

With humility and love, I offer myself at the divine lotus feet of our Lord, Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba.

Distinguished guests, brothers and sisters,

Sai Ram!

A Joyous and loving welcome to all of you!

Fellow spiritual aspirants, fellow good-willed, good-hearted, selfless servants of our Lord, Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba, who resides in the hearts of everyone of us, fellow workers in the Sri Sathya Sai Organization, fellow devotees of our beloved, our dearest, sweetest Swami,

Welcome to the 9<sup>th</sup> World Conference of the International Sri Sathya Sai Organization. 9 is an auspicious number, 9 is an auspicious time. Most auspicious of all are the blessings that our beloved Swami has given that we proceed with this conference, with this program, at this time, with all of you.

Ultimately, the common purpose of the Sai Pre-World Conferences, this Sai World Conference, and all Sai Conferences —actually the purpose of human life— is to spiritually realize ourselves and inspire selfless love in our brothers and sisters.

I would share with you the very dramatic role that Swami had in the conception and unfolding of the series of Pre-World Conferences all over the world, which culminated in this 9<sup>th</sup> World Conference.

As you know, beginning in February of this year, we conducted Pre-World Conferences in Japan, Argentina, Mexico, Italy, Russia, Germany, Florida, USA, UK, Malaysia, Australia, South Africa, Canada, Lagos, and Mauritius. Almost six years ago, when the Prasanthi Council was appointed by Swami, the four members had a meeting with Him in Brindavan.

At that time, Swami gave general instructions and concluded by giving us His blessing to proceed with the work of the Prasanthi Council. Just prior to the conclusion of the meeting, Swami suddenly, much to our surprise, said to us, “I am going to send you all over the world to bring my message to the people everywhere.” Over the years, I had forgotten these words, and it appears that my fellow Prasanthi Council members also forgot.

Suddenly, after the last Birthday, I felt that we needed to go among the people to meet them in order to better understand their experience and their needs.

As the Zone Chairs and Central Coordinators who are here will remember, after I presented the program “Sai Ideal Human Life, Sai Ideal Spiritual Organization”, we established 10 official Pre-World Conference dates in the countries representing the 10 zones. Later, 4 more Pre-World Conferences were added.

All of us who took part in this unprecedented series of very uplifting events will remember the degree of participation and fulfillment that was experienced by most of those who attended.

Only recently, my fellow Prasanthi Council Member Bill Harvey reminded me that this series of Pre-World Conferences constituted the fulfillment of Swami’s pronouncement when the Prasanthi Council was conceived. I repeat. Swami had suddenly said to us: “You will go all over the world and bring My message to the people everywhere.” We forgot, but His Divine Will will be done. Hence, the Pre-World Conferences. The ways of the Lord are mysterious indeed! His Will will always prevail.

The common purpose of all that we do as His devotees is to awaken us from our slumber, this unconsciousness, this shallowness, this unholy sleep, this belief that we are these bodies and minds, this failure to recognize that we are essentially divine beings.

In this world conference, we will have an opportunity to derive inspiration that will be moving for each of us as spiritual aspirants. We can derive insight that will lead to spiritual progress in our individual lives and in our organization. There is no doubt, no doubt whatsoever: We will achieve spiritual progress. It has been ordained.

The time and the number of opportunities that we have in these lives and in this world is finite, not infinite. I trust you understand this. Let us awaken now, not later! Now is the time to look at ourselves as an organization, see ourselves as we are, and aspire to become what we could be, what we *should* be. Now is the time for collective self-inquiry. Who are we, from whence have we come, and where are we going?

Now is the time —if not now, then when?

What is the task at hand?

Ultimately, the goal is that everyone, all people in the world, light the lamp of love in their own hearts and realize our common divine heritage. Each of us must begin with ourselves and realize our common divine heritage. Each of us must begin with ourselves, by diligently seeking to bring light to the dark area in our lives and order to our meandering ways.

Self-inquiry is essential to a spiritual aspirant. It is also essential to our organization. We need collective self-inquiry as a spiritual organization that bears the divine name of Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba. We need to ask ourselves what we are doing, planning, aspiring to accomplish. Are our deeds, plans, and aspirations worthwhile endeavors for the spiritual organization that bears the divine name of our Lord, Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba?

We need to ask ourselves in our collective inquiry: What is real and worthwhile now and forevermore — as opposed to what is fleeting frivolous, and irrelevant?

One very important aspect of this World Conference is to take inventory of our state of being and how we represent ourselves. There is often a disparity between our current state of affairs in terms of our spiritual development and our worldly actions.

Our service activities, our accomplishments in health care, education, and other areas are sometimes exaggerated. Sometimes, there is an incongruity between our talk and our deeds. Let us become cognizant of this incongruity and address it. Let us not become grandiose and lull ourselves into a state of complacency. We are doing much good work! Let us report is accurately, faithfully.

A handful of devotees spending only a paltry sum but who are inspired from within, who act with wisdom and love, can do big things. They can do much more than a large group of people who spend millions in a presumptuous and grandiose display that is without divine wisdom and without love!

From a paradigm of real and deep, wise and loving, sincere and selfless come great events, deeds, and works. Mahatma Gandhi marched to the sea and made salt. The people were inspired, and the oppressors of the people took notice. He did not spend a lot of money, but his deed was noble and monumental and had last effect.

Let us learn from this. Let us not operate from a paradigm of presumption and ego, with loud noise, glaring display, nothing that inspires, but much that alienates the sensitivities. We are not seeking popular appeal or approval. We do not seek what will please all people. Rather, we seek the common good of the people.

Who is to decide what is the common good? The answer, of course, is simple. Every man and woman has access to knowledge of the common good of all. That knowledge of the common good of all patiently awaits acknowledgement from each and every member of the human race. When you acknowledge yourself, your true self, you also acknowledge the wisdom of all ages, divine wisdom and selfless love. You acknowledge the love and wisdom of our beloved Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba, Lord of Lords, *Avatar* of the *Kali Yuga*.

Listen, and you will have knowledge of the common good. Listen to your heart!

Therefore, we do not seek to say or do that which will please all the people all the time. Rather, we seek to say and do that which reflects the highest wisdom, accomplishes the greatest good, and inspires love in our brothers and sisters. Se seek to act with divine inspiration as instruments of divine will.

Swami says: Be, do, tell. But we often succumb to the temptation to show and tell instead of be-do-tell. We talk before we have done and before we become. That is hypocrisy.

First and foremost, we must become exemplars and not bad examples.

Then, we must do. Act from inner instruction of conscience, not for recognition or selfish gain.

Then, we are qualified to tell, to share our spiritual experiences with the world, to speak and at based on what we have understood and experienced from the depths of our own hearts.

To do otherwise is hypocritical, the antithesis of spirituality.

With regard to do and tell, first we become selfless, then we do selfless work, *nishkarma karma yoga*, then we will tell as the result of the inquiries and acknowledgement that we will receive. People will respond to our good works. Their hearts will respond to our hearts, which will be demonstrated in our selfless work and our selfless love. We will *Be*, we will *Do*, and we will righteously *Tell*.

As opposed to show and tell. Here, we make an ostentatious display. We present ourselves as something we are not or more than we are.

Some people will be impressed; others will be repelled. Those who have wisdom and depth will be repelled that we represent ourselves as someone with a spiritual orientation, even though we are ostentatiously displaying something in an egoistic manner. Even the people who subscribe to what we are showing, who applaud our efforts, even that will be shallow and short-lived.

Let us Be-Do-Tell. Not show and tell. Let us follow Swami's instructions. Let us become, let us accomplish; then, when inquiries come to us, we will respond faithfully and appropriately.

By practicing His teachings, we are transformed, and others are inspired to seek their own transformation. We practice the divine message, and it illuminates the world.

The most important work of the Sai Organization is that all of us become living exemplars of His message. Has He not said to us, "Your lives are My message."

Let's be real. Let's join together in a common effort to uplift the quality of this organization so that it is genuine and is worthy of bearing the divine name of Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba.

To the extent that we go deep into our hearts and seek to do His work, good ideas will come forth. They will not be selfish or foolish. They will be wise and constructive, tempered with Sai Love from the depths of our hearts. Let it be thus! For this Conference or any assembly to be worthy of bearing the divine name of Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba, it must be thus.

With Swami's grace, this 9<sup>th</sup> World Conference of the International Sri Sathya Sai Organization will not be an occasion where there will be more shallow talk, words that fade away, ideas and feelings that excite and depress, that rise and fall. Instead, let us pray that Swami will uplift us and enable all of us to rise to the occasion.

We will rise, not fall; we will continue to rise to the full potential of our wisdom and our love.

In conclusion, I pray that Swami will open our minds, fill our hearts, and make all of us very very very loving, wise, and productive. May we all experience a very happy and blessed Sri Sathya Sai 9<sup>th</sup> World Conference.

Jai Sai Ram