

The second blessing is *mumukshathvam*, **the desire for liberation**. There are 6.5 billion people and of them very few want to know the Truth and the purpose of life. When we know the Truth it leads to Divine Bliss. Most of us are happy eating, drinking and making merry. Only by the Grace of God one knows Him and has love for Him.

The third important sign of Grace is *mahapurusha samsrayam*, **the company of great souls**. When we desire to have enlightenment we need a *Guru* and a guide. Even for learning mundane things like physics, chemistry, bicycling, and swimming we always need a teacher. For spirituality, which is the *summum bonum* of life, we definitely need a *Guru*. But Swami says there are two kinds of *Gurus* – *badha Gurus* and *bodha Gurus*. *Badha Gurus* are the ones who cause you pain and *bodha Gurus* are true teachers. There are many *Gurus* who cause you pain. They are like the blind leading the blind. Swami says, “*chevilo mantram chethilo dabba* (these fake *Gurus* collect money in the hand while whispering in the ear).” In the West, particularly in Europe and America, spirituality has become commercialised. For a meditation course they will charge \$500 or \$1,000. Thus, it has become a business. So, to get a good *Guru* like Bhagawan Ramana Maharshi or Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa we need special Divine Grace. However, to our good fortune we have more than a good *Guru*, we have *Purushothama* (the Lord Supreme) Himself as our *Guru*. The teacher of teachers, universal teacher, the Supreme Lord Himself is our *Guru*.

Sai Parabrahman – The True Guru

How blessed and fortunate we are that the *Adi Guru* (First Teacher), the *Parama Guru* (Supreme Teacher), the Lord Himself is guiding us. There was a great saint by the name of Swami Abhedananda who was a disciple of Bhagawan Ramana Maharshi. He was a sincere seeker on the spiritual path. But even after many years of severe austerity and sincere inquiry he could not attain enlightenment. He felt discouraged. He read the book ‘*Sathyam Sivam Sundaram*’, the biography written by late Professor Kasturi about Swami. Thinking that Swami was his last hope to attain his goal, Swami Abhedananda came to Prasanthi Nilayam. Swami loves sincere spiritual seekers. He called Swami Abhedananda soon after his arrival for an interview and blessed him. After this Swami Abhedananda was in bliss. When he came out of the interview room Professor Kasturi enquired how the interview was. Swami Abhedananda replied, “To say that Swami is an *Avatar* is only a partial truth and is an understatement. Swami is not just an *Avatar*. **He is the Source of all Avatars.**”

Swami Abhedananda continued saying, “He is Supreme *Parabrahman*, *nirguna nirakara parabrahman*

(attributeless, formless, Divine Supreme). That is my experience.” That is why day before yesterday Swami in His Inaugural Discourse said, “I am not Sai Baba.” That means we should not restrict Swami to this body and Name. Swami says to restrict God to a Name, a form, and a place is ignorance. Swami says that He is all names and all forms. Bhagawan Krishna says in the *Gita*, “*Avajananthi mam mudha manushim tanumasritham; Parambhavam ajanantho mama bhutha mahesvaram* (the ignorant insults Me by saying that I am this embodied being as they do not understand My all-pervading reality).” Swami is one in all, all in one, all in all and beyond all. He is the Supreme Reality.

In His infinite kindness and Love, on May 17, 1968, Swami revealed glimpses of His Divinity during the First World Conference of the Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organisation. Swami said, “**In truth, you cannot understand the nature of My Reality either today, or even after a thousand years of steady austerity or ardent inquiry even if all mankind joins in that effort.**” So, we should never try to understand or analyse our Bhagawan, but we should experience His Love, enjoy His Love, and spread His Love.

Swami also mentioned in that same Discourse that we should realise that we are blessed and fortunate to know of Him. He said, “Your good fortune which provided you this chance is greater than what was available for anchorites, monks, sages, saints and even personalities embodying facets of Divine Glory.” In that landmark Discourse, Swami said, “**This is a Human Form in which every Divine Entity, every Divine Principle, that is to say, all the Names and Forms ascribed by man to God, are manifest. Never let any doubt distract you from this Truth.**” So we should be grateful for our good fortune. In the *Bhagavatha Purana* the angels and gods were jealous of the cowherd girls and cowherd boys of Brindavan. They thought how lucky were these cowherd girls and boys who had the good fortune of playing with Sri Krishna, the Supreme *Parabrahman* (Lord Supreme) manifested in Human Form. Similarly, the future generations will be thinking how blessed and fortunate we are to have this time with our sweet Lord Sai.

Follow His Command Implicitly

How to make best use of this great opportunity and blessing Swami has given us? Swami has given the answer to this also in the same Discourse of May 17, 1968. He said that to follow His instructions and commands is enough. **Swami says that following His instructions and commands is greater than all the spiritual practices and austerities we can do.** He said that mergence with the Divine is achieved by following His commands. What are His instructions and com-

mands? In His Inaugural Discourse of the youth conference, Swami said that youth is the time when the mind and senses are very powerful. That is why when Arjuna says, “*chanchalam hi manah Krishna pramaathi balavadh dridham* (the mind and senses are very turbulent and powerful; I am not able to control them),” then Lord Krishna replies, “*asamshayam mahaabaaho mano durnigraham chalam* (no doubt Arjuna, it is very difficult to control the unsteady mind).” But He gives a solution to the problem. How? “*Abhyaasena tu kaunteya vairaagyena cha grihyate* (**by constant practice and detachment one controls the mind**).” Detachment is attachment to God. When one is attached to God, the mind is easily controlled. That is the secret.

Swami also talked about discrimination. Whenever we do something Swami says we should discriminate, “Is it good? Is it bad?” **Swami says that there are two types of discrimination** – individual discrimination and fundamental discrimination. Individual discrimination focuses only on personal interests and welfare, “Is this good for me?” Whereas, fundamental discrimination keeps in view the highest good of all. So when we follow this fundamental discrimination we ask ourselves: will it take us to the right path and goal?

The *Kathopanishad* says that there are two paths – *shreyo marg* (the good path) and *preyo marg* (the path of pleasure). When we are youth, the mind and senses direct us to the *preyo marg*, which is the pleasing path. Swami says we should always stick to the *shreyo marg*, the good path which is the Godward path. Swami emphasises that one should follow *shreyo marg* from one’s youth.

Avoid Bad Company

In this Godward path, a lot of importance is given to one’s company. On many occasions, Swami has said **ABC – “Always Be Cheerful,” “Always Be Content,” “Always Be Calm,” “Always Be Careful,”** and also **“Avoid Bad Company.”** Swami says that the company we keep is very important because our mind gets easily influenced by our company. Swami gives an example. Dust in the company of air goes up, but it doesn’t have any wings. Dust in the company of water goes down, but it doesn’t have any legs. The company the dust keeps makes the difference. Similarly, Swami gives a simple example. You wrap some jasmine flowers in a paper. You take the flowers out and the paper still smells of jasmine. If you wrap some food such as *pakodas* in the paper it will smell of *pakodas*. Swami often says, “Tell me your company and I will tell you what you are.” Once, Swami was going to Kodaikanal and in His infinite Love Swami moved from His car to the bus with the students to make them happy. As the cars passed, people were throwing flowers on Swami’s

car rather than the bus because people thought that Swami was in the car and not in the bus. Then Swami told the students how by His association even the car gets adoration and worship. That is the influence of one’s company. So we should be very careful about the company we keep.

Work Is Worship

Another important teaching of Bhagawan is that we should not separate and compartmentalise the secular from the sacred. He wants us to spiritualise and divinise all work. We try to compartmentalise – this is Swami’s work, this is housework, and this is office work. Swami says beautifully in Telugu, “*unnadhi okkate karma, ade bhagavath karma* (there is only one work and that is God’s work).” Everything depends upon the attitude we have. Twenty years ago, my wife who is a physician had to balance her career in medicine with taking care of household chores and bringing up our small children. When we were with Swami one day she asked Him, “Swami, I am not able to do my spiritual practices like meditation, *japa*, and reading scriptures because of my busy medical practice and my household duties. Please guide me.” Swami replied, “**As long as you think something is secular and something is sacred, as long as you see the difference, you will never have peace of mind.**” He advised her to try to find spirituality in everything. He gave a beautiful and simple example. That is the beauty of Swami. He simplifies the most complicated *Vedantic* truths. He said, “When you are cutting the vegetables think you are cutting the ego. When you are vacuuming or sweeping the floor and getting rid of the dirt, think that you are getting rid of the evil qualities and making your heart pure. When you are making *chapathi* (Indian bread), when you are making it broad, think you are broadening your heart and filling it with love.” All spiritual practices are summarised in this simple, but practical, example. Getting rid of the ego, getting rid of the evil qualities and filling the heart with love is all the *sadhana* one needs to practice. That is how we can spiritualise everything. Brother Lawrence, a French mystic, said, “I could be in communion with my Lord as much when I was serving the monks in the kitchen as when I am kneeling at the altar of the church.”

Swami wants us to experience Divinity in everything, everywhere, ever. Day before yesterday Swami mentioned, “This table is God, this flower is God, this microphone is God.” We should have conviction that everything is God. There is nothing but God that exists. That is why Prahlada says, “*Harimayamu kaani dravyamu paramaanuvu ledu vamshapaayanavinte* (nothing exists other than God, not even an atom).” Swami also says, “*anuvuvu, kana kanamu, kshana*

kshanamu Swame (every atom, every cell and every moment is permeated by God).” We should have that kind of experience. The *Narayana Suktam* says, “*An-tharbahischa tathsarvam vyapya naraayana stithaha* (what all exists is Divinity, both inside and outside).”

What Is the Easiest and Best Path?

How do we experience Divinity? Swami has given us the answer. Swami says that *Prema Yoga* is the way. Swami mentions that of all the *yogas* – *Kriya Yoga*, *Hatha Yoga*, *Karma Yoga*, and *Prema Yoga* – the easiest and the best path is *Prema Yoga*. The first book in the *Vahini* series written by Swami was *Prema Vahini*. When Jesus was asked what is the greatest commandment, He replied that the first and greatest commandment is to “Love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, mind, soul and strength and love thy neighbour as thy self.” St. Paul in his letter to the Corinthians said that if you have faith to command a mountain to move, you can move it. But if you have no love it is of no benefit. You may give everything, whatever you have to charities, but if you do not have love it is of no use. You may know all the scriptures in the world and be able to prophesise, but if you have no love it is of no value. So faith, love and hope are great. Of them, St. Paul said, love is the greatest.

Swami says, “Start the day with Love, fill the day with Love and end the day with Love.” Swami, His Life, His Message, His Ideals and His Humanitarian Works, all can be enshrined in just one word: Love, Love, Love. Swami is Love and Love is Swami. That is why the other day Swami said, “God is Love, Love is God, live in Love.” Sai is Love, Love is Sai. Let us redeem and sanctify our lives by realising and experiencing this love, sharing this love with all, and finally realising

we are love. On one occasion I asked Swami, “When I cannot delve into the mystery of the Divine, how can I give public speeches on Divinity?” Swami said, “*Prema nu panchuko, penchuko* (the Love you experienced from Me you should share with all and thus expand and increase Love).” He said that the Love we have experienced is for all creation to share. When you share Love, it expands. May we follow the Divine clarion call “*uthistatha Jagratha, prapyavaraan ni bhodhita* (**Arise, awake and stop not till the goal is reached!**)”, the goal supreme being Divine Love. The Love Divine is eternal, pure and unsullied. Now I pray to Swami to bless us all with this pure Divine Love. I also pray to Swami to bless us with His Divine Message which I know all of you are eagerly waiting for.

Jai Sai Ram.

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Purpose of Being

Dr. Michael Goldstein

With humility and love, I offer my *Pranams* at Bhagavan Baba's Divine Lotus Feet. Distinguished guests, brothers and sisters, youth delegates, dear students, Sai Ram to all of you!

It is essential that we inquire!

What is the purpose of being here in His Divine Presence?

What is the purpose of being?

Is human life nature's accident or is it God's Plan?

From time to time, age to age, when mankind is bent on self-destruction, the Lord comes! He comes as an *Avatar*. He is here now as the *Kali Yuga Avatar*, our Beloved Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba!

He is the embodiment of Divine Love and Divine Truth. The same Divine Love and Truth that is ever-present and always accessible deep in the sacred spiritual heart of every man and woman, every single one of us. It is always there, waiting for our acknowledgement, our embrace. Waiting for the realisation of our true being.

What is the purpose of being here in the Divine Presence?

What is the purpose of being?

By being here, here in His Presence, we accelerate our movement toward the realisation of our Divine nature. **By being, by being embodiments of Divine Love and Truth, we glorify and please Him. We fulfill the purpose of human life.**

Sometimes we encounter obstacles. We entertain doubts. Weeks, months, and years go by. Yet we do not even try to truly see and really be who we are. Sometimes it just seems so far. And we choose to remain embroiled in worldly woes and ensnared by imaginary foes.

But Swami has taught us that the joy of selfless love is ever so close.

Actually, it is imminent in everything, everyone, everywhere. It can come to us after many years of discipline and sacrifice. Or, it can come to us in a flash,

for no apparent reason. We have seen examples of these in the lives of the saints and sages.

Spiritual Inquiry

Today is an auspicious time. We are here to be close to Him, Our Lord, our origin, our essence, and our destination. It is a good time to engage in spiritual inquiry.

We are here to be with Him so that we can remember from whence we have come, who we are, where we are going. We seek knowledge of our origin, our identity, and our destination. From Him we have come. Of Him we are. To Him we shall return.

When consciously we strive to be who we really are, we become spiritual aspirants. Swami has said, "*Spirituality is the resolute pursuit of cosmic consciousness. It enables us to manifest in all its fullness the Divine cosmic consciousness that is present both within and outside yourself. It means getting rid of one's animal nature and developing the Divine tendency within oneself.*"

We have learned from Swami that humanity has no life without consciousness, that consciousness is the Omnipresent Divinity, that consciousness is Divine Love, Selfless Love. This consciousness resides within the heart of every man and woman and gives life to the mind and the body. This consciousness is appreciated and realised by each of us through our conscience.

Then what is the culmination of this resolute pursuit of cosmic consciousness to which Swami has referred? We transcend worldly woes and dismiss imaginary foes. We eliminate the disparity between our convictions and our actions. We eliminate the divergence between our desires and our Divine purpose. We achieve convergence of thought, word, and deed. We follow our conscience.

Follow Our Conscience

One day, many years ago, I had the good fortune to sit at Swami's Feet with another devotee. Swami

looked at me, pointed to the other devotee, and He said, "This man is a very good devotee. He follows his conscience in all things at all times. In all situations, he asks himself, "Is it good or is it bad? Is it right or is it wrong? What should I do?"

"This man looks deeply within himself, he receives the answer from his conscience, and he acts without delay. Sometimes the answer does not come immediately. He perseveres. He continues to seek the answer within himself, from his conscience. Then the answer comes and he acts without procrastination. He is a very good devotee."

Swami used this man's good example to teach what is right and good. If only all of us would but follow this clear path that lies before us.

Many years ago we prayed to Swami to give us a *mantra* on His Birthday. **Swami graciously gave us the following *mantra*: Swami declared: "God Is!" That was the *mantra*. God Is!**

God Is! God Is!

Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba Is!

Swami teaches us that we are all Divine.

If God Is, then man also Is! Is What?

Swami teaches us that we are consciousness which is eternal and whose essence is selfless love.

In these human lives that He has so graciously allotted to us, Swami teaches us to distinguish that which is real and lasting, from that which is fake and ephemeral. He teaches us to distinguish that which is Divine from that which is illusion.

We are all essentially Divine. We are Divine Love. We are consciousness. But, at the same time, we are players on the stage of everything that is not. We are players on the stage of this world. Why are we players on this surrealistic and unrealistic worldly stage?

We are players so that we might learn to distinguish what is from what is not. We are players so that we might learn that selfless love is our true essence. We are players so that we might learn that the curtain falling on our worldly drama is not the end of who we are. It is the end of being who we are not and the beginning of being solely and purely Divinity.

We follow our conscience in all things, we love and serve selflessly, finding God always in everyone, everywhere. We distinguish real from unreal. That is the culmination of our spiritual pursuit.

Today, we conclude this conference, Ideal Sai Youth-Messengers of Sai Love. Our Beloved Swami has loved us, uplifted us, inspired us, and motivated us to move forward on our spiritual journey.

How can we ever demonstrate our gratitude to Him?

We can receive His Message with reverence and apply His Message to these human lives with diligence.

We have experienced great joy. Let us take this to heart so that our lives become His Message.

Jai Sai Ram!



Workshop Session 1



How to Build Character That Lasts

Mrs. Mallika Srinivasan

I offer my most loving and humble *Pranams* at the Lotus Feet of our Beloved Bhagavan. Respected elders, Sai Youth, brothers and sisters, Sai Ram to all of you.

“Watch, Observe, Learn, Obey, and Apply”

Each one of us gathered here today is truly blessed, enjoying and basking as we do in Bhagavan’s Protection, Grace and Love. To my family, as to all of you, Swami has been the very centre of existence – Mother, Father, *Guru* and God. All of you as Sai Youth are exceptionally privileged.

For unlike people like myself, who went through a process that began with magnetic attraction, led to intellectual curiosity, and perhaps a degree of scepticism before the spark of devotion could be lit, leading to faith and finally to total surrender, you have been brought into Swami’s fold at a time when your heart is open to receive His Love instantly. Youth take to Swami like fish to water.

It is the determination of Swami to sow in the minds of young people, which are like rays of the rising sun, the seeds of desire for acquiring spiritual knowledge. These seeds have already been sown in the Sai Youth gathered here today. The distinguishing feature of Sai Youth is that material gains are not the sole goal of your lives. You seek to lead holistic lives, yearn to achieve a larger purpose and strive to be better human beings.

Living in the Presence of Bhagavan offers us the very best opportunity to achieve this. Swami teaches us in a variety of ways through His compassion, through disciplining, through His interactions, through the formal teaching like we had this morning, and at times through direct advice: “Watch, observe, learn, obey and apply.” Then, we will begin to comprehend the essence of what is required for a successful life, i.e., the building of character. **Devotion, Duty, Discipline, Determination and Discrimination are the pillars on which the robust house of character is built.** These are the few things I would like to touch upon today.

The Charismatic Charioteer

Devotion to God is fundamental to leading a virtuous life. Swami, through His Divine Love and in His own inimitable way, evokes in each of our hearts, this devotion and builds our faith. I would like to share with you one such instance, when Swami through a simple and appealing example captured the heart of a young boy in an instant, making him a devotee for life!

During an interview, Swami asked our young son to ask Him a question.

The boy said, “Swami, which is your favourite car?”

My heart sank and I thought to myself, “Is this the question to ask Swami? Time with Swami is so precious!”

Swami gave a lovely smile and answered, “Morris Minor” and went on to tell stories of how He used to drive to Madras and how He obtained a license.

“You used to drive it yourself Swami?” exclaimed the boy, stars in his eyes!

Swami had woven a bit of magic and our son looked at Swami transfixed.

Swami went on to say, “I will give you a big car. Will you take it? You mustn’t say no!”

And the boy, a bit overawed by now, said, “OK!”

Swami then asked, “Will you give me your car?”

Prompt came the answer, “Sure, Swami!”

“Shall I drive it?”

And the boy again said, “Sure, Swami.”

Swami then smilingly placed His Hand on our son’s heart and said, “Your heart is the car and I am the driver.”

One of the most profound lessons in devotion had been taught by Swami in the simplest possible manner! Swami says, “Have faith in Me” and “Be free from fear, anxiety and agitation. **Surrender to God; His Grace can save you. His wisdom can enlighten you. His power can overcome all obstacles. Faith and surrender are the manifestations of devotion.**”

The Right Attitude

Duty without expectation of reward is the essence of the *Bhagavad Gita*. Let us cast a glimpse of what is actually happening around us in the world today, especially in the lives of younger people. There is, if you permit me to say, an obsession with being remunerated; with obtaining greater and greater power and authority. There is a constant measurement of work versus reward and a continuous comparison with other family members, friends, colleagues and peers. Opportunities and temptations abound in a growing economy and this is fuelling these trends.

Frequency of job change has reached new heights and as the search continues for something elusive, our inner peace is destroyed. If, on the other hand, we enjoy doing what we are doing, do our very best, excel at it, going beyond what is commonly termed “the call of duty,” do our tasks with devotion and love, without fear of failure, leaving the rewards to Swami, not only will we achieve inner peace, but we will exceed our own expectations of performance.

Surrender, the Best Strategy!

In our professional lives, we may have the illusion that we control outcomes. That it is only an illusion becomes quite clear, when we are faced with a personal crisis.

For example, let us take the illness of a loved one. My mother, a very healthy person, was recently diagnosed with having an ailment, for which the prognosis was indeed poor. Only God could save her. It is in situations like this, that faith and surrender make us witness Swami’s magic. **His Grace fills us with a sense of calm. He directs and guides us to do our duty taking appropriate decisions and leaving the rest to Him.**

It was raining heavily and the hospital room began to leak. A fungus infection would be disastrous for my mother. The hospital administration and doctors out of concern were urging me to move her immediately to another hospital where the care would not be of the same order, but the room would not leak. We seemed to be moving her for all the wrong reasons. Couldn’t we move her to the smaller room or to the intensive care? A quiet prayer was made to Swami seeking His guidance and the answer was clear. “Do not move her.”

It is Bhagavan’s infinite Grace that she is today completely well, truly Swami’s walking miracle. Faith enables us to carry out our duties calmly, even under extraordinarily extenuating circumstances, surrendering the problem at His Feet. Our duty, however, extends beyond our jobs and serving our families to serving humanity at large.

Inspiring Examples

Speaking at the Harvard Commencement in June 2007, Bill Gates said, “When you consider what those of us here have been given in talent, privilege and opportunity, there is almost no limit to what the world has a right to expect from us.” We who have gathered here today are even more privileged than those at Harvard. For, we have in our midst, Bhagavan, to teach and guide us as we strive to give back to society, what society has given to us! “We make a living by what we get, we make a life by what we give,” said Winston Churchill.

While our ancient texts have laid down the way wealth should be distributed – a quarter for personal use, a quarter for charitable purposes, a quarter on other living beings, and a quarter in support of state – even in this materialistic world, there are a handful of the richest of men, who have set outstanding examples of giving back to serve the larger cause of humanity. Many of you would probably have read Warren Buffett’s recent announcement that he would donate 85 percent of his 44 billion dollar empire to charity to serve communities across the world and most importantly, without heed to religion, caste or community.

Inspired by such examples, Sai Youth, having imbibed Swami’s teachings of “**Service to man is service to God**” can play a prominent role in the establishment of a new world order. Participating actively in Swami’s Seva Organisation and programmes, be they providing water, food or medical care, gives Sai Youth a unique opportunity to serve with love under Divine guidance.

How Can ‘I’ Start Service?

Opportunities to serve are everywhere; one does not have to search for them. They are in your neighbourhood and in your workplace. As Swami says, you may not get a chance to participate in some gigantic scheme of service through which millions may be benefited, but you can lift a lame lamb over the side, or lead a blind child across a busy road. That too, is an act of worship. If you look around you with love, service to others will come spontaneously and become an intrinsic part of our daily lives.

In the words of Bhagavan, **the real value of seva and its most visible result is that it transforms and reshapes you.** Devotion must be directed along the lines of duty and tested in the crucible of discipline, says Bhagavan.

Discipline – Indispensable for Success

“Why do we need discipline?” Swami’s analogy of comparing life to a football game, gives us the answer. If any player can do anything with the ball, and there is neither foul nor out, neither offside nor goal, neither

throw nor penalty, then it is a meaningless game incapable of giving joy. It is these rules and restrictions that give charm to the game of life. It is disciplined societies that emerge victorious.

Japan was decimated during World War II and Korea sank into poverty after the Korean War. It is determination and discipline that were key to the resurgence of both Japan and South Korea, and enabled them to become economic powerhouses of the world. Discipline pervades every aspect of life in their society, their daily routine, work habits, their interactions with each other. Everything is done in a planned way, at a particular time, and with no

deviations. In Japan, even the tea ceremony is a much disciplined affair. Quality, efficiency and excellence in everything they do are the hallmarks of these societies. It is individual discipline that translates into this kind of societal discipline and ensures success.

While discipline is a prerequisite in every endeavour, be it social, economic or material, it is even more vital for Sai Youth aspiring to pursue the spiritual path. Swami expects the highest levels of discipline from His students and the youth, for it is this discipline that builds credibility, the foundation stone for leadership.

When a new employee joins a firm, both his seniors and his subordinates are watching him closely. Does he come to work on time? Does he do what he says he will? Does he deliver his assigned tasks on schedule? Is there unison in what he thinks, says and does? Is he willing to shoulder additional responsibilities? No one can succeed in his or her mission alone, and success depends upon the support we are able to garner from others and this support is garnered only through credibility established by the practice of personal discipline. People may not believe what you say. But they will surely believe what they see you do. Emerson, the American author had this to say. "What you are shouts so loudly in my ears I cannot hear what you say." **It is character that communicates most eloquently.**

Discrimination - The Most Vital Tenet

All of you gathered here are aspiring to be leaders in your own respective spheres of life. Besides demonstration by personal example, two key differentiators

between leaders and others are determination and what Swami referred to this morning in His Inaugural Address as "The Power of Discrimination."

Determination is widely acclaimed as the king of faculties and as the one that succeeds when everything else fails. Nothing can take the place of per-

sistence. Talent will not. Nothing is more common than unsuccessful men with great talent. Genius will not. Nothing is more common than unrewarded genius! It is now almost like a proverb. Education will not. The world is full of educated derelicts. Persistence and determination alone are omnipotent.

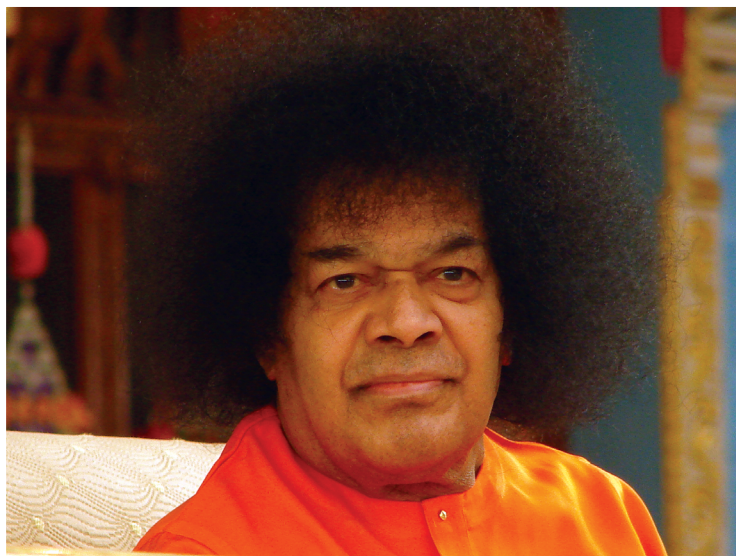
A distinction, however, may be made between de-

termination and obstinacy. An obstinate man is not open to suggestions and course corrections become impossible. In sharp contrast, a determined man has a flexible approach, keeps his eye on the goal post and freely takes inputs that help to further progress towards the goal. Obstinate people are filled with ego. Determination without a trace of ego or self-interest empowers the individual with a sharper sense of discrimination.

Discrimination is the ability to distinguish between good and bad, right and wrong, and take the correct decision, given a specific set of circumstances. What is right in one situation may not be right in another, and leaders are often faced with difficult choices. **But in every situation, discrimination implies applying the principle of Dharma, the righteousness that upholds the universe.**

Here are a couple of examples. Each one of us has different roles that we play in life. The father at home is many times the boss at work, be it a small, medium, or large business. The factors that he takes when taking a decision vis-à-vis his son in his role as a father will be distinctively different from those that he uses when taking decisions at the workplace. At the workplace, he cannot take decisions based only on his son's individual interest. For, these affect the larger good of the organisation. Therefore, necessarily, it has to be above self-interest. He needs to give up the feeling of mine and thine.

Hitler was a determined man. Why was he destroyed? His determination was filled with ego and



megalomaniac tendencies. The larger good was not in sight. He lost his discrimination for his decisions were not based on the principles of *Dharma*.

While the *Dharma* for each person may be different, depending upon the role he plays, the basic principles of *Dharma*, based on which discrimination is applied remain unchanged, namely, truth, love, fortitude and non-violence. These are the cornerstones of the practice of *Dharma* and upholding *Dharma* is the insignia of a true leader.

When there is *Dharma*, there is victory. And the protector of *Dharma*, will always be protected by Bhagavan. Devotion, Duty, Discipline, Determination and Discrimination are integral parts of the whole and need to come together in perfect balance to form the character of an Ideal Sai Youth.

Each of these attributes cannot be viewed in isolation and when closely intertwined, make for a successful and holistic life. All of you, young delegates are filled with idealism, dreams and aspirations. In conclusion, I would like to share with you the words of Swami, that to me have been through the years, a joyous source of inspiration. “Life is a Game, Play It! Life is a Challenge, Meet It! Life is Love, Enjoy It! Life is a Dream, Realise It!”

Jai Sai Ram!



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Mrs. Mallika Srinivasan is the CEO of TAFE (Tractors and Farm Equipment) and is one of the most successful CEOs in India having transformed TAFE from an 80-crore company to a 2,500-crore market leader. She was awarded the Business Woman of the Year Award by the BBC, UK in 1999 and the Economic Times Business Woman of the Year in 2006. Engaged in many social service activities, she is also an active participant in the Mother and Child Care Programme undertaken by the Easwaramma Women's Welfare Trust.

Living Up to His Message

Sri Sanjay Sahani

I offer my loving *Pranams* at the Lotus Feet of our Beloved Bhagavan.

Revered elders, Sai Youth from all over the world and Sai educational institutions, brothers and sisters.

We are living in extraordinary times. It is the best of times and also the worst of times. It is the best of times because man will never get an easier opportunity to redeem himself than at a time when a Divine Incarnation walks on earth. It is also the worst of times, because the very Presence of a Divine Incarnation amidst us is a sign of the declining standards of living, which have warranted His coming.

In such a scenario, I am reminded of what Bhagavan Himself has said, "If there is a small scuffle on the road, a constable is enough to set matters right. When the problem aggravates and 20-30 people gather, the Sub-Inspector of Police has to make his presence felt. When the entire city is in flames and there are riots everywhere, then the Inspector General of Police has to appear on the scene." Bhagavan is the Inspector General of Police for the cosmos who has come to save mankind from itself.

Rabindranath Tagore, India's Nobel Laureate in Literature, once observed, "Every time a child is born, he brings a message from God that God has not yet despaired of man. He still has hope in the crown jewel of His creation." Bhagavan Himself this morning was telling us, "*Janthunaam nara janma durlabham*." Of all the 84 *lakhs* of life forms that are possible, human birth is the crowning piece of God's creation. Having received such a gift from the Divine, what is our role?

Why Do I Need to Transform?

A few years ago, while addressing devotees in Brindavan, Bhagavan said, "I do not want your *bhakti* (devotion). I want your transformation." What does Bhagavan mean when He says, "I do not want your *bhakti*?" **That devotion which does not lead to transformation is no devotion at all.** What He wants is that our love for God should goad us, should prompt us, and should nudge us to action.

One of the queries that one of our Sai Youth has expressed is: "Why should we spiritually transform ourselves?" Is it because Swami wants us to transform? Or, is it because we must transform? Or, is it because the world needs our transformation? Or, is it because the world is going to be damned if we do not transform? Why should we transform? That is a very good thought.

I wonder if you have ever seen a caterpillar walking on its little legs on a leaf. As a caterpillar evolves, it grows into a beautiful butterfly, which hops from flower to flower, colourful, giving joy to everyone around. Have we ever asked ourselves, "Why should a caterpillar give up its existence as a caterpillar and become a butterfly?" Because its destiny is to be a butterfly! It is manifesting its own inherent nature when it transforms into a butterfly.

When we ask for whose sake we should transform, then I would like to ask, if you are sleeping, for whose sake should you wake up? For your own sake! When the Lord is walking on earth, if we are sleeping, time will be lost and then if you wake up, what a misfortune?

We are living in an age, which is called the information age, but the need of the hour is transformation. Bhagavan distinguishes between the two by saying, when you keep asking others, "Who are you, who are you?", when you are concerned with the world, you are in the stage of information. When you ask yourself the question, "Who am I? Who am I? You have taken the first step in transformation."

The Most Ideal Form of Love

One very beautiful aspect of Swami's that I have experienced and perhaps many of you have also felt the same is this. When we come to Bhagavan, He accepts us as we are, with all the angularity of personality, with all the vagaries of our minds, and with all our shortcomings; He accepts us completely as we are. But, we have lots of problems in accepting Him. We lay out so many conditions...1, 2, 3, 4. "Swami, if you fulfill this,

then I will accept you.” But, Swami is unconditional in His Love. **He gives us what we ask, so that we begin to ask Him for what He has come to give.** That is, to awaken us to our own reality.

Who Are We?

Decades ago, one day, here in Prasanthi Mandir, as Bhagavan was passing by amidst the students, we observed that there was a little redness in Swami’s eyes. We were a little concerned but hopeful that it would go away. Every *Darshan* that Swami would walk by, we would peer into His eyes to see whether the so-called ‘ailment’ had disappeared. But days passed and nothing happened. In fact, there was an elderly doctor in the *Mandir* who also expressed his concern to Swami.

One evening, Swami called a few of us students who were sitting in the *Darshan* line into the interview room. He asked the question, “Who are you?” We were dumbfounded by that question. “Who are we?” What is the answer that Swami expects? Then **He said, “You and I are one.”** The *Vedas* declared, “*Shrunvanthu vishwe, Amruthasya Puthraha.*” That is, “Listen my dear child, you are not a mortal being. You are the child of immortality!” If this is too high for us to understand, the same thing can be put in much easier terms. We are the children of Sai. If Sai represents the immortal spirit, we as His children, also embody that immortal being.

Swami explained, “See, for the last so many days, you have been worrying about My eye. It has come in the natural course of events. It will go away, in the same way. For the last 60 years of My life, I have never even once used My Divine Powers for My sake. It has always been for the benefit of the students, for devotees. But because you are feeling so much anguish, I offer you a solution. As you and I are one, there is no difference between Me and you. This is not My body, this is yours! If you pray to Me to cure the ailment that has come upon this physical frame, I assure you that it will be cured.” It was a great revelation to us students, to understand that we are truly inheritors of Swami’s spiritual heritage. That is the heritage of every Sai Youth!

What do the letters of the word “SAI” stand for? Swami talks of S.A.I. “S” stands for Spiritual transformation; “A” stands for Association transformation; “I” stands for Individual transformation. And Swami expects each one of us to rise to His expectations.

What Does Bhagavan Expect from Us?

I recall another incident which happened when we were undergraduate students. Swami was explaining the difference between His expectations and the expectations of the parents. He said, “Your parents expect that you study well, get good marks and when the education is complete, get a good job, a good wife, have good children and accumulate a lot of property.

That is the expectation of your parents. My expectation is very different.”

What does Swami expect from us? He said, “Cultivate good thoughts; get a good name, that is My expectation from you!” **“The end of education is character,”** Bhagavan has often reminded us. If a Sai Youth does not have character, he loses his right to use the Name of Sai associated with himself. Swami Himself is the embodiment of perfection.

How to Build Our Character?

How do we build our character, which is so dear to Swami? He says, **“Sow a thought, reap an action. Sow an action, reap a tendency. Sow a tendency, reap a habit. Sow a habit, reap a character. Sow a character and reap your destiny.”**

When we are young, we are afflicted with so many thoughts. One day, the students were with Bhagavan in Trayee Brindavan, Bhagavan’s residence in Bangalore. The Trayee session, the interaction that students have with Bhagavan, was just over. He got up from His *jhoola* (swing). A student who was sitting somewhere in the front, knelt and got up to ask Swami something. Swami also went near him, “What is the matter?” The boy said, “Swami, I have got so many bad thoughts.”

Swami, I tell you, is the greatest psychologist, the greatest psychiatrist. He said, “*Bangaru*, my dear one, this is the season! If in the rainy season, you don’t get rain, when are you going to get the rains?” This is the season! Then He said, “Do you think that you are the one and sole individual who is afflicted with these thoughts?” He pointed to the entire student community and said, “All are in the same boat, it is only a question of degree. Only you are uttering it with your lips and others are keeping mum.”

Swami has said on other occasions, “When you get that wrong thought, you know it is wrong! You know it is not good for you. What should you do? The bare minimum that you should do is to see that it doesn’t translate into action.” Sow a thought, reap an action. Don’t allow the body to follow the thought. At the same time, when you get a good thought, we hesitate to translate into action for 101 different reasons. Maybe the time is not good, or other people may not come forward; so many reasons we have. When you get a good thought, immediately put it into action.

The Divine Master Knows When You Practise Love

One of the queries from a Sai Youth was, “What is the essence of Swami’s Message?” Of course, He Himself has chosen to speak on that. The essence of Swami’s Message is Love. And **the easiest way to experience love, to experience spiritual joy is service.** We may not be able to do many things in life. But in this age, something that you can certainly do is to serve anybody around you in need.

I will perhaps end with this small anecdote. There used to be a devotee in the *Ashram* at Brindavan, who had a mental illness. Bhagavan blessed the students with the privilege and the opportunity to take care of this devotee. It was, in fact, one of the most sought after service activities on campus.

There were a few students who would do this service in rotation. During the summer, when everybody else had gone to their respective home towns, there was one student who was caring for this devotee. Swami was also not in Brindavan. Very few teachers were around and there was this one student who was looking after this devotee's welfare. Even the washerman of the *Ashram* had disappeared. The student waited, one week, two weeks; and three weeks passed. There were 20 pairs of clothes collected over 20 days to be washed. This boy waited but the washerman was not around. He washed all 20 pairs of that devotee's clothes, unbeknownst to anyone in the hostel or in the *Ashram*.

A few weeks later, Swami returned to Brindavan, and suddenly He asked the Warden one day, "Bring the boys who take care of that devotee." When the boys arrived, Swami pointed to that boy and said, "I know that the washerman was away, and that you personally washed 20 pairs of clothes belonging to him." He then blessed the student and filled his hands with gifts.

What I am trying to emphasise is that every good little act you do, in the silence of the night, even if

nobody around knows it, God knows and is willing to bless you and recognise you for your effort.

The True Sathya Sai Student

Truly, it is a great privilege to be a Sai Youth. To be a Sai Youth is actually an aspiration. The other day I was interacting with some of our students and I asked them the question, "What is the difference between being a Sathya Sai University Student and a Sathya Sai Student?" I would like to share with you one student's reply: "To be a Sathya Sai University Student is to be a student of Sai for just a few years, during the tenure of your education. **To be a Sathya Sai Student is to be a Sai Student for life!**"

Brothers and sisters, let me assure you, if you can make this aspiration your heart's keenest desire, the Advent of the Lord amidst us will not have been in vain. Jai Sai Ram.

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Sri Sanjay Sahani is a Gold Medallist from Sri Sathya Sai University. He has served as the Warden of Sri Sathya Sai Hostel, Prasanthi Nilayam and is currently the Principal of the Brindavan Campus of Sri Sathya Sai University.



Question and Answer Session

Workshop Number 1

QUESTION 1: Is it wrong to be ambitious in our worldly careers or should we be more focused on our spiritual life and be like *sanyasis*? How is this important, different, or unique for women?

Mrs. Srinivasan: May I interpret this question to read, “Is there a conflict between material ambitions and spiritual pursuits,” and then take the second question first and say I do not believe there is a difference between men and women and both are faced with a similar issue.

Perhaps, the answer to this can be best illustrated with an example. Let us dream of building an enterprise in the technology arena, which is the most rapidly growing sector today. It is not enough to look at this aspiration merely from the point of view of accumulating personal wealth. We should see how this technology will make the world a better place to live in. If we can use wealth to make the world a better place, use it in service, in the upliftment of the less privileged, then the larger cause of humanity will have been served. Bill Gates is perhaps an example for this. The answer to this question can be summarised in Swami’s saying, “**Be in the world, but do not let the world be in you.**”

QUESTION 2A: I am having trouble finding a method for increasing detachment and I find it very hard to grasp that we should detach ourselves from our friends and family.

QUESTION 2B: How do we develop discrimination since Bhagavan spoke about discrimination this morning?

Mr. Sahani: I will take up the second question first. The one distinguishing feature between animal life and human life is what Swami calls *viveka* or discrimination. Therefore, it is very important that we understand its nuances. We can accumulate all kinds of knowledge but if we do not use discrimination it is of no value.

What is discrimination? Discrimination is to inquire, “Is it good or is it bad, is it right or is it wrong?” The inquiry itself will lead us to the truth. For Sai Youth, for Sai students, we have a very simple prescription to nourish discrimination. **If you are faced with a dilemma, ask yourself this question – will Swami approve of this or not?** Would Swami like me to do this or would He not like me to do this?

Again, Swami has said there are two kinds of discrimination. The first is called individual discrimination and the second is called fundamental discrimination. When I think of protecting my own

self-interests alone, I am indulging in **individual discrimination**. When I think of the welfare of one and all and subsume my individual welfare to societal welfare, then I have cultivated **fundamental discrimination**. In one of His beautiful stanzas, Swami says, and this leads me to the second question, “*Smara Nithya Anithyathwam* (discriminate between what is eternal and what is transient).”

The first question was how do we live in the world and yet be detached. In this context, let me give Swami’s own illustration. He takes the example of a school headmaster. The headmaster of the school looks into every small detail of the school’s welfare. During his tenure he takes care of the entire property of the school as if it is his own property, knowing fully well that one day he will retire, he will no longer be the school headmaster and he will have to leave everything behind.

On the other hand, when he is retiring and he is going back to his native place, he packs up everything in the house including the old sandals and the broken broom because he feels they belong to him. Swami says that we should be like the school headmaster. When he is in the hot seat, he takes care of everything, does everything that is required in the worldly sense but knows all the time that it is transient and one day he will have to leave everything behind. I think if we adopt this fundamental approach to life, detachment will come easily. Again let me give just a one-line definition. **What is attachment? It is detachment from God. What is detachment? It is attachment to God.** This is Swami’s definition.

QUESTION 3: Very often in the workplace it is very difficult to practise sweet and loving speech with everyone. The staff will only listen and get things done when management reprimands them using a harsh tone. How can this be overcome?

Mrs. Srinivasan: Let me begin by saying it is not necessarily true and then try to explain this further. If we can control our anger and really talk without any trace of ego, we can avoid what most often happens in the workplace. Prejudices mar our judgment. So, we should put aside anger, all prejudices, and look at the problem objectively. We can be soft-spoken, but the answer is not necessarily soft. We can present this in an objective yet firm manner. The choice of words is important and with the focus being to maintain the other person’s dignity and self-respect. If the choice of words is made without a trace of ego and without

any prejudices, then I think it is eminently possible to convey the message and get the work done without raising your voice.

QUESTION 4: What attitude does Swami expect us to have towards our non-devotee peers and others whose values are so distant from His teachings? When we are forced to deal with them in the world, how should we best interact with them and yet practise His teachings?

Mr. Sahani: First of all, I do not think any one of us has a right to either call anybody else or even to call ourselves devotees or non-devotees. It is for the Lord to acknowledge, not for us to publicise. I still remember when the U.S.S.R. was under a different set up, Swami used to say, “Communist – come you next.” And on last *Sivarathri* day, we had a wonderful spectacle of so many Russian devotees seated in this hall waving to Swami and who were acknowledged when Swami mentioned, “See in this hall so many Russian devotees have assembled.” **So it is for the Lord to say who His devotee is and who is not.**

But yes, there are some of us who recognise the Divine in this form of Bhagavan, there are others who may not. Some of them may be indifferent, and some of them may be even hostile. How should we relate to such people? Suppose there is a primary school student and there is a university graduate. The primary school student speaks something, which you know is not right. In your heart of hearts, with your knowledge, you know it is not right. You do not get annoyed with the primary school student. You understand that you were also once upon a time in the primary school. If that child is speaking the way he is speaking, he is speaking out of ignorance. There is a saying, “Every saint has a past and every sinner a future.” So let us not condemn anybody because the Lord would not disown anybody.

There is an anecdote in the life of Emperor Akbar. He used to have his favourite minister by the name of Birbal. One day the minister told his emperor, “My Lord, there is something which you can do which God cannot do.” Emperor Akbar was startled and asked, “What is it which I am capable of but that God is not!” Then, his minister said, “*Jahanpanah* (Emperor)! You can banish me from your kingdom, but the Lord cannot.” So let us not cultivate that ego, that here we are the Sai Youth and we are the only Sai Youth.

There are thousands of people, millions of people all over the world who may perhaps be dearer to the Lord because they follow Bhagavan’s teachings in their lives. Swami gives the following example. Suppose you dislike somebody because he doesn’t love Swami the way you love Him. Because of this difference, you dislike each other. How should you relate to this

person? Swami gives this example. Suppose you are walking on the street, and you walk in front of this gentleman’s house. Above the door, you find a picture of a deity hung and you know God is one. You see that image of the Lord and at that point of time you do not say, “This picture of the Lord is hanging over the doorstep of my enemy and therefore does not deserve my adoration or my respect.” Instead, you offer your salutations to the picture anyways because you see the Divine in the picture.

Swami says, “I am installed in every individual. See me in everyone.” In your heart of hearts, do not have any hatred, any ill will because the Lord is installed in every individual’s heart. This is my suggestion. This is another practical tip which I have found very useful. If you feel that your relations with any individual gets sour, and still you want to feel that he is Divine, he is as much a child of God as you are – **think that this individual is only wearing a mask and it is Swami who is actually behind that costume.** Try to imagine and see what happens. It can do wonders to you and the situation at hand.

QUESTION 5: As parents, how should we instill solid family values in our children in a world that apparently has no values?

Mrs. Srinivasan: The first and perhaps the best way to instill values is to personally practise them. It would be quite impossible to tell your children to speak the truth if they found you lying, or avoid bad habits if they found you were addicted to them. In the words of Swami, **keep practice and precept in line.**

Secondly, watch closely the company they keep. Swami often stresses the need to keep good company, for man is known by the company he keeps. As parents we can encourage them and guide them to keep good company. Thirdly, encourage a dialogue. We can’t really control or put a whole set of restrictions on children. What we can do is to instill in them a set of values and the ability to make good decisions, to instill in them and develop and nurture that power of discrimination. Finally, and most importantly, encourage them, encourage their devotion to God, for this is the best anchor in our lives and the only true check that works from within.

QUESTION 6: If you are alone through circumstance and cannot regularly have the benefit of good satsang, what is the best advice to help us in our spiritual progress?

Mr. Sahani: What is *satsang*? ‘*Sath*’ means the eternal principle and ‘*Sang*’ means to be in the company of, to be associated with it. So *satsang* is actually not the company of Mr. X or Mrs. Y. ***Satsang* is to be in the proximity of the Lord.** You may have a friend. When



he is talking to you about Swami, you are in *satsang*. When he is talking to you about some worldly affair, you cannot call it *satsang*. So the content of the association is important, rather than any individual.

Also, the questioner says, “I am alone.” When we have discovered Swami why should we ever feel that we are alone? Swami gives an example. Suppose you are coming from Bangalore to Prasanthi Nilayam, and as you near Prasanthi Nilayam, you say Prasanthi Nilayam has come. Actually Prasanthi Nilayam has not come, you have arrived at Prasanthi Nilayam. If you think God is 10 miles away from you, He is 10 miles away from you. If you think God is in you, around you, above you, below you – He is verily with you.

Just to give you an instance from personal experience. One day when Bhagavan was here in Prasanthi Nilayam, a colleague of mine came to me and said that his wife was in the hospital and was in a coma. He asked if we could inform Swami. He said, “Swami is in Prasanthi Nilayam and we are in Bangalore. How do we reach out to Swami?” I said, “First, immediately send a telegram to Bhagavan.” And this happened around 12:15 in the afternoon. Around 12:40 or 12:45 when I reached my room in the hostel, the phone rang. I picked up the phone. The faculty member was on the other side. He said, “I have just returned from the post office. As you suggested I sent a telegram to Swami praying for Swami’s Grace. I reached home and as I entered the home the phone rang. My brother-in-law rang up from the hospital to say that my wife had come out of coma.” I said, “Swami! You are sitting in Prasanthi Nilayam, but You are so very, very much with us, we feel You are with us.” When you feel that God is with you, He is definitely with you.

There are certain other ways in which we can feel Swami’s Presence. Also, we need not wait for distressful situations. For example, Swami says, “There is no difference between My word and Me.” There is a volume of Sai literature that has been published. When you read Swami’s words, when you read people’s experiences with Swami, you are transported to the Presence of Swami. There is another practice our students have cultivated. They have a fascination for collecting photographs of Bhagavan. I do not know how many of you have practised it. Just take out your photo album, and

keep looking at Swami’s beautiful portraits captured in photographs. I tell you, you will have a wonderful *Darshan*! You will not realise how time flies! When we are here, we hear a number of devotional songs, *bhajans*. No matter which part of the world you are in, if you take some cassettes and listen to them on your own personal audio system, it will transport you to where Swami is. Swami is everywhere, but our mind will be transported to His Presence.

Today, we also have Radio Sai, which is doing wonderful work transmitting Swami’s Message to every nook and corner of the world. You can tune into Radio Sai and receive the wonderful vibrations. In fact, in the Poornachandra Auditorium they have put up a wonderful exhibition that is worth visiting. I hope during your stay here, you will have a chance to see it. So there are any number of ways in which we can tune in to the Divine. It is our choice.

QUESTION 7: How is it possible to keep our faith in Swami intact when things go seriously wrong in our lives?

Mrs. Srinivasan: This is best answered in Swami’s own words, when He says, “**I expect those devoted to me to treat joy, grief and loss with equal fortitude.**” He will never give up on those who are attached to Him. Trials and tribulations test our inner strength; they build our moral fibre and bring us even closer to God.