



The New Year Pledge

Today is the holy Yugadi (Telugu New Year) day. We bid farewell to the year gone by and welcome the New Year. We hope that during this year, called *Siddharthi*, our time and activity will be meaningful. We pray that the new spring should confer on all beings longevity, health, and goodness. Pleasant experiences and unpleasant memories of the previous year that linger in the mind contain many good lessons. When one reviews the past year within oneself, one can realize how much time was spent selfishly and how much in service.

Man has achieved some progress physically and scientifically, but morally he has fallen. He is sliding down due to his egotism. What is the cause of this fall? Selfishness, ignorance, and *avidya* (absence of wisdom) are the only causes. It is selfishness that is now operating behind every thought, word, and deed. Those who seek the joy of liberation should burn this selfishness in the fire of *jnana* (spiritual wisdom). Otherwise there is no future.

Do not misuse time that is precious. Time fleets fast. The span of life is like a porous pot. Not to realize this is the basic ignorance. Make good use of time by recognizing what is permanent and true in human life.



Cultivate the spiritual feeling of oneness

There are 5,64,000 small villages in our country. Their condition is sad and pitiable. People like you living in the towns must involve yourselves in social services and programs and help these fellowmen. It is because of your selfishness that you become useless to others. When can you recognize the good in others? You entertain all kinds of hopes and finally get deceived. People preach a million things but do not practice even one.

We say from platforms "Brothers and Sisters." We feel that we are all brothers. But even real brothers wrangle over properties and go up to the Supreme Court in litigation. So instead of thinking that we are brothers merely in words, we should cultivate the higher spiritual feeling of 'Oneness.' The fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man become meaningful only then.

Today is the holy Yugadi day. It is not enough if we wear new clothes and partake in feasts. Launch a new movement to mark the New Year. People in the villages have no medical and educational facilities. They have no drinking water, no sanitary arrangements. They have no food to eat. Provide these facilities for them and thereby realize divinity. The need of the hour is the man of action, not the one who only talks. Our *Bhartabhumi* (land of *Bharat*, India) is *karmabhumi* (land of sacred action). *Karma* is exertion, effort. *Bhartabhumi* is also the land that is known for its love of God.

Put the money to use for people in distress

Today our lives are tainted by a desire for wealth. Wealth makes a man intoxicated and mad. Money is necessary but it must have a limit. Excessive money can be harmful to the mind. It is more difficult to spend money than to earn it. It is even more difficult to take care of money. This difficulty has an advantage—put the money to good use by spending it for the rural folk and people in distress. It is not '*dhanamoolam idam jagat*' (money is the basis of this mundane world) but '*dharmamoolam idam jagat*' (righteousness is the basis of this world). If money grows, unrest also grows. Money brings sorrow with it. A rich man is harassed from three sides—the government, his relations, and thieves. God alone knows the agony suffered by a rich man.

Those who amass wealth for the sake of their sons themselves suffer privations and ruin the very sons. So give away your money in charity and make it purposeful. Members of Sathya Sai Organizations must tour every village and improve the lot of the rural folk. This is a new challenge for the members of the organization.

I shall visit every village along with you, serve them without any discrimination of caste, creed, race, and class. I wish that the Sathya Sai Organizations should from this day onward undertake programs of rural uplift, go to each village and provide educational and medical facilities. Meditation and penance are useful to one's own self only, but the good of the world at large is achieved through sacrifice. The Upanishads refer to "sacrifice as the only means of salvation—*Tyagenaikena*

Amritatwamanasuh." So I wish that from today onward members of Sathya Sai Organizations should develop the spirit of sacrifice and provide the basic necessities of life for the rural masses. It is in the villages that a certain amount of morality and honesty is still left. I hope that all rich people will strive to improve the condition of the villages.

Does a festival mean only wearing new clothes and eating sweets? Get rid of old ideas and plant new ones. The bittersweet mix served on the Yugadi day symbolizes that one should treat pleasure and pain equally.

Children and students must be trained to serve in rural areas. There are 2,55,00,000 children in our country today. Forty percent among them go about begging. It is not good to keep quiet when there is such hardship in the society around. We should give up *japa* (repeating God's name) and *sadhana* (spiritual practices) and uplift such people through service and sacrifice. We should feel that *Jana Seva* is *Janardhana Seva* and *Manava Seva* is *Madhava Seva* (service to people is service to God).

All of you should take the pledge on this New Year Day that you will serve the rural people to the best of your ability. You must do this as a sacred duty that goes beyond differences of politics, caste, and creed. Such a feeling is strengthened by self-confidence and equanimity in joy and sorrow. We say we are all children of *Bharath*, but in what way are we sustaining the culture of Bharath? Our culture cannot be sustained without proper faith on our part. Faith and self-confidence are essential for spiritual progress.

With the hope that you will regard service to villages as service to God, I offer my blessings to you.

Source: *Sathya Sai Speaks*, Vol. 14

Teaching Values by Example

The following are excerpts from Bhagavan Baba's valedictory discourse that He gave to the National Symposium on Value Orientation in September 1987.

"Human values cannot be learnt from lectures or text-books. Those who seek to impart values to students must first practice them themselves and set an example," declared Bhagavan Baba, Chancellor of Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning in His valedictory address to the National Symposium on Value Orientation in Higher Learning held at Prasanthi Nilayam from Sept. 24 to 26, 1987. The Symposium, in which vice-chancellors and educationists from all over India participated, was the first of its kind organized on a national basis. The valedictory meeting was held in the

Poornachandra Auditorium, which was filled to capacity with devotees, besides the educationists.

In His discourse, Bhagavan said:

A society without values will cease to be human. The more human values are cherished, the better will be the growth of society, the nation, and the world. We cannot rest content with an educational system that is confined to academic achievement. It has to promote simultaneously human virtues. The main problem of our education is how to adapt the spiritual and cultural traditions we have inherited from the past to the needs of daily life today.

The relationship between the individual and society has to be rightly understood. Why should the individual serve others? What claims does the society have on the individual? When we examine these issues, we realize that the individual can find within himself unity (*aikamathyam*), control (*swadhenam*), knowledge (*jnanam*), and power (*shakti*). These four help to make society move forward.

Values in Vedanta

How are human qualities to be promoted in society? Society is made up of individuals. No man can be an island to himself. Living amidst fellow human beings, man has to sow the seeds of love, rear the plants of harmony, and offer the fruits of peace to society. Thereby his humanness is manifested. In the *Ashtanga Yoga* (the eightfold yoga), this figures as the first



among the different disciplines: *yama* [outward sense control], *niyama* [inner sense control], *asana* [seated posture], *pranayama* [breath control], *pratyahara* [detachment], *dharana* [power of concentration], *dhyana* [meditation], and *samadhi* [inner communion]. *Yama* calls for the observance of the following practices: *ahimsa* (non-violence), *sathyam* (truth), *astheyam* (non-stealing), *brahmacharyam* (celibacy), and *aparigraha* (non-acquisitiveness). These are the five human values to be cultivated, in the language of *Vedanta*.

Ahimsa does not mean, as is commonly understood, not causing harm to others. It really means that one should not cause harm to anyone in thought, word, or deed. This is the most important human quality. Only when this has been developed will one be qualified to practice and experience truth.

Truth does not mean merely telling the facts as one sees or knows them. Truth is that which does not change with time. It must be spoken with complete purity of mind, speech, and body.

Astheyam means refraining from stealing what belongs to others. Even the thought of taking another's property should not arise in the mind. Nor should one tell others to commit theft. This is the third human value.

The fourth is *brahmacharyam*. Observance of *Brahmacharya* means that whatever one thinks, says or does should be filled with thoughts of *Brahman*. To be ever immersed in the consciousness of *Brahman* is *Brahmacharya*. All thoughts, words, and deeds should be dedicated to the Divine. When the thoughts, which are the prelude to action, are centered on God, they are unlikely to go astray.

Aham (the ego) arises from the *atma* [soul]. Thoughts are produced by the ego and give rise to speech. Hence all actions are based on the *atma*. All thoughts, desires, and speech emanate from the *atma*. When all these are sanctified by dedication to God, the consciousness of oneness with *Brahman* (*Aham Brahmasmi*—I am *Brahman*) ensues. That *Brahman* is *prajna* (constant integrated awareness).

The acquisitive mania

The fifth practice is *aparigraha*. This is usually interpreted as not accepting other's property as gift or gratuitously. This is not the correct meaning. It really means performing actions without expecting any reward, without any acquisitive motives, and in a completely selfless spirit. Today because all actions are done out of self-interest and desire for acquiring wealth, they lack true human quality. Even worship, religious ceremonies, pilgrimages, and the like are done with some kind of expectations and not in a spirit of disinterested devotion.

People today are totally immersed in self-interest. Multiplying desires without limit, they are becoming demonic beings. They are not content with having what they need for essential purposes. They wish to accumulate enormously for the future. They are filled with worries and discontent. Thereby they forfeit their happiness here and in the hereafter. Birds and beasts are content to live on what they can get. Man alone is afflicted with insatiable desires. Birds and animals have no desire to hoard or to exploit others. But man is a prey to these vices. He forgets his natural human qualities and behaves worse than animals. When these tendencies are given up, the inherent divinity in man will manifest itself.

Values and faith in God

Human virtues cannot be acquired from others. They cannot be nourished by the mere study of books. Nor can they be got [readymade] from teachers. They have to be cultivated by each person and the resulting joy has to be experienced by him.

The world sorely needs today human values. Attempts are being made to promote these values in the educational field. But they cannot be promoted through

materialistic, worldly or scientific means. Without developing devotion to God no human quality can grow. The first requisite is faith in God. Doubts are raised whether God exists or not. Those who affirm that God exists and those who deny are equally incompetent to say anything about God if they know nothing about the nature of God. To assert the existence of that which does not exist is ignorance. To deny the existence of that which exists is folly. God is omnipresent. There is no need to search for Him anywhere. Everything that we see is a manifestation of God. Wherever we are there is God. There can be no greater folly than to deny the existence of God when the whole cosmos bears witness to His handiwork. Everything in creation must be viewed as a manifestation of God. Only with this basic faith can one develop one's human personality.

Satya and dharma

Human values cannot be promoted merely by repeating the words *satya*, *dharma*, *shanti*, *prema*, and *ahimsa*. The *Vedas* declare: *Sathyam vada, Dharmam chara* (Speak the truth; adhere to right conduct). In practicing *dharma*, there should be no "*marma*" (secret desires). Actions performed with such secret motives result in bondage. Truth and right conduct should be adhered to with pure intentions. Both of them are rooted in the eternal. A righteous life leads to peace. Love is to be experienced in the depths of peace. Love should find expression in non-violence. Where love prevails, there is no room for doing harm or violence to others. All these basic values have to be demonstrated in action and not limited to preaching.

Many educationists and vice chancellors are present here today. Their vision is turned outward toward the external physical world. I am concerned with the Inner Vision. It is not possible to reconcile the physical and the internal spiritual vision. The heart cannot be transformed by lessons in a classroom. The world cannot be changed by mere preaching. Only through action and practical example can the impulse for change be intensified. When one leads a disciplined and regulated life, the lesson will be learnt without any teaching. The people will follow of their own accord. This applies to human values also. Only when they are practiced by teachers and elders will students practice them.

Practice and precept

Those who seek to impart the values of *sathya*, *dharma*, *shanti*, *prema*, and *ahimsa* to others must first try to practice them themselves wholeheartedly. To imagine that values can be instilled by teaching is a mistake. Such learning will have no permanent effect. Educationists must take note of this fact. If transformation is to be affected in students, the process must start from a very early age.

To propagate human values, it is advisable to keep as far away as possible from the powers that be. It is not possible to promote sacred values through the help of governmental authorities. Some well-intentioned leaders may formulate commendable schemes. But there is a frequent change of men in the seats of power. What, then, happens to human values? It is essential to be self-reliant and stand on our own legs. Only when you are untrammled and independent can you propagate

these sacred values freely and effectively. Educationists should try to set up an independent body for the formulation and implementation of educational policy, free from control or interference by the Government. Only then will the movement for the promotion of human values succeed.

If there is unity among educationists, any undertaking can be successful. Today unity is lacking in colleges and universities. Students and teachers are at loggerheads. How, then, is national integration to be promoted? When there is no unity or harmony at home, how can there be national unity

Those in power operate under their own compulsions. They can take over properties and enterprises, but they cannot promote values. They may occupy temples and take over temple properties, but they can exercise no control over God. Governments may exercise control over men, but they have no hold over men's qualities.

Educational institutions must promote the spiritual outlook among students. When students acquire spiritual values, human values will grow in them of their own accord. Human values are not things to be implanted from outside. They are within each individual. They have to be manifested from within.

Human values are in everyone. What we need are persons who will provide the stimulus and the encouragement to bring them out. If the feeling that the divinity that is present in everyone is one and the same, is promoted among all, human values will sprout naturally in every person. To have this sense of spiritual oneness is the prelude to experiencing the highest bliss.

Educational institutions should teach students to adhere to truth and to discharge their duties as a sacred obligation. Students should not allow success or failure to ruffle their minds unduly. Courage and self-confidence must be instilled in the students.

Bend the twig and bend the tree, says the proverb. The molding of character must start with children at the earliest age. Begin developing human values from the primary school. Some are concerned about our living in a "secular state". Secularism really means equal respect for all faiths and beliefs. There should be no hatred toward any faith. Other creeds and beliefs should not be condemned or derided. Some time ago, there was an absurd idea that Sathya Sai educational institutions were religious institutions. Sai educational institutions are based on equal respect for all religions. They are wedded to unity and harmony.

Whatever studies you may pursue, do not give up your faith in God. To give up God is to give up life itself. Life is God. Truth is God. All that you do as an offering to God will be an expression of human values.

The educationists and vice-chancellors who have assembled here have come to some decisions as a result of their high-minded deliberations. They are firmly convinced that human values have to be promoted. Whatever their limitations, they

should strive to the extent possible to implement their decisions. The Divine is installed in their hearts. It is enough if they follow the promptings of the Divine. They are bound to achieve their objectives. If faith in God is strengthened, all values will develop in due course. Sublimate your lives by remembering, worshipping, and adoring God.

Source: *Sanathana Sarathi*, Oct. 1987

How I Was Translated

Years ago I had read an article on Baba in the *Illustrated Weekly* and had at once rejected the whole description as “trash,” sentimental, and useless. I used to receive those letters that most of us get where the sender appeals to our greed, saying that if we send nine or eleven similar letters to our friends, we will receive on the ninth day some good news! A threat is also mentioned therein, that, ‘if we do not continue the chain, we will suffer loss or dishonor.’ I used to throw these letters in the wastepaper basket without reading them. In September 1969, someone sent me three books on Sathya Sai Baba. I never tried to know who had sent them; I never cared to go through the contents of the books, for I had such set ideas and attitudes about Baba.

I turned the pages of the books; my eyes fell upon a photograph of Baba; I felt there was nothing worth reading in them. I placed them in an obscure corner of my bookshelf. This was a unique act: I did not, as was my wont, throw them away or give them away to someone. As Divisional Inspector of Schools over a district, I keep receiving books from all over the country. I read the ones I like and later pass them over to the library of some school. But in the case of these three books, I did not read them, nor did I pass them on. I kept them with me!

I have a habit of waking up from bed about an hour after midnight to read books for about two or three hours and going back to



bed for further sleep. This was a habit I cultivated while at college; it has stayed with me ever since. Though the compulsions of study are absent, I still get up at about 1 a.m. and study some book or other for about two or three hours.

I am studying these days the *Ashta-dhyayi* (eight chapters) of *Panini*—the *Sanskrit Sabdanusasanam*—one of the most celebrated works on linguistics, written several hundred years before Christ was born. Panini is the greatest architect of language the world has produced. His book not only deals with the Sanskrit language, but it is a text illustrating his linguistic methods. The world's linguists have wandered for two centuries fruitlessly in the jungles of language study; at last they are returning to Panini and seeing light. Panini is an absorbing and fascinating writer, though his work is by no means easy to understand.

It was early September 1969. One night I woke up and took my *Ashta-dhyayi* and went into the dining room so that the rest of the household might not be disturbed. It was strange that I could not concentrate that night. I closed the book and went out of the house. The time was 1 o'clock, then. Wonderful peace was reigning on Khosa that was sleeping quietly. Only a few lights flickered here and there. A nice cool breeze was blowing softly, and I felt refreshed enough to walk in and resume the study.

But when I sat down and started reading, I found I could not. For a moment I thought, 'why could I not concentrate', when lo and behold, just by my side sitting on a chair near the dining table, near where I was studying, I saw a figure in flowing red robe, with hair typical of Sathya Sai Baba. The instinctive reaction of anyone when he sees a stranger in his house at dead of night is, of course, to shout for help. But I felt no such reaction. On the other hand, I felt great pleasure, an unearthly peace filling me, on seeing Baba. I had never thought of Him, nor, had I desired to see Him, even in my dream of dreams! But He was there before me. Even on seeing Him, I was not ready to accept Him. Before I could ask Him who He was, I heard His clear sweet voice, saying to me, in a reassuring tone, "Do not be afraid. I am with you."

He repeated this twice and I felt really more assured. Still, the question remained, who was He? I was just about to put that question when I heard His voice again, "I sent you some books"! At once I associated the books with the books I had received on Baba, and without even thinking for a moment, I replied, "Yes. I have received some books". I was about to say more—(I always like to say more and more—my friends know that I seldom stop short, but always talk on and on—though I have often felt, unnecessarily), but Baba then said, "Read them."

I said, "There is nothing in them, it is all trash. There is nothing I can read in them". But Baba persisted: "Still, there will be something in them; at least read." And He smiled a smile I can never forget. I said, "I will," and got up and went to the shelf. When I returned with the books, Baba was not there.

I started reading those books. I found therein all the wisdom our books on philosophy contained, described through actual experience by Baba. I found in them the conviction of realization. Let me make it clear that I have never been drawn toward religion. I recognize three compartments in religion—philosophy, ritual, and action. Of these only philosophy has attracted me from long ago; I had read almost all books available about Eastern and Western philosophy and found them mere words without the sublime experience of what they imply. Baba's words were, however, convincing!

After a few days, I was again reading Panini in the small hours of the night and again feeling that I could not concentrate on the work. I saw Baba again before me in the chair. He asked me, "You have read the books." It was not a question; it was a statement of what He already knew. It forced me to say, "Yes. I have." "You liked them," Baba said, with the same assurance of knowledge. "Yes; some nice things have been described in them," I said. "I knew you would like them; now ... translate," Baba said, with that charming smile of His, and vanished. Translate! What did it mean? From one language to another? Or from the head to the heart? I took Him to mean that I should translate the books into Hindi or Adi; I took the literal meaning. I started translating the books into the Adi language of the North-Eastern Frontier Agency.

Friends who know Adi will agree that it is very difficult to express in Adi abstract philosophical ideas. However, by the grace of Baba, I could do this. Still I used to stop the work of translation in a few places, awaiting guidance. Psychologists might interpret my behavior as 'an escape from a difficult pursuit like the study of Panini'; they would have been right but for the fact that I am still continuing my study of Panini and what is more, finding it easier and easier day after day!

Baba came to me a third time! He asked me, "You have started translating." This time His voice came in the midst of my absorption in Panini! I raised my head and saw Baba in His full glory and replied, "I cannot do it; it is very difficult." But Baba said, "You can do it. You have done it. Do not get too much fixed up in words. What is worth doing is difficult." Then Baba disappeared. This assurance gave me further courage; I continued obeying His behest; I have now not only translated the books into Adi, but I have translated myself in thought, action, and feeling.

This is the story. On hearing about this, friends ask me, "What more do you desire? You are indeed lucky that you have seen Baba and that too so often." I reply that I am indeed blessed and that I do not desire anything. The 'I' is submerged in Baba. I desire not. Baba wishes, Baba orders, Baba gives me strength to do what He wants to be done. Some say, "You may leave this material world soon!" But can any man do so without Baba's express will? If Baba wishes so, well, man will.

This experience has given me control over the ego and over hatred of others. I am now afraid of talking slightly of subjects I do not know or beyond my actual experience. Miracles are happening to me every now and then; if I describe them,

this letter will grow too long. Let me conclude with ... *Sathya Sai Jai Jai* [glory to Sathya Sai].

~Laksh Kumar, Khosa, Nefa

Source: *Sanathana Sarathi*, June 1970

Baba is Everything

To me Baba is everything;
I am but an insignificant thing;
I write because He holds my pen;
He alone sings and teaches all men.

I echo when He sings or talks;
I am nothing but a chatterbox;
He alone helps all, good or bad;
He has come to make all people glad.

I always think of Him for my good;
I always think that He gives me food;
I always pray that all may be happy
Healthy, wealthy, wise, and free.

~K. Vaidyanathan

Source: *Sanathana Sarathi*, April 1962

Lynn

This is the story of Lynn, a Bal Vikas Child, from Santa Barbara.

Lynn—The child

When I think of our daughter, Lynn, a mosaic of bright images comes to mind... Lynn, the child of whimsy, improviser of games and stories that delighted her friends. As one of them would later say, "Wherever Lynn was, there was laughter." ...Lynn, the true Bal Vikas [Sai Spiritual Education] pupil who loved to show reverence for her

parents ...serving me breakfast on "Mother's Day" and tenderly caring for her father as he recovered from surgery ...Lynn, the honor student, who loved school,... Lynn, the child who at 14 when other girls of her age talked about boys preferred to sing *bhajans* [devotional songs] and yes, climb trees... and most of all, Lynn who loved Baba with a devotion that would awaken an introspective quality in her and a desire for solitude in which to write poems and thoughts of Baba in her diary. Indeed, her intensity of devotion would draw her two younger brothers and her parents closer to God.

Lynn and Holy Company

It was in the winter of 1974 that I prayed for holy company. I know now it was Baba who answered my prayer; for, soon afterward, through a dear friend, we learned about Him, and Lynn and I began coming to *bhajans* at our Santa Barbara Sai Baba Center.

It was Lynn who after seeing our first Baba film at the center said, "Mummy, we must have our own meditation corner." She promptly removed all the books from a recessed bookcase in our back hall, and thenceforth it was our altar where we meditate daily.

My hopes and unspoken prayers for the children's spiritual education were quickly answered by Baba when shortly after joining the Sai family, our head of center formed a *Bal Vikas* [children's] class. Thus, at Thursday evening *bhajans* and again on Sunday at *Bal Vikas* Class, Lynn's devotion had precious opportunities to grow and to flower.

Indeed, she was the only child present at the daily celebration of *Dasara* and was proud and happy when asked to participate in the reading of the *Chandi* [a form of Goddess Parvati] on the culminating evening of *Dasara* that fall of 1975. I remember seeing tears of joy in Lynn's eyes as she offered a flower to the Mother. And at *Shivaratri*, some six weeks before her passing,



while many adults were too tired to continue, Lynn's ardor sustained her (as it had the previous year) through the night-long vigil of meditation, prayer, and *bhajan*.

At times like these my pride in her devotion was tempered by occasional thoughts that perhaps her zeal was being guided tenderly by our Lord and prepared for the culmination of her short life.

Lynn seeks the lamp of God

It was Thursday afternoon, ten days before Easter, the all-important date on the Christian calendar that commemorates the resurrection of Jesus Christ. School had finished for the day. Lynn had gone to the park, and I knew she was heading for the tall pine, her favorite climbing tree. I remember watching from the kitchen window as she darted off, calling in her sweet voice for our dog Jupiter to follow.

Only 45 minutes later a neighbor came to tell me that Lynn had a fall. In her haste to help her brother, David, who had been bitten by a strange dog and was crying, she had stepped on a broken branch and fallen some 12 feet to the ground.

As I ran, I heard Lynn call, "Mommy!" Mommy!" And as I reached her side, she seemed to know that I was with her. She lay quietly and did not seem to be in pain; though I had no idea she was so near death. I prayed earnestly as I held her hand, "Baba, please be with Lynn, please be with Lynn..." An hour later, in the Catholic hospital nearby, a priest was administering the last rites as she quietly passed on.

Numb with grief, I asked Baba for reassurance. The first thought that came was: Why, it is Thursday, Baba's day. Indeed, two short hours after Lynn's passing, *bhajans* and prayers of our Santa Barbara center were lifting her spirit.

That night I could not sleep. I was tormented by the knowledge that Lynn, stunned by her fall, had perhaps been unable to think of Baba at the time of her going. The next morning when I went into her room, Baba had already answered my anguish. There on Lynn's desk were her last words, written just before going to the park. They were a fateful synthesis of the morning prayers: "O, Lord, I rise now from the womb of slumber. Before I plunge again into the daily routine, let me pray most earnestly to Thee, omniscient Self, and *seek thy lap*, which confers on me restful sleep and blesses me with eternal peace and everlasting bliss."

Our minister was so struck by the event that he would open the memorial service for Lynn with these very words.

Lynn and her dear, dear brother

The prayer had been written in her favorite purple ink, ready to be inserted into her new *Bal Vikas* notebook, which her teacher provided the day before her death. The notebook was to be a replacement for one David had lost on the way to Sunday morning *Omkar* at the center two weeks previously. (Now I know why David lost the notebook. It was all a part of Baba's design.) At the time, I had marveled at Lynn. She

did not get angry with David. She had simply said, "Well, Mommy, since our center leader is moving to a new house I shall start a new notebook." I told her how happy I was that she did not get angry with David, "You see now Baba is answering your prayers," I said. She had often asked Baba for help in dealing with, as I told her, very natural feelings of sibling rivalry with her younger brother. But Lynn, ever the perfectionist, was upset by her occasional negative feelings toward him, and she had often prayed to Baba for help. That's why I now know that the way Lynn died was also part of Baba's design, for she fell in the act of hurrying to David's rescue. Thus, her last act was a selfless one.

Lynn's favorite *bhajan*

Late Saturday we learned that Mr. Vimu Mukunda, distinguished musician from Bangalore and former atomic scientist, just happened to be visiting a friend near Santa Barbara when the news came of Lynn's passing. He wished to play the Veena at Lynn's memorial service.

The morning of Lynn's service, Palm Sunday (one week before Easter), dawned fair and sunny after a brief shower of rain that seemed like a touch of grace. Well do I remember the tangible aura of peace in Lynn's room that day. Later, after the service, friends would remark on it with a sense of awe.

The service was a beautiful one consisting of prayers, readings from the Bible and the *Bhagavad-Gita*, and Lynn's own poems. And the high point was Mr. Mukunda's Veena solo that he concluded by leading us all in singing Lynn's favorite *bhajan*, "*Jai Durga, Lakshmi, Saraswati....*"

How grateful I was to Baba for Mr. Mukunda's presence. It was as if our Lord had blessed the event to be one of celebration rather than lament.

After the service, friends who did not know of Baba came up to us with grief in their faces. How could I tell them, and yet our friends in the Baba family understood that our daughter had been blessed in her short life to come to Baba in her heart, to love this *Avatar*, who had now raised her pure spirit to Him. The tears in my eyes that day were tears of joy and reverence. Only much later would the very human emotions of missing her dear presence occur.

Lynn's Grandmother

Shortly after Lynn's death a friend and adopted "grandmother" added another bright image to Baba's tapestry. ...Three weeks before Lynn's passing, during a special function at our center, we had seen inspiring films of India, and on the way home that night Lynn had asked her, "When do you think I shall go to see Baba? I want to so much." That very night, our friend told me, she had a dream in which Baba came to her and said, "In 21 days she will come to me...." At the time our friend was in very poor health and she thought Baba meant that *she* was to die in three weeks. Then, after Lynn's death, she suddenly realized that He had actually referred

to Lynn in the dream, for it was indeed 21 days after that Lynn was to fall from the tree.

As our head of center remarked, everyone in our Sai family was deeply affected by the love Lynn left behind, a love she had quietly and undemonstratively exhibited as a participant in our worship. Her going made each of us re-evaluate ourselves and perceive how vital each individual is to the life of a center.

Lynn and her Gift to her Father

And finally, as a legacy of Lynn's passing, her father who was once an atheist is now himself on the spiritual path. The poetry of paradox was again clear: We usually consider death a tragic event, and yet in this instance, as a dear friend would say, Lynn's life and death were a beautiful solo in Baba's cosmic symphony. Indeed, Baba sent my husband a vivid dream that pointed out to him that our child had given him the key to a priceless treasure, the awareness of divinity within...Some months later he would say to me, "Lynn's death has been a gift to me...I am now a believer."

Lynn's vision

I will close with Lynn's own words, composed on a family camping trip:

The golden sun climbs up from behind
a round, green hill.
All the sky is blue, cold and open.
Sai Baba stands on a single rock,
smiling *with the glory of dawn*
and Wish.

And this poem, expressing her yearning that our Minister shared at her memorial service

To Baba, who sits on a golden throne;
Surrounded by snowflakes and frothy sea foam
Come into my heart
Remove with your touch the tears of my heart
And replace them with a blissful song...."

Source: *Sanathana Sarathi*, March 1979

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Q&A

WITH BHAGAVAN

The Four Ashramas

Q. In this cosmos that is the human body, what is the best *dharma* [right action] to follow? Which *Ashram* [four age-based life stages] is most conducive for that *dharma*? How many *Ashrams* are there in all?

A. There are four *Ashrams* in all; if you know about them, you can yourselves decide which *Ashram* you are to fulfill, examining your own achievement, progress, and aptitude. *Brahmacharya* [student], *Grihastha* [householder], *Vaanaprastha* [retired], and *Sanyasa* [renunciator] are the four *Ashrams*.

Q. Different explanations are given by different persons for the word *Brahmacharya* and the stage it denotes. I wish to know from you the real significance of that stage.

A. Very well. It is believed that those who have not become *Grihasthas* are entitled to be called *Brahmacharis*. This is very wrong. Only those who keep their minds away from the delusions of the world, who are constantly engaged in the thought of God, who do not see or hear light or merely entertaining stuff, who pursue good taste, who do not yield to joy or grief, who keep their mind, intelligence, and self-consciousness in good trim by unremitting contemplation of the *Brahmatatwa* [the Divine principle]—only such deserve the name, *Brahmachari*.

Q. What exactly does *Grihastha* mean?

A. Being married and living with the wife and children do not constitute *Grihastha Ashrama* as most people think. Without giving up the duties assigned to one's caste and status, the person has to treat all with equal consideration—kinsmen as well as others. He must be aware of the rights of the elders and the obligations of juniors: he has to be full of sympathy and willingness to help; he should treat with loving kindness all those who are dependent on him; he must grow wiser with each new experience of the world. He, should acquaint himself with the *Shastras* and be alert to do *dharma* and avoid *adharma*; he must foster and protect his wife and children with a sense of responsibility; he has to trample down the *eight egoisms*, the conceit that develops from family, wealth, character, personal beauty, youth, scholarship, native place, and even accomplishments in austerity. Conscious of the four goals of *dharma*, *artha* [economic values], *kama* [pleasure], and *moksha* [liberation], with no pride in material possessions though he might have them in large measure; utilizing a portion of the day in the service of others; with no designs against any other household; himself deserving the trust of his wife and having a trusted wife, each understanding the other and

having full faith in the other; such are the ways in which the *Grihastha* manifests.

Q. What, then, does *Vaanaprastha* mean?

A. At that stage, man feels that all dualities are untrue and baseless. He gives up all desires; drops all attachment to the world; dislikes living in crowded places; is anxious to achieve victory through *mantra-japa* [reciting the sacred words] and so leads a life of austerity, eating only uncooked food, mostly fruits and leaves, in moderation; moves in the company of sages and *maharishis*; listens to their teachings and moves unfalteringly on the path realizing the Lord. The *Vaanaprastha* must get the approval of his wife when he moves out into solitude for the life of *sadhana* [spiritual effort], and he must make sufficient provision for his children also. If, however, the wife is willing to accompany him, he has to take her in his spiritual journey. They must hence forward live as brother and sister and not as husband-wife. Provided this new relationship is maintained, life in the home, too, can be transformed into *Vaanaprastha*. On the other hand, if the old life is continued, life in the forest does not constitute *Vaanaprastha*. The *Vaanaprastha* must not stay in the residence of married people. He must observe the vows prescribed for each season of the year. He has to brave the rain, the sun and the cold during the seasons. He must be vigilant against being drawn toward physical pleasures by fickleness of the mind. He must seek and find pleasure only in the contemplation of the Lord and in dwelling upon His glory.

Q. What does *Sanyasa* mean?

A. *Sanyasa* is above and beyond all promptings of sensual or objective pleasure. The *Sanyasi* deals with the contemplation of the Lord as the very breath of his life, an essential necessity always and at all places for sheer existence itself; he derives joy only from this contemplation. He knows that wealth and kinship, affection and attachment are all momentary and liable to decline and end. He discards the external reminders of even caste-status and *samskaras* [mental impressions] like *Upanayanam* [sacred thread ceremony where a person is exposed to the *Gayatri mantra*]; he wears the ochre robe of the mendicant; he does not live in populous places; he lives on whatever little food he gets; he does not decry the place where he does not get food; he does not eat twice in the same place or sleep two days in succession in the same place; he even conquers the temptation to sleep and eat; he cares little for the rigors of the seasons; he is ever joyful and happy in the company of the Lord whom he invokes by his *Dhyana* [meditation].

Q. Nowadays, there are many ochre-robed people moving about as *sanyasis*. Are they all equipped with the disciplines mentioned by you now?

- A. There is, of course, no paucity of people who are so equipped. But it is not possible to say that all are like that.
- Q. There are many who though *sanyasis* establish *Ashramas* and get themselves established in worldly affairs and worldly possessions and struggle for worldly pomp and power. What is to be said of these?
- A. For genuine *Sanyasa* and for detachment from all mental agitations, institutions like the *Ashramas* you mention are great handicaps. For those who should give up all purposeful effort, the effort for the upkeep and progress of the *Ashrama* is an obstacle in the path. I need not tell you by what name such *sanyasis* are to be called. I can only say they do not deserve the name *sanyasi*.
- Q. Swami, how can the growth of the *Ashramas*, which help people like us to know the means of liberation, be a bondage? And how can *Ashramas* get on without money? I hope it is not wrong to accept help voluntarily offered.
- A. My dear fellow! It is theft if the lock is broken and valuables are taken away, or if they are removed through an opening made in wall; it is theft, if by soft words in open daylight a person persuades you to part with your valuables. If a *sanyasi* casts his eyes on wealth, whatever the motive, it is harmful for his spiritual progress. He should cast all such tasks on some trustworthy devotee and be an unconcerned witness only. His duty is to see that the persons who seek *aashraya* (succor) are assured of spiritual help, not to help the *Ashrama* to rise and prosper. The flames of desire to make the *Ashrama* grow will rise into the bonfire of self-seeking egoism and burn out all that is commendable in the *sanyasi*, especially his *atma-ananda*. The fire will destroy not merely the *sanyasi*, but also those dependent on him for guidance. The feeling “I” and “mine” are such destruction-causing sparks. Man must attach himself to guides who are devoid of these. But once the *Ashrama* becomes the prime factor, the so-called ‘guide’ has to attach himself to men! It should be the other way. He must not be dependent on the world; he must be free from all dependence. That is the mark of the *sanyasi*.

Source: *Prasnaottara Vahini*

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Thought of the MONTH

Character

The devotee is inseparable from God. When he is filled with the love of God and is totally forgetful of himself, he experiences oneness with God. Prahlada was such a supreme devotee.... His form was human, his heart was centered on God.

Once Indra [ancient Vedic deity] conquered Prahlada and enjoyed *Swarga* (the realm of the Gods). Later Prahlada overcame Indra and deprived him of *Swarga*. Indra was forlorn and sought the advice of his high priest for winning back his Kingdom. The priest told him that Prahlada was performing a great *yaga* called *Vishvajit* and Indra should assume the form of a *Brahmana* [priest]. Prahlada welcomed him and asked him what he wanted. As advised earlier by his high priest, he asked Prahlada to offer him Prahlada's *sheelam* (character). Prahlada enquired of the *Brahmana* of what use was his character to the seeker. The *Brahmana* replied that there was no need to go into all that. He had expressed what he wanted in response to Prahlada's offer to give whatever anyone asked at the *Vishvajit* sacrifice. "Are you prepared to give or not?" Prahlada immediately gave what the *Brahmana* asked with due ceremony.

Within a few minutes, an effulgent flame emerged from Prahlada. Seeing the effulgent form, he asked; "who are you?" the effulgent figure prostrated before Prahlada and said, "I am your character. Hitherto I was in you. I fostered your name and fame. Now you have given me away as a gift. Hence I am leaving you."

When character left Prahlada, shortly thereafter another beautiful effulgent form issued forth from Prahlada. Prahlada asked him, "who are you, oh King?" the radiant figure replied, "Prahlada! I am your *keerti* (reputation). When character has left you, I have no place within you. Hitherto, I was the servant of Character. When Character has left you, I have to follow suit."

Prahlada was puzzled. Then came another beautiful radiant female form from Prahlada. Prahlada respectfully asked her, "Mother! Who are you?" "Prahlada! After the departure of Character and Reputation, I, namely Rajyalakshmi, (the goddess of royal prosperity) have no place within you." Indra, who had come in the form of a *Brahmana*, took all the three with him.

That very moment, Prahlada lost his kingdom. You can see from this how one's fame and prosperity are dependent on one's Character. Character is a supremely Divine quality. Hence God is described as having six great attributes including Righteousness infinite Wealth, boundless Prosperity, indescribable Fame and unfathomable Wisdom.

Sathya Sai Speaks, Vol. XXIX, The Greatness of Prahlada