, your mind!" Many of us get into this type of shallow thinking and arguments. There is no flaw in this creation; it is the flaw of our *Dristhi* or vision and not *Srishti*, the creation.

The Bhagavad Gita was given right in the middle of the battlefield, not in a palace or in the Pandavas' camp. This is because it is very symbolic. It is our story. We are continuously torn between two forces the forces of *Dharma* and *Adharma*. We often sing a bhajan:

*Jeevan jyot jalao kanhaiya
Jo kuch mera sab hai tera*

Meaning, whatever is mine O Lord, is Yours. However, in real life we follow the reverse, i.e., whatever is Yours is mine. If life is a car, we have given the driver's seat to the negative forces. We should actually make the Lord sit in the driver's seat.

Another aspect which all *sadhakas* have to understand is the aspect of *gunas* as mentioned in the 14th chapter of the *Bhagavad Gita*. I have taken the example of Hanuman because he is a role model for all *sadhakas*. We can learn from him how to deal with different

gunas. When Hanuman was sent by Rama to find out the news of Sita, the first obstacle of Hanuman was the *Mainaka* hill. *Mainaka* hill was a *Satwik* obstacle as it requested Hanuman to take some rest before proceeding further in return for the favour done to the hill by Hanuman's father, Vayudeva. Hanuman replied that he can't take rest as he was doing Rama's work. Similarly in our day-to-day life, we find that people with good intentions come to us in the midst of our sadhana and unintentionally distract us. We should politely refuse without any hesitation, as done by Hanuman. The next obstacle which Hanuman met was Surasa. Surasa was a *Rajasic* obstacle. We might encounter some situations where people intentionally come to create obstacles. Surasa asked Hanuman to enter her mouth and then only resume him journey. Hanuman used *yukti* (tact) to cross this obstacle. He increased his size to gigantic proportions making Surasa also to increase her size and when both reached mammoth sizes, Hanuman quickly becomes very small, entered her mouth and came out and thus satisfying her conditions. We have also to use our *yukti* in life to deal with such obstacles. As he moved further, Hanuman encountered the *tamasic* obstacle of *Chhayagrahi*. Hanuman immediately killed it. For us most of the *tamasic* obstacles are internal like sleep, indolence and laziness. There should not be any scope of discussion, negotiations in these cases. We should immediately shun it. Finally, Hanuman encountered Lankini which represents the ego which deserved the same treatment. Hanuman reached Sita who represents the *jivatma* and the beauty of the story is that on his way back he doesn't find any obstacles. The beauty is that when a father sends his son for work, he puts obstacles so that the son grows but when the mother sends her son, she removes all obstacles to make the journey smooth.

Let us perform a small exercise on equanimity which Krishna describes as '*samatwam yoga muchyate*' in *Bhagavad Gita*. It is an exercise of just a minute's duration. Imagine that you are walking on a rope, with your arms outstretched. There are two birds: a white bird and a black bird. When the white bird of ambitions, aspirations comes to you, don't try

to grab it or you will fall down. Let it come and go. Next, when the black bird of negative situations and circumstances come to you, don't try to shun it away. If you try to push it away, you will fall down. Allow the birds to come or allow these situations to come in to your life. Accept them with open arms. Open arms are symbolic of acceptance; if it is happening, let it happen. The birds signify temporariness; this too shall pass, but the goal that you are walking towards i.e. God, is straight in front of you. You should not be looking right or left, but focus straight at your Goal of reaching God. Keep the arms open in the attitude of acceptance and move on.

We should do this exercise everyday for some time to get that acceptance and one-pointedness towards our goal.

Sadhana should develop love. Once Bhagawan said, "When you leave the body I will not ask you what you have achieved in terms of tangible things and worldly accomplishments. I will ask you only one thing; how much love which I have given you in your heart, have you shared with my creation?" That is all that matters.

To summarize: Swami embodies all the facets of Sanathana Dharma and our mission is to bring a smile on His face.



Excerpts from Bhagawan Baba's Discourses

On Karma

What is Karma? Karma is an activity, which all the human beings have to perform, until death releases them from this body prison. Man cannot live for a moment without doing Karma. Even while he is sleeping, the breathing process becomes his Karma. Karma is the cause of man's bondage to the cycle of birth and death. The life has been given to man to sort out the consequences of the previous Karma deliberately done, in many past lives, as well as in present life. Man cannot be liberated, until and unless he has sorted out and neutralized all effects of past and present Karma, and bringing the Karmic balance to nil.

Many times Kriya (natural activity), is being considered as Karma. Kriya is a natural activity, which we perform in our day-to-day life, without thinking, questioning or seeking anybody's advice. Every morning we get up, brush our teeth, take bath, wear clothes and go to work, or go to the garden, take some exercises, and do many more such acts. Such acts are known as Kriya. They do not bind us to the 'Law of Karma'. Karma is the action or activity, deliberately done, with full knowledge and intention of the doer, and also in expectation of certain results in consequences thereof. This kind of Karma binds man to the causes and effects of the 'Law of Karma'.

There are three types of Karmas.

Instant Karma, which brings instant result. For example, when you slap someone in the face and he slaps you back. Here, both the action and reaction is instantly neutralized, leaving no balance behind.

The Mass Karma (Natural calamities like a plane crash, train accidents, earthquake, floods or cyclone, etc.) and Delayed Karma, which baffles human beings most because its consequence is not instant and immediate, but takes a much longer time to appear. The seed needs to be planted, the soil needs to get fertilized,

and the tree needs to grow before its fruit can ripen. By the time this whole process gets over, the past actions are totally erased from the memory, and the person is confused when he gets the fruit of his past actions. But be very sure that whatever you shall sow, so you shall reap. The same theory applies to the 'Law of Karma'.

When you sow a seed of Karma and whenever it yields the result and become the fruit, whether it is sweet or bitter, rest assured that you and you alone will have to eat it, whether you like it or not, and no one else will be able to eat it on your behalf, even if somebody volunteers to do so. Most of the people are under the mistaken impression that after doing one bad Karma and at the same time by doing another good Karma, they can mitigate the result of the bad Karma. If one does something bad to someone, he is sure to get it back, in the same manner, today or tomorrow, from that very person himself or by any other person. By the same token, if one does good to somebody, he is also going to benefit in a similar manner.

There are three types of Karma: Past, Present and Future. Present Karma must continue. It is like the carriage behind which is a trail of dust. If the carriage stops, the dust will settle on it. A doubt might be that the carriage cannot forever continue so as to be ahead of its dust. But the carriage need not always travel on a dusty road. It can get on the surface highway where there is no dust. The highway is equivalent to the Grace of God.

There is a difference between the benefit of Grace and the benefit of the Bhakthi, or devotion. A patient with pain is given a sedative which dulls the pain. But, Grace is an operation that does entirely away with pain. Make no mistake; Grace does entirely away with Karma. It is like a medicine that is labelled, 'good until 1968'. If used in 1973, the medicine is entirely ineffective. The body is the bottle, the karma in the body is the medicine, God puts a date on the 'medicine'; so it is not effective.

Sanathana Sarathi, Apr 1998

Law of Karma - A tenet of Indian philosophy

Miss U Suma

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In the 1930s, in a small Polish village of Proshnik, lived a rabbi by name Samuel Shapira. He had a habit of going for a walk every morning in the Polish countryside and he would wish anyone he met with genuine feeling. It so happened that every day his path crossed a particular German farmer named Mueller. The rabbi would greet him, "Good morning! Herr Mueller." The tensions between the Germans and the Jews had escalated so Herr Mueller would only scowl. But our Rabbi never gave up, he was trained in the Talmudian dictum of loving everybody and since he was a rabbi, practice was important to him. So he would greet him day after day and slowly the German began to thaw. What was a scowl changed into a nod, and a nod to the tipping of a hat. The tipping of the hat slowly became a gruff 'Good morning! Rabbi'.

That was not the end of the dramatic event. Days passed, Hitler grew in power, the Jews were sent to concentration camps and our rabbi was also in a concentration camp. They were shifted from one camp to another, till they reached Auschwitz. When the Rabbi was going into the concentration camp, he saw a soldier waving a baton in the right and left direction. Jews who were getting down the vehicles were either sent to the right or left. Unknown to them, going to left meant death and going to the right meant a few more days of survival. When the rabbi was slowly trudging towards the soldier, the rabbi looked up and the soldier also turned and for a few seconds their eyes locked. When they drew closer, the rabbi said, "Good morning! Herr Mueller." The soldier said, 'good morning rabbi' under his breath but exaggeratedly

pushed his baton towards the right and our rabbi got a few more days of life.

The moral of the story is: ‘as we sow so shall we reap’. But though we agree with the moral of this story in practical experience, it seldom seems to happen. We are good to many people and when they are not so good to us, we get hurt. We work with best of intentions but get misunderstood, and slowly but steadily get conditioned to expecting the worst. Then we begin to live like victims.

There is a choice for us in our lives as we heard in this summer course – to live like victims or to live like masters. If we have to live like masters, we have to obey the laws of the universe. The funny thing is that if you start obeying the laws of the universe, the universe starts to obey you. When we obey the laws of the universe, it creates deservedness in us and this deservedness makes one powerful. Today we will look at one such law – the Law of Karma.

Once I was trying to tell the story of the Ramayana to my little cousin, who was six years old then. The attention levels of these small kids, with eyes wide open as saucers, mouth half open, trying to hang on to each word uttered, is something which we dream we will get from our students in class. I was reveling in this attention and was building on the climax of Ramayana where we come to the battlefield part of it. I told him how Rama stood tall and handsome, lifted the bow, pulled the string close to his lips and how he said the mantra and released the



arrow and how the arrow created havoc in the demon army. I narrated about the tsunami of fire raging in the battlefield and his eyes grew wider. In a bated and hushed voice he asked me, "Did Rama use a voice-activated missile?" It was then that I realized that I had to put a lot of technological import into my narration of the Ramayana. I never thought of a voice-activated missile when I heard the Ramayana umpteen number of times.

This incident taught me a lesson that if you have to tell each generation anything, you better adapt to that generation because until they discover the timeless truths, there is a barrier.

Keeping this in mind, I have divided my presentation into two parts. In the first part, we will walk through the basic tenets of the Law of Karma and in the second part, I will play the role of the devil's advocate. I will raise all the questions which are usually raised regarding the Law of Karma. Swami has answered all these questions, so I will present to you what Swami has said about each one of these questions.

The easiest way to understand the Law of Karma is to understand the principle of the boomerang. We know the story of Parikshit, the repercussions of his putting the snake around the neck of the sage. Karma is used in many senses. One is action and the other is consequence. It is also referred to as fate. Speaking to you now is a karma which I am performing and listening to me is your karma, your fate. This is a way to understand it superficially. But actually the word karma has lot of import and meaning and we will try to discuss that in the next few minutes.

Every action of ours generates a certain amount of energy. The universe operates on certain principles and this energy comes back to us. The Law of Karma works perfectly whether we are aware of it or not. Whether we do good actions, bad actions or no actions, everything has a repercussion. The story of Sravana Kumar, where unknowingly Dasaratha kills him, thinking him to be an animal, is well known to

all of us. The blind parents of Sravana Kumar curse him and it comes true. Dasratha died in the sorrow pangs of losing his son Rama. We see that the Ramayana and Mahabharata are replete with such examples. In one of His discourses Swami says, 'In short, karma is movement, action, progress, evolution.' He has elaborated on all these concepts so let us look at these four aspects and get the gist of karma.

1. Karma as movement:

Swami said that when Godhood desired to move, the whole creation started. So this was the original action. Hence karma has a divine origin. What is the relevance of this to us? If karma is divine, the solution is also divine and going near this divine principle will get us out of this karmic cycle. So understanding that the whole of karma theory comes from God Himself is that when He comes down on the earth, He follows the rules, He doesn't break them as He is the master. He also performs karma. When He performs karma, he is not bound by them so they are sacrifices. They are done for the good of all. However, we are not in the same milieu so we have to find ways of making our karma more pure.

2. Karma as action:

We think action is something which is physical and visible in nature, which we can look at, but it is not so. Even thought and word is karma. So we are actually performing karma all the time. Even if we decide not to act, that is also a karma. Swami says that even breathing is karma. Do we have an escape from it? No, we don't have an escape but we have to understand this aspect very deeply. The thoughts lead to action but the seed of the action is always a desire. Why is it important to change this? If we have to change our actions, it has to begin at the thought level. Swami says: "*yad dhyayti tad ichhati, yad ichhati tad karoti, yad karoti tad bhavati*", meaning what we dwell on, in our mind slowly becomes a desire. Once it becomes a desire, you start acting it out, and once you begin to act it begins to happen. The universe is a friendly phenomenon, whatever seeds you sow in it, it gives back to you. It may not be in the time frame you prescribe, but it does happen. Whether



we like it or not, God built us like masters and to live like masters or slaves is our choice.

3. Karma as progress:

One more aspect of karma is the hereditary effect. Imagine that we perform karma all the time, we will have a huge storehouse of it and it spills over to subsequent births. So karmas which we do in one life, start affecting us in terms of the type of birth in the next life and it creates the ambience to work them out. Birth is the result of karma. Buddhists talk about the wheel of karma and how we spin on it, life after life. They also tell us that our birth is determined by what we do in the past. People very often tell us that we are very fortunate to be contemporaries of Swami and that being His students is good karma. We don't realize this but it is true; lifetimes of good karma has given us the deservedness to be close to Bhagawan and His institutions. If we have spent lifetimes in doing, we will be given an environment to foster it further, hence it has a reinforcing effect on our life.

We also have one aspect of karma which I call the 'karma tense'. *Sanchita* karma is the storehouse of karma which we have and will take lifetimes to redeem, *Prarabdha* karma is what we get for this lifetime and *Agami* karma is what we build for future. If we are little indiscreet about our *Agami* karma, we will add to the *Sanchita* Karma and consequently to our *Prarabdha* karma. This sounds very fatalistic, whether we act or not, everything is collecting against us. So apparently it looks like a trap; but it is not so. The whole theory of karma is built with a lot of positivism in it. It is a highway to evolution.

4. Karma as evolution:

Karma talks about delayed effect. We do something now and pay it back in some other lifetime. So in the next lifetime, you won't know why a particular circumstance is coming towards you but you know that you can build your own life. If you know this, you have a choice. This choice is the most empowering part of this life. Swami often says, 'what comes to you is destiny but how you react to it is in your hands'.



We will dwell a little longer upon this empowering part of choice.

If you have to deal with your *Agami* karma, Swami says that there is a very beautiful step by step procedure. First think about the consequence of your act and think whether Swami will be happy with it. Once we start using this criterion, it becomes a habit and slowly our action become sacred.

Swami has also kept loopholes to get out of *Prarabda* Karma!

If I have a huge store of karma, how do I clear it? However good I am it will take a long time?

Swami says there are three ways of doing this, which I explain hierarchically:

- » Bear it stoically: You broke your leg, without grumbling or blaming yourself and others for this mishap, bear it stoically with an attitude – let it come, I will bear it.
- » Transmute your suffering – Learn from your suffering and share the experience with others and alleviate their suffering. In this case you try to understand what the universe is trying to teach you and try to help others with your learning.
- » Transcend the suffering: All transcending theories mean one thing: stick to God and go back to God. Once you go back to God, it transcends all body-mind conditions. In the Bhagavad Gita, Krishna talks about this transcending aspect in the form of *Nishkama* Karma. It is the very famous episode in Mahabharata where Arjuna is despondent and Krishna says that he can't give up action. Krishna counsels Arjuna to have renunciation in every act and not renunciation of the act. *Nishkama* karma is something which we hear many times but is difficult to practice. Krishna says: "Have steady faith in Atma, dedicate all your acts to me with no desire of fruits thereof and with no sense of egoism, possession and pride engage in the battle". This defines the essence of *Nishkama*

karma. *Nishkama* karma is at two levels: one is surrendering the fruits of the action and the second is the surrender of doership or the agency of action. Hence all divine theories, in essence, say that you should surrender everything to God and realize that you are God. This concept is found in all our scriptures.

Coming to a mundane level; if I do Nishkama karma, how will it help me?

Nishkama karma brings objectivity. We see things as they are without colouring it with our glasses of ego.

Karma sometimes involves action, sometimes inaction. And getting a balance between the two is perfect action. Once Swami told us, “If you speak two words it is too much, if you speak one word it is too less and so you should speak one and half words.” Swami added, “Only Swami can do that.” So how does *Nishkama* karma give us this balance? Let us see an example. When I was in school, I had an art teacher who was a very motivated teacher. He wanted to make something good out of all of us, but he had a very non-cooperative class. He used to give an exercise of drawing a picture which he used to turn upside down. He used to say that the concept of what the picture is influencing your drawing. He used to say that one should look at things as they are and not as one knows them to be. He used to ask us to pay attention also to the negative spaces where the object doesn’t exist and then draw both to get the perfect picture.

Let us take the example of a table which, as we all know, has four legs. If we keep the table in a position where only three legs are visible, we can’t draw it if the concept that ‘table has four legs’ interferes with our drawing. Hence objectivity is very important. One more way of looking at it is identifying the negative spaces where the table is not there. This will give you the relational aspect of one leg and the other. Imagine If for something as simple as drawing, we need objectivity and holistic vision, don’t we need it for life itself? Swami says that if

one is not attached to fruits of one's action, one can practise akarma even in karma.

Let us go to the next part which is the skeptic's questions.

We get all the questions because we don't have complete understanding. Alexander Pope said, "From the fountainhead of knowledge drink deeply because the shallow draughts of knowledge will intoxicate the brain and drinking largely will sober you again." If you want to be sober, to be balanced, it is necessary to go deep inside. The whole purpose of this summer course is to inspire people to live with the word, and to dwell on it, even if it doesn't make any sense in the beginning. Stay with the word and slowly it will open up and give you a sense and meaning. Skeptical questions are raised by uninformed people with half understanding of the concepts. A few of the common questions are:

» **Why do bad things happen to good people?**

We always expect that if people are good, good things should happen to them and if they are bad, bad things should happen to them. This doesn't happen which doesn't mean that the universe is capricious or whimsical. The reason is that there is a delayed effect.

I recollect my Balvikas class where a student got up and asked our Balvikas teacher, "In the Mahabharata, the Pandavas were in the forest for long periods of time; they had a miserable time for all practical purposes. Duryodhana may have been bad, but overall in his life he lived like a king. So what is the point of being good?" This is the thinking, which most people have.

Our Balvikas teacher responded, "It is true that Pandavas had a hard life, but every night when they went to sleep, they slept with hope and assurance that God is with them whereas Duryodhana would not have had a good sleep." Situations come to us for what we have done and not because of someone else. We have to get out of the



victim syndrome. Swami says that every human being thinks that he is undergoing suffering even though he has not done anything bad. But the fact is that whatever pleasure or pain anyone undergoes is due to karma performed. Every human being performs karma and enjoys the fruit as a consequence. One step in living like masters is to stop blaming others. It means taking responsibility.

» Does the belief in karma make people passive?

A very popular argument is that Indians are very passive as they hold their fate responsible for all their acts. They lack initiative. The opinion is that if one is discontented, he will have initiative. Swami says, "People who follow spiritual practices are labelled as idlers. But that is a partial view." Swami adds, "This is not a religion of despair; it is a religion of hope, assurance and encouragement to lead an active, useful and beneficial life; for the future is in your hands, as tomorrow can be shaped by today. Today has already been shaped by yesterday." If we follow the path of karma, choice making is an empowering part of it. Life may dish out whatever it wants, but you can overcome the odds.

Let me narrate a story to explain this principle. Once two young men approached a sage and as they sat in front of him, the sage opened his eyes, looked at one of them and said, "You my son, will become a king, you have that destiny." The young man was elated. He looked at the other one and said, "I am sorry son, you are going to die within a year." Both left for their village, one was down in the dumps and the other was too happy for words. The man who was destined to become a king, started thinking and living like a king. Soon he developed all the vices and started spending whatever stored money he had and threw his weight around. He became callous, selfish and didn't bother about anybody else. The other man who was destined to die, was despondent for some days and then realized that he should do something as his time is limited. He started to thank everyone who made a difference to his life and slowly started to help others thus changing his perspective completely. He was slowly preparing for his death. One year passed;

neither the first man became a king nor did the second man die. They decided to meet the sage and clarify as to why his words didn't come true. They set off and were going through a forest, when unfortunately for them, they were attacked by dacoits. The man who was to become a king was more agile. He quickly climbed a tree and hid himself in the foliage while the other man ran. But he was caught and beaten up by the dacoits. The dacoits, later buried a pot of gold which was their loot, under a tree and it so happened that it was the same tree on the top of which the first man was hiding. When the dacoits left for their next mission, this man got down, dug up the place, took the pot of gold, searched for the friend, and reached the sage. They asked the sage as to why his prediction did not come true. The sage replied, "Yours was the destiny to die but due to the good activities you did, it got reduced to injury, but this man wasted his time and so his kingship got reduced to a pot of gold." Actions that we do today can affect us tomorrow and the backlog can be changed.

» **You say that we have to be true to ourselves. If I am true only to one part of me and not the other parts, am I being true to myself? For e.g. if I used to see films in my previous births and I come into this birth with a natural inclination of seeing films and if I repress it, is it correct?**

Swami very beautifully says, as I mentioned earlier, that what we dwell upon becomes a desire, a desire prompts an action which results in the action occurring. Hence Swami says, as a remedy, that it is easy to control a tendency when the mind starts to dwell upon something and impossible to control the mind when it reaches the stage of infatuation. Swami always used to encourage us to do a positive thing rather than forbidding us from doing a negative thing. He used to tell us to dwell on God and not on any other thing. So if the impulse is controlled in the initial stage, the rest is averted. If the impulse is not controlled and reaches the stage of infatuation, it can't be controlled. So the psychological theory of repression is not true if we understand how we reach the stage of infatuation.



Swami says that non-attached action and not forced withdrawal is the road to progress. He also says that the fostering of pure thoughts will promote the spirit of selfless service in our hearts. ‘*Nishkama karma* removes the bestiality in man and confers immortality.’ So if we constantly think of God, surrender our ego and doership, we are saturated with God and the bestiality goes away. Then, whatever action is done, becomes sacred and spiritual.

» **Is there a way out of this karmic cycle?**

Swami says that there is a way out of this cycle. He says that it may not be possible to escape the consequences of one’s good and bad actions but even a mountain of sin can be wiped out by winning the grace of the divine. Hence one should strive to earn the love of God which is all embracing and all powerful. But how do we earn God’s grace? Swami says, “Install Him in your heart, make Him the basis of all your actions, then all your actions will become sacred.” The previous speaker very aptly said that one should build a bond with God. Once the bond is created, believe me, we will devote more and more of our time in fostering this bond.

When my sister was studying in Stanley Medical College, Chennai, she once went to visit her friend. The friend’s mother asked her as to what she will do after she completes her studies. My sister said that she will go back and serve in Swami’s hospital. The friend’s mother was curious to know why she would not pursue her PG. My sister had many such questions pelted at her during the period of her studies. She understood the truth that when people are preoccupied with life, they use God as a via means to achieve their worldly goals. But if you stay in Bhagawan’s institutions and learn to love God, something opposite happens. God becomes the focus and worldly life becomes the via means to reach God. You start thinking of what things to do to be close to Him. Shift of focus is the essence of what we have to learn as students here. Once that is done everything will follow.

Swami says that grace can nullify karmic effects. Swami compares grace to a morphine injection. When it is given one can't feel the pain. He also gives the example of the expired tablet which will not have any effect even if it is taken. My parents had an accident and the whole experience was saturated with the love of the Lord. My mother said, "Swami if I can have so much of your presence, I would not mind a second accident." A completely traumatic experience can be totally nullified by the grace of God. This is the power of God's grace and it is important to seek it. However, grace can do much more than this. Swami says that grace is like a matchstick which can burn a bale of cotton. Even if you have a huge store of karma, it will get burnt by the grace of God. So even if you look from a mercenary point of view, you should follow God.

» **How does the belief in this doctrine help us?**

Swami says, "Work done in the cognition of the Atma gives protection to life, broadens the heart, illuminates the individual, annihilates the ego and confers the bliss of self on man. To recognize the sanctity of karma, we have to first purify our hearts." This will be useful for us in our everyday practice. We learn from both good and bad people in our lives. Good teaches us what we should be and bad teaches what we should not be.

Stay positive, live with good intentions; we are capable of creating both good and bad karma. 'What we give, we shall receive' – it is the universal Law of Karma.

Swami says, "Your actions are responsible for both your good or ill, fame or disgrace, joy or greed. Do not get excited over petty demands and desires. Fix your minds on the permanent ideals."

Excerpts from Bhagawan Baba's Discourses

On Indian Culture

Verily like a massive tusker
Knows not its own might
The sons of Bharat are unaware of the greatness of their culture,
Tolerance and compassion its beauteous form,
Truth above all other rituals strict,
Mother's love and reverence, the very elixir eternal,
Character, true, greater than mere living of comfort,
Unmindful of ones own heritage,
The Bharatiya runs after fashions occidental,
Sad is the sight, sadder the plight.

Telugu Poem

Hindu Culture is World Culture

As a diamond shines in splendour when it is cut into many facets, the foundational principles of Hinduism will shine brightly and illumine the world, when one starts the inquiry, patiently and enthusiastically. How can you know the taste if you do not eat? How can you know the depth, if you refuse to enter the water? Those who spurn Bhaarathheeya culture without practising it are as foolish as those who dismiss a dish without tasting it.

Hindu culture is the pillar and support of the nation; it is the backbone of the spiritually adventurous; it grants both this world and the next to all beings. It is really World Culture, the culture that the world needs. Other cultures assume various forms in various climes. But, the culture of Bharat has asserted eternal values, values for all times and all climes - like daya, dharma and dhama (compassion, virtue and self-control). It has not bent before the pressure of patronage or persecution.

The impact of Western civilisation has given rise to certain new sects

that attempt to reform and modernise the Hindu religion. Hinduism has the strength to correct their egoism and establish concord. Hinduism is the one religion that proclaims the truth that there is nothing separate from God and it proves it too. Because people are not able to understand this fundamental integrating principle, hatred and malice have grown in the followers of other faiths.

Volume 6, Sathya Sai Speaks

Today, there are very few people who practise and propagate the sacred values of our culture. Bharatiyas have completely forgotten their rich cultural heritage and are imitating Western Culture, losing their sanctity. Though the culture of Bharat is ancient, it is ageless and as relevant in the contemporary scene and, hence, it should be practised and propagated in every village.

Prasanthi Nilayam, 20 Oct 2003

The culture of Bharath

Culture seeks to integrate the various aspects of daily life and develop a unified outlook. It should enable one to transcend the divisions of caste, creed and community and realise the divine unity that underlies the apparent diversity. Students should realise that Bharathiya culture is not meant only for Bharath, but is meant for all mankind to reveal to the world the path to the Divine. Today one finds that the virtues exhibited by illiterate villagers and uneducated folk in the tribal areas are not to be seen among the educated urban population. In fact, wherever schools, courts and administrative offices have multiplied, in them we witness an increased corruption, injustice and wickedness.

7th Convocation of SSSIHL, 22 Nov 1988

Sri Sathya Sai - The fountainhead of Indian culture and spirituality

Sri Amey Deshpande

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*Kabira hum jab paida huve jag hanse ham roye
Aisi karni kar chalo ham hanse jag roye*

Saint Kabir says that when we are born, we naturally cry and if we don't cry we are made to cry. Seeing us cry the entire world rejoices, but in this lifetime, let us take up those glorious and enlightening activities and endeavours which leave us so calm and full of joy that when we depart from this world, we smile as the rest of the world laments on our departure.

I am reminded of my Kodaikanal trip of 2005. It was one of those days when Swami was upset with all of us; the day went on without any major interaction between Him and us. Towards the evening as we were getting ready for Bhajans, Swami asked a few boys, "O! You are getting ready for Bhajans?" We nodded. Swami added, "I don't want your Bhajans, I don't want your devotion." This was a very surprising and stunning statement because if God doesn't want our devotion, then whom is our devotion for? Swami then clarified, "Devotion comes and goes, but transformation, once it comes, stays with us forever." We get devotional when we attend a bhajan session in Kulwant Hall or while listening to a talk in Poornachandra, but as soon as we step out of the portals of either Kulwant Hall or Poornachandra, our devotion ceases to exist and we go back to our mundane ways. So we have to take upon the process of transformation.

As I was delving upon the statement where Swami says that he wants transformation, it stuck two chords with me which will be the theme of my presentation. Let us delve into the topic of Sri Sathya Sai – the fountainhead of Bharatiya culture and spirituality. Let us first understand what culture is. Then we will try to see what is Bharatiya culture. Ultimately let us understand how Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai is the fountain head of Bharatiya culture and spirituality.

What is culture? Swami says that the end of culture is perfection. What is the process or the way to achieving that endpoint? The second definition of Swami explains the second question. Swami defines culture as refinement. This refinement ultimately brings about transformation which leads us to perfection. This is the best definition of culture. Let us take the example of a seed. The seed on its own is useless. When the seed is put in the culture of a fertile soil, given water, tended to by a caring gardener, it emerges out as a beautiful tree which then is useful for mankind. This is the process of refinement. We can't say that the seed is useless but it is not useful as it is. It becomes useful only when it gets transformed into a tree. This is the process of refinement. Let us take another example of butterflies. Butterflies were nothing but ugly cocoons or larvae before they emerge as multicoloured beautiful butterflies that we see around. So the larvae become useful through the process of refinement and emerge into beautiful butterflies. This is culture. Let us take the last example which Swami gives of a sculptor who chisels out a beautiful statue from a rock. A rock per se is useless



but when the sculptor chisels out a beautiful statue it suddenly becomes a work of art. So this process or refinement makes it a masterpiece.

We all are trying to refine ourselves through this process of education. Swami says that education itself is a process of refinement where the ambience is the fertile soil and He is the gardener who keeps nurturing us with his beautiful messages.

If we were to compare our life to an equation:

The Sigma of Life = Perfection and the process through which we reach it, is refinement. So, many things are necessary for this perfection to be gained. If we look at mathematics, we have a set of axioms or postulates or rules which are not questioned. In other words, they are a set of assumptions based on which we solve our mathematical problems. Similarly, in life, for the process of refinement, we need a set of axioms or tenets which should our life and its activities.

Time and again, several masters come to give us these axioms like the Ten Commandments of Moses, and the Sermon on the Mount by Jesus. But once in a while, the sender of these messages comes down and tells us how to lead our lives by His own example. Hence we have our Lord, whose life will become the basis for our refinement.

Let me share with you one beautiful experience. It was one of those occasions, when Swami was giving a thundering discourse. He spoke about the declaration of Vedas. After the discourse, Dr. Bhagawantam¹ went up to the Kamavadhani garu². Kamavadhani garu was such an adept in Vedas that he could chant the Vedas in reverse order! Dr. Bhagawantam asked him, “Kamavadhani garu! Swami says so much about Vedas, do the Vedas really have all these, do they really have them?” Kamavadhani garu replies, “Sir, What are you saying! Whatever Swami says need not be in the Vedas, but it is the Vedas. Swami is the

1 An eminent physicist and Bhagawan's translator for over a decade

2 A Vedic scholar par excellence

fountainhead of Vedas. So whatever He says becomes the Vedas. Every sentence of His is a sutra; every discourse of his is an Upanishad. His life is a Veda.”

As we have the Ten Commandments of Moses or the five pillars of Islam – which are faith, prayer, pilgrimage, fasting and charity, in the same way, every culture has its set of tenets or axioms which help us in the process of refinement. So, what are those tenets of Bharatiya culture? I humbly attempted to find out those tenets and here are a few of them.

- » *Yad bhavam tad bhavati:* This is the most powerful of all the axioms. As you feel so you become. Most of these have nothing to do with god; these are the axioms which we can use in our day-to-day life. Dust you think, dust you will become, god if you think, god you will become.
- » *Vasudhaiva kutumbakam:* Vasudha is earth, aiva is only and kutumbakam is family hence it means that the entire world is one family and our mother is mother earth. This talks of the very famous paradigm of David Bohm known as the theory of interconnectedness. It was discovered by our ancients long, long before David Bohm discovered it.
- » *Yogaha Karmasu kousalam:* Excellence in action is Yoga and Yoga is union with god, which means that excellence in action is union with god.
- » *Sarva karma bhagwat preethyarthatam:* Let us do every action to make the Lord happy.
- » *Sarvam khalvidam brahma:* Every speck and atom of this universe is filled with the essence of the Lord.

Let us see how our Lord Sri Sathya Sai epitomized all these tenets.
Let us take:

- » *Yad Bhavam tad bhavati:* Swami always used to say that He is a



mirror. Whatever we reflect, He reflects back to us. There was one boy who was confused as to what should he do next after his studies so he was sitting in mandir to ask Swami. Swami came and asked him, "What you want to do next?" The boy replied, "Whatever you say Swami." Swami said, "Do IAS, it is good for you."

Next day Swami walks up to him and says, "Do IFS, it is good for you." The boy was little confused, that within a span of twenty four hours, this is the second profession, Swami has told him to pursue. The third day Swami again walks up to him and asks him, "What are you doing?" The boy replies, "Swami, you told me to do IFS. Swami adds, "IFS is not good, business is good for you, go and join your father in his business." The next day, he sat little back thinking, Swami should not further confuse him. Swami walked up to him and asked, "What will you do after studies?" the boy replies, "Swami you told me to do business, so I will do business." Swami corrected him and said, "Business is not good, do teaching, it is the best profession." So at the end of four days, the boy had four professions and each one of them might take a lifetime to achieve. In utter exasperation, the boy said, "Swami, you told me to do IAS on the first day and then IFS, on the third day to do business and now you are telling me to be a teacher. Swami, give me one answer." Swami said, "O! Foolish one, I am merely reflecting the confusion which is there in your head. I am not misguiding you, the lack of clarity is there in your head and I am just reflecting it to you." This boy was very intelligent, he said, "Swami if you are merely going to reflect what is there in my mind, when will I get clarity?" Swami answers this question in his inimitable style, he says, "From the muddy pool of your mind, with so many waves scattering it, remove the mud and then steady the mind, automatically you will get my guidance." *Yad bhavam tad bhavati* – if you are confused, he will behave in the same manner. If you become steady and clear, the guidance automatically comes to you.

» *Vasudhaiva kutumbakam*: The entire world is our family. Once



Swami called the MBA boys for an afternoon tiffin session. When Bhagawan calls for food, one should also pray to Him to give the strength to digest the food. This is because; any session of Swami has at least ten items. In this tiffin session, Swami was personally serving all the boys. This went on for some time and the boys were noticing that Swami was not sitting on the throne kept for him. The students were feeling very uncomfortable as they wanted Him to sit comfortably on the throne and they were requesting Swami to sit down. Swami said that He was fine and He was interacting with the boys in this manner for 45 minutes. The boys were feeling very uneasy as all the students were sitting on chairs. After forty-five minutes, the boys pleaded Bhagawan to sit saying that they are not able to see Him stand. Swami said that they don't understand and asked the boys to pick up the pillow, which was there on Bhagawan's throne. As the boys lifted the cushion, they found that a small wasp that was making a nest behind the pillow and Bhagawan said, "If I would have sat, the wasp would have lost its life and also the little ones which exist in that nest." The Lord identified himself with a small wasp and its family, giving us a lesson of Vasudhaiva kutumbakam.

One more experience comes to my mind when I was doing a sevadal duty in Trayee Brindavan. There is a ramp which goes into Swami's interview room and as He was going to give interview to a few devotees, He lifted up His robe and jumped across. We were all surprised to see a 75-year old jumping across. Swami turned towards us and said, "Poor ants are having their breakfast." We all ran to see what was happening and found out that a long stream of ants were carrying a moth from one end to other. Some one went to remove the ants but Swami didn't allow them to do it. Moreover, Swami told all the devotees accompanying Him to jump over that line of ants and enter the interview room. Swami was able to identify himself with every ant for He himself sits in the form of Vaiswanara in the ant and also is the creator of the moth. Swami says, 'Love is my form, truth is my breath,



bliss is my food, my life is my message, expansion is my life.' Can we expand the horizons of our lives from our petty families and relatives to something that encompasses the entire universe? Can we radiate that love to all beings that we come across or even that which is not in our life? Can we make the entire mother earth one family? This is a postulate for our life.

- » *Yogaha karmasu kousalam:* There is a very interesting story narrated by Sri Suryanarayana, our hostel accountant. When the Sri Sathya Sai Hostel for Senior Boys was constructed, Swami would come to supervise the construction for nearly 3-4 hours every day. Swami used to stand and walk around in that dust and debris. One of the senior teachers requested Him not to strain himself and take rest. He said that the teachers will take care of the work and report to him to give him the details. Swami didn't agree saying that He is required there. This parley went on for sometime and finally Swami said, "OK, I will give responsibility for one room, see to it that three works there get over perfectly. First - furniture work, second - electrical work and the third - painting work. These three works should get over by tomorrow." The teachers said confidently, "Yes Swami, it will be over definitely." Swami said, "Be ready, I am coming tomorrow at 9.30." Next day at 9.30 Swami's car landed and even before it stopped, Swami lowered the window and confirmed once more if everything is ready. He went into the room and asked the teacher to open the cupboard. The cupboards have two types of flaps, one which opens sideways and another one that opens as a writing pad, parallel to the ground. Swami noticed that the writing pad was not exactly parallel to the ground and all hell broke loose. He severely rebuked this senior teacher and said, "Don't you realise, if students study using this pad they will get backache. You have failed in the furniture activity. At least have you done the electrical work properly?" The teacher replied with his heart racing, "Yes, Swami, I think I have done it properly." Swami looked up and noticed a wire hanging from the ceiling. Swami again took the teacher to task and



said, "Do you know that what will happen to the boys, if they touch this wire? You have failed in the electrical work also." Now came the turn of painting work and the teacher had no courage to tell Swami that it has been done perfectly. Swami goes to a window stopper and checks behind it, whether it was painted or not. As expected it was not painted and the teacher got the banging for the third time in the day. Swami finally said, "this is the reason my presence is required here." This is excellence in action. We have several such instances where the activity taken by Swami is absolutely perfect. Can we follow this postulate of *Yogaha karmasu kousalam* in our lives?

- » *Sarva karma bhagwat preetyartham*: It was the occasion of one of those mega birthday celebrations (either 55th or 60th birthday). A large concourse of devotees had gathered in Prashanti Nilayam. We didn't have the present day facilities then. At one point, the sewerage got blocked and all the water started coming out, emanating a dirty stink. What was required was to jump into that dirt and muck and release the filter over there so that water could flow freely. One sevadal from Orissa, without a second thought, took out his shirt and dived straight into that pool of sewerage, went to the bottom of the pit, released the filter and all the water went past. It didn't cause any problem for the rest of the birthday celebrations. In those days, Swami used to give padanamaskar to all the sevadals after a function like this. As the sevadals were sitting in the erstwhile Prashanti Nilayam, Swami walked up to this boy and said, "For that one act of yours that day, you will not have rebirth at all." Swami had granted him the ultimate gift of self-realization or mukti for that one act of his. Swami is *Sulabha prasannaya namaha* – one who is easily pleased. It is not the quantum of work but the quality and the intention of work that touches the Lord. Once He is pleased, He gives you the ultimate gift. Can we use this postulate, *Sarva karma bhagwat preetyartham*, in refining our lives?

» *Sarvam Khalvidam Brahma*: The entire universe is suffused with the Lord. Dr. Bhagawantam was the scientific advisor to the Government of India and also the Director of Indian Institute of Science. When he came to Bhagawan for the first time, people told him about the hallowed materializations of Bhagawan in the river Chitravati, where Swami used to put his hand into the sands of the river and remove various objects. Dr. Bhagawantam argued that it is impossible for such things to happen. Let me digress for some time and tell you that when Vibhuti appears on Swami's photographs, whether it is a speck or more, it is scientifically impossible because matter cannot come out of energy without power. It is like saying something is coming out of nothing or matter is coming out of energy. This plagued Dr. Bhagawantam. He came to Bhagawan and on one occasion, he was walking with Swami on the sands of Chitravati. Swami asked him to pick a place in the sands where they can sit. His thinking was that Swami used to plant things beforehand. Swami added that all scientists are doubting Thomases. Dr. Bhagawantam said, "Not all scientists Swami, some of them believe in God." Swami said, "Oh! You read the Bhagavad Gita; do you want a copy of it?" So saying Swami picked up few grains of sand in his hand and poured it into the hands of Dr. Bhagawantam. Even as the sand reached the palms of Dr. Bhagawan tam, it got transformed into a book of Bhagavad Gita. The Bhagavad Gita was in Telugu. Swami commented, "I know, you find it difficult to read Sanskrit so I gave you a Telugu one." Swami added, "Find out the publisher's name." There was no publisher's name on the book. Then Swami said, "This is not important, what is important is that you imbibe the lessons which are there in the Bhagavad Gita; then you will understand that *Sarvam Khalvidam Brahma* – every speck of dust is suffused with the essence of the Lord."

Swami has given many such postulates, and what comes to my mind immediately is *Tyaja durjana samasargam bhaja sadhujana samagamam* (run away from bad company and choose the company of the good



and godly).

If we use these postulates from Indian Culture and epitomise Swami in that, and implement it in our life, we will find that our life has been refined and continuously moving towards the destination called perfection. Even if we are not able to become the sun which He is, let us become the lamp which can give light to all those who come into our ambit. I will conclude with a beautiful song:

*Madhuban khushboo deta hai
Saagar savan deta hai
Jeena uska jeena hai
Jo auron ko jeevan deta hai
Madhuban khushboo deta hai
Suraj na ban payein to ban ke deepak jalta chal
Phool milen ya aangarey sach ki rahoон pe chalat chal
Dil woh dil hai jo auron ko apne dhadkan deta hai
Madhuban khushboo deta hai*

Let us dare to become the flower in His garden, let us dare to become the star in His heaven, let us dare to become divine, let us dare to become Him.



Excerpts from Bhagawan Baba's Discourses

Swami on Himself

Whatever I do, it is for you, not for Me. For what is it that can be called Mine ? Only you.

Prasanthi Nilayam, 5 Jul 1996.

Giving the appearance of a strange person, having a basket-like hair on his head, showing no signs which indicate any particular religion or sect, with no specific mark on his face indicative of any particular caste, he appears quickly in a moment and vanishes equally quickly; then suddenly comes into your presence, wearing a robe that comes right down to his feet and sometimes covers the feet and sometimes does not cover the feet. Inherent beauty and attractiveness are obvious in his playing and singing. These are the aspects of Shiva Sakthi that are contained in him. Neither his hair nor any particular mark on his body nor the kind of robes that he wears give any clue to his divinity. All these signs point to the young Sathya Sai as he appears in his external form. He always smiles. In him, you will find the aspects of Shiva and Sakthi. How is it possible for anyone to understand the secret of Sathya Sai whose form answers this description?

The miracles that I perform are the kind of feeling which an elephant has when a mosquito lands on its body. These miracles have an insignificant place in my totality. Sometimes I feel like laughing at the ignorance of people when they attach importance to my miracles. People talk of only such small things and forget the much bigger aspect in me. The most sacred quality in me is *prema*.

This *prema* is immeasurable. However much a person may try, he cannot get a measure of the extent of my *prema*. It is immeasurable and unrealisable. Only such people who have recognised the existence of such *prema* in me can get some idea of who and what I am.

Realise and understand fully well that the only royal path to reach God is the path of *prema*. You will be able to taste this sweet honey of *prema* only at the lotus feet of the Lord.

*Summer Course in Indian Culture & Spirituality,
Brindavan, 1974*

I always fulfil My promise made to devotees. Whatever I do is for the happiness of devotees. I don't need anything for Myself. I don't have any desires.

I never accepted anything from others. I always conduct Myself in accordance with the principle of *Help ever, Hurt never*. This has been My motto. I never harmed anyone. I derive great joy in helping others. That is why I tell the devotees to always pray, *Loka Samasthah Sukhino Bhavantu* (May all the people of the world be happy!) All should be happy, healthy and blissful. With such sacred motive, I have been spreading the message of love to the entire world. **My life is for the sake of humanity at large.** The happiness of people is the happiness of Swami. I have no interest in celebrating My Birthdays. But the devotees would not leave Me. They want to have different celebrations, but I do not want any. I consider your birthday as My Birthday. The day you are happy is truly My Birthday. Though bodies are different, you should not give room for any differences. *All are one, be alike to everyone.* The relationship that Swami has with the devotees is not of a worldly nature. It is relationship based on Divine love.

Annunciation Message, Prasanthi Nilayam, 20 Oct 2002

Indian culture and spirituality

Dr. T Ravikumar

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Alvin Kalicharan came to India sometime in the late 70s as captain of the West Indies cricket team. He played with the Indian team captained by Sunil Gavaskar. While they were in Chennai for a cricket match, Bhagawan happened to visit Chennai. Kalicharan had heard about Swami, so one evening he went to have Swami's darshan. When Kalicharan went for Swami's darshan, Swami had gone to a devotee's house. He waited for 3-4 hours near the gate and when Swami's car came back, Swami drove right in. The sevadal told Kalicharan that Swami would not come now so he may return home. When Kalicharan, a successful test captain was turned away thus, he felt humbled and crestfallen. Within a few minutes he received a message that Bhagawan wanted to see him. Swami granted him an interview, which he says, changed his life.

The old students of the erstwhile Brindavan College published a volume named *Golden Age* and had asked Kalicharan to write an article. He wrote an article describing Bhagawan as *Bharat Bhagya Vidhata*: the designer of the destiny of Bharat.

In 1976, at the end of the Summer Course in Indian Culture & Spirituality in Ooty, Swami gave a discourse describing His entire life. He declared, "All through my life, youth will follow me, this will happen in larger and larger numbers. He created a medallion and said, "Look! In my palm is the destiny of this country, India." It was a medallion with the map of India, and a few verses engraved on it. He said, "There

are verses on this medallion which describe glorious events; social works that I will undertake and the names of the students who will head the 18 centres which will come all over India.” So Bhagawan is the *Bharat Bhagya Vidhata* and in His hands lie, safely, the destiny of our nation, nay the destiny of the entire world.

Once in Kodaikanal, Swami was standing near us and suddenly He posed a question, “My dear boys, why have I brought you all so near to me?” There were various answers. Swami said, “Do you think that I have brought you all close to me because you all are very intelligent? No! Do you think I have taken you all close to me because you all are very rich and handsome? No! Do you think I have taken you all close to me because you all have done lot of merit? Not at all!” We all were wondering what the reason for our nearness to Swami could be, when He said, “I have taken you all near to me because I want to revive the *Bhartiya Samskruti* through you all. That is the reason, I give you so many opportunities to watch Me, to be close to Me, to learn from Me and to be guided by Me.”

What is culture? We have had a number of summer courses and many scholars and speakers have given erudite explanations on the meaning of ‘culture’. As one of my previous speakers said, culture is refinement. *Bharatiya* culture is the Indian way of refining an individual. This ‘way’ will take an individual to perfection and oneness with God. This is known as culture.



A few years back, in one summer course, Swami said, "What is culture? Some people say that culture is 'a way of life'. But I say that 'culture is concern for others'. When we see Swami's life, we see how cultured and perfect it is. So in the next few minutes let me take you through some experiences where I was able to witness Swami's concern for people.

It was one of those hot summer days in 1974 in Brindavan. Swami had finished giving darshan and returned to his bungalow at 10:00 a.m. At around 10:45 a.m., a group of villagers from North India came to Brindavan. They were extremely poor. They had come in a run-down bus wearing very simple clothes. Many of them were in rags; but somehow they paid (the fare) and got into this bus hearing that they could go around South India for a pilgrimage. Someone told them on the way, that Bhagawan is in Brindavan. They had absolutely no idea about darshan timings and the like, because in most temples one can walk in, have darshan and come out. When they arrived they learnt to their dismay that the darshan had got over and next darshan would be only in the evening. Their itinerary was so packed that they had no chance to wait until the evening. As the sevadals were explaining the schedule, tears started rolling down from their eyes thinking that they wouldn't be able to see Swami.

Suddenly the inside gates of the Brindavan bungalow opened and Swami came out. He was walking very fast, and seeing Him the sevadals became attentive. I was keenly watching this from the college building, which is the present *Kalyan Mandapam*. In those days, students had one special privilege. This was of offering Swami *chappals* to wear whenever He went out in the hot sun or when he had to tread on thorny, uneven surfaces. Realizing that it was very hot, I ran inside to get a pair of slippers for Swami. I ran towards Swami and kept it in front of Him. Swami glared at me, turned away and proceeded to give darshan at the Sai Ram shed. I was shocked, thinking that perhaps I had obstructed Swami. I told myself that this act of mine resulted in



Swami turning down wearing the slippers and walk in hot sun.

Swami went straight to those villagers, whose tears of despondency were transformed into tears of bliss. Swami enquired from the villagers about their native place and very sweetly asked them to sit in rows. They sat in rows, Swami walked amidst them and the villagers took Padanamaskar. Swami was not satisfied. He called two boys and told them to get sweets from inside. Swami distributed the sweets Himself, but He was not satisfied. He ordered the boys to get photos and distributed them to all. He even distributed Prasadam (Vibhuti) to them. Twenty-five minutes later, Swami returned back very satisfied.

Swami says that He can wipe away tears (*kaneeru tappinchu*), also bring tears (*kaneeru teppinchu*) to your eyes. He will wipe away tears when He says, ‘your cancer is cancelled’ and He brings tears to your eyes when you just have His darshan! Swami while walking back, saw me crestfallen and very lovingly called me and said, “*Bangaru!* Did you notice, the poor people didn’t have slippers. How could I wear them when I went into their midst?” That is the love of our Lord. This is culture, which is concern for others.

It was the same year when Swami had taken a group of us to Mumbai. The event was the inauguration of the *Sarva Dharma Stupa* there. The students staged a drama in one of the biggest hall known as the Shanmukananda Hall and the drama went on very well. After the program concluded, Swami came up on to the stage, looked at all of us and said, “I am very happy with all of you. Take off the make up, change (your costumes) and come to Dharmakshetra for lunch.” Swami left and as we went inside to change our clothes, one boy realized that the ring which Swami had given him disappeared. Swami had given some of us rings, chains, watches and we had removed them and kept them very carefully at one place to enact the role of sanyasins in the drama. All of that had disappeared completely. For the next couple of hours, we kept on searching every nook and corner of the auditorium. We



asked the watchman, the stage manager and all the people concerned but no body had any clue about them. Crestfallen, we got into the bus and reached Dharmakshetra.

It was 2:30 in the afternoon. Swami was waiting for us at the doorstep of *Satyadeep* with a worried look on His face. He asked, "Why did you come late, what happened?" The students replied with a heavy heart, "Swami! Whatever you had given us for our protection has been lost. We searched everywhere, but couldn't find it." Swami said, "Is that all? Go, wash your feet and hands and have your food." As we went in, Swami also came, the plates were placed, food was served for all of us and all of us partook of the food. As we were about to finish, we noticed that Sarlaben Shah (wife of Indulal Shah) came and kept a plate for Swami. Swami had not eaten. Even though He reached Dharmaksetra two hours before us, He was waiting for us. Concern for others is culture. Swami epitomizes this dictum in every act of His. Swami of course created and returned to us all the watches and rings and chains we had lost that day. Nothing He gives is ever lost. Nobody can rob those! It returns to Him, He said.

Towards the end of the trip we had a very beautiful experience. Swami took us for sightseeing in an air-conditioned bus. He showed us the various places like the Taj Mahal Hotel, the Gateway of India, Malabar Hills; continuously describing them to us. It was around 10:30 at night when we were returning to Dharmakshetra. At one traffic junction, our bus came to a halt. At that time, a beggar woman comes straight to the window where Swami is sitting and asks for some alms. Swami wittily replied that He doesn't have pockets. Sri Kamani, the premier industrialist of our country sitting next to Swami takes out a hundred-rupee note and gives it to Swami. Swami gives it to the beggar woman and tells her, "This is a hundred-rupee note, be very careful, feed your children and you also eat something." In the meantime, the traffic light turns green and the bus moves away.



This small act showed Swami's love. When He gives a gift, He gives Himself with the gift. This makes His gift very precious. I have around 35 matchboxes that Swami has given me after lighting the *arati* over the last 35 years. On each of the matchboxes, I have written the date I got it, the shirt pocket in which Swami kept it after lighting the *arati*. So every gift that He gives – be it a pencil, a pen or a matchbox – is special because the Lord gives Himself with each one of these. This concern for others is Indian culture.

It was one of the trips to Sai Shruti, Swami's abode in Kodaikanal. One day, it started drizzling all of a sudden. Swami briefly went to the portico, saw that the devotees have not assembled, came back inside and kept talking to us. After some time He said that He had to go to give darshan. One of the elders said, "Swami! The Devotees are not there." Swami said, "No, No! I saw, devotees were coming in a line." This elderly gentleman whose duty it was to admit the devotees said, "I thought that the darshan was over (when you went to the porch and came in) so I sent all the devotees back." Swami was very upset at this; it looked like Swami would wind up the Kodaikanal trip that day itself. Swami asked, "Do you have any daya (compassion). My devotees are sitting there since 4 o'clock. Do you think I am stonehearted? Can some mere rainfall stop Me from giving darshan to My devotees? How sad they would have felt? How many people would have come with the hope of telling their problems to Swami and receiving solace and because of your callousness, they had to go back empty-handed, burdened with their problems." Swami didn't eat food the whole day because for Him taking on the troubles, worries and sufferings of others is a joy. *Mee anandame naa aharamu*, 'Your bliss is my food', He says.

Let me take you to the time when Swami fell down and had a hip fracture. Swami lightened our fears by saying that it was just a catch. The doctors insisted that X-ray should be taken and the X-ray was done. The X-ray film when developed showed a fracture in the pelvic bone. That night a group of doctors were discussing, how to break this



news to Swami. He would retire for the day in a few minutes. So they summoned courage and went into His room and told Swami, "Swami, it is a fracture." Swami very casually replied, "Oh! Only a fracture, we will look into this tomorrow morning." Next morning Swami was being taken to the operation theatre. As He was being wheeled to the theatre, suddenly He asked them to stop. They stopped. Swami asked them to call Dr. Hegde. Dr. Hedge was called and Swami said, "I had told you that I would give you interview this week, I will call you on next Sunday and talk to you." Dr. Hegde's son was coming from USA and Swami had told him that He would call all his family members for an interview. Swami was going for an operation; but even at this time, He was not thinking about Himself. His thoughts, worries and concern was for His devotees. His delight lies in the delight of His devotees. His happiness lies in the happiness of His devotees.

A few days later, Swami said, "Boys are feeling sad that I have not given darshan. Tell the boys that I will come and give darshan from the balcony. Let them assemble in the round hall below." In those days, I had the privilege of sleeping in Trayee Brindavan. At 4 in the morning, I heard a sound. I looked up and saw Swami holding a walker and walking very slowly around. We had thought that Swami would just peep out of His door and go back. But Swami was practicing, going around the whole of the round hall so that all get His darshan and return satisfied. He took that trouble for our sake!

On that day, we had to get the Mysore Pak *prasadam* blessed by Swami. I went up to get it blessed. Swami said that it is very oily, so give it as it is. We discussed that in the future, we will put the *prasadam* in a cover and offer it to Swami so that He will touch it. Next time, apples were the *prasadam*. I took a tray of apples for His blessings. He picked up one apple and remarked, "It is very heavy." A thought ran through my head that Swami has become so weak that He was finding even this apple heavy. Reading my thoughts, Swami said, "It is not that. If I throw an apple from here to someone (down there), and he misses

catching it, he will get hurt.” Even at that point, Swami was thinking only about others. End of culture is perfection and Swami lived His life to perfection.

There was a group of sevadal ladies who had finished sevadal service in Parthi. Swami was giving them *padanamaskar*. The ladies were going in line and taking *namaskar*. One of the ladies had a small kid in her hand. She didn’t know what to do with the child as she took *namaskar*. Very spontaneously she passed on the child to Swami. He extended His hands and carried the child as the lady took *namaskar*!

Swami, how sweet you are! This is the Swami whom we saw. He taught us that our lives need to be cultured. We have to become sensitive to the needs and feelings of those around us. We have to lead lives saturated with selflessness. This is true *Bharatiya* culture and He taught us this lesson through every page of His Life.

Excerpts from Bhagawan Baba's Discourses

On Yoga

The seers of ancient India professed and practised Yoga with its eight components of *Yama, Niyama, Asana, Pranayama, Pratyahara, Dharana, Dhyana* and *Samadhi*. Though India is the homeland of Yoga, it gains popularity in foreign lands. Indians have neglected Yoga, nourishing the mistaken notion that Yoga is meant for the ochre-robed forest dwellers who feed on tubers. They think that only recluses and renunciates are worthy enough to practise Yoga. They deluded themselves, entertaining the wrong idea that an ordinary man has nothing to do with Yoga. Man in his frantic scramble for amassing wealth has lost proper sleeping habits. He forces himself to take sleeping pills and intoxicants to induce sleep, into his worried mind. Pills and drugs take a heavy toll of his health and make him a target for blood pressure and heart ailments. The hurry and insatiable greed of man have brought in their wake a host of mental maladies.

The healing power of Yoga

Some intellectuals began to think whether there could be a remedy for the heated nerves and worried minds and diseased bodies afflicted by blood pressure and lung diseases. Professor Carlton researched into these problems and declared that the Yoga Shastra of Patanjali shows a sure remedy for this malady of the modern man. Inspired by the investigations of Carlton Cane, Professors of Hawaii University like Elliot, Shuton and Johnson began researching into Yoga. Professor Johnson in the beginning doubted the efficacy of Yoga; but as his research progressed, he realised the great power of yoga. He concluded that the clue to the problem lay in controlling the vagaries of the mind. He, along with other Professors, further stated that the practise of Yoga fosters physical and mental stamina, and people could remedy their mental afflictions without spending a pie. The professors determined that the joy that one derives from two hours of undisturbed deep sleep

can be obtained by twelve minutes of Yogic practise.

Though Devaki was the mother who nurtured Krishna in her womb, it was Yashoda who enjoyed the pleasure of Krishna's company as a foster mother. Sitting under a tree, Devaki lamented her misfortune thus:

It was not for me to see the wondrous deed of your sucking away the life of Putana while she suckled you;
It was not for me to kiss your wondrous belly, which ropes failed to bind;
It was given to me to suffer the labour pains to deliver you to the world;
It was given to Yashoda to fondle you in fond joy.

Though fertile, I became a barren woman. Without begetting a son, Yashoda became the mother of a Great Son. The plight of the *Bharityas* today is similar to that of Devaki.

Though India is the mother of Yoga and *Shaddarshanas*, it is the foreigners who foster Yoga in their countries and derive immense benefit thereby. Indians are reduced to the pitiable condition of learning Yoga in foreign lands. They do not strive sincerely to benefit from the marvellous, sacred and unique wisdom contained in the sacred texts.

Sage Patanjali devoted his entire life to the study of Yoga and declared that health is most essential for life. He stated that the well-being of the body depends on discipline. He defined Yoga as, "the observance of discipline for the physical, mental and spiritual well-being."

*Summer Course in Indian Culture & Spirituality,
Brindavan, 1993*

Patanjali Yoga Sutras & the Sri Sathya Sai System of Integral Education

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I am quite at a loss of words this morning because my position is that of one who serves a bitter pill after a delicious meal. The entire auditorium is so steeped and soaked in the stories of the love of Swami, that I actually do not wish to disturb those thoughts. However, most people who take a tablet, usually take it after a meal. Bhagawan has told one more thing – that when we truly love a person, we not only tell them we love them, but also do what they like us to do. It is in this way that my talk, which will be different from what you have been listening to the whole morning, will be relevant.

The memory of a beautiful moment on the same stage, sixteen years back envelops my mind. It was Christmas Eve of 1995 and I was scheduled as one of the speakers for the alumni meet which was happening here. The speaker before me had overshot her time and Bhagawan had already signaled to her to stop. When she finally wound up her talk and retreated, and I made my way to Bhagawan, handed a rose to Him and knelt down to feel the touch of His redeeming feet, the whisper of His gentle voice fell on my ears. Involuntarily I looked up, nodded, walked up to the mike and finished the speech which was scheduled for around twelve minutes, in about 7-8 minutes. It was only when I went backstage, relieved from the speech, that I thought of what Swami had actually told me. In front of Swami everything is oblivion. The echo and impression of His voice was lingering in my

head and Swami had actually told me, takku chesi cheppu, meaning, make your speech short. I am recounting this because the instruction is relevant even today for me. I have this impossible task of abridging a vast topic in about twenty-five minutes.

My topic for the day is the Patanjali Yogasutras. Over the past two days, you have been listening to talks on important texts in the Indian Culture. In fact, on the first day, during the first talk, when there was a slide on the statistics of the popularity of different Indian scriptures, this text didn't figure at all. Unlike every other text like the Bhagavatam, the Mahabharata and the Ramayana, I do not even have stories to bank upon. So, I will make a very humble effort to give to you in brief what Swami has reiterated in His many discourses about the ashtanga yoga of Patanjali Yoga Sutras.

A few quick facts:

Who was Patanjali?

There are varied stories about him. Since the different versions do not agree with one another, I shall not deal with it here. However, one point which is agreed upon by all is that he was an incarnation of Adisesha. He lived approximately around 500 to 200 B.C.



What is Yoga?

In yesterday's quiz competition, one student answered this question brilliantly. Yoga is one of the shad darshanas, the six schools of Indian philosophical thought. There are many kinds of Yoga. The Bhagavad Gita talks about three kinds of Yoga namely Karma Yoga, Bhakti Yoga and Jnana Yoga. If we look at some other texts, we hear of Mantra Yoga, Laya Yoga, Raja Yoga, Hatha Yoga etc. Patanjali Yoga Sutras is a text which fundamentally focusses on Raja Yoga, which concentrates on controlling the mind. This Yoga is about the taming of the mind which is like a mad monkey, as Swami has described it.

What is the meaning of the word 'Yoga'?

The Sanskrit root of it means 'union'. It can also be called as the method which helps us achieve spiritual union. Interestingly, the English word 'yoke' which means 'to unite', 'to bind' or 'to bring together' has its Sanskrit ancestor in Yoga.

What are Sutras?

A sutra is a string or thread which puts together things, but metaphorically it is an aphorism; a short instructive saying. So, an instruction which is very briefly put is a sutra. Patanjali Yoga Sutras give us instructions in a very crisp and lucid manner. There are 196 sutras divided into four chapters.

Yogaha chitta vritti nirodhaha (1.2)

This aphorism is the second verse of the first chapter and it gives the definition of Yoga. It means: Yoga is the restraining of the fluctuations and disturbances of the mind. Adi Shankara, in Atma Shatakam, says: manobudhi ahamkaara chittaani naaham. Chitta is the combination of manas, buddhi and ahamkara. All these together comprise the mind. Let us take an example. It is the mind, which will perceive that an object is coming towards me. The buddhi will tell me that the object coming towards me is a speeding car. Ahamkara will tell me that the

object is coming towards ‘me’; it will injure ‘me’, so ‘I’ have to move out of the way. Identity with ‘I’ is Ahamkara. Mind is the combination of these three. The function of the mind is very fascinating but it is the greatest challenge which we all have. The root of everything we want to do or achieve lies in the mind. Why is it so challenging to control the mind? For e.g., as I am speaking, one part of my mind is concentrating on the speech, whereas another part is observing all who are sitting here and listening to my talk. Yet another part is thinking what I am going speak next. Similarly, if you take a quick retrospect, you will know that your mind is at many places and not just one place. This aspect of it makes it most challenging.

Patanjali, through his sutras, has given a few steps to tame this mind.

vṛttayah pañcatayyah klistā aklistāh (1.5)

These vrittis are of five types, but he categorises them broadly into two types - troublesome and non-troublesome. It can be put very simply as positive thoughts and negative thoughts. Negative thoughts take us towards ignorance, and positive thoughts take us towards freedom and wisdom. The *shadripus* (six internal enemies) of kama, krodha, lobha, moha, mada and matsarya come under klistha thoughts and satya, dharma, shanti, prema and ahimsa come under aklistha thoughts. At one point of time even the positive thoughts have to be quelled for the union to happen. Swami very aptly says, ‘Bend the body, mend the senses and end the mind.’ The word ‘End the mind’ actually means no thoughts at all, not even the positive ones. To begin with, we can’t empty the mind completely but we can start pouring in more of positive thoughts into our minds so that the negative thoughts diminish and at one stage only positive thoughts remain. A very beautiful simile that Swami has given is about the bucket of dirty water. If you have half a bucket of dirty water and, if you want to fill it with good water without pouring the bad water out, you have to let the good water flow into it. At one point all the bad water would have flown out and only the



good water will remain. This is exactly what is happening when we go through the different processes.

The five kinds of mental disturbances are:

- » Right knowledge, which is also a thought or a wave that causes disturbance.
- » Wrong knowledge, which is what we understand based on falsehood.
- » Imagination is when we think about something that doesn't exist in reality.
- » Sleep is a state of nothingness with some awareness because we wake up and feel that we slept well or didn't sleep well.
- » Memory - Whatever we see, hear and perceive is retained in the mind which is known as memory. Students sometimes say that when they read a book they take in only what is good and not what is bad which is not possible. This is because the senses retain whatever they perceive, in the memory.

How do we control these disturbances?

We know that the mind is filled with thoughts and we also know that it has to be stilled. How do we go about doing this? There are two simple steps:

abhyasa vairagyaabhyaaam tannirodhaha (1.12)

the control of the mind can be achieved by practice and dispassion or non-attachment. A very beautiful definition has been given for practice. The sutra says:

tatra sthitou yatnobhyasaha (1.13)

which means steady or persistent effort is practice. In the next verse, he talks about practice further:

sa tu deerghakala nairantarya satkara asevito drudhabhoomi (1.14)

This means, the practice will be firmly grounded when it is done for long time, uninterruptedly with reverence and with great diligence. This is the practice which Swami often mentions: *Sradhavan labhate jnanam*.

What is vairagya? That which is without raga or passion is vairagya. This also means that one doesn't have any specific interest, either selfish or unselfish in anything. Patanjali explains it as:

*Drusta anusravika vishaya vitrushnasya
vashikara swagna vairagyam* (1.15)

If we subjugate the attraction for anything we see, hear or perceive through the sense organs, then it is known as vairagyam. We know that practice and detachment are the two things to control the mind.

Let us consider a seeming contradiction here. Practice says 'never give up' but dispassion says 'always let go' which is a little tricky. This actually means that we should never give up our efforts, endeavours and attempts and always let go the tendency to look at what comes out of our efforts. The vigilant balance of these two to some extent will help us to bring our mind under control.

What is it that we have to practice?

Patanjali has given clear-cut steps and Swami has also re-emphasized this on many occasions. They are Yama, Niyama, Asana, Pranayama, Pratyhara, Dharana, Dhyana and Samadhi.

Swami has made these steps very easy to understand in His discourses. Before dwelling on these eight steps, let us look at one more injunction which says,

*jāti deśa kāla samaya anavacchinnāḥ
sārvabhaumāḥ mahāvratam* (2.31)



If community, birth, place of birth and time don't cause any interruption in our practice then it becomes a great vow.

Yama: Yama is moral restraint on some aspects of our daily life.

Niyama: Niyama comprises some observances and practices which we have to do diligently on a recurring basis everyday.

Asana: Asana is our posture. It is not necessarily a posture like the Padmasana or Sukhasana when we do meditation. Our posture even while sitting to listen to a speech matters. Once, in a Poornachandra session, Swami spoke about our posture. He said, "The steadiness in posture reduces the wavering of the mind to a large extent. When listening to a talk or singing Bhajans, we should not sway or look around or nod our heads. This disturbs people sitting behind you." When we sit on a chair, we should have a comfortable posture. This is also a clue for our classrooms.

Pranayama: Pranayama is the control of breath.

Pratyahara: Pratyahara is the withdrawal of the senses from external objects.

Dharana: Dharana is attention. If we do a self-analysis of the amount of attention that each one of us has, it will help us to ascertain how much of these practices we have to undertake. Attention or concentration is dependent on the success of the previous steps.

Dhyana: Continuous and uninterrupted attention for a longer span of time is Dhyana or meditation.

Samadhi: When Dhyana becomes deeper, the object of meditation, the meditator and the process of meditation are not perceived and only the essence of meditation is left, it is known as Samadhi.

Out of the eight steps, Swami has given special importance to the first two steps. Swami says that man's mind is sanctified when he understands the correct meaning of Yama and Niyama.

Yama has five components:

Ahimsa or non-violence: Non-violence need not be exclusively concerned with violent acts. This could be as simple as not harming or hurting anybody in thought, word and deed.

Sathya or truth: The component which doesn't change in all the three times of past, present and future is truth. Swami also differentiates between fact and truth (nijam and satyam). If I say that someone is wearing a white dress now, it might not be true after one hour. But that which doesn't change with time is truth or satya. Honest practices will make a person attract rewards towards him without having to run after them.

Asteya or non-stealing: I remember an incident that happened with me. I was to go for the invigilation of an examination when one of my friends asked me a pertinent question. She said, "The motto of this university is Satyam Vada, Dharmam Chara; the name of the University is Sri Satya Sai Institute of Higher Learning; the Founder Chancellor is Sri Satya Sai Baba, and you coach your students in Sathya as the first human value. When every component of this Institute has Sathya or truth in it, why do you need an invigilator for your examinations?" I was taken aback by this question, as it was a very relevant query. If honesty has got ingrained in us, we don't need anyone to oversee whether we are being honest or not.

Brahmacharya: It usually means celibacy. Swami has given a very beautiful definition to it. He says, "Brahmam lo charichadame brahmacharya." This means, if we do all our activities with Brahman as the focus, it is Brahmacharya.



Aparigraham: Aparigraham is non-possessiveness or, not coveting which is not ours. We are possessive sometimes about ideas, people and also about trivial things like chairs and notebooks. Possessiveness can come in any form unknown to us, so we should be careful.

Niyama also has five components:

Soucham: Swami says, “Soucham is of two types, the inner and outer cleanliness. It is not confined only to bodily cleanliness. Everything a man associates with in his daily life has to be clean, whether it is the clothes he wears, the bed on which he lies down, the books that he uses, the house he lives in – all this has to be kept clean. Even the body should be maintained clean. That’s why every morning after waking up one should brush his teeth, wash his mouth and face. This confers not only good health but also joy and bliss in life. Make efforts to keep your surroundings also clean. To cleanse our minds, we should cultivate pure feelings like love, kindness, patience, compassion, sympathy and such other qualities.” We have seen that Swami not only speaks of Atman and Brahman but also, like a mother, tells us about the basics of life like brushing our teeth, wearing clean clothes, eating clean food and also reading clean books.

Santosham: Swami says, “When do we get santosham? Only when we enjoy satisfaction. When we have contentment, we get joy or santosham. He is the richest man who has the greatest satisfaction.”

Tapas or austerity: Tapas doesn’t mean that we have to stand on one leg on the peak of Himalayas for God to appear. To be able to bear opposites (like heat and cold) is Tapas. I always think that it is not that Bhagawan or the Sri Sathya Sai Central Trust doesn’t have funds to give air-conditioned single occupancy rooms to each of the students. Our hostel and its minimum comforts are deliberately planned so that we learn to lead an austere life. When we have a fan, we enjoy the breeze; when it is not there, we can manage very well without it. This is the kind of training we receive here.



Swadhyaya or self-study: This includes reading of sacred texts, scriptures like Ramakatha Rasavahini, Dharma Vahini which we have in our awareness courses. These books help us to understand and reflect upon higher and nobler ideals.

Iswarapranidhana: Iswarapranidhana is doing all activities as an offering to God. I believe we specialize in this.

Asana:

sthira sukham āsanam (2.46)

prayatna ūaithilya ananta samāpattibhyām (2.47)

Patanjali says that the posture should be steady, not fidgety. Sukham means, the posture should be comfortable. The posture should not be strenuous, it should be relaxed. Then one can concentrate on the ananta, the infinite one. We can apply it not only to meditation but to any activity we undertake.

Pranayama: Pranayama is breath control.

tasmin satiśvāsa praśvāsayoh gativicchedah prāṇāyāmab

which means that after the previous step, i.e., after settling in a comfortable posture, the inhalation and the exhalation of breath should have a gap. We should not be gasping; our breath should be regulated. Swami beautifully explains the relation between breathing and life span in a discourse in 1989. Man and elephants should ideally breathe 12-13 times per minute, then they will have a lifespan of 100 years. Snakes breathe 7-8 times a minute, so they live for 200 years. Monkeys, dogs and cats breathe 30-40 times a minute, so they live 12-13 years which is a very short life span. The rabbits breathe even faster, so they have a lifespan of only 5-6 years. In Prasnottara Vahini, in the last chapter, Swami explains Astanga Yoga. In this chapter, He gives a simple method of Laghu Pranayama. He says we should



have 2 seconds long Puraka (inhalation), 4 seconds long of Rechaka (retention) and 8 seconds long Kumbhaka (exhalation). Swami says that if we practice this carefully for three months, then slowly increase the duration, then the activities of the senses will be laid low. If this method of Pranayama is practiced with faith and feeling, it becomes very easy to tame the mind.

Pratyahara:

*svavisaya asamprayoge cittasya svariūpānukārah
iva indriyāñām pratyāhārab* (2.54)

If we withdraw our mind from all objects, then the senses will follow suit. If my mind thinks about an ice-cream, then automatically my tongue will desire it. So if the mind is controlled, the senses can be easily controlled. For e.g., in a military coup, the central government is attacked which will automatically control the state governments. Similarly if the mind is controlled, the senses can be checked.

Dharana:

desa bandhah cittasya dhāraṇā (3.1)

If the mind is focused on one thing, it is dharana.

Dhyana:

tatra pratyaya ekatānatā dhyānam (3.2)

If the focus or attention happens continuously it becomes dhyānam.

Samadhi:

*tadeva arthamatrānirbhāsam
svarūpaśūnyam iva samādhīb* (3.3)

When only the essence (arthamatram) or effulgence (anirbhasham) of the object remains and the object disappears (shunyam), then that is



Samadhi.

To put in simple terms, attention leads to concentration, which in turn leads to meditation and finally, absorption.

Swami explains it very beautifully, “What do you mean by dharana? If one concentrates on one object for 12 seconds, then it is dharana. 12 dharanas is one dhyana and 12 dhyanas is one Samadhi. It is very important for the students to practice this dharana.” If we are able to concentrate for 12 seconds, it is dharana and if this concentration can be done for around 2 minutes 28 seconds, it is dhyana and if the same state can be extended to less than 30 minutes, it is Samadhi. Swami always says that we have to undertake studies to steady the mind.

What is the relevance of this yoga for all of us?

In the first chapter, Patanjali says that Omkar is the designation of God.

*tasya vācakah prapavah
tajjapah tadarthabbhāvanam.*

If Omkaram is chanted keeping in mind its meaning, it removes a lot of mental obstacles like laziness, doubt, disease and many others, according to Patanjali Yoga Sutras. We chant Om many times a day in addition to the 21 Omkars in the morning before Suprabhatam. After Omkaram we undertake the cleaning process (cleaning the room and oneself) in hostel i.e., soucham. Then we go for yogasananas. Hence one limb of Astanga Yoga i.e., Asana is already in practice. Then we go to college for universal prayer and meditation. The practice of dharana is embedded in this routine. I don't think any university gives grades to its students for prayer and meditation. Then we have to exercise attention in the classes which is dharana in practice. We live in a community - around ten students in a room, which is a deliberate practice. We are advised to lead a simple life without excess possessions



to help develop a non-covetous nature. This gives us the quality of Asteya i.e., not getting tempted by other's possessions. We don't have luxuries in our hostel but we have all the basic facilities of living in the hostel. This inculcates in us the quality of contentment. Whatever co-curricular activities we do, we do it for Swami, which is nothing but Ishwarapranidhanam. If we make a card, learn a song, sing a bhajan, follow discipline - all are done to please Swami.

When I read about Astanga Yoga, I thought how could we possibly practice it, as the term itself is intimidating. But when I went through the routine, I discovered that all of us are already following it even without our knowledge. We have to do it a little more consciously, which will lead us to the final stage of stilling the mind.

Swami gives a very beautiful simile for this. He says, "When you have to thread a needle, you have to be intent on the job. You can't turn the attention away from the eye of the needle and the end of the thread should be kept straight and pointed. Similarly, the mind has to be steady, the senses have to be concentrated, only then can we achieve anything in life." Having said all this, I personally believe that no Yoga is greater than the love that we can cultivate for that finite form which dissolved into infinity in front of our very eyes. Even to develop such love for Swami, we need steadiness of mind and concentration.

I conclude gratefully, hopefully and prayerfully. Grateful because this was an opportunity for me to do swadhyaya and I hope with more guidance and greater intent, I will be able to go through this process. Hopeful that at least some part of the audience will take some part of this talk in great intent. Prayerful that all of us feel more intensely about going more seriously through what is actually needed to take us to our destination.





Excerpts from Bhagawan Baba's Discourses

On an Ideal Sai Student

My dear students!

You are flowers in God's garden.

You are stars in God's sky.

You are wonderful beings in God's world.

You *must* possess head of Sankaracharya.

You *must* possess heart of Buddha.

You *must* possess hands of Janaka Maharaja.

Then you are perfect men.

6th Convocation of SSSIHL, 22 Nov 1987

Once Shankaracharya asked his disciples: what is the hallmark of greatness? Each disciple gave his own answer. One disciple said that the man who won great victories in battle is a great man. Another disciple said that man who underwent many troubles and difficulties and amassed large wealth was great. Another said that a great man was one who accomplished by determined effort what he wanted to achieve. Planting one's flag over a territory or crossing a mighty ocean were mentioned as marks of greatness. Ultimately Shankara gave the answer that he alone is great who has mastery over his mind. All other achievements are of no avail. Every action is sanctified by making it an offering to God. Shankaracharya declared that the one who is immersed in the contemplation of the Supreme Self, experiences the highest bliss, regardless of all other actions. Shankara exhorted the devotee to adore God in whatever situation he was placed, whether in a crowd, or while enjoying something or in any other state. This experience of the Divine is one's true wealth.

Brindavan, 20 Mar 1996

What are the qualities expected of a student?

Students should pursue such education which confers on them the sacred qualities like good character, adherence to truth, devotion, discipline and duty.

Telugu poem

Only those students who cultivate such qualities are eligible to be called students in the real sense. Those who act against those principles are not students, but stupids. You should not associate with such people. Neither you should call them stupids and earn their wrath. Be neutral in your relationship with them. You should keep up your own good qualities, which the world will appreciate.

24th Convocation of SSSIHL, 22 Nov 2005

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

As alumni of our Institute, you should stand out as ideal students and as examples to the world. Realise that there is no greater quality than truth. Truth is God. Dharma is His ornament. Adhere to these two as the highest attributes of humanness.

Students! Your hearts are tender and unsullied. From this age itself you must foster pure thoughts. Plant the seed of love in your pure hearts. From that tree of love you will have the fruits of forbearance, compassion and kindness. Always be smiling. Face every situation in life, including death, with a smile.

*Auditorium, Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning,
Prashaanthi Nilayam, 19 Jan 1997*

An ideal Sai student and her/his role in society

Ms. Mahima Kapoor

Alumnus, SSSIHL

I vividly remember the morning of 1st June 1999. It was 5 a.m. in the morning when I stepped into the Anantapur Campus when the gates of the hostel were not yet open. I could see through the windows of the room facing the visitor's hall, the girls were getting ready to go for Suprabhatam. It was an interesting moment; I was very excited but slightly apprehensive, 150% sure but a little unsure, happy but a little sad, looking forward but still holding back a little bit.

When I was in class 11th and many of my batch mates were preparing for engineering and medical examinations, I was sitting back and waiting for the entrance exam of the Institute to come up as I wanted to be called as His student; I wanted to feel His warmth when He addresses us as *Vidyardhi* and *Vidyarthanilulara*. But at that time, what I didn't know is that all of this comes with a fair bit of responsibility.

So when I walked in that morning, I walked with mixed feelings, as the rules were very strict. Swami Himself was strict with His students; we had to wear sarees which was new to me; we had to get up at 5 a.m. every morning, and the food would be different (as I come from north India). I was little fearful whether I would be able to adjust to this strict discipline. Many a time I would ask Swami that why He has made it so tough for us. I guess He was probably smiling to Himself as He was at work. He has been working on the students all through these years, chiselling us, making a beautiful artwork out of a plain stone. He is the master sculptor and He creates sculptures out of us to

send back into the world so that people can look at them and say ‘O! This is a Sai Student.’

He took a piece of clay, gently formed it, and moulded it day by day with His love and care so that the world would see diamonds that have come from dust. That is what He does to us or expects us to be. I graduated in 2002. Ten years later, when I look back, I understand as to why He creates a curriculum which is so loaded, a routine that is so heavy and a hostel that is so strict. All the lessons taught by Him through His talks, through His actions and through all the experiences gathered as a student of His institute come to life when we go out to face the world and start applying them.

I will share a few of the lessons which I took back being part of His institute.

First is simple living: The hostel is designed to be simple; not that it can't be made luxurious, but it is the will of Swami. We have to stay with a certain number of students in a room; there is a certain kind of food, there are certain specific rules to be followed so that we learn the lesson of simplicity. We understand this as Swami puts it: the difference between need and want. Mahatma Gandhi once said, ‘There is enough on this earth for every man's need but not for every man's greed.’ Our needs are limited but the wants are limitless; so where do we have to draw the line, where is it, that we can say I will hold back now? In the



present times it is easier to lose ourselves than say twenty years back, as there are so many things to buy, there are so many gadgets to explore. How do we what is a need and what is a want? It is not so easy, but this is where He plays His role very subtly. Let me take a very simple and trivial example to differentiate between need and want.

I have five watches already. When I came to the institute, we had a batch of girls from primary school who had a watch given by Swami. I always used to look at it and think how lucky they are that they have a watch given by time Himself. In the three years that I studied here, Swami gave us watches every single year. I acquired two more through gifts and it seemed to me that it is not enough so I had an eye on a particular watch. Whenever I used to get closer to getting it, He would pop up in my mind and ask me, "Do you really need it?" I used to pause and think, as nobody can wear six watches. So I let it go. It is one of those small situations that illustrates how we face different dilemmas in our life in balancing between need and want. But it is important in life to remember that, however accomplished we are, how many ever resources are at our disposal, how do we decide that this is enough for us.

One more aspect is that just because someone sells expensive cars, he doesn't need to possess one. I used to work with a company that sold cosmetics. My boss was very insistent that I should colour my hair. I don't believe in colouring my hair so I kept on telling her very politely my opinion, but she kept pushing me into it. At one point, I was very firm that I will not do it. I didn't do well in my stint with that company but I held on to what I felt was right. He will always throw these tests and challenges in our way but it is important for us to remember what He really wants from us and follow that.

Truth and Honesty: I was really amazed when I heard one of the previous speakers mentioning about *Satyam Vada Dharmam Chara* being the basis of our institute, how our institute is named Sri Sathya

Sai Institute of Higher Learning and the Founder Chancellor being Sri Sathya Sai Baba. However, if truth would have been a commodity traded in the open market, it will very heavily priced. It is in such short supply that people almost forget to demand for it. In the outside world we find very few people who are truthful and honest. But this is the difference between others and us. This is because, He stands by us and gives us the courage to say no. This works both ways. One is that He is always there with us and the second is that if we slip somewhere, others might get away with it but we won't. Many times there are dilemmas that He might even put you in to test your faith.

Let me take another example from work. I did a sales stint in the distribution side in a town in India. I was working in a soaps and shampoos firm and we had to take all the stock from the distribution centre to the retailers. Each distributor has a demarcated area of operation but sometimes they dump stock in another's area, which is unfair. I was a two months old trainee and fairly new to this system. I found that there were enormous irregularities in the distribution point where I was working. Some of the salesmen were dumping stocks at other locations and when I found this out, they threatened me that they will not allow me to meet my targets. However, with Swami's immense grace, support and courage, I conducted a raid at the stockist's point and found the documents needed to prove that something wrong is happening. It was His support that everything went on smoothly. This gave me lot of confidence and I felt that being honest is so important. I have a clear conscience today and that doesn't come so easily.

I have also read articles in Heart-to-Heart¹ and a very surprising fact that I found out is that when someone is honest it gives them more rewards, deals and business. This is because people appreciate it a lot. Though we might get an impression that in the short term, honesty might not take us through or things are not going to our way, but in the long term, it is He who will take care and situations turn out to be

¹ An eJournal by Radio Sai Global Harmony

for our advantage.

Lesson of giving: *Gram Seva* is the best example of the spirit of giving. I don't think any other university in the world has this practice where the Institute organizes community development and the students are mandated to participate in it. This is because the joy of giving can't be taught, it has to be experienced. For e.g. if you are learning swimming and the instructor tells you how to do swimming like moving the hands back and forth, you won't be able to do anything unless you get into the water. One has to experience it practically. Giving is also similar; until one goes out and experiences the joy himself, it is futile. Swami teaches us to give joy, time, energy and material things as well.

As Khalil Gibran puts it:

If you give but little when you give of your possessions
It is when you give of yourself that you truly give.

What is scarce for us today is time and energy. It is at this time that we should pull out our time and energy and give back to society, as He has ingrained it in us through the years. Swami says, "The very joy derived from service reacts on your body and makes you free from disease." Swami is giving personified without thinking who is at the receiving end. His nature is to give, be it in the form of education, hospitals or water.

Faith: The Institute in our stay here subtly helps us to inculcate a deep faith in us that irrespective of any situation or any impossible task, Swami is always going to be there for us. Swami had once said, "In the lives of my students there will never be any emergency; before the emergency arises, I would have taken care of the situation." As we step out of this portal, this is an experience which all of us have. He is always there whether we call out or not. Sometimes, He might take his own time (and that is His decision) but He will be there. In His

own way, He might make you immune to certain circumstances which would be difficult for anyone else to go through. I want to give couple of examples here.

I was in my second year and we were in Parthi for Swami's birthday celebrations. At such times one doesn't have contact with one's parents. Through one relative, I found out that my father was getting operated that evening. I was taken aback knowing that he was not well and I was a little upset. In the afternoon, I wrote a letter and sat in the second or third line. Swami was retiring after Bhajans. Usually, He would just walk past the area I was sitting, but He cut across, came to me, stretched His hand with fingers held in a cross like fashion and picked up the letter which I was holding between my fingers. His gesture of using the fingers in a cross like manner meant to me that He is cutting all the pain we were going through. It has been the most cherished moment in my life.

The second experience happened when we all were preparing for a batch interview with Swami. It was a very special moment for all of us as we tried to give back, in our small way, whatever we can, to Him as gratitude. We were preparing a small program. We came to Parthi on the morning of 3rd March 2002. Our teachers sat in front for darshan and when Swami came out, they asked Him permission for our interview. Swami looked dismissively at us, turned to the teachers and said, "In the afternoon, I have to speak to some people in relation to the hospital." He said this and walked past. We had just that one day, so we started walking back but we didn't lose hope. We started praying intensely as we knew that He can't turn us back. It was around 2:30 p.m. and we were ready to go for darshan not knowing whether He has come out or not. Suddenly, we got a message that Swami has sent word to all of us to come to mandir in answer to our fervent prayers.

There can be multiple such experiences with all of us where He subtly indicates to us about His divinity.



Let me narrate one small experience. This happened around a week back. I had hurt my hand and I had to carry my baby who is very small. My wrists very tender and holding him was difficult. I was worried about this and I told Swami to take care of this problem as only He knew about the seriousness of the problem. At that time, I was in a supermarket buying some groceries. Suddenly, one lady standing ahead of me came to me, looked at my hand having the crepe bandage and asked me whether I have hurt my hand. I answered in the affirmative and said that it was a sprain. Apparently she had met a doctor a few weeks prior to that day, when the doctor told her that the chances of developing tendonitis in cases where ladies have their first babies is one in a hundred. I was really amazed, as it was very touching. Swami made this happen where somebody came out of the blue to tell me that it is not serious and there is nothing to worry. It was his way of telling me not to worry; He will take care of everything.

Swami you are the wind and I am the flute, I am your instrument, please do as you feel right. Make me always work for you and your activities.





An ideal Sai student and her/his role in society

Sri Daman Hejmadi

Alumni, SSSIHL

It has been twenty-five years since I graduated and it is refreshing to see that the routine and the discipline remain unchanged. I will talk to you about three aspects of the education which I took with me – the physical, mental and the spiritual. When I graduated, I was one of those confused people referred to in one previous talk. We always used to ask Swami for literally everything and Swami very lovingly used to put up with us. I was hoping at that time that He will allow me to stay on and do my M.Sc. But Swami's direction at that time was to go out into the world and I joined Indian Institute of Science. Then I went for my software engineering to the University of Massachusetts and subsequently joined Intel. I had the opportunity to see the evolution of the semi-conductor industry over the last twenty-five years.

I want to emphasize this point that we learn a lot of skills for getting a job but the skills that stay with us are the life skills that we learn here. Swami puts this very beautifully as 'education is for life and not for living'. Something so simple and yet so profound can only be said by Swami. Let us talk about the physical disciplines we learn here like the suprabhatam or meditation. These disciplines never go away. There is a popular generalised view that Indian parents spoil their children and the children don't know anything till they go out into the world. This is true to some extent.

When I went to the USA, a bunch of students started living together. Thanks to my training, I was the expert cook, teaching my other

companions how to make rice and other items. One of the important lessons you learn here is wake up early. I travel a lot and wherever I am, I wake up before 5 a.m., not minding the jet lag. Before others have got up, I would have taken care of my daily chores and also planned for the day. People think that I am very efficient but what they don't know is that there is a lot of effort gone into it and my efficiency is a reflexive action.

As mentioned by a previous speaker about austere living in our hostels, I feel that the resourcefulness and self-reliance that our graduates learn here, is not something one gets easily. Usually, the people who go ahead in life are the ones who are resourceful and this doesn't come due to the degrees done in premier institutions. These traits come to those students who have learnt to establish camaraderie, who listen actively and the one's who control the restlessness of their minds. All these are taught in our university.

Let us talk about how to handle the pressures of worldly life, once you are out of the Institution. Swami says 'Life is a game, play it'. Just like in football or basketball or any sport, you never enter to lose but to win. We should have a balance between how engaged we should be and how detached we should be. We should remember that when we enter a situation, we should work hard so that we walk away with a win-win situation.



Let me illustrate with some examples. In the semi-conductor industry there have been several downturns due to job cuts, lay-offs, housing crisis, European crisis. At these times, businesses try to squeeze their suppliers who supply tools or labour because there is an overall shut down in the business. But we can have win-win situations here also. In addition to doing a fair business as its profitability depends on you, leave some amount on the table so that the person on the other side also feels that they have won something out of the deal. This creates a true partnership. I have learnt this principle of putting yourself in other's shoes, to leave something for the other, here as a student.

Another lesson learnt is what you do when you win as it defines who you are. Life always has its ups and downs but what you do in good times defines who you are. In bad times all generally become defensive. Failures and bad times are constantly present in our lives, but those of us who can distance ourselves from the circumstances we are in, can learn more from the circumstances. I remember an exciting experience relating to this aspect. In the 1980s, heavy weight boxing was very famous. Joe Fraser, popularly known as Smoking Joe, was a contemporary of Muhammad Ali. He was unlucky as a boxer as he lost the Heavyweight boxing championship six to seven times to Muhammad Ali. But the example explains that winning or losing is not important. But what is important is whether one has put in his best effort or not.

Another important point is standing up for our principles. We are on the spiritual path hence we tend to avoid confronting people. This becomes a cultural shock for many of us when we go out into the world, as generally people are aggressive in what they want. Initially I tried to step back thinking Swami would be unhappy if I tried to dominate the situation. After a lot of introspection, I realized that standing up for your principles is a smart course of action, even though we become aggressive as there can not be a compromise on values and principles. The difficulty encountered is more for the students

graduating from our colleges as the people in the outside world try to differentiate individuals who are different from them. In the present state of affairs where people go to bars and nightclubs, there is a need to bring in the values which we learn here. One interesting thing that I noticed is that once people figure out that you are not ready to fit into the present scheme of things, you start getting support, credibility and appreciation for courage.

I graduated in 1986 and got caught up in a very normal life like building my career, getting married, raising a family, buying a house and so on. Later, I came back to India and started a design centre for Intel making a microprocessor. I had already climbed the corporate ladder and had become a senior member in the organisation and used to spend a fair amount of my time travelling.

I would very frequently visit Washington Dulles¹ as it is a key entry point to the USA. On one such trip, in 2004, I travelled from Frankfurt to Washington, in transit to go to Boston. I had cleared customs, and was going through a sea of humanity in one of the busiest airports of the world. In the middle of this concourse of people, I see Swami right there. If we see Swami somewhere other than in darshan we really get scared. Swami tells me, "It is been eighteen years since you left, come back to me." Immediately after that, He disappeared. I totally forgot about my food, my flight and I was in a state of shock. I think I was in such a state of laziness that He had to come to me and pull me out of my stupor. The objective of narrating this experience is that all of us are in His orbit wherever we are situated. We just have to be sensitive, and still our minds so that He can guide us. If you are imperfect like me, He will rein you and bring you back when the situations demand.

Let us understand the aspect of spiritual toughness. There is not going to be a special battle that will take place in our lives. Everyday when we go for work is like going to a battlefield for us where we make

¹ One of three major airports in Washington, D.C.



tough choices and decisions. These decisions will decide whether we are living up to Swami's expectation or backsliding by wasting this opportunity. Equanimity is a key trait for people who graduate from this university. One important thing to learn is that every experience that we face in life is a gift of Swami. Earlier if He was upset, we could go and pacify him or pray to Him but now the work is little more difficult. We have to do more work internally to make sure that we are accepting the downturns of our lives with grace and a smile.

Contentment is one more virtue which lots of speakers have already spoken about but I will also briefly touch upon it. In the context of business and work outside, it is very easy to get into a rat race trying to look up to someone who has a higher status than you and look down upon someone who is behind you just on the basis of a smaller or bigger car or a smaller or bigger house. If we too live our lives in that manner then we have wasted all the time and energy that Swami has spent on us and the sacrifices that our parents have done in sending us to this Institute under Swami's care.

Having goals and aspirations is important but only to play the game of life. The real objective is not to amass lot of wealth and other worldly things but to find our way to God.

Let me conclude with a small experience that happened recently. I had a speaking engagement and was a little afraid of speaking to this audience. I have spoken at many places but this audience was a totally different one. I was doing meditation and having an internal chat with Swami when Swami gave a message to all of you. He said, "Wherever you are and whatever are your circumstances, wherever life takes you, when you feel overwhelmed, all you have to do is to close your eyes, still your mind and you will instantly transported to Prashanti Nilayam." This is a reassurance that whenever you have Swami with you, your success in the journey is guaranteed.





Summer Course 2012 - Valedictory Address

Dr. (Miss) T R Rajeswari

Associate Professor, Dept. of Commerce, SSSIHL

With love and reverence I bow down to the consciousness that resides in all of us and seek Bhagawan's blessings and permission to commence this concluding session.

Once, Michelangelo, the great sculptor, was working on a piece of rock. There was an observer watching him at work. As the figure emerged, he exclaimed, "Mr. Michel, how can you make such beautiful sculptures?" Michelangelo smiled and said, "It is very easy, I just chisel away whatever is in excess. The figure is already there." Similarly we all have virtues; all we have to do is to chisel out the extra gross matter that conceals our spiritual nature. If we can get rid of the heavy layers of ignorance that covers our real spiritual identity, we can become subtle, light and free. This is exactly what our Sri Sathya Sai system of education facilitates. We have a platform to enable us to understand, learn and express our real self. Our educare system recognizes the fact that human beings are an intricate combination of mind, body and soul and hence our curriculum is developed to address all the three domains. One of the previous speakers very clearly demonstrated how without our knowledge our system of education is helping us to evolve.

What we have to do to get the best out of the system is to be open and to have the conviction to make a correct choice. When I say to be open, I am reminded of an incident that I read in a book 'The Art of Japanese Management'. In the 1960s and 70s the Japanese introduced many innovative techniques in car manufacturing and as a result, the

Americans were rapidly losing their market share. Once, an American CEO happened to meet a Japanese CEO. The Japanese was a follower of a Zen master. In the course of conversation, the American asked the Japanese, “Sir, what is the secret of your success?” and the Japanese led him to a coffee table, put an empty cup in front of the American and another empty cup in front of himself and started pouring coffee into the American’s cup from the kettle. The cup started overflowing and seeing that the American said, “Stop! Stop! The cup is overflowing.” The Japanese didn’t stop; he emptied the entire kettle into that small cup, smiled and said, “This is the secret of our success.” The American didn’t understand. The Japanese went on to explain, “We, Japanese, are like the empty cups, there is space for us to receive new things, whereas you Americans are like the full cups, there is no space. That is the reason why no learning takes place in your case.”

So the prerequisite for effective learning is readiness with the correct attitude. Humility is required to learn and master anything new. Our educational system gives ample scope for this. In the past two-and-a-half days you have heard many lectures on various topics from different scriptures. We hope that you would have got the essence of it and your interest in reading these scriptures and Sai literature has been rekindled, so that you can grasp their essence in the right perspective. You have to work hard on this perspective so that when you graduate, you can sustain it in society. As I mentioned, we have to be open and should have the conviction to make the correct choice



to read, analyse and practice the teachings. The scriptures will give us guidance whenever necessary. Once we practice the teachings, we get experience, and growth and expansion come with experience. This is real personality development.

All short-term two to three week personality development courses which many management institutions offer are only techniques. They may be useful only for short-term success. Mastering these techniques is like cramming through a whole course. We may stay here for three years or so, get a degree and go but if we lose the essence of the subject, we have lost an opportunity. Even a good grade doesn't necessarily mean that we have mastered a subject. Hence our Institute believes that it is futile to put personality ahead of character. That is why our curriculum aims at character building and we are proud to see that our students are demonstrating it in the presentation here and the alumni have absorbed Swami's principles and are following them in the outside world.

Attending a satsang like this for three days should help you to expand and grow. One more aspect which I want to touch upon is that all the speakers without exception were focusing on do's and not on don'ts, which is a very good approach. When you concentrate on do's you become more positive and acquire more knowledge, which lasts permanently. When you concentrate on don'ts, it is like mastering a technique that lasts for a limited period.

Many of the presentations by students focused on making the right choices. I feel it has got deeply ingrained in students. Making correct choices in the outside world is a big dilemma. I am reminded of a small analogy. In 1930s and 40s, the Tirupati ladoo was made manually; now it is mechanized. The problem encountered before mechanization was that when the sweet boondi was laid out in the open, a lot of ants would come. In order to prevent this, the authorities would create a wall around the boondi made of white sugar. The ants felt satisfied

eating the sugar and never ventured to go inside where mountains of boondi were kept. Similarly, you all have a choice. You can be satisfied with the academic degree (sugar wall), which is for living. But if you want to grasp the essence of the system, you have to go beyond the sugar wall and your campus and hostel life will provide you with lot of situations to train you towards this. So start your journey from living to life and from life to life eternal. If we say that we know the path to life eternal it will not take us to our destination. We have to walk on the path that we have found already. Swami is there to guide us but what matters is the aspect of time. We have to carry out this journey throughout our life. To know the value of one minute, you ask a person who has missed a bus, a train or a plane. To understand the value of one second, ask a person who escaped an accident by a second. The person says, "Thank god! I am safe; I escaped by a split second. God's grace!" To know the value of a millisecond, ask a sportsperson participating in the Olympics. One millisecond too matters for all of us in life.

So every second, let us gather knowledge, every second of our stay here, let us grow. We have our loving Sai Maa to guide us always. You should read the scriptures again and again to get many more insights from them. All of you have been introduced to a beautiful way of living; so let us all walk along the path and reach our destination.

So much effort has gone into organising this Summer Course and on behalf of all the beneficiaries I thank all the organisers for their time, effort and resources. I pray to our dear Bhagawan, to bless us all with enough strength to do our duties in the situation in which destiny has placed us and become worthy recipients of His tremendous unconditional love.

Quiz on the Life & Teachings of Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba

Dr. Shashank Shah, Sri K M Ganesh, Sri Aman Jhaveri,
Sri Sai Chittaranjan, Sri Pradyumna Mulpur

Quiz has always been an effective tool in the teaching-learning process for many centuries. The formalised structure in which quiz competitions and programmes are conducted in schools, colleges and universities has always fascinated many generations of students into the ‘art and science’ of quizzing.

Quiz programmes have always been an important part of summer courses at the Institute. While they were held in the Divine Presence of Bhagawan during many summer courses in the past, there were occasions when quiz programmes were even conducted during Bhagawan’s visit to the Hostels at Prasanthi Nilayam and Brindavan and in the Sai Sruthi Mandir at Kodaikanal. The objective of these programmes was always the same – to make the students aware of the rich and varied heritage of Indian culture and to acquaint them with the life and teachings of Bhagawan Baba.

In line with this sacred tradition, there was a lively inter-campus quiz programme during the Summer Course. Three teams of students (two from the men’s campuses at Prasanthi Nilayam and Brindavan and one from the women’s campus at Anantapur) participated.

The seven rounds in this Quiz Programme were:

Round 1 – Ramayana

Round 2 – Mahabharata and Bhagavad Gita

Round 3 – Bhagavatam

Round 4 – Shad Darshanas and Bhaja Govindam

Round 5 – Visual Round

Round 6 – Audio Round - Message of the Lord

Round 7 – Bhagawan's Life

Along with the students, even elders enthusiastically participated in the event by answering questions passed by the participating students. The quiz brought before the students, cherished memories of the wonderful times they were blessed to have, in the years gone by, in the immediate physical presence of their Revered Founder Chancellor – Bhagawan Baba.



ROUND – 1: RAMAYANA

1. Who were the founders for the cities of Ayodhya and Mithila?

Emperor Manu founded Ayodhya and Emperor Nimi founded Mithila.

(Chapter 2 and 4, Summer Showers in Brindavan, 1996)

2. Which Ashrama was saved by Lord Rama from the demoness Tataki? Which technique did Rama employ to kill the demoness?

Siddhashrama; *Shabda Bhedi Technique*

(Chapter 3, SSB 1996)

3. The Kurukshetra war lasted for 18 days; the war between Rama and Ravana lasted for how many days?

75 days

(Chapter 8, SSB 1996)

4. There are at least three well known instances when Lakshmana was unable to execute Lord Rama's command. Narrate at least 2 of these 3?

When Yamadharmaraja comes to meet Lord Rama in person and Rama orders Lakshmana to keep a guard outside the door, allowing no one inside

Leaving Sita alone in the hut in *Panchavati*

At the time of Rama Sita Kalyanam, when Sita was unable to garland Lord Rama, Rama asked Lakshmana to raise the land where Sita was standing; Lakshmana refused to oblige

(Chapters 4 and 5; SSB 1996)

5. At the time of Ravana's death, he was asked the most memorable thing that he had discovered in his life, What was his answer?

What were the three desires he could never fulfill because of this particular failing in his life?

Never delay to put into practice the noble acts at any time in life.
Procrastination is the thief of time.

The three desires that he could not fulfill in his life time because of procrastination were:

Connecting earth and heaven with ladder.

Turn the saline water into sweet water surrounding Lanka.

Bring comfort and solace to residents of hell!

(Chapter 7, SSB 2002)

6. According to Bhagawan, what do the ten heads of Ravana signify?

The ten heads of Ravana signified his mastery over the 4 Vedas and 6 Shastras

(Chapter 9, SSB 1996)

7. The word 'Rama' is made up of which three *Bijaksharas* (root syllables). What do they signify?

'Ra' signifies the Fire (*Agni*) principle which destroys the illusion
'Aa' signifies the Sun (*Surya*) principle which dispels the darkness of ignorance and 'Ma' signifies the Moon (*Chandra*) principle that cools the inner heart.

(Chapter 3, SSB 1996)



8. What is the inner significance of Lord Parashurama meeting Lord Rama, when the marriage retinue of Lord Rama and His three brothers was returning from Mithila?

A *Poornavatara* has 16 *Kalas* (Divine attributes). Lord Rama was born with 12 *Kalas*. The other three brothers possessed 1 *Kala* each. The 16th *Kala* was with Lord Parashurama who passed it to Lord Rama during their ‘apparent encounter’.

(Chapter 4, SSB 1996)

9. Sage Vishwamitra taught Lord Rama and Lakshmana the ‘*Bala*’ and ‘*Atibala*’ Mantra. What was the significance of this Mantra?

‘*Bala*’ conquers sleep, ‘*Atibala*’ conquers hunger. These Mantras would assist them in fighting the demons while protecting the Yaga of Sage Vishwamitra.

(Chapter 3, SSB 2002)

ROUND – 2: MAHABHARATA

1. According to Bhagawan, Bhagavatam and Mahabharata teach us to give up bad company. He has identified 4 wicked individuals in the Mahabharata as the Dushta Chatushtayam. Who are they?

Duryodhana, Dusshasana, Shakuni and Karna

(Chapter 5, SSB 1995)

2. During the Summer Course of 1979, Bhagawan spoke extensively on the Gita. According to Him, which Yoga is considered to be the ‘Life of the Gita’?

Sankhya Yoga

(Chapter 6, SSB 1979)

3. What was the age of Parikshita when he was handed over the kingdom at the time of the Maha Prasthana of the Pandavas?

36 years

(Chapter 12, SRBM 1976)

4. God is worshiped by four kinds of devotees; God loves all of them. He grants them boons appropriate to their thoughts and attributes. Name the four types.

Aartha (prays to God in the times of distress)

Arthaarthi (prays to God for power and prosperity)

Jijnasu (wants to understand enigma of God and solve the riddle of the universe), and *Jnani* (one who can reach and know God).

(Chapter 12, SSB 1979)



5. Arjuna blames Krishna as Vamsha Nashi (destroyer of the dynasty) on one occasion and Vamsha Rakshaka (protector of the dynasty) on another occasion. On both occasions, Lord Krishna remains unfazed. Can you recount those?

Krishna simply listened to all the abuses that were being showered on him while Arjuna was accusing him in many ways for Abhimanyu's death.

When Lord Krishna revived dead Parikshit, Arjuna praised him as protector of dynasty. Krishna smiled and came to Arjuna and said, *"Be aware of whatever you are saying. Now, you say that I am responsible for the continuance of your family. That day you described me as one who completely destroyed your family, and today you are praising me as one who is a protector of your family. Was that the truth or is this the truth?"*

(Chapter 9, SRBM 1976)

6. The youth of today get a doubt – Krishna wanted the peace of this world and yet he encouraged this big battle in which forty lakhs of people were killed. Is this called Himsa (violence) or Ahimsa (nonviolence)? What is the clarification or analogy given by Bhagawan to explain this dichotomy?

Bhagawan compared the 4 million demonic forces fighting on the side of the Kaurvas to 4 million cancerous cells in a human body. A doctor would mercilessly destroy these cells to protect a patient. Similarly, Lord Krishna adorned the role of a doctor and used the Mahabharata war as an operation to destroy the negative forces to protect the social fabric from Adharma.

(Chapter 3, SRBM 1976)



ROUND – 3: BHAGAVATAM

1. Name the parents of Dhruva

Uttanapada and Suneeti

(Chapter 5, SSB 1995)

2. Pleased with Ambarisha's Yagna, Lord Narayana presented him with a gift. What was the gift? What was its inner significance?

Sudarshan Chakra.

In the wordly sense it means a disc endowed with power. Spiritually it means good sight – the ability to see everything in true light.

(Chapter 4, SSB 1995)

3. In the Bhagavata Purana, who was Priyavrata? How was he different from his brother?

Priyavrata was the son of Manu and the younger brother of Uttanapada. Unlike his brother who enjoyed the responsibility of ruling the kingdom, Privrata's heart was in renunciation and solitude.

(Chapter 6, SSB 1995)

4. Why did Hiranyakashyap consider himself Divine?

He had explored Nature, seasons and the solar system. He once noticed that the Earth's axis was tilted at 23.5 degrees. With his yogic powers, he changed the tilt out of curiosity. He returned it to normal when large-scale destruction resulted. With his will power, he had control over the orbits of the Sun and the Moon as well. That is why he thought of himself as Divine.

(Chapter 8, SSB 1995)



5. In Bhagawan's words, what is the difference between the 'Yadavas' and 'Gopikas'?

Yadavas thought, "*Krishna is our relative, our friend.*" They related to Krishna with attachment based on pride. This wrong kind of attachment fed their ego constantly, bringing about their destruction many years later.

But the Gopikas were different. Instead of telling Krishna, "*You are ours,*" they said, "*We are Yours.*" This surrender earned them security and divine Love all their lives. Humility and obedience poured out of the Gopalas and Gopikas.

(Chapter 11, SSB 1995)

6. In Bhagawan's words, what is the difference between 'Dasharatha' and 'Jatayu'?

Dasharatha, the father of Lord Rama, cried for Rama repeatedly and begged Him to stay near. But Dasharatha died a broken-hearted man, separated from Rama. On the other hand, Jatayu did not beg Rama for favours. He did his duty, to the extent that he sacrificed his life trying to save Sita. Even in his last moments, Jatayu worried only about Rama's troubles. As a result, Rama rested Jatayu on His thigh and performed his funeral rites like a son.

God knows what to give to whom, when, where, and how. Therefore, do your duty and God's Grace will overflow, unasked.

(Chapter 2, SSB 1995)



ROUND – 4: SHAD DARSHANAS & BHAJA GOVINDAM

1. What are the *Shad Darshanas*?

They are the six systems of Indian philosophy (*Shad Darshanas*): *Nyaya*, *Vaisheshika*, *Samkhya*, *Yoga*, *Poorva Mimamsa* and *Uttara Mimamsa*.

(SSB 1993)

2. According to Bhagawan, what are the 25 aspects/principles that together make up the Human Body?

The 5 senses (*Panchendriyas*), the 5 sheaths (*Panch Koshas*), the 5 life forces (*Panch Pranas*), the 5 elements (*Panch Bhutas*), the Manas, Chitta, Buddhi, Ahamkara, and the Mahapurusha (Atma Tattva).

(Chapter 3, SSB 1993)

3. After his triumphant march (*Digvijayam*) all over India, Sri Adi Shankaracharya reached the city of Benares. What are the three ‘sins’ about which he confessed at the Kashi Vishwanath Temple?

*Yatho Vacho Nivartante, Apraapya Manasa Saha
Eshwara Sarva Bhoohanam, Eesawasyam Idam Jagat
Ekatma Sarvabhootantaratma, Ekameva Adviteeyam Brahma*

(Chapter 7, SSB 1993)

4. Most of the daily activities are performed based on the testimony of sound. Sound can cause sorrow as well as ecstasy, hope as well as depression. Singing (*Sankeertana*) is a sublime harmony of sound and lifts people to lofty heights. What are the eight opulences (*Ashta Aishwaryas*) that Shabda Brahman is endowed with?



*Shabda Brahma Mayi, Charachara Mayi, Vang Mayi, Paratpara Mayi,
Nityananda Mayi, Maya Mayi, Jyothir Mayi, Sri Mayi*

(Chapter 9 – The Philosophy of Gautama, SSB 1993)

5. What are the three types of purity that chanting of the Food Prayer confers?

Paatra Shuddhi (cleanliness of vessel)

Padartha Shuddhi (cleanliness of food stuff)

Paaka Shuddhi (cleanliness in the process of cooking)

(Chapter 11 – The Samkhya Philosophy, SSB 1993)

6. Which analogy does Sri Adi Sankara draw to highlight the transience of human life?

Droplet on a lotus leaf

(Chapter 13, SSB 1973)



ROUND – 5: VISUAL ROUND



- 1. Identify these two devotees of Bhagawan. What is the unique incident associated with the devotee gentleman?**

Smt. Radhamma and Sri Radhakrishna of Kuppam. Bhagawan resurrected Sri Radhakrishna based on a promise given to Radhamma that he would live beyond the age of 60 years.



- 2. Identify the occasion and the year.**

Inauguration of the Sri Sathya Sai Primary School, 1981



- 3. Which temple is Bhagawan consecrating? This temple has a unique distinction. Could you please elaborate on the same?**

The Shirdi Sai Temple at Guindy, Madras. This temple has the distinction of having the first idol of Shirdi Sai Baba being installed anywhere in the world in the year

1949. Even the temple at Shirdi got an idol in the 1950s.

4. What is the occasion and the location of this event?

Summer Course in Indian Culture and Spirituality in the Brindavan Ashram in 1973-74.



5. Identify the occasion and the year.

Bhagawan consecrated His own idol in the Sai Kulwant Hall (at the current location of the Maha Sannidhi) on the occasion of Guru Pournima festival 2002.



6. This occasion is a very important landmark for SSSIHL. What is it? Name any three other persons in the photograph besides Bhagawan. All of them played a very important role at SSSIHL.

First Convocation of SSSIHL in 1982.



The prominent people around Bhagawan include:

Sri Nani Palkhivala, *Eminent Jurist and Chief Guest of the Convocation*

Prof. Vinayak Krishna Gokak, *First Vice Chancellor, SSSIHL*

Sri Indulal Shah, Member, *Sri Sathya Sai Central Trust and SSSIHL Trust; Chairman, World Council, Sri Sathya Sai Organisations*

Justice P N Bhagwati, Member, *Sri Sathya Sai Central Trust and currently, Honourable Chancellor, SSSIHL*

Sri K Chakravarthi, *First Registrar, SSSIHL*

Prof. Jha, *Vice-Chancellor, Benares Hindu University*

ROUND – 6: *This was an Audio Round*



ROUND – 7: BHAGAWAN'S LIFE & MESSAGE

1. Which is the oldest institution established by Bhagawan ?

Sri Sathya Sai General Hospital at Prasanthi Nilayam established in 1954

2. In which year was the Sri Sathya Sai Airport inaugurated at Puttaparthi?

Bhagawan inaugurated the new Air Terminal of the Sri Sathya Sai Airport at Puttaparthi on 15th November 1991

(Sanathana Sarathi 1991)

3. A very significant monument in Prasanthi Nilayam is 50 feet high. Which monument am I referring to? When was it inaugurated?

The Sarva Dharma Stupa. It was inaugurated on 23rd November 1975. It is 50 feet high as it was an offering on Bhagawan's 50th Birthday.

4. Bhagawan often linked the following words in an order and logic: *Insight, Knowledge, Balance, Skill*. Could you please give the order and explain?

Knowledge has to be **Skilled** in order to get **Balance** which will lead to Spiritual **Insight**

5. Bhagawan had stated that His life is divided into 6 stages – each of 16 years. Could you state these 6 stages?

Leela, Mahima, Upadesha, Vidya, Vaidya and Sanathana Dharma

6. Of the following places of pilgrimage - Badrinath, Srisailam, Gaya, Kashi, Tirupati, Dwarka, Amarnath, Ayodhya, Mathura,



Puri, Pandharpur, Haridwar - which two places has Bhagawan not physically sanctified?

Amarnath and Puri

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