



God, Nature and Man

For over 60 years, Sri Sathya Sai Baba has discoursed on spirituality, emphasising the divinity of man and the underlying unity of all things in the Universe. The intricate inter-dependency between the physical world of Nature, the realm of the spirit and the Divine Creator is exquisitely revealed.

The author has compiled the wisdom from these discourses into this single volume that explains the mysteries of creation, the evolution of the human spirit, the purpose of being and the relationship of all things to God.

Through the marvellous insights and revelations of Sai Baba, we can understand our relationship with the material Universe and the purpose underlying all Creation.

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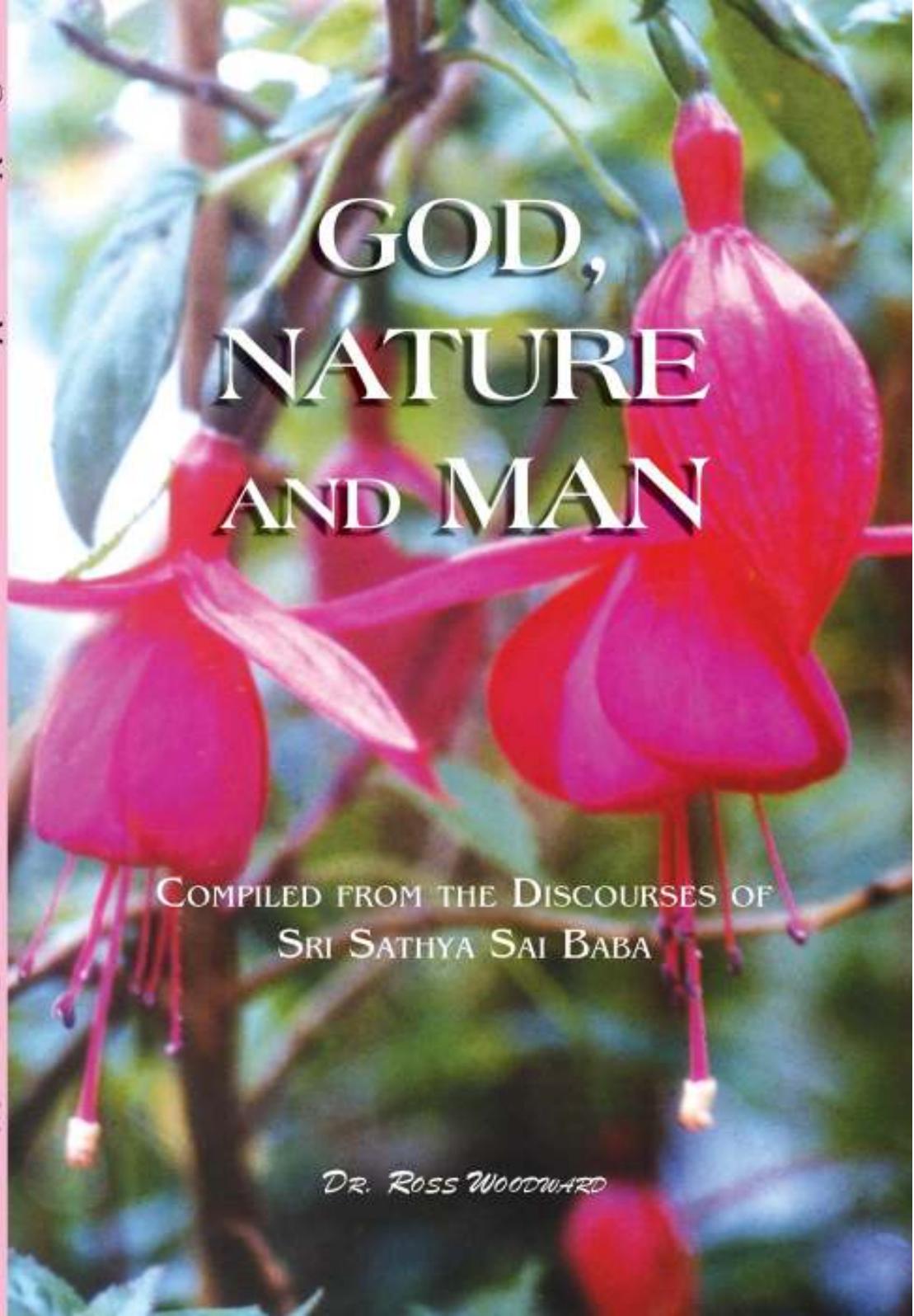
GOD, NATURE AND MAN

DR ROSS WOODWARD

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COMPILED FROM THE DISCOURSES OF
SRI SATHYA SAI BABA

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DEDICATION

This book is dedicated to my earthly father and mother, Roy and Dorothy, who lit the flame that brought the light of God into my life as well as showing me the beauty and majesty of Nature.

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PROLOGUE

By Howard Murphet, author of “Man of Miracles” and many more spiritual books. Howard was aged 97 years when he listened to this book from a recorded tape because of dimming eyesight. He spoke the following words and agreed they should be placed at the front of this book - ‘God, Nature and Man’.

“Understanding that everything is God is a big step for most people, who don’t even believe in God, or think of God, as He is taught in the churches and the temples. We mustn’t expect people to understand it who have not gone that far. You can lead them a bit along the path, but they have to be well along the path before they accept the fact that we are God and nothing but God. That makes us the One, we all have the one God within us. That is what in India they call the Atma or the Atman, and we in the west call the Soul. It is all part of God. The part equals the whole, that’s the thing that always intrigues me, you can’t apply theoretical geometry to theorems where the part can never equal the whole. In Divine geometry the part equals the whole. We are all part of God, but we are all the whole of God once we reach enlightenment. There is no difference then; Swami says there is no difference between you and God. Potentially there is no difference, once we reach enlightenment, we know we are God. We know it now but only when the mind is stilled. When you know it deep in your heart, you live that way entirely.

I was given that complete experience, only for a minute or two perhaps, of feeling the peace that I have never felt before, the peace of those who live in the Eternal as one. I felt that

peace and it’s the peace of God, of which you have never had an experience until you’ve experienced it. You can never think what it is like. I had that, and then I had this joy or bliss coming up through it. That went on for a while, then finally, I knew, not with my mind, I experienced being one with all life. That makes you a different person. It was Swami’s grace to show me what the goal of our lives is and therefore to keep working for it.

You’ve given it as a sermon, a long beautiful sermon. “Man of Miracles” puts it in a way that here is a great miracle man and He is God. But it doesn’t say things like we are all God or you are God. In one place you talk about the amoebae and how it is suffering because of the volcanoes and the mountains and the lava and so on. I thought there, actually, that God is in the fire, in the mountains, as well as in the amoebae. God in one thing can certainly attack God in another. A fire can attack us but God is in the fire, God is in everything. Really, God is in the rock, in the fire, in the stone, in everything.

You can say that all of nature is God and all that is real in man is God. The truth is that there is only one being - God. Therefore your being, my being, everybody’s being is God. We take our being from God and there is only one source of consciousness - God. The one source of real joy is God.

God divided Himself into many, many, many parts. That’s a big step. Spiritually it’s a big step to accept that God divided Himself to experience Himself.

I admire your book very much, but I am just telling you that you won’t get much of an audience until the beginning of the

Golden Age. The Ascended Masters say the beginning of the Golden Age will be between 2011 and 2012 and then it's going to develop slowly towards 2020 when Swami said it would be here. It's a wonderful thought that it is on its way like that.

You want to make devotees from your book if you can, not write it for devotees. There would be people who would buy it; there may be those who are not ready for it and they would put it aside for a time. I know a man who bought "Man of Miracles" and then had it on the shelf for ten years and now he is one of the best devotees of Swami.

I reckon it is a very fine book, don't give it up. It expresses a truth. It's like a parson getting up on the floor and preaching a sermon that nobody understands. It's a gradual thing that you must come to. I've come to it, you've come to it and Ron's come to it and many other people have come to it, but not a great many.

Swami himself did not, in my experience, teach us at to begin with that God is within. He did it in a very good way. It was way back, maybe soon after I came to Him, in 1965 or 1966 and I was there at the ashram in Brindavan. There used to be a little garden when you went in that main big gate and you turned to your left. Where the lotus shaped mandir is now, there was a big two storey old house and the door of His interview room opened onto the garden from a semi-circular verandah. There were a few men, maybe a dozen, waiting for Swami to come out; expecting Him at any minute to come through the door and cross over the semi-circular verandah with its concrete floor. So Swami came out. There was a young man about 18 or 19, an Indian. He walked up and stood in front of Swami and

said "Are you God?" Swami looked very calmly at him and said "You are God". Then He gave us a marvellous lecture that I will never forget, just the group of us there gathered around, He said: "You see, all of you come with the God within. You are all avatars but you don't remember it, you are not conscious of it. But He is there, God is there within you and you are all avatars." I thought that this is interesting, so then He said: "Those who come and are aware of God being within them and they are aware they are all God, except the body they are wearing, that is an avatar. That's what all the avatars have been and I am one of those. You are all avatars except that you have forgotten." So that made me understand what an avatar meant. He brought it to the level of all of us.

It was a marvellous thing to hear. There were other people at Brindavan but He just chose those few because they were the ones in the garden waiting for Him. He doesn't say "there are not many here, I'll tell you that later", He just told those who were there, the truth. He told us this: "You are here on earth to come to the understanding, not only that, to come to the memory of who you really are; that you are avatars of God. You and every individual are the same. There is nobody born without God within them. So in that sense you are all avatars but you are unaware".

I thought it was a wonderful lesson that led me to the understanding, or the beginning of the understanding; He taught me a lot more later. That was the beginning of my understanding of what an avatar is and the wonderful thought that we are all related to each other, but we just don't remember it. That to me was a very good way of putting it. I probably wouldn't have believed in avatars, I wasn't brought up to think of avatars at all.

We have no concept of what Swami really is, so great He is. Why would He come three times if it wasn't a big job to do, three incarnations? Why would He take on the job of raising the consciousness of mankind from the third dimension to the fifth? Greater than any other avatar that ever lived. Three incarnations, three bodies. It's phenomenal, it has never happened before in the whole history of the world.

I said to Swami, probably in the first year or two I was there in the sixties, as he was coming across the yard. I met Him and started talking to Him and I said "Swami, your scriptures, the Shastras, say that the Avatars Rama and Krishna were incarnations of Vishnu, that is, the aspect of God concerned with maintenance. And they tell me that you are an incarnation of Shiva. Is that right?" He looked at me and He said "Don't forget, there is only One God." And He walked off. That's good enough for me."

Howard Murphet
Hazelbrook
Australia
July 2004

FOREWORD

It gives me great pleasure to pen these few words of introduction to "God, Nature and Man" by Dr Ross Woodward, an Australian environmental scientist whose friendship over the years I truly value.

I also feel blessed to be involved because I hold the teachings of Sathya Sai Baba in the highest regard and consider His words and example to be the 'wisdom light' for these challenging times.

Who is Sathya Sai Baba, this speaker and writer of profound truths?

He was born in a remote village in southern India in 1926 to devout spiritual parents and from an early age demonstrated a superior wisdom and intelligence saturated with a deep compassion for others. With little formal education, even as a teenager He was sought after by pundits, spiritual seekers, politicians, businessmen and those suffering from incurable ailments. His teachings unify and clarify the essence of all religions while his humanitarian works in education, health and the provision of drinking water to millions set an example for the world to follow.

The present collection of extracts from the talks and writings of Sathya Sai Baba lead the reader powerfully and steadily into a profound sense of unity with all of creation. In so doing, we are inspired to begin anew that age-old inward journey towards knowing who we truly are. We come to see that the incessant search for pleasure and joy via the five senses of the

body and the imaginings of the mind is really a search for oneself – for, as Henry Thoreau once said, “What we are looking for is what is looking.”

Early in the collection, Sai Baba reminds us of nature’s role in teaching us that everything is a manifestation of the one omnipresent energy, variously referred to throughout as Brahman, God, Atma or Self. He says:

“Nature’s role is to help man, the crowning achievement of the evolutionary process, to realise the Divinity immanent in Creation. Just as there is oil in the sesame seed, butter in milk, fragrance in the flower, tasty juice in the fruit, fire in wood, there is Divinity in this vast universe. The Divine is all-pervasive and is present in every being.”

Of course, some of this has been said before, not only by saints and sages of yore, but also scientists of the highest ilk such as the late Albert Einstein who wrote:

“A human being is a part of the whole, called by us the ‘Universe’, a part limited in time and space. He experiences himself, his thoughts and feelings as something separated from the rest, a kind of optical delusion of his consciousness. This delusion is a kind of prison for us, restricting us to our personal desires and to affection for a few persons nearest to us. Our task must be to free ourselves from this prison by widening our circle of compassion to embrace all living creatures and the whole of nature in its beauty – the striving for such an achievement is itself part of the liberation and a foundation for inner security.”

In similar vein, although with even deeper reverence, the

present-day Canadian geneticist and well-known international communicator on environmental and societal issues, David Suzuki, has this to say:

“Throughout the history of our species, human beings have understood that we are a part of nature, in which everything is connected to everything else and nothing exists in isolation. The way we see the world shapes the way we treat it. If a mountain is a deity, not a pile of ore; if a river is one of the veins of the land, not potential irrigation water; if a forest is a sacred grove, not timber; if other species are our biological kin, not resources; or if the planet is our mother, not an opportunity – then we will treat each one with respect. That is the challenge, to look at the world from a different perspective.”

Einstein and Suzuki are both saying that we need to re-establish our sense of unity with and gratitude towards nature. Only then, they insist, can we begin to get a sense of our own beauty and grandeur.

These two scientists are both compelling figures and what they say rings true. But neither they nor others have left us with a blueprint for the radical shift in world consciousness required to change direction towards living in complete harmony with nature. What we need is a saving treatise from someone who is both scientist and seer, humanitarian and visionary, someone whose words and example can guide a lost and suffering humanity towards a safe and liberating future. Such a one is, I believe, found in the form of Sathya Sai Baba of Puttaparthi, India.

In Dr Woodward’s selection and arrangement of Sai Baba’s words, we have in fact the story of evolution, both physical and

spiritual, unfolding one within the other. Here we have no contradiction between science and spirituality because all is the one Divine energy. Sai Baba says:

“There is nothing in the world that is not a manifestation of God. There is not an atom in the universe that is not permeated by the Divine.... Every being and every object in the world is Divine energy. It cannot be destroyed, but it can be changed from one form of energy to another.... This indestructible character is Divine.”

How scientific and spiritual at the same time! Even these few words alone, if believed and practised by just a few, are enough to change the course of history. And it is practice that Sai Baba urges us towards – as witnessed by his own living example – and not just the studying of spiritual truths. Midway through ‘God, Nature and Man’ Sai Baba admonishes each one of us and then sets the challenge:

“He (Man) has the glorious chance of visualising his identity with the Mystery that is manifested as this Universe, but he is so sunk in ignorance that he behaves as though he is an animal like the rest and wallows in grief and vice. It is as if fire has forgotten its capacity to burn, or water its nature to wet. Man has forgotten his nature to reach out into Godhead, his capacity to seek and secure the Truth of the Universe of which he is a part, his capacity to train himself by virtue, justice, love and sympathy to escape from the particular to the universal. He can attain the consummation and climax of merging with the Unchanging that is behind all this change.”

What a great blessing, although somewhat uncomfortable at times, to be reminded that we are kings and queens who have gone to ‘sleep’, forgetting who we truly are. Following in the wake of such prolonged ignorance comes the inevitable serious consequences:

“The lovely petals of the rose, dancing in the breeze, and spreading fragrance around, are blown to the ground by a sudden gust of wind! Man too is floored at the height of his triumph by the stroke of some unseen hand. Man is aghast at the consequences that he experiences; he is unaware of the cause, for he has no inclination to seek it. The cause is the fascination for sense objects and the trail of activity that it involves.”

So there we have it: look within and not without, for the love and joy that we so earnestly seek. If we ignore this age-old advice, presented here so cogently, we are reminded by Sai Baba that we will experience dire consequences, both individually and for the planet as a whole. Follow it and we find a more lasting happiness and the capacity to be custodians of a treasured estate.

I am sure that you will enjoy the transformational journey to be set in motion by your reading ‘God, Nature and Man’. Welcome, Fellow Seeker, the opportunity lies before us to discover riches beyond compare.

Dr Ron Farmer
Clinical Psychologist
Brindavan
India
2 June 2005

1

God - in the Beginning

For millennia, humans have pondered the vastness of the Universe and the underlying foundation of all Creation. The compilation begins with an explanation of the basis of the phenomenal universe and all that has followed. Sai Baba expounds on the will, the reason and the why of creation, and the role that God has created for Himself and all He manifested.

It is through the words and descriptions of Sai Baba that the theories of science, the beliefs of religions and the speculation of man are married into a lucid explanation of creation and evolution.

In the Beginning...

The vast Cosmos, with its myriad animate and inanimate objects, having countless names and forms, is a manifestation of Brahman. It has emanated from Brahman; it is sustained by it and dissolves in it. When the unmanifest Brahman manifests itself, it is cognisable as Being-Awareness-Bliss. 'Being' indicates that It is self-existing with no other basis than Itself. 'Awareness' indicates the awareness of Its self-existence as a self-illuminating consciousness. 'Bliss' is the expression of that awareness. What is the reason for

Brahmam manifesting itself? It is for making known its infinite potencies by Self-evolution. ¹

‘Verily, all that is, is Brahmam’. The truth about the vast Universe of moving and motionless objects is contained in this single pronouncement. There is nothing in the Cosmos without Brahmam. Divinity is latent in everything, like fire in wood and oil in sesame. Hence there is nothing in the world that is not permeated by the Divine. The process of creation, survival and dissolution occur according to the injunctions of the Divine. Whether man believes it or not, the wheel of creation is revolving according to the dictates of the Divine. God is the author of the wheel of time. ²

The Cosmos has one Source, one Support, one End. That is an eternal entity, self sufficient, totally luminous. The Chandogya Upanishad reveals that though we deal with different numbers as three, five, seven, nine, eleven, thirteen, fifteen, seventeen, nineteen and twenty-one, there is only One in reality, the Brahman. Multiplicity is how the One appears when It assumes Name and Form. Then It becomes the Creation, the Flux, the Cosmos, the Universe. God was alone before the Cosmos appeared. He projects, He protects, He dissolves and draws it into Himself. This is the Truth. ³

He has been manifesting Himself as all this. He has willed to become all this. In every thing, He, the highest Truth, is immanent. In the absence of this highest Truth, nothing can exist. Each one is sustained by the all-comprehensive Reality. ⁴

The Vedas have declared: “I am one, I shall become many.” It is the One that has become the many. This is the unity that

underlies the diversity. ⁵

The created Universe is called Nature. Prior to the Manifestation, there was darkness; after the Manifestation, there was light. The darkness was the *thamasic* (quality of inaction, inertia) state, when there was no activity. The light was the *rajasic* (quality of agitation, activity) state, when with movement and agitation, uplift and downfall alternated. The ‘five elements’ were then formed, and in time attained comparative quiet. That was the *sathwic* (quality of serenity) state, when Divinity shone through them. ⁶

When the urge to become, namely delusion, impels Brahmam to project Itself, It appears as God when associated with the serenity characteristic, as man and living beings when associated with the activity characteristic, and as Nature when associated with the inertia characteristic. Brahmam is the characteristic of all three, just as the rope is the basis of the snake for which it is mistaken. Delusion is the mirror in which Brahmam is reflected as the Personalised God, man and Nature. We are able to know Brahmam through Nature, which is saturated with it or identifiable with it. ⁷

Energy is Brahman and Brahman is energy. The Cosmos is filled with energy. All that you see, all that you do is energy. You observe an object. You see an individual. Both the object and the individual are manifestations of energy.

What the scientists call matter is energy alone. An object appears as matter, but it turns into energy later on. Likewise, one may appear to you as an individual, but even he becomes

energy in due course. Hence, all the forms and names you see are manifestations of energy.

What is this energy? It is something that you cannot see or hear or conceive in the mind. Energy is energy alone. It is Divine. Every physical object has a base. There is electrical energy in man. Likewise, there is radiation energy in man. There must be a basis for all these energies. You see that in the world every object is based on some other object. God is the base for all the energies in the Cosmos.⁸

God

The word 'God' is the indication that there is God. If there was no God, the word 'God' would not have originated and gained currency. You may see God or you may not, but the word is proof that there is God.⁹

In the word 'God', you have three letters: G, O, D. 'G' refers to 'generation' (or Creation). 'O' refers to 'organisation' (that is, keeping Creation going). 'D' stands for 'destruction'. 'God' combines the three aspects of generation, organisation and destruction. When people refer to God, they (Hindus) regard Brahma, Vishnu and Siva as each a God. God is the one who wields authority over all the three.¹⁰

When you see the spark of a fire, you can infer the nature of fire. If you know the nature of a drop of water, you can understand the nature of the Ganges. Likewise, if you understand the nature of the atom, you can understand

the nature of the entire Cosmos. Recognising this truth, the Upanishads declared: "The Divine is subtler than the atom and vaster than the vastest."¹¹

There is no need to exhaust yourselves in the search for the Lord; He is there like butter in milk, like the chicken in the egg, immanent in every atom of Creation. He does not come from somewhere or go somewhere else. He is there, here, everywhere. From the atom to the great, from the microcosm to the macrocosm, He is everything.¹²

The macrocosmos and the microcosmos - the Universal and the individual - all arise from the one Truth. They are manifestations and emergent of that Truth, which is not affected by either. That Truth is known as Brahman. When this unmodifiable, transcendent and immanent Brahman, instead of just 'being', decides on 'becoming', It is best designated as 'God', 'Iswara' or 'Almighty'. The Divine ground of everything is the spiritual Absolute, called Supreme Absolute Self. It is also the ground, the base, the core, the reality of man.¹³

Some people ask, "How are we to believe in God when we have no notion of His form?" This is sheer folly. Here is a flower. It has a form, but the fragrance emanating from it has no form. Can you deny the reality of the fragrance because it has no form? Fragrance has a form, but that form is manifested in the flower.¹⁴

Who can affirm that God is this or that? Who can affirm

that God is not of this form or with this attribute? Each one can acquire from the vast expanse of the ocean only as much as can be contained in the vessel he carries to its shore. From that quantity, they can grasp but little of that immensity.

Each religion defines God within the limits it demarcates and then claims to have grasped Him. Like the seven blind men who spoke of the elephant as a pillar, a fan, a rope or a wall, because they contacted but a part and could not comprehend the entire animal, so too, religions speak of a part and assert that its vision is full and total.

Each religion forgets that God is all forms and all names, all attributes and all assertions. The Religion of Humanity is the sum and substance of all these partial faiths; for there is only one religion and that is the religion of Love. The various limbs of the elephant that seemed separate and distinct to the eye-less seekers of its truth were all fostered and activated by one single stream of blood; the various religions and faiths that feel separate and distinct are all fostered by one single stream of Love. ¹⁵

In the great drama of cosmic life, the cosmic director, God, is also an actor. The cosmic play is governed by certain rules and regulations. Because He is the Almighty, God cannot behave in an arbitrary manner. His actions have to be in accordance with His role in the cosmic play. There are certain rules as to how one should act according to the time, the place and the circumstances. He cannot behave according to His whims just because He is all-powerful. For instance, the officer who lays down the rules for controlling traffic cannot

disobey them on the ground that he is their author. Likewise, the Creator has to conform to the rules laid down by Him for Creation. ¹⁶

2

The Creation

In these selections, we learn how from the unique being, called Brahman or God, all of creation arose. The logical argument, then, is that God is contained in all of Creation. Despite the beauty, magnificence and grandeur of the Cosmos, we humans are unable to grasp our own origins, denying what is patent. The so-called 'scientific' view prevails because humans prefer to believe those who claim to define and measure truth by the senses instead of relying on their own intuitive wisdom.

The Creator

The Cosmos manifested through the will of God, Who is the Universal Absolute. It arose from the Absolute only, since there was then, only One, just as even now there is only One, in spite of all this seeming variety. That will which emanated from the Absolute persuaded us to see and experience many; that is all that has happened. The One Reality is still the One; it has not undergone any change. We have super-imposed on the One, the illusion of the many!

God, therefore, is the material cause as well as the instrumental cause, the gold and the goldsmith, the potter and the clay, the seed as well as the tree. He says in the Gita, 'I

am the seed of all the elements and all beings'. Nature is His body; the Cosmos is His will; the Vedas are His breath. ¹

"The One chose to become the many." There are three factors involved in this. For making a pot, a potter is the cause (the instrument for its making). The potter is the cause and the pot is the effect. The base for the production of the pot is clay. The pot may break but the clay remains as such. Out of the permanent substance, clay, the potter makes a pot. The fate of the pot does not affect the potter. The clay in the pot also remains as such. The analogy applies equally to gold, the goldsmith, and the jewels made from gold.

On the same analogy, God is the changeless creator who creates the innumerable objects in Creation, which are subject to changes in names and forms. The relations between the three entities involved should be properly understood. The potter cannot make a pot without clay. No pot can be made if there is clay alone but no potter. Both potter and clay are necessary for making a pot. The Creator is the instrumental cause of Creation. ²

The Cosmos is a magnificent wonder, a source of continuous amazement. It cannot but impress one as a supreme marvel, whoever he may be. When an object has to be made, we know we need one who has the skill and the intelligence, the power. Without a maker nothing can be made. Therefore how do these objects that are visible to us - the Sun, the Moon, the stars, the constellations, their brilliance, their movements - move and behave as they do without a Designer, a Maker, a Master? Can these yield to any ordinary power? No. Intelligent people

can easily infer, observing the objects designed and made having such mighty capabilities, how immeasurable must be the power of the Maker Himself.

Look at the marvellous variety in Creation. No one thing is the same as another; no one person resembles another. This can only be the sport of the phenomenon with limitless glory, God. Anyone can understand that no lesser power could be the source. On the basis of the mystery that inheres in Creation, one can easily infer the Almighty Power that has created it. Those who are incapable of unravelling the mystery of the created can never unravel the nature of the Creator. Creation or the Cosmos is the manifestation of the Will latent in Brahman. All this is God's will or plan.³

What is the evidence for determining the Divine nature of the Cosmos? Students, puffed up with a little knowledge, ask how any one can believe in the Divine nature of the Universe when it is not demonstrable. Such persons are forgetting their own inherent Divine nature. Does the misguided person base all his knowledge on the objective, physical form of what he calls the 'mind'? If it has no physical shape, how does he 'see' his mind? One says, "I am happy." What is the physical form of 'happiness'? To seek direct physical evidence for everything is a sign of insolence.⁴

You enjoy the sight of the mighty mountains, the big rivers, the vast ocean and the dense forests. Who is the creator of all these beautiful manifestations in Nature? God is the basis for all these. Though it is not possible for most people to realise the existence of God as the eternal Truth, yet a few have acquired this highest wisdom, the wisdom of the *Atma*.⁵

Creation

What is Creation? Creation means the expression of the Will of God. It is called Nature. Everything that has emerged from Nature must necessarily have the quality of Nature. Man is born to express the quality of Nature. Creation refers to manifestation of thoughts.⁶

In the distant past, the world was enveloped in darkness. For millions of years, the world was covered by a heavy mass of clouds. Then started a downpour that lasted for thousands of years. This was followed by the formation of oceans, mountains, rivers and forests on the Earth. The dissolution of the clouds gradually dispelled the darkness enveloping the world. Then, the Sun and the stars became visible from the Earth.⁷

The five basic elements that constitute the primary factors in Creation are present throughout the Universe. If the five elements, which are products of Creation, have this limitless power of presence throughout the Universe, how can we doubt that the Creator permeates everything in the Universe?⁸

Creation has to be viewed as a cosmic stage. God is the director and *dramatis personae* in this play. He assigns all the roles of the characters in the play. All creatures in the world are manifestations of the Divine. The good and the evil in the world are expressions of the Divine consciousness. Man should not be misled by these expressions. Behind all the various actions of the actors, the Divine director is at work. It should be realised that though names and forms may vary, languages and nationalities may be different, the human race

is one in its Divine essence. All are sparks of the Divine - the Lord declared in the Gita: "All beings in the world of the living are aspects of my Eternal Self."⁹

God is immanent in the entire Cosmos. The Universe does not exist apart from God. In every object there is a Divine element. Without this Divine basis, no object will be cognisable. A being without life is as good as non-existent. Likewise, any object that lacks a Divine base is worthless. The Divine element is the basis. The material form is gross. The Divine is the basis of the physical substance. Viewed from the physical point of view, these two appear to be contradictory. But, viewed from the spiritual point of view, it will be apparent that there is no material object without a Divine basis, no living being without the vital force and no inert substance without consciousness.¹⁰

I related this story to Hislop, when he asked me whether inanimate things too had emotions and feelings of disappointment and despair. The occasion at Dharmakshetra was: I asked that about a hundred saris be brought, so that I could select some, for distribution to the women workers at Anantapur who are helping build the Sathya Sai College there! I selected 96 and asked them to return 4 to the shop. I kept the 4 aside and the 96 were placed in my room. Later, when I passed the table on which the four discarded saris were kept (Hislop was standing by the side of that table), it was noticed that the cardboard box which contained the four was dripping tears! The saris were weeping that they could not get appreciation from Me and were declared unfit. Yes! They had shed tears. You may ask whether this is ever possible. I answer, there is nothing in this world which has no heart,

which is incapable of feeling joy or grief! Only, you must have the eye to see, the ear to listen, the heart to respond!¹¹

There is no difference between one kind of consciousness and another. All consciousness is alike because it is a manifestation of the Absolute. It is Brahman that has manifested itself as the Cosmos. The doctrine of evolution is being discussed widely and widely accepted. But one should try to understand how evolution takes place in Nature.

Evolution in Nature is really the gradual unfoldment of the inherent powers of Nature. For instance, life has evolved from matter and mind has evolved from life. What is meant by matter? Matter is that which is encased in life. Consider the example of paddy. As long as the rice grain is covered by husk it is called paddy. When the husk is removed it becomes rice. Paddy has the power to germinate as long as the husk remains. Likewise, the vital principle is contained in matter. It may thus be seen that life came from matter. Likewise, the mind evolved from life.

Today men are prepared to recognise that mind evolved from life and life from matter. But they are not ready to go beyond this stage in human evolution. Human evolution cannot be complete unless it goes beyond the mind.¹²

The 'Scientific' View

The Cosmos of which the Earth is a part and with which we are embroiled has as its basic cause, Brahman

itself. Some others declare as the cause for the origin of the Cosmos, such factors as innate nature, order, accident, time, etc. But, neither any one of these nor all of them together can be the cause. For they are all inert, incapable of will or initiative.¹³

The materialist doctrine proceeds on the assumption that consciousness is a product of sensory experiences and that the evolution of consciousness is dependent on and is based on the evolution of matter. Inanimate matter is the basis for the materialistic doctrine. Matter is finite.

The Vedic doctrine repudiates the view that consciousness can arise out of physical senses that are limited by their origin in matter that is finite and limited. In total opposition to this materialistic doctrine, the spiritual view was projected to demonstrate the falsity of the concept of the primacy of matter over consciousness.

For the spiritual view, the basis is the Spirit. The Spirit is infinite. The Vedantic doctrine proclaimed the infinite nature of the Self and pointed out that matter is both inert and finite. Consciousness constitutes three-fourths and one-fourth is inert matter. Thus, it is consciousness that animates matter and not matter that gives rise to consciousness. This is the essence of the spiritual concept.¹⁴

With the passage of time, scientists themselves are veering around to the view that the Universe is being guided and governed by some Divine power. The innumerable stars and planets in the Universe are whirling at tremendous speeds. If they were to deviate even slightly from their orbits or their

speeds, it would result in a universal holocaust. Who has ordained them to adhere to their speeds and orbits? Today's scientists are creating artificial satellites that are orbiting around the Earth. But these satellites are crashing down or catching fire in a few days or months, whereas the planets in God's Creation are orbiting regularly since time immemorial, without any crashing or catching fire.

Light travels at the rate of 186,000 miles per second. Even with such a tremendous speed, it takes hundreds of thousands of years for light to travel around the families or constellations of the suns and stars. In the Milky Way that is visible to us, there are innumerable stars unknown to us. The light from some of the stars has not yet reached the Earth, despite the lapse of aeons since their creation.

Even the scientists are in the doldrums to understand fully such aspects of Creation. What a contrast between the scientist who swells up with pride on account of discovering but a minute fraction of the mystery of Creation, and the Creator (God) who is running the whole Universe peacefully, silently, patiently and lovingly without any pomp or pride! Not this alone. The way this Creation or Nature is functioning is amazing beyond words. For instance, the carbon dioxide exhaled by man is being taken up by the plants and the oxygen released by the plants is being inhaled by man. Who has made this mutually beneficial arrangement in Nature?

Poet-saints like Purandaradas have sung the praise of the Lord Almighty in the following terms: "Who has watered, manured and grown the small shrubs and the gigantic trees in the crevices of the rocks in the mountains? Who has painted

the beautiful peacock and its tail with such attractive colours? Who has designed the wonderful combination of a green body and a red beak for the parrot?" The scientist may explain away all such things as the 'Law of Nature'. But are these scientists able to transcend Nature or to dispense with the materials available in Nature?

Whatever the scientists claim as their 'creation' is only derived from a combination of the basic materials found in Nature. For example, the scientist produces water by combining hydrogen and oxygen. But then, which scientist has produced or created hydrogen and oxygen? These elements are produced by sunlight. In the same manner, whatever the scientist may produce is based only on the permutation and combination of the already existing materials in Nature. This fact is conveniently ignored by most scientists. When one ponders over the mysteries or secrets of Nature, even a fool will have to admit the existence of a Divine power behind all these wonderful phenomena.

Let us consider another example. There are nearly 5.08 billion human beings in the world. But, it is amazing that in such a huge population, no two persons look exactly alike. Which creator except God can do this extraordinary wonderful feat! The goods manufactured by the modern 'creators' are all alike because they come out of the same mould. What a striking contrast!

The students should therefore try to understand the mysteries of Creation. We are prone to take Creation for granted, thinking that it is insentient Nature, thereby ignoring the sentient principle that regulates Nature and imparts a proper balance among its various constituents.¹⁵

3

Nature

The Divine Consciousness or Energy manifested as gross matter and the higher worlds of Spirit. Thus, Nature is the form of God created and expressed in the material world. If all this vast Cosmos arose from God, how can it be separate from God? Nature is a reflection of God and its majesty and Divine origin is evidenced in the tiniest cell to the enormous inter-galactic clouds of gas brought to vivid life by the space telescopes.

Manifestation of the Divine

In the Cosmos, the first manifestation of the Divine is as water. Man cannot live without water. Water is present everywhere, though in some places it will be visible on the surface, and below the ground in others. The Divine is protecting all living beings in the form of water. Water is known by another name as 'life'. God is making His presence felt in the world in the form of water.

The second manifestation is fire. It is on account of fire that everything is illumined and can be perceived. The same fire is present in man as the digestive fire. It is this fire that enables the conversion of the food one consumes into blood, flesh, bone and other things and sustains the body. Without these

seven primary constituents, life cannot exist for a moment. For all of them, God in the form of fire is the basis.

The third manifestation is the Earth. All living beings flourish on the Earth. Birth and death go on, on the Earth. The phenomena of birth, growth and death testify to the manifestation of God in the form of the Earth. Man secures all the things needed for living from the Earth. Hence the Earth must be regarded as a manifestation of God. As God cannot be experienced in any specific form, He must be recognised in manifestations like the Earth.

The fourth manifestation is air. Every moment we are engaged in breathing air. We are sustained by the oxygen in the air. Man inhales and exhales air 21,600 times in 24 hours. While inhaling, the sound 'So' is produced. In exhaling, the sound 'Ham' is produced. Together, they make up the term 'So-ham', meaning 'He is I', proclaiming the inherent Divinity of man. God is to be recognised in the process of inhaling and exhaling. That being so, what is the need to go in quest of God elsewhere? When the Divine is within us and present in the form of the five basic elements, men strive to search for God everywhere else. When the Lord is present everywhere, within and outside you, why go in search of Him anywhere? In this context, the question arises: Is it true that devotees are going in search of God or is God searching for devotees? In my view, it is God who is searching for devotees.

Space is the fifth manifestation. The distinctive quality of space is sound. The Cosmos is filled with sound vibrations. Sound is the means of cognising most things in the world. The

entire Cosmos is permeated by sound waves. Creation itself has originated from sound. When man inhales air, it is this sound that emanates from him in the form of 'So-ham' - 'Ham-so'. Where is this space? People imagine it is high up. Only the clouds are above. Wherever you have sound vibrations, you have space. When I speak, it is space. When you strike this table, you can experience space. Space is present in the clapping of hands during spiritual singing. Space is present in the process of breathing. It is because of space that living is possible.

The sixth is the Sun. All living beings are able to survive because of the Sun. Birds, beasts, trees and crops all thrive on the energy got from the Sun. The world will cease to exist without the Sun. Human intelligence is a reflection of the effulgence of the Sun. The enquiring nature of the intellect is derived from the Sun. Without the power of discrimination, man will be a moron.

The Moon comes seventh. The Moon principle confers tranquillity on man. The mind is a reflection of the Moon. Man's primary goal is to secure peace of mind. The Earth came from the Sun, and Moon from the Earth. The Sun, the Earth and the Moon are forms of the same substance. These three find their expressions in man in the form of mind, intellect and consciousness.

The eighth element is the authority of the Vedas. The Vedas proclaim the eternal Truth. There is the saying: 'There is no greater Righteousness than Truth'. God, who is the embodiment of Truth, though eternal and formless, manifests

Himself in the eight forms in the Cosmos. When the Divine is recognised in these forms, man will realise his true nature. ¹

People ask, “Where is God?” The answer is provided by Nature. Who is it that has created the five elements, the five life-breaths, the five sheaths, the five external sense organs and the five internal sense organs, which are all ceaselessly carrying out their functions according to their prescribed roles? The seasons in their regular cycle are teaching a lesson to man. Therefore Nature is the demonstrable proof for the existence of God. Nature is not under any obligation to any man; it takes no orders from any man; it operates according to the will of the Divine. ²

The Vesture of God

The Veda declares that the foolish person, even while seeing the acts of God, declares he has not seen God. He does not realise that Nature is the vesture of God. ³

We have to endeavour to get at the truth about Nature. The Upanishads declared: “All this is permeated by the Divine.” That means, there is only one thing that is immanent in the entire Universe. If the truths declared by the Upanishads are to be understood, we have to seek the truth of everything in our daily lives. For instance, what for has Nature come into being? Nature’s role is to help man, the crowning achievement of the evolutionary process, to realise the Divinity immanent in Creation. ⁴

Just as there is oil in the sesame seed, butter in milk,

fragrance in the flower, tasty juice in the fruit, fire in wood, there is Divinity in this vast Universe. The Divine is all-pervasive and is present in every being. It is the Divine power inside that makes it possible for the eyes to see and ears to hear. The entire Creation is the expression of the will power of God. Nature is a manifestation of the Supreme Divine. Man is born to manifest and reflect Divinity. All constituents of Nature reflect their inherent qualities. ⁵

God is the echo of the hills, the flutter of the leaves, the whisper of men, the babble of children, the Om that is wafted everywhere. God is present at all places, but to recognise Him saints have had to prescribe a thousand methods! He is in every one, yet he evades discovery by all but a few. Being all-powerful, He is the Giver of all gifts, the Providence bestowing upon us all the wherewithal. He remains all-encompassing. There is nothing except God. Nature is His manifestation. Man must recognise God in all human beings and in all else that exists. ⁶

In the cosmic context, Nature is the mirror, God is the viewer. All that is reflected in Nature is Divine. The One alone exists. The object and the image appear because of the presence of the mirror. When there is no mirror there is no image. This is the mystery relating to Nature and the wonders of the Lord. The glories of the Lord are multifarious and marvellous beyond words. ⁷

The Nature we have around us and with us is the vesture of God. We have evidence of His beauty, goodness, wisdom and power, all around us, wherever we turn our eyes. But, the

art of recognising Him is strange to us and so, we deny Him, and live on in darkness. ⁸

There is nothing in the world that is not a manifestation of God. Do not have any doubt that the Cosmos is permeated by God and everything is contained in Him. There is not an atom in the Universe that is not permeated by the Divine. ⁹

Every being and every object in the world is Divine energy. It cannot be destroyed, but it can be changed from one form of energy to another. For instance, magnetic energy can be converted to electricity. From electricity you can get light or atomic energy. In this manner, energy can be converted to different forms, but it cannot be destroyed. This indestructible character is Divine.

Hence, there is no place in the Cosmos that is not permeated by the Divine. There is Divinity in every particle and every cell. The sages therefore declared: 'That which is subtler than the subtlest and vaster than the vastest and which is present everywhere as the eternal witness is the *Atma*'. The *Atma* is atom and the atom is *Atma*. All three terms - Brahman, *Atma* and atom - represent one and the same thing. ¹⁰

4

The Advent of Man

Within the created cosmos, Divinity expressed its full capacity in the form of human life. Consciousness evolved to the zenith of Creation in the form of Man. Humans have long pondered and argued as to whether creation or evolution gave rise to Man. Failing to recognise the parallel physical and spiritual evolution of humanity, man is distracted by useless arguments centered on a material basis. Whereas, God is the basis for the creation and evolution of human kind.

A Child of Immortality

Creation proclaims the will of the Lord. This means that the whole of Creation is a manifestation of the will of the Lord. Every being existing in Creation has necessarily to bear the qualities of the Divine. Man has taken birth in this world to manifest the will of the Divine. A seed sprouts into a plant and puts forth a flower. The plant and its different constituents like branches and leaves are all the basis for the blossoming of the flower. God is the seed for the whole of Creation. God is present in every human being as a seed, which sprouts into a plant, develops leaves and branches in the form of qualities and blossoms into the flower of Being-Awareness-Bliss. ¹

Man is not merely a creature thrown up by Nature in the process of an evolutionary gamble. He has a special meaning, a special mission, a unique role. He is Divinity, encased in the human frame! Lord Krishna affirms in the Gita (Chapter XV verse 7), 'a portion of Mine in the world of life is transformed into the individual'. It is He who moves and motivates man. Man is a unit of that Unity; he is a child of Immortality, set in the background of this mortal world, in this mortal frame. ²

Consider how man has been shaped since millions of years for this high destiny. During the primeval cosmic chaos, there were two phenomena struggling to overwhelm each other. On one side was the fiery lava flood vomited by the volcanoes and emanating from the crevices and chasms that scarred the horrifying face of the Earth. The destructive conflagration swept in all directions, scattering panic and death, heralding the end of everything. On the other side, scarcely noticed, microscopic amoeba floated furtively on the water's edge or clung desperately in the cracks of rocks, keeping the faint spark of life unharmed from fire and flood.

Who could have predicted at that time that the future was with the animalcule or amoeba, whose appearance itself was due to an accident, and whose survival was an enigma? Who could have foreseen that these minute specks of life could hold out triumphantly against the devastating onslaught of heat and cold?

But that speck of Life-Consciousness won through. Sheer intelligence, adaptability and perseverance in 'willing' to live helped it to defeat the mortal fury of the elements. By the unfoldment of that Life-Consciousness,

the amoeba blossomed into various species of living beings, gigantic and microscopic; at last, it grew into man; in man, it bore fruit as goodness and virtue, sympathy and sacrifice, oratory and music, song and dance, scholarship and spiritual deeds, martyrdom and sainthood, and as repositories of Divinity; nay, even Divine Manifestations assumed the human form!

This is the reason why man is said to be the zenith of Creation. This is the purpose for which he has struggled through stone and grass, tree, bird and beast. Hence, man should not fritter away the precious prize he has won; he should not slide back into the beast; he must move forward into Divinity. He must become aware of his strength and weaknesses and become clear about his goal, his path and his potentialities. He must act up to his worth and capacity. ³

Man cannot exist without God sustaining him. God, too, needs man in order to announce Himself. With no son, how can the father announce Himself as such? The word Nara (man) implies the concept of Narayana (God). Man creates God in his own image by the intensity of spiritual practices and God creates man in His image by willing it to happen. Most people are too weak to conceive of Godhead, too weak in intellect and imagination. Egoism freezes flowing water into hard blocks of ice, but when the sun of wisdom shines, they are softened and resume their real nature. ⁴

God is one without a second. He is infinite. It is impossible to measure Him or compare Him with anything. He is omnipresent. Comparison is possible only when there

is a second object. The Vedas declare: “One alone without a second.” The Divine willed: “I am one; I shall become many.” By His will the Divine manifested Himself in the many. All religions have accepted this truth. The Bible declares: “God created man in His own image.” From the One, the manifold Cosmos has emerged. Only man has been endowed with the capacity to control Nature. With the growth of knowledge, the animal nature in man has diminished and he has been able to develop culture. God comes in human form. As the saying goes: “The Divine appears in human form.” Hence man should not be regarded as a mere product of Nature, a creature of the senses and the physical elements.⁵

The traditional number of created beings is 840,000 and man is the final item of the evolutionary procession; but why did the number stop at 840,000? It stopped because man is the zenith, the fullness; he is God in fact, though he has ignored the truth and holds fast to the belief that he is just a man. He is endowed with mind, intellect, reasoning faculty and ego, all four, in an integrated personality, whereas the birds and beasts and all other species have mostly ego alone. The lives of the latter are centred around the ego and its desires and demands. But, man has the capacity to follow truth, right action, peace, and love; man alone has it.⁶

In this vast Cosmos, among innumerable living beings, the human being stands foremost. Although it has been proclaimed that in all living beings the Divine exists as the Indwelling Spirit, not all living beings can recognise this truth. Only a human being has the capacity to recognise it. This unique ability invests human birth with its rare quality.⁷

Man's Destiny

At first sight what we see are inert objects like mountains and hills. We cannot see any sign of consciousness in these objects. The second category of objects is trees. There is consciousness in them, but they cannot move from place to place. They are stationary. The third category is living beings. Beside consciousness, these have the capacity of motion. Man belongs to the fourth category. He has not only fully developed consciousness but has another extraordinary, marvellous quality. That is the supreme gift of speech.

Starting with the inert, we have the conscient, the mobile beings and the human species with the power of speech. If this progression in the creative process is rightly understood, we can realise how important is the advent of man.⁸

Man is considered to be the crown of the animal kingdom; his is the summit of living beings. Of living beings, it is said, he is the highest. Why? Because he is the only animal that can investigate his own self and realise and reveal the Divinity that is his reality. Other animals have no thirst for the basic inquiry and no hunger for this satisfying wisdom.⁹

Man is no mere biped, an animal that struts about on two legs, instead of four. He has the unique destiny of realising and appreciating beauty, truth, goodness, harmony, melody and conferring on himself and others love, compassion and sympathy. He can delve, not only into the secrets of Nature, but into his own mystery and discover God, who is behind both Nature and himself. The clouds of conceit and

ignorance hide from him this destiny. He can install in his heart the Goodness, that is the motivator of all Creation, all existence and all dissolution. Goodness is truth and beauty.¹⁰

Man alone can rise through effort to higher stages of spiritual evolution. No other animal can do so. Animal tamers of the circus can train a tiger to perform various tricks, but they cannot change his nature. They cannot make it live on grass and completely deprive it of meat. Man is different. His nature can be changed by means of his own disciplined effort. He can control, by his will, the evil thoughts and ideas that arise in his mind. This is why birth as a human being is considered a rare gift.¹¹

Man alone is endowed with the equipment needed to establish mastery over the senses. Birds, beasts and other species have no such capacity to discriminate and renounce. They act on instinct or impulse; they cannot argue, assess, accept or reject. A hermit was one day bathing in the Ganges when he saw, floating downstream on a piece of wood, a scorpion. This is God encased in the scorpion form and name, he felt. He wanted to save the scorpion, so he took it on his palm. But, when it stung him, he dropped it on the waters. Then he was stricken with remorse and so he lifted it up again. Thus it stung him five or six times, but he persisted in his mission of mercy and at last, managed to drop it on dry land so that it could go its way, alive and happy. Many people watched his efforts and laughed at him for his stupidly exaggerated sympathy. The hermit told them that the scorpion had taught him a lesson and he was thankful for it. They asked him what it was. He said, “Stick to your innate nature, whatever may

happen; that is what it has taught me.” Its nature is to sting; it stung, regardless of whom or when. Man’s nature is to achieve wisdom; bliss is man’s essence; love is the bloodstream that sustains him; peace is the vision that guides and directs him.

¹²

Creation has no predetermined limits. It is an eternal process whose beginning or end cannot be known. In the process of birth, growth and dissolution, besides the will of the Lord, the role of human effort can also be recognised to a certain extent. Man’s destiny is determined by the nature of his actions, thoughts and desires. In this process, man forgets the Divine source from which he has come. Developing demonic tendencies and behaving like an animal, man wastes his human existence.¹³

If the individual knows he is Divine and that all else are equally so, that consciousness is the best bond for society; that bliss is the best atmosphere to sustain the Society. How can a person who knows that all are Divine keep away from the God he recognises? I am He; He is I; both I and He are kith and kin in Him. This awareness is so thrilling, so satisfying, so uplifting, that such society is the noblest holy company man can ever come into.¹⁴

5

A Soul's Journey

Since pure consciousness gave rise to all things in creation, so all things in creation must possess some level of consciousness. Being dazzled and pre-occupied with scientific findings supporting evolution from the material, human-kind has failed to recognise our more subtle spiritual heritage. Yet Man has the ability to experience his true nature and recognise his own source as he travels from life to life.

From the Stone to the Divine

Man is a pilgrim set on a long journey; he has started from the stone, moved on to the vegetable and the animal, and has now come to the human stage. He has still a long way to go to reach the Divine and so he should not tarry. Every moment is precious; every step must take him further and nearer. ¹

Man has to lift himself from the animal level through his own spiritual practice. There are three types of men: the animal type, the human type or the Divine type. Man has evolved from the stone through plant and tree, worm and insect, bird and mammal; but some are still grovelling in the early stages, though they have achieved human form. ²

What is the reason for the prevalence of animal qualities in

man even after reaching the human level? It should be noted that it is after passing through many lives in other species of beings that one gets a human birth. Because of this fact, animal qualities appear in human beings. One person may be found leading an unsteady life, with his mind wavering all the time. He may make many efforts to achieve steadiness. But, his fickleness and unsteadiness continue to grow. When you inquire into the reason for this, the answer is provided by the Veda. The man concerned had been a monkey in a previous birth and has inherited some of the simian qualities of fickleness and hopping from one thing to another from his past life.

Similarly, when you find in some persons qualities such as lying, stealing, cowardice, or stupidity, they should be considered as hangovers from their previous animal lives. The means to get rid of such tendencies is to offer all one's actions to the Divine. The tendency to steal is present in many persons. Stealing is a natural quality of the cat. Mental instability is a characteristic trait of the monkey. Stupidity is a trait of sheep. Obstinacy is a quality of the buffalo. These traits of the different animals are reflected in the actions of humans who have emerged from the respective animal state. ³

Man is a compound of animal and angel, we can say. He has in him the wolf, the monkey, the bullock, the jackal, the snake, the peacock, the bear ... and he has beneath all these, the pure spark of Divinity too. It is the duty of all who cater to the senses of man to transform the low values now pervading, and transmute them into higher values. ⁴

Your Reality is the *Atma*, a wave of the *Paramatma* (the

Universal Soul). The one object of this human existence is to visualise that Reality, that *Atma*, that relationship between the wave and the Sea. All other activities are trivial; you share them with birds and beasts, but this is the unique privilege of man. He has clambered through all the levels of animality, all the steps in the ladder of evolution, in order to inherit this high destiny. If all the years between birth and death are frittered away in seeking food and shelter, comfort and pleasure, as animals do, man is condemning himself to a further life-sentence.

Man is endowed with two special gifts: the faculty of reasoning and the faculty of analysis and synthesis. Use these gifts for discovering the truth of yourself, which is the truth of everyone else, of everything else.⁵

Most men spend the lifetime allotted to them or earned by them in the partaking of rich but harmful food and drink and glamorous but more harmful pastimes. What a pathetic waste of precious stuff! Though belonging to the animal genus, man has much more than his fellow-beings in physical, mental and moral equipment. He has memory, language, conscience, reverence, awe, wonder and an inexplicable sense of discontent, the precursor of detachment.

He has the glorious chance of visualising his identity with the Mystery that is manifested as this Universe: but he is so sunk in ignorance that he behaves as though he is an animal like the rest and wallows in grief and vice. It is as if fire has forgotten its capacity to burn, or water its nature to wet. Man has forgotten his nature to reach out into Godhood, his capacity to seek and secure the Truth of the Universe of which

he is a part, his capacity to train himself by virtue, justice, love and sympathy to escape from the particular to the Universal. He can attain the consummation and climax of merging with the Unchanging that is behind all this change.⁶

The ascent to manhood has been made possible for you all. This high status among the animals is to be deserved by merging at last in the Divine; that is the goal which the pilgrimage of evolution has in view, since life began on Earth as the amoeba on the waters. Faith in that goal and steady march towards it are the signs of one's being aware of the responsibility of being a man. The call of the Divine echoes in every heart; it provokes the reaction of awe, reverence, affection, love and sacrifice - all ingredients of devotion. It translates itself into acts of worship, of praise, of adoration and of rituals symbolising the majesty of God. Thus, the mind gets saturated with Divine thoughts; it is recast in the Divine mould, until the flow of bliss is unabated.⁷

From Animal to Human

By being merely endowed with the human form, men do not become really human. The evolution from the animal to the human has taken millennia. The world is peopled today by billions of human beings. But how many of them display genuine human qualities? Man is still going through the birth-pangs of real human-ness. Only when human qualities are manifest can man claim to be truly human. In that human-ness there is Divinity. It will bear the mantle of Truth. It will be the embodiment of Righteousness, Love and Peace. It is only when men display these qualities that they can be regarded as human.⁸

Man is the noblest of all animals, the final product of untold ages of progressive evolution, but he is not consciously striving to live up to his heritage. The beasts held a World Conference to confabulate on the authenticity of man's claim to be the acme of Creation and the monarch of all that walks the Earth. The lion presided over the deliberations.

The tiger questioned the claims of man; the leopard seconded the resolution of emphatic protest. It made a devastating speech, condemning man. "He is a standing disgrace to animals everywhere. He manufactures and drinks merrily fatal poisons and is proud of his utter foolishness. He cheats his own kind and spends all his energies and resources in devising diabolical weapons to wipe out his sisters and brothers; he prods horses and dogs to run in desperate haste and gambles his earnings away, while they gallop along the track; he is cruel, greedy, immoral, insatiable and unashamed. He sets a bad example to the animal world. Though endowed with superior emotions and intelligence, his behaviour is disgusting and demeaning," he said. "We do not know if and where we will get our next meal; we have no sure place of rest. We have nothing to wrap round ourselves, except the skin. Yet the least of us is a far worthier child of God than this monster called man," he concluded.

The fox rose and added, "We have a season when we mate, but man, I am ashamed to say, has broken all restraints and cares for no rules. He is a law unto himself and a disaster to the rest."

The lion rose, to sum up the arguments. He agreed with the general trend of the tirade against man, provoked by his undeserved claim to supremacy. But, he refused to tar all with the

same brush. He distinguished between men who are bestial and worse, and men who have transcended their bestial past, by the proper use of the special gifts of discrimination and detachment. The latter, he said, ought to be revered by all beasts as Masters, while the former deserved severe reprisals and condemnation.

Each of you has struggled upwards from the stone to plant, from plant to animal, from animal to man! Do not slide back into the beast; rise higher to Divinity, shining with the new effulgence of Love. The Divine is the energy that animates, the urge that circulates the blood in your veins, that transmits knowledge and experience through the nerves, that correlates and collects for storage the impressions your senses gather, the conclusions your intelligence garners.⁹

From Birth to Birth

Man is the most devalued entity today; everything else has risen in value but man is cheap; he can be neglected with impunity. He knows not his own greatness or worth. He does not know how to elevate the smallest act of his into a means of realising the Grace of the Lord. He does not know the alchemy by which every failure or disappointment can be transmuted into a golden chance for self-surrender and for building up the bulwark of devotion. He fritters away precious time in paltry activities and petty pleasures, which lower his self-respect and injure his physical and mental calibre.¹⁰

There is a law of cause and effect; every action has a consequence, whether you like it or not, whether you anticipate it or not. A good action produces a good result; a bad one

has to produce a bad result. Birth is the result of the actions done before death; if you are asked what happens to man after death, you can point to yourselves and declare, "This is what happens;" they are born again. This is no religion of despair; it is a religion of hope, of assurance, of encouragement to lead an active, useful, beneficent life. For the future is in your hands; tomorrow can be shaped by today, though today has already been shaped by yesterday.¹¹

Man has to become God; that is his destiny, the plan and purpose of his being armed, as no other animal is, with the sword of discrimination and the shield of renunciation. Man is the only animal that can picture a previous existence and existences in a series, with impressions accumulating from one to the other. What you see and feel in a dream has some basis on what you have seen and felt in the waking state; so too, what you see and feel in the present life has, as its basis, what you have seen and felt in other lives, previous lives.¹²

Death is but a passage from this life to the next; it is the change from old clothes to new, as the Gita says. But some cynics laugh at the comparison and ask, "What about the death of new-born infants, children, youths and middle-aged persons? Their bodies cannot by any stretch of meaning be classified as worn out!" Well, the clothes might not be old, but the cloth out of which they were made must have been from very old stock, so that though new clothes were prepared out of it, they had to be discarded soon.

Again, there are some crooked men who refuse to believe in a previous life, because they cannot recollect the events! These people cannot recollect the events of one particular

Magha Suddha Dasami, say 5 or 10 years ago, though they are certain they were alive on that Dasami! Forgetting the events of that day does not mean that they were not alive at all; it only means that they did not pay any special heed to them, they had no objective or special reason to keep it in memory.¹³

Man's life has a beginning and an end; the beginning and the end are both governed by the law of cause and effect. The nest of a bird built with arduous circumspection on the branch is swayed by the gale and felled by the storm. The lovely petals of the rose, dancing in the breeze, and spreading fragrance around, are blown to the ground by a sudden gust of wind! Man too is floored at the height of his triumph by the stroke of some unseen hand. Man is aghast at the consequence that he experiences; he is unaware of the cause, for he has no inclination to seek it. The cause for birth is the same as the cause for death: fascination for sense-objects and the trail of activity that it involves.

Children are happy since they have not yet got involved in such activity. They scatter joy and enthusiasm, innocence and confidence. How is it that they are so fresh and gay? Their minds are free from the infection of sense-pleasure-seeking. They are revelling in the untainted joy of their own innate nature. That is the reason why Christ fondled a child, and advised all the grown-ups to become children, so that they may be saved. How sweet is the smile of the babe in the cradle or of the child playing in the garden! That is the genuine nature of man, which he tarnishes foolishly, year by year, as he grows.¹⁴

The contemplation of death is the very foundation of

spiritual discipline. Without it, man is certain to fall into falsehood, pursuing the objects of sense-pleasure, and trying to accumulate material, worldly riches. Death is no ominous calamity, it is a step into the auspicious brightness beyond. It is inescapable; it cannot be bribed away, adjourned by certificates of good conduct, or testimonials from the great. Once born, death is the inevitable end; but it is possible to escape birth and thereby, escape death. For, birth is the consequence of *karma*.¹⁵

Every animate being has to attain fulfilment; that is the destiny, however hard, however long, the journey. When and how are determined by the nature of the cumulative effects of many lives. The effects are shaped not only by actions but even more by the motives that induce them. The present condition of each is the consequence of past actions and motives. Present actions and motives mould the future. Each one builds his own fortune or misfortune.¹⁶

Everyone craves for security, peace, joy and happiness. But most believe that these can be extracted from Nature around. The result is, he wastes his years in eating and drinking, playing and resting, earning and spending. Man moves from cradle to grave, and again from cradle to grave, *ad nauseam*, drifting along, knowing neither the place from where he started his journey, nor the place to which his steps are leading him through the ages. Man has won unique qualities of head and heart through a series of effort-filled lives as members of inferior species; that victory is now reduced to ashes, by this supine sloth.

You must have the skill to swim across the waves of joy

and grief, of pain and profit. You must be a master of the art of being fully at ease, perfectly calm and unaffected, whatever may happen to the body or senses or mind; they are all inert when they are not urged by the inner 'I', which is intelligence, awareness. Learn the skill of achieving and maintaining inner peace, the art of being ever aware of the *Atma*, as the Inner Reality, and then you can safely gyrate in the world, as fast as you care.¹⁷

6

Man, Nature and God

The great tragedy is that with such a noble origin and birth, most of human-kind fail to understand our source, and worse still, fail to recognise the Divinity around us in the form of Nature. Man neither tries to learn the lessons that Nature can teach nor shows gratitude for the multifarious benefits and beauty that Nature provides. It seems the further we move from Nature, the further we move from higher values and God.

Man Fails to See God in Nature

There are three entities in the Universe with which man has to deal: God, Nature and man. Of course, God is to be worshipped by man, to be realised by man through Nature. Nature is the name for all the various items that impress upon man the glory and the splendour of God. ¹

Man is continually seeking to have a vision of the Divine, but he fails to realise that the Divine is present everywhere in the Cosmos. Failure to see the Divine in the visible Universe is a mark of ignorance. Everything in the phenomenal Universe is pervaded by God. When you see Nature, you see only its worldly aspect. When your mind is centred on God, you see the Divine in everything. The fault lies, therefore, in your outlook and not in Creation. Transform your perspective.

Therefore, from the outset, you have to view everything as a manifestation of the Divine.

It is true that there is ugliness in Nature and in all Creation, but everything has its place and purpose. Nothing was created without a reason. What is ugliness, after all? It is the other side of beauty ... Thus we have two sides to every aspect - good and bad, beauty and ugliness, truth and untruth, light and darkness, knowledge and ignorance, and so on. They are complementary; where one exists, the other also will. Can you appreciate beauty, unless you know what ugliness is? Can you be good, unless you know what is bad? You must learn to discriminate between delusion and relative truth, and this will help you to perceive God in everything. In this way, you will develop a feeling of closeness to Nature and to God and awareness of Oneness. ²

Nature is not to be despised. When Nature is viewed from the egoistic point of view, it assumes a distorted form. When it is regarded from the spiritual point of view, it presents a sacred aspect. The differences in the role of Nature arise out of man's attitudes. ³

The difficulty in recognising the truth about the Divine was expressed by the Saint Surdas when he sang, "O Krishna! How can I recognise you? You are subtler than the atom and vaster than the vastest. You are present in the 840,000 species in the Universe, permeating everything in the Cosmos, from a blade of grass to the vastest thing in Creation. How can I recognise your infinite form?" The great ones experienced God in this infinite form, recognising that the Divine was present even in the wicked and the evil-minded. ⁴

When the One became many, when the One manifests as Nature composed of the five elements, do not imagine that its value is affected thereby. When a rupee is changed into ten coins, its value is not decreased at all. So, see Nature as God, not as a multiplicity of sense impressions and sense-attractions. Wherever your eye turns, whatever your ears hear, your fingers touch, your tongue tastes, and your nose smells, whatever has form, sound, touch, taste and smell, take that also to be God-filled. Do not allow the mere sound, the mere taste etc to captivate your senses. See the Divine in each; welcome and accept only that. ⁵

Marvellous are the beauties presented by Nature. They are sacred as well as wondrous. What Nature promotes or destroys, what it bestows or takes away are equally amazing. It is not easy to understand these marvels. ⁶

Appreciate the Handiwork of God

No one can comprehend or describe the glory and mystery of Nature. Nature is a reflection of the sport of the Divine. It is animated by the three *gunas* (characteristics), which are manifestations of the Trinity. God is nourishing and promoting Nature by using the three *gunas* in multifarious combinations and forms. The purpose of life is to experience the sacredness of Nature as a projection of the Divine. ⁷

The basis for all the varied phenomena in Nature - the twinkling of the stars, the revolutions of the planets, the fire from the Sun - is the Divine. Nature proclaims the immanence of God. You look with awe at a mountain. You feel ecstatic at the torrent of a mighty river. The sight of a green forest delights

you. All these are manifestations of the Divine mystery. All the beauties in Nature testify to the basic presence of the Divine in all things. ⁸

Nature is very close to God, closer than man is, for in man there is a veil of ignorance clouding his vision and marring his sight. But Nature is the purest handiwork of God. If you are able to love Nature and feel in tune with it, you are that much closer to God. It is very easy to know God through Nature, for in Nature there is goodness, simplicity, purity and selflessness. ⁹

Spend your time in the contemplation of the beauties of Nature that are spread out before you in earth and sky: green expanses of the crops you have raised, cool breezes that waft contentment and joy, the panorama of coloured clouds, the music of the birds. Sing the glories of God as you walk along the bunds of the fields and the banks of the canals. Do not talk hatefully in the midst of all this evidence of love; do not get angry in these placid surroundings; do not disturb the sky with your shouts and curses. Do not pollute the air with vengeful boasts. ¹⁰

Just as you seek the udder of the cow for the milk it gives, seek the Lord and His glory only in Nature. As a matter of fact, Nature is useful only when it adds to the wonder and awe that it is able to provoke and sustain. Everything is an image of the Lord. Krishna revelled in seeing His own images in the Mani Mantapa of His house, when He was a child; just as the Lord is pleased when He sees Himself in His manifestation called Nature. That is why there is such joy welling up in all when they hear the story of the Lord and how He calls

all to Himself. It is the call of the person (the real) for the reflection, to merge in it. So, all are entitled for the merging; all finally have to attain it. Otherwise, there is no meaning for the yearning to become greater and greater.¹¹

Nature will not give real bliss, as long as it is viewed from a physical and worldly point of view. The pleasure to be derived from any object in the world depends on the condition in which it is enjoyed. For instance, a mango will be tasteless if it is tender, sour if it is half-ripe and sweet when it is fully ripe. Likewise, Nature is a sweet fruit, but if it is seen from a purely sensory point of view, it will give only a bitter taste. But, when it is viewed as a manifestation of the Divine, its unique sweetness will be apparent. Thoughts influence the vision, which, in its turn affects the mind.¹²

The land is very beautiful, as I saw when I came from Coimbatore all the way to this capital city (Thiruvananthapuram). The scenery formed by the backwaters and the coconut groves, stretching from one end of the state to the other, was like a vast painting by a great artist on a huge canvas. The Lord enjoys these things as a painter; He appreciates His own handiwork, standing before His own painting or sculpture. To see the Lord's own loveliness in the lovely scenery around you requires not the outer eye but the inward eye. If you develop that, walking over the land or voyaging over the waters is itself a pilgrimage through holy land giving you glimpses of God in every speck of cloud or patch of green. But, all this Divine beauty must lead man to Truth and all this Truth to Goodness. That is the natural path. The beauty of the Lord's handiwork leads man on to the glory of the Lord; the picture makes you curious about the Painter. The Lord, when His

Truth is grasped, confers bliss that is auspiciousness itself.¹³

Show Gratitude to Nature

Man is deriving innumerable benefits from Nature, and enjoying the amenities provided by Nature in various ways. But what is the gratitude he is showing to Nature? What gratitude is he offering to the Divine? He is forgetting the Divine who is the provider of everything. That is the reason for his becoming a prey to various difficulties and calamities. While he is receiving countless benefits from Providence, he is offering nothing in return to Nature or God. This shows how unnatural and heartless is the behaviour of man. When we are enjoined to return good for evil, how unbecoming is it to fail even to return good for good? Man is not learning the great lessons Nature is teaching him. The foremost lesson is doing service with no expectation of return.¹⁴

Mountains help man to build houses by using stone slabs, quarried from them. Trees provide the timber for constructing houses and also firewood for domestic use. Among animate beings, every creature, from an ant to an elephant, is of assistance to man in one way or another. Cows provide nourishing milk to man. Bullocks are useful for ploughing the fields and helping to grow food crops. All other creatures like birds, fish, sheep and others are serving man in their different ways. Seen in this light, it will be clear that all things in Creation are helpful to man in leading his life. Even the Sun and the Moon are serving man.¹⁵

Have firm faith in the reality of God's existence. You have to show your gratitude to God for the benefits showered

on you. Consider, for instance, how the Divine has filled the atmosphere with life-giving oxygen to enable you to live. The biggest fan made by man can provide breeze only for a small area, but the winds caused by Nature can blow over the whole world. Who is the cause of this wind? There are three kinds of lamps in the temple. They illumine a small space, but the Sun created by God illumines the whole world. We pump water with the help of pump sets. Can all the water pumped by these sets equal a fraction of the water got from a heavy downpour of rain which can inundate the Ganges?

Who is it that is providing this air, this water and this illumination? We are enjoying all these, but we show no gratitude to the provider of these benefits. We express thanks to those who render trifling acts of service. But what thanks are we expressing to God who is providing such essential life sustaining amenities for meaningful human existence? Can this be a virtue in a human being? Is it a sign of right education? Is it the mark of a scholar? No. You must show your gratitude with humility and sincerity to whoever has done you any good.¹⁶

7

The Abuse of Nature

Failing to recognise the beauty and source of Nature and natural resources, humans abuse Nature by the wasteful and proliferigate use of resources and the pollution of the environment in the name of economic rationalism. Unless Man's attitude to Nature and the environment changes, human-kind is condemned to experience continued suffering and earth and atmospheric disturbances.

Man's Abuse of Nature

Unfortunately today, as a consequence of scientific and technological progress, humanness has declined and man considers the world as only intended for his enjoyment. As a result, the powers of Nature are being used in a manner that poses a great threat to the world. The world has not been created for mere enjoyment. Abusing the resources of Nature and forgetting his own basic human nature, man is going against the purpose of Creation.

Many natural catastrophes are entirely due to man's behaviour. Earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, wars, floods and famines and other calamities are the result of grave disorders in Nature. These disorders are traceable to man's conduct. Man has not recognised the integral relationship between humanity and the world of Nature.¹

Man is considering Nature as entirely a creation of Providence for his enjoyment. This is a mistake. Nature exists for enjoyment by man according to certain limits.

Scientists today are exploring the powers of Nature with a view to enjoying them without limit. They want to bring all those powers under human control for their unrestricted enjoyment. This is responsible for so many of the natural disasters that we witness today.

What is the cause of droughts and floods that occur in the world? Man seeks to enjoy the benefits of Nature without any restraint or regulation. The result is imbalance in Nature that has grave consequences. Here you have a globe. If you hit it one way, its balance is disturbed. We should always see to it that, in the utilisation of natural resources, a proper balance is kept. Excessive use in any one direction will result in harm in another direction.²

Scientists and technologists, in pursuit of selfish interests as well as of name and fame, utterly disregard the security and welfare of the society and the nation by upsetting the balance in Nature, which results in various accidents, calamities, losses and misery to the public at large. For example, the oceans contain air needed by the Earth for more than ten years. One lightning in the sky emits enough electricity required for the entire world for twenty years. By building gigantic dams in one place, the earth goes down in that area and consequently goes up in another area, like a see-saw.

The indiscriminate exploitation of natural resources by the scientists and technologists, such as various types of

mines for extracting minerals, mica, coal, petrol and other oils, results in imbalances and pollution of the five major elements, leading to catastrophes like earth-quakes and volcanoes etc. The rapid and excessive proliferation of industries, factories, automobiles etc, with the attendant pollution of the atmosphere, is responsible for the increasing incidence of diseases like eosinophilia, asthma, deafness, pneumonia and typhoid etc. However, science *per se* is not bad; what is necessary is for man to put it to proper and judicious use.³

The progress of modern technology, by polluting the atmosphere with carbon dioxide and smoke, is causing threat to life on Earth. This smoke has already created a hole in the ozone ring above the Earth, which has been serving as a protecting cover against harmful radiation from the Sun. If the ozone layer is destroyed, the effect of the Sun's rays may be disastrous. All nations are now worried about this threat. All that needs to be done to avert this danger is to reduce the pollution of the atmosphere caused by automobiles and industrial effluents. The uncontrolled development of industries has to be checked.⁴

Whatever man seeks to achieve, he has to rely on Nature. Nature is not anyone's private property. It belongs to God. Without the grace of the Lord no one can enjoy the benefits of Nature. Not realising this truth, some people embark on the exploitation of Nature, out of arrogance and self-conceit. This is highly misconceived.⁵

There is a legendary tale in which one greedy man killed the goose that laid golden eggs, thinking that he can extract all

the eggs from it in one lump. Such acts of folly are committed freely by scientists today by exploiting Nature's gifts beyond all limits, creating disastrous imbalances resulting in natural calamities, such as earthquakes, spelling danger to humanity. We cannot blame science for this. Those who apply the scientific discoveries without discrimination are to be blamed for this. They fail to consider with deep deliberation the effects of excessive depletion of the natural resources.⁶

Man's Attitude should Change

Man is born in this world but does not realise the purpose of his birth. Forgetting this purpose, he regards himself as the master of Nature and in his insane conceit forgets his own Divinity. He is unable to recognise that it is Nature that provides or takes away, that blesses or punishes, that Nature's sway is extensive. Nature presides over every aspect of life.

In his deep involvement with mundane concerns man tends to forget his Divinity and what he owes to Nature. All things in Creation are equal in the eyes of God. God is immanent in all of them. Hence God and Nature should not be regarded as distinct entities. They are inseparably inter-related, like the object and its image. Man, however, looking at Nature externally, considers it as purely physical and intended to provide the amenities he seeks.⁷

Man today is not using properly the five basic elements of which the Cosmos is constituted. Consequently man is afflicted with a myriad troubles. The benefits to be derived from the five elements (in the form of sound, touch, sight,

taste and smell) are not being rightly enjoyed. They are being misused. Because man is abusing the God-given elements and faculties, he is forfeiting God's grace and is becoming a victim of Divine displeasure. The five elements have also turned against man. They are despising man for the way he is degrading them. The result is the sounds that one hears are a cacophony of scandal and gossip. Are these the sounds that man should produce?

Man should manifest his sublime, perennial Divine nature. Unfortunately, his entire vision today is tainted. He is filled with bad thoughts. Hence his sight has turned against him. When you examine man's faculty of hearing, what do you find? He hears all the time scandalous gossip about all and sundry, while his ears turn away from the sweet praises of the Lord. As the ears are abused in this manner, the mind gets polluted by listening to bad things. Even the air one breathes is polluted. The entire atmosphere is polluted. The food one consumes is also polluted.

If we try to find out what is the root of all the troubles and worries men experience today, it will be seen that man's abuse of the five elements is the cause. Therefore, see good, hear what is good, speak what is good, think good thoughts, and be good. When people behave in this manner, the five elements will shower their benefits on them. It is only when man secures the grace of the five elements that he will experience the grace of the Divine.⁸

Man is misled into believing that Nature is his rival that has to be defeated and conquered; he struggles and suffers loss and pain in the process. He considers it heroic to undergo

travail in what he calls conquest of Nature. If only he feels kinship with Nature, as equally saturated with Divinity, and proclaiming with equal clarity the immanence of God, he can be happier and much more restful and content. When you see everywhere, on every inch of ground in every being, small or big, the footprint of God, Nature is seen in a new vesture of glory, a manifestation that demands worship, rather than exploitation and enslavement.⁹

Man has always tried to conquer Nature. In this contest, he has employed all his physical, mental and intellectual skill. Nature is a composite of the three characteristics (*gunas*): the pure, passionate and dull. Therefore, it can be overcome only by developing the qualities of truth, love and tolerance. When man taps the energy of the Divine in him, he can easily master Nature, which is only the vesture of the Divine.¹⁰

There is no basic conflict between man and Nature. Man is entitled to enjoy the fruits of Nature, even as a child is entitled to the mother's milk or a bee to suck the honey in a flower. The Creation is greater than mankind. It is humanity's privilege to understand the secrets of Creation. Man should also seek to know the relationship between Creation and the Creator.¹¹

Do not look upon the objective world as something to be exploited; it is something to be adopted and appreciated. Then, you can derive the maximum bliss out of the contact!¹²

Responsibility for Nature Rests with Man

You should learn how to regulate the forces of Nature and not seek to go against natural laws. It follows that

man has the freedom to enjoy the things provided by the Creator. But man should exercise his discrimination to determine what are beneficial for him and what are not fit to be used. Because all things are available, one should not use them as he likes for the simple reason that each use is accompanied by its natural consequences. One cannot avoid these consequences. If you are prepared to face the consequences, you can act as you want. What is happening, however, is enjoyment of something with relish and later bemoaning the adverse after-effects. This is a mark of mental weakness.

Nature is like a mirror. It reflects your action. Standing before a mirror, you offer a salutation to it. The image in the mirror reflects your actions. If you attempt to hit the image, the reflection will hit back. Based on this law of action and reaction, the Scriptures declared: "Whatever your thoughts, that you become." Hence, in the realm of natural phenomena, whatever actions you do will be followed by consequences which are inescapable, some time or other.

As human beings, you have to ascertain by the use of your intelligence and discriminating power what are the actions that are proper and what are to be avoided. Whatever appears to be good, you better do it. But if, knowing that something is wrong, you do it, you can never escape from its consequences. The Lord created the Cosmos and offered it to mankind. Consequently, the responsibility for properly utilising all objects in the world rests on humanity and not on the Lord. If men use things in the right way and benefit from them, they will experience happiness. If you misuse them or put them to wrong uses, you will have to bear the troubles resulting therefrom.¹³

Man has the rare good fortune of adoring Nature as the body of God and offering grateful worship to God. But, is he conscious of God being the source and sustenance? Does he give God the first place in his thoughts, which is His due? Or, is he engaged in the activities of life in total disregard of God?

It is a pity that, instead of paying attention to God, Nature and man, in that order, men today are concerned most with themselves, more with Nature and very much less with God. From birth to death, from dawn till night, man pursues fleeting pleasures by the exploitation, the despoiling, the desecration of Nature, ignoring the truth that it is the property of God the Creator, and any injury caused to it is a sacrilege which merits dire punishment. ¹⁴

In the exploitation of natural resources, people are observing no limits in the name of their right to act as they please. I do not understand wherefrom this 'right' is derived. In reality, there is no such thing as a 'right'. In fact, what they have is 'responsibility'. If one's responsibilities are properly discharged, some rights may emerge from them. If responsibilities (duties) are ignored, what can be the outcome? Only disorder and lack of peace. When rain falls, there will be water in the channels. How can you hope for water when there is no rain?

Hence, you have to pray at the outset for rain. Only then you can enjoy the flow of water in the rivers. Similarly, you have at the outset to discharge your duties, then you will secure your rights. ¹⁵

8

Lessons from Nature

Because the Divine is inherent in and is the basis of Nature and all that is manifested, Nature can teach Man many lessons if he has the desire to learn. Sai Baba states that the best University for Man is the Universe – meaning that we should observe and regard Nature as our best teacher for the essential lessons of life.

Nature is the Best Teacher

The only true teacher is God. He manifests himself in Nature, which serves as the cosmic teacher. Nature is the best teacher. ¹

Let me tell you this: There is no need for you to follow this person or that person in the search for a Teacher. The heart full of compassion is the altar of God. Nature is the best preacher. Life is the best teacher. Fill yourselves with awe and reverence at the handiwork of God, the manifestation of His power and glory that is called the World. This is enough instruction and enough inspiration for you. ²

Nature is your school, your laboratory, the gateway to liberation, and the panorama of God's manifold majesty. Seek to know the lessons it is ready to teach; all things in Nature are as Brahman as you are. So, any act is Divine; any work is

Divine worship; build the mansion of your life on the strong foundation of the faith that all this is Brahman. ³

Nature is the best teacher for man. Every object, every individual, is offering lessons of various kinds to man every moment. ⁴

Do not try to avoid contact with others or with external Nature. Develop a wider, a universal, outlook. Look upon external Nature as the vestment of God; it is the expression of the will of God, it is the manifestation of His glory, His power, His might, His majesty. See these in every blade of grass, in every floral petal, every slice of fruit. Learn lessons from the river, the mountains, the star and the sky. ⁵

Who takes the role of educator from the beginning of your life? The mother, is it not? Nature is the Mother, the feminine principle, the illusory energy. She is the great teacher. If you do not learn the lessons well, Nature punishes you, boxes you in the ear, hits you on the head. She is a stern merciless instructress; but, if you learn well, she will lead you proudly to the presence of the Supreme Person.

Obey Nature and be well trained by her; then, you can inherit the glory of the Supreme Person. If you disregard her teaching, the Mother gets disgusted with you and the Father too will disregard your entreaties. The commands of Nature given for your good are called righteousness. Have that righteousness as the witness of all your thoughts, words and deeds. Be guided every instant by the dictates of that righteousness and success will be yours. ⁶

The lesson is learned by man, when he studies Nature, analysing it and trying to understand it. It is at the mother's lap that the child learns the art of living; so also, it is Nature that teaches man how to succeed in the hard struggle and win peace. Break the laws of Nature and she boxes you in the ear; obey her commands and listen to her warnings and she will pass on to you your heritage of immortality. That is to say, have the Lord as your guide and guardian and adhere to the rules of righteousness. ⁷

The Lessons from Nature

What is the lesson to be learnt from the observance of Nature? It is excellence in the performance of duty. It is because Nature ceaselessly performs its duty that the world is able to derive so many sacred benefits. ⁸

Every man is a son of Mother Earth. As a mother, she is teaching many lessons to her children. She calls on her children to learn everything from herself instead of going after other preceptors. "Scholars and intellectuals are cutting me to pieces to acquire knowledge and conduct their experiments," laments Mother Earth. "They are subjecting me to great suffering by their diggings and blastings. But I am not worried about all this. Learn this spirit of forbearance from me. Whatever abuse or attack others may level at you, bear them with fortitude. Treat praise or blame, good or bad with equanimity. This is the highest knowledge."

Another vital element in Nature is water, which is also one of the manifestations of the Divine. The lesson that water teaches is: "Son! By nature I am pure, sweet and cool. Purity,

patience and perseverance are three good qualities you have to cultivate.”

Fire is another of Nature’s preceptors. It tells man: “My son! I make no difference between good and bad. I do not gain by burning one thing, or lose by not burning something. I treat all alike whatever comes into my orbit. Learn to see the Divine in all things. This is the way to gain knowledge of the Self.”

I have often said that Nature is the best text-book for one and all. Many valuable things can be learnt from the behaviour of wind, which sustains life by the respiratory process and is all pervading.⁹

With an observant mind man can learn many lessons from the rivers and hills, from birds and beasts, from stars and flowers and from trees. The trees offer cool shade to all who seek it; they do not deny it to anyone on the basis of caste, creed or colour. They offer their fruits to all, irrespective of their social or economic status.¹⁰

Rivers carry water to meet the needs of others. They don’t consume the water they carry. All their water is offered for the benefit of the world. In a spirit of helpfulness, cows offer their milk to the people. They do not consume their milk. However, man, forgetting that he has been endowed with a body for rendering help to others, is immersed in selfish concerns and pursues narrow ends. Man today does not exhibit even a thousandth part of the spirit of selfless help to others shown by the trees, rivers or cows. From sunrise to sunset, man today is steeped in selfish pursuits.¹¹

The mountains, by bearing heat and cold, wind and rain alike, teach man not to care too much for the body. The birds take no thought for the morrow and are content to live on what they can get. They teach man the lesson of contentment and indifference to the future. The departed convey the message of the impermanence of life and its pleasures. Nature thus teaches man in many ways to give up ideas of ‘I’ and ‘mine’ and look upon God as the supreme preceptor. Although Nature has been teaching these lessons from the beginning of time, man has not learnt to give up the ideas of ‘my people’ and ‘others’ and to develop the sense of oneness and equality of mankind and realise his Divinity.

Trees are foremost among teachers. By attachment to the body and developing self-conceit, man forgets the lessons of Nature and wallows in selfishness. The mountains, by their indifference to cold or heat, are teaching man that he should bear joy or grief with an equal mind and strive to realise God. Pleasure and pain relate only to the body. The *Atma* (Soul) is unaffected. This is the lesson to be learned from the mountains.¹²

In the background of mountains, that bear Sun and rain with equal unconcern, of the sea and sky, that are unaffected by storms and clouds, it looks ridiculous that man alone is subject to anxiety and fear. In the company of birds and beasts that do not store food for another day, but are content to leave it to Providence to provide for them, it looks absurd that man alone should spend all his days, calculating and accumulating. No bird casts seed on land to grow food for itself; nor do beasts plough and enclose fields, claiming ‘this is mine, this is for my

children and children's children'.

Action without desire for the benefit is the natural face of activity for the children of God, the progeny of Immortality. They sing and swim, they dance and dive, they talk and walk, they pray and pine, because they must; it is their nature to. They do not know what will happen; as a consequence, they do not care; they do not anticipate any result. They are just themselves when they do these things. It is their innate nature, their inborn characteristic. ¹³

When we examine the life and behaviour of animals, labelled as 'lower', we can learn many lessons for our own betterment. The elephant, the cow and the deer do not harm or eat other animals. They live on leaves or grass or grain. They lead pure lives. Therefore, they receive reverence and worshipful homage of man. On the other hand, the tiger, the leopard and the wolf have cruel natures; they hurt other animals; they eat up the animals they kill. As a consequence, man is ever trying to keep these *rajasic* (passionate) animals at a distance. ¹⁴

9

The Reality of Nature

In western society we grow up and are taught to recognise that gross or material objects are real and anything that cannot be seen or detected with the five senses is unreal or imaginary. Unfortunately for modern Man, the exact opposite is true. Not only are the senses very unreliable but also the material Universe is constantly changing, evolving and destructing – so how can these be real? The spiritual basis is boundless, unchanging pure consciousness with no beginning and no end – that alone is true and real.

Real or Unreal

Is the Universe real? Is it relatively unreal? This problem has been agitating man since ages, in all lands. The realists and the idealists have argued on their explanations for centuries. The scientists or realists believe that the Universe is a conglomeration of atoms in varying patterns which have assumed manifold forms and names, but this is only partially true. The spiritually oriented point out to the materially oriented, that a firm base is essential for all these transformations to happen. The Universe must have a basic force or energy or phenomenon; as basic as clay is to the pot. That fundamental principle is, according to them, the *Atman*.

However, the attempt in which man is engaged today is to deny the clay and build faith in the pot! This process is doomed to fail. The cognisable Universe that is dismissed as untrue must have Truth as its base, as the 'rope' on which the 'snake' is superimposed. That basic Truth is the *Atman*.

Of course the Universe in which we exist is cognised by our senses and we take it as true and real. It cannot be accepted as Truth, for anything that changes does not deserve to be so called. Also, it appears differently to different living beings at different levels of consciousness. Animals, birds and cats are aware of it in different ways and forms. It is shaped and moulded according to the desires and perception of each. How are these created?

The *Atman* enters the body as the Inner Motivator and awakens the thoughts and feelings. In the absence of the *Atman*, the body is inert; in the absence of the body, thoughts do not arise and in the absence of thought, the Universe is not apparent; it is non-existent to the individual. The three are inextricably interdependent - the body (with all the powers of consciousness enclosed in it), the Universe and the *Atman*, either individualised or universally immanent.¹

If you can understand how your dream comes into being, you can know how this Creation came into being. Sleep causes dreams; the *maya* (the deluding power) of the Divine has caused this Creation! This Universe is as unreal as the dream. It is only relatively real; it is not absolutely real.²

Many are affected by the problem of what caused the Cosmos. How did it come into being? They advance various

theories and lay down many opposing hypotheses, but there is no need for seekers to beat about the bush so much. Just as a dream results when one is cut off from reality in a state of sleep, the Cosmos is a result of being cut off from reality by delusion in a state of ignorance. The Cosmos is as ephemeral and as vagarious as a dream.

It is difficult to discover laws that explain or govern its infinite mysteries. More profitable than inquiring into the mysteries is the inquiry into possible ways of benefiting by them and learning from them. It is mostly a waste of time to probe into the origin of the Cosmos or to determine how it will end. You are a part of Creation, so try to understand yourself and keep your goal in view.³

The clouds appear to be stuck to the sky; so, too, *maya* (the tendency to conclude that what the senses tell us is true or to project our preferences and prejudices on to the world around us) gives us an untrue picture of Brahman. It makes us believe that the world is real. Its impact warps our reasoning process, our sensory impressions and our views on God, on Creation and on man. It spreads before us a diversity that tantalises and deceives.⁴

So long as inquiry is postponed, only the multiplicity is cognised, The multiplicity is neither real nor unreal. It is relatively real, temporarily real, pragmatically real, *mithya* - not truth, but an amalgam of truth and untruth, apparently real but fundamentally unreal, real for most practical purposes but unreal when the basic nature is unravelled.⁵

What you consider as real is unreal. What you think is

unreal is the only reality. God alone is the one eternal Reality. Do not forget this wholesome truth. What you regard as real in the waking state does not exist in the dream state. What you experience in the dream state has no reality in the waking state. If there can be such differences in two states of consciousness in a single day, it ill befits man to hug the ever-changing impermanent phenomenal existence, ignoring the eternal Reality. ⁶

The Spiritual and the Material

Both materialism and spiritualism seek the fundamental universal base; one discovers it in matter, the other in the Spirit. The Spirit or *Atman* takes on a form and body to experience and cognise the Universe, just as cotton takes on the form of yarn to be cognised and experienced as cloth. The cloth is both, the yarn and the cotton. Cotton is the fundamental base, the *Atman*. It assumes name and form and becomes yarn (the body), and is finally known as cloth (the Creation), the product of the thoughts emanating from the body. ⁷

Many consider that spirituality has no concern with mundane affairs. Equally, they consider that there is no connection between the physical world and the realm of the Spirit. This is a grievous mistake. One is the base and the other is sustained by it. One is life and the other is the living being. The Cosmos is the synthesis in consciousness of these two (Spirit and matter). To ignore this Universe and to concern yourself with only the Spirit is a form of narrow-mindedness.

You have to develop the conviction that the Divine and the Universe are intimately inter-related. If the phenomenal world

did not exist, one cannot understand anything. Nor can one recognise any truth. The Universe is the basic cause of ideas relating to what is Real and what is unreal. It is impossible to accomplish anything if the world is discarded. Basing yourself on the physical world, you have to aspire for realising the Divine. If you want to realise the Divinity in man, you have to understand the nature of the human estate. ⁸

Without self-knowledge, man is led into the belief that the objective world is true and lasting, and into the neglect of the really true and the really eternal. What is the self? Here too, man mistakenly entertains false beliefs. He holds on to the belief that the self is the body and revels in describing its components and characteristics. He ignores the *Atma*, sublime, serene and ever fresh, Divine Principle that he is. It is the ever-present urge to expand and to illumine. The urge to contract and limit is the feature of the animal. Denying the *Atma*, disregarding its mandate, ignoring its existence --- these are the roots of grief.

Now, about death. The *Atma* has no birth, and so, no death. It is ever-existing, never-disappearing. It has no beginning and no finish. It does not die; neither does it kill nor can it be pronounced inert. It is the witness in each and all. ⁹

The fixed and fundamental attributes are Truth, Knowledge, Infinite. This is the true form of Brahman. These attributes do not change with time, space and the nature of the observer. They penetrate time, space and matter and we perceive them in five aspects: Existence, Consciousness, Bliss, name and form. Three of these - Existence, Consciousness and Bliss - are basic, while the other two - name and form - are

transitional and superficial. It is indisputable that all these features need a Creator, who is immanent, who is their author and contributor.

The Sun, the stars, the Moon, the oceans, the Earth - all these point to the Maker whom we have to accept. There are two causes which together produce any thing: the shaper and the substance. This silver cup must have had a smith who shaped it and silver that he shaped. When you go deep into this process of creation, you will realise that both causes merge into One, the Embodiment of Being, Consciousness and Bliss.

10

One, Not Many

The real nature of God, Nature and man is not understood. Man is but a wave of the ocean that is God. Nature is just a manifestation of the same God, appearing as having diversity, and as good-bad, gentle-cruel, useful-useless, with such other dual attributes. Desire to acquire or anxiety to avoid comes because man is caught in this duality, which is fundamentally a creation of his own mind.¹¹

All this Creation and all this history is His sport, or rather, Himself, Creator, Truth, also, World Truth. Only, world is 'relatively real' until the distinction between Creator and world disappears and then even world is seen to be God, felt as God, known as God. Then you know all is full of the Supreme Being. To be more correct, there is no separate 'all' to be recognised as 'full of'. God alone is one without a second, non-dual, single, eternal, pure and immovable. Who created all this variety from that single? The answer is, there is no

variety at all; so the question makes no sense. No person or force or urge or concatenation of circumstances or accident produced this multiplicity.

There is no multiplicity! The One remains as One. You mistake it as many; the fault is in you; correct your vision, remove your delusion, the Supreme Reality did not change into the relative world; the rope does not change into a snake. Only you mistook it to be a snake. God is God, forever and ever; your ignorance of this fact makes you see it as the world. The world stands on one leg: delusion (*maya*). Cut down that leg and it falls.

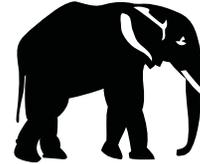
You experience the disappearance of this variety, this multiplicity, this world, this world based on delusion, every day, but you do not hold on to that experience. That is the tragedy! When you are asleep, what happens to your world? In what is all your manifoldness subsumed? What is the source of the feeling of joy which sound sleep brings?

Sleep keeps a tiny trace of the ego as a memento of the world and so, when awake, you are the same deluded individual, pestered by creatures of your own fantasies! That is why I very often tell you not to identify even Me with this particular build-up. But you do not understand. You call Me by one Name only and believe I have one Form only. Remember, there is no name I do not bear, there is no form which is not Mine.¹²

The sages have laid down three categories that comprise the knowable world: God, Nature and the 'I'. God when seen through the mirror of Nature appears as 'I'. Remove the mirror;

there is only God; the image merges in the original. Man is but the image of God. Even Nature is but an appearance of God; the reality is He alone. The principle of appearance that deludes as multiple manifestation, is *maya* (delusion). It is not external to God; it is inherent in God, just as all powers are inherent in Him. ¹³

Nature is a great store where all things that help you to grasp the Truth are found. The Truth is first cognised as 'All is Brahman' - all this is imbued with Brahman, directed by Brahman, composed of Brahman (Eternal Absolute)! Then the seeker rises to a greater awareness, the awareness of 'All this is Brahman', only it appears as something else for a time to the unopened eyes! The final state is one where there is not even an 'all' to be posited as Brahman; there is just Brahman; the one and only. ¹⁴



*The creation emerges from truth and merges into truth,
Is there a place in the cosmos where truth does not exist?
Visualise this pure and unsullied truth. ¹⁵*

10

The Nature of Man

The human mind is readily deluded by the gross and the material, ignoring the subtle and the real. We have to reverse our way of thinking and understand who we truly are by pursuing a spiritual path. Only by this means can we establish our oneness with all life and experience true and lasting happiness. Unlike animals, we are capable of recognising that we are not the body, senses, mind or intelligence; that in fact we are Atma, the Self, God – which is everywhere and one without a second.

The Delusion of Man

We are seeing people being born and people dying. In spite of all that is seen, or heard or experienced, man is unable to get rid of the delusions relating to the body. Hence he is caught up in the coils of bodily attachments. He does not learn the lesson of the impermanence and fleeting nature of physical existence. ¹

The Vedas describe the Divine Entity as *Madhava: Ma* meaning *maya* or delusion and *Dhava* meaning Lord. That is to say, He is the Master of all that is born and therefore dies, changes and therefore, false! Life and death are a part of delusion, of which He is Sovereign. So, all who are bound

by this dual chain have to be loyal to God, and pay homage to Him and obey His order. That is the path to happiness. But, the agent of delusion that is in the human, namely, the mind, does not usually help him in this endeavour. It runs after the shadow, the reflection, the unsubstantial glitter, and discards the gold. It runs through the senses into the outer world and neglects the call of reason for discriminating analysis and renunciation. Man is thus everywhere living a life of shame, far below the level that he can well attain and enjoy. ²

Forgetting his true nature, man spends his life in the pursuit and enjoyment of meretricious and evanescent sensuous pleasures and mundane desires. Does man secure peace, however much he may succeed in indulging in worldly pleasures? No. Ultimately he ends his life in discontent and despair. Ignoring the pure, eternal, infinite, Divine Truth in him, man fosters animal and demonic traits. What is the reason for this betrayal of his true nature, which renders his life meaningless? It is because he neglects the code governing a life based on restraints and righteousness. The old saying is: “Righteousness is at the root of everything. It is the highest virtue.” ³

Man has explored everything in the external world but has failed to know his own true nature. As a result he has created divisiveness. Once he knows his true self, he will have no feeling of divisiveness. He will recognise the oneness of all life. ⁴

Seeing the advances made in science and technology, you have lost balance. Man has learnt to walk on the Moon, to live in the depths of the ocean, to penetrate into the deepest crusts

of earth, but alas, it is a pity, he has not learned how to live on the Earth and to let other men, too, live on the surface of the Earth. How can man achieve happiness and peace of mind, flying high or swimming deep? He has to carry his troubles and worries, fears and failings, with him to those places also. Unless he rids himself of these burdens, he cannot feel light and loveable. Peace has to emerge within; it cannot be added from without. ⁵

“All this is enveloped in God”. Everything and every being are but waves on the surface of the vast unbounded timeless ocean, which is God. Waves belong to the ocean and depend on it for their individual existence; but the ocean has no need of waves. Therefore, you are bound inextricably with all else and all others. The world will inevitably react on you; it will reflect your thoughts and plans: it will resound with your cries and creeds. Your thoughts, words and deeds will shape others, and theirs will shape you. ⁶

The air which one man exhales is inhaled by another and the minute particles of one’s system enter the system of the other person. Seawater becomes the moisture in the air and, gathered together as rain-clouds which feed the fields and gardens, is transformed into edible sweetness. Matter is but the perpetual communion and separation of particles.

The human body has all its component cells replaced by ‘new’ ones during every seven-year period of time. Therefore, how can we pronounce anything as stable, as permanent, as true? This is the reason man does not get contentment or peace. This is the reason man does not get joy, however wealthy or famous he may become. So long as he revels in the trivial

and the temporary, he cannot be happy. It is only when he has discovered the *Atman* and is always deep in the ecstasy of that discovery that he can be in unblemished happiness. In that stage, he is aware that he is eternal and all-knowing, absolute and omniscient. ⁷

The Truth of Man

Man is endowed with the capacity to separate himself from his body and the senses and the mind and the intelligence. He feels and says. “My eyes, my ears, my feet, my hands, my mind, my reason,” etc. He knows, deep down in his consciousness, that he is apart from all these; that he is their user, owner and master. No animal feels itself different from the body; for them, they are the body. They do not know that they are occupants of the physical frames. Man can, by a simple exercise in silent reasoning, discover that the physical frame is unreal and temporary. This should lead to detachment, achieved through analysis, the result of discrimination. ⁸

You feel that there is something behind and beyond all this fleeting fantasy; something that persists through all the successes and defeats, all the tears and smiles, all this mirth and moan; but, you are unable to grasp it and realise that it is the same entity that underlies the entire universe. You are one with most distant star and the least little blade of grass. You shine as dew on the petal of the rose; you swing from star to star; you are part and parcel of all this manifestation. ⁹

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

in. To gain the infinite universal individuality, the miserable little prison, individuality, must go. Devotion is no crying or any negative condition. It is the seeing of all in all we see. It is the heart that reaches the goal. Follow the heart. A pure heart seeks beyond the intellect; it gets inspired.

Whatever we do reacts upon us. If we do good, we shall have happiness and if evil, unhappiness. Within you is the real happiness; within you is the mighty ocean of nectar Divine. Seek it within you, feel it, feel it, it is here, the Self. It is not the body, the mind, the intellect, the brain. It is not the desire of the desiring. It is not the object of desire. Above all these, you are. All these are simply manifestations. You appear as the smiling flower, as the twinkling stars. What is there in the world which can make you desire anything. ¹⁰

The Vedic sages, out of the illumination of their purified intellects, declared in bliss, for all mankind to know: “Thou art That.” “Wisdom is That.” “This I is That.” “I am That.” “I am everything; I am the Supreme.” “I am the One, without a second.” When these depth-stirring declarations reverberate in the heart, men awaken to the vision of Truth. The realisation that you are the *Atman* and that there is nothing except the *Atman* anywhere at any time - this is Self-realisation; it is the realisation of the *Atma* by the *Atma*, of yourself, by yourself, as the Self. ¹¹

God is the One who manifests Himself in the Cosmos with a myriad heads, a myriad eyes and a myriad feet. When this eternal Divinity is so near us we are searching for Him all over the Universe. This is as foolish as the person who goes abegging to his neighbour for milk while the ‘wish-fulfilling

cow’ is in his backyard. It is sheer senselessness on the part of man to search for God outside him when the Divine is within him. ¹²

While the Divine is all-pervasive, man is failing to recognise it. He cannot grasp the air that surrounds him. He is unable to see the light that is within him. The Reality which you are seeking everywhere in the outside world is within you. The Supreme Lord is present inside and outside, everywhere in the Cosmos. Man today looks only at the outside world like any animal. To look inward is the mark of the true human being. Obsessed with the external and losing the internal vision, man has forfeited his power of discrimination. ¹³

Man is basically, essentially, fully, Immortal. He is of the nature of Nectar of Immortality, but yet he is afraid he would die! He is of the nature of Bliss, but yet he weeps that he is miserable. He is of the nature of Peace, yet everywhere he is overlaid with anxiety. This absurd self-deception is the root of the tragedy from which the world suffers today. The truth has to be driven into the consciousness of both the spiritual teachers and the disciples, wherever they may be, in this country or elsewhere. ¹⁴

Recognise Truth

Men today do not recognise the nature of their humanness. How can they recognise their inherent Divinity? It is only when man is aware of his humanness that he will be competent to recognise his Divinity. How, then, is man to recognise his humanness? What is the means? Buddha undertook various enquiries to discover the Divine

and came to the conclusion that it is only through mastery over his senses he can achieve this. Man has to make the right use of his senses for sacred purposes to realise his Divinity.¹⁵

Recognise the Divinity that is manifested in the Cosmos. All things in Nature observe their laws with undeviating regularity. The Sun, the Moon, the seasons observe their respective laws. Man alone violates the laws of his being. Animals obey their instincts and have their seasons for regulating their lives. Man is the exception. He needs to be taught the rules of right living. He has to cultivate morality and integrity.

There is only one way by which this can be done. It is by pursuing the spiritual path. Without spirituality man cannot discover the Light within him.¹⁶

What is spirituality? It is the resolute pursuit of cosmic consciousness. Spirituality aims at enabling man to manifest in all its fullness the Divine cosmic consciousness that is present within and outside him. It means getting rid of the animal nature in man and developing the Divine tendencies in him. It means breaking down the barriers between God and Nature and establishing their essential oneness.¹⁷

Shutting yourself in a room and offering incense and flowers to a picture or image of God, singing or reciting His glory are very poor substitutes for the discipline that will liberate you from ignorance. All beings are images of God; all men are His pictures; then why shut yourselves in?

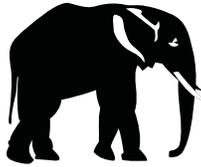
All Creation is marching on a pilgrimage to Him; why

then behave as if you are trekking it alone? You believe that the time spent in church or temple or the domestic shrine in adoration and in ritual worship is devoted to God and the rest is spent for other purposes, but you cannot demarcate and delimit the realms of God and man like that.

God is ever with you everywhere. All this is God. Society is the school where this lesson is taught to those who earnestly seek. The sages of this land resorted to the hermitages in the forests, and mixed with the steadfast seekers there in scholastic discussion and disciplinary practices. They drew inspiration and instruction from each other, and learnt the Truth - this Universe is enveloped in God, that God is the string on which the worlds are strung. When man gives up his conceit and becomes Nature's pupil, rather than its tyrannical master, he can hear her voice advising, admonishing, and illuminating.

Man has all the resources he needs in himself. He can tap them by identifying them and manifesting them, and by sharing them with others. He is Being, Awareness and Bliss; he is the form of Divine-energy. When man extols himself, he is extolling God. Do not cultivate the conviction that you are mere men; be assured that you are destined for Divinity.¹⁸

Journey without Distance



The sun derives its energy and effulgence from the Divine cosmic source. It is the same cosmic source that accounts for the power of the human mind and the marvellous power of the eye to see the most distant star. With this power of sight, man is able to see the entire creation. There is no greater power than this. This boundless power is being recognised and exercised by each according to the level of his development. Because of man's ability to manifest the divine boundless cosmic energy, man is described as a manifestation of the Divine. Humanness lies in manifesting what is hidden and invisible to man.¹⁹

Humans try to search for the meaning of life and the answers to spiritual questions outside themselves. Doubting our worthiness and inherent truth as a result of pre-occupation with the senses and the material, we fail to search inside ourselves with the same level of vigour that we pursue career and accumulation of possessions. But Man has the unique ability to discover and experience his true reality by controlling the mind, destroying the ego and allowing the Divinity within to manifest.

Do Not Doubt God

If you deny God, it is as if you deny yourself. There is no God, you declare, but you assert that "I exist." Well, who is that 'I' that exists, that exists throughout the varying stages of growth, physical and mental, in joy and in grief? That 'I' is God; believe it. For that 'I' sees with the eye, tastes with the tongue, walks with the feet, argues with the intelligence, but all the while it is conscious that it is separate from all these.

When you affirm, "There is no God," you first assert and then declare the absence of that entity. You assert the non-existence of something that "is". That 'I' must be conceived

as a wave of the ocean of God, not as the first person singular. That 'first' person leads you into the world of fear and greed. My house, my village, my community, my district, my language - it entangles itself thus more and more inextricably. ¹

You see a plane zooming in the sky; someone tells you that it is flown by a pilot, but you refuse to believe, because you do not see him from where you are. Is this correct? You must go into the plane to see the pilot; you cannot deny his existence, standing on the ground. You have to guess that the plane must have a pilot. So too, seeing the Universe, you have to guess the existence of God, not deny Him because you are not able to see him. People do not believe in God, but they believe newspapers and the news they publish about things they do not see or cannot see. They believe what their ears hear more than what their eyes see or minds experience. A blind man is in darkness and when he denies there is light, we need not attach any value to his denial. ²

Another irreverence that is harming progress is the cynical sneer with which the younger generation has been taught to welcome all reference to God and religion. "Who is this God? Where is He to be found? What does He do there?" they ask in derision. When a wandering monk was accosted thus by a gang of villagers, he asked them casually to bring him a basin of milk. He looked long at it, stirred it with his finger, shook it around and was silent all the time. The villagers asked him why and he replied, "I am trying to locate the butter that they say is in milk. I do not see any in this basin-full of milk." The gang laughed at his colossal ignorance. They told him the butter was there, in every drop of the milk, though he could not see it with his eyes or take it out with his finger; it had to

be curdled, churned and collected, that was all.

The monk declared, "So too, God is immanent in the Universe; He is in the most distant star as well as the blade of grass under your feet. You can see Him provided you curdle this Universe with discrimination, churn it with detachment and collect it with earnestness. In the grain of sand as well as in the grandest galaxy, God can be found by diligent spiritual practice. He is the core of every being, as butter is in every drop of the milk." Like a lighted lamp, God's Grace spreads all round, on all who approach Him and love to go near him; but if you interpose a shade which shuts out the light from you, you have only yourself to blame if Grace does not shine.

³

God is and can be only One, not more! "There is only one God and He is omnipresent! There is only one religion, the religion of Love. There is only one language, the language of the Heart." This God has to be visualised by means of constant spiritual discipline. Do not involve yourselves in doubts and hesitations. If only you observe the disciplines and purify the consciousness, you can see the God installed in your heart. There is sugar in the cup, but the water is insipid, for you have not stirred it well. There is God in the world, and by stirring the Divine well into every drop or atom thereof, you can make the world a sweet thing to live by. ⁴

You may complain that God is hard and heartless, since He does not respond to prayer, give signs from His pictures, speak from 'nowhere' in clear unambiguous terms, assuaging, assuring, advising - but, let Me tell you, God is Love; Love is God; His form is Love; His essential nature is Bliss; His Life-

blood is Truth. When even the stony cliff echoes your voice and responds when you cry, will not the softest, sweetest, love-filled heart of God respond? When there is no response, infer that there is something wanting in the cry. Perhaps the cry is hollow, insincere, mere play acting, set to a pattern, addressed to someone alien to oneself, taken to be far away and distant, as a tyrant or taskmaster. ⁵

Recognise You Are Divine

Why does man wail when he arrives into the world, whimper throughout his life and groan out into the beyond, lamenting that his sojourn here was a waste of years? Man does so, because he is unaware of his glory, of his high destiny. He is the Divine poured into the human mould, just as everything else, alive or inert, is but it is the privilege of man alone, to be able to become aware of this precious truth! This is the message of the Upanishads to man. This message is echoed by the scriptures, and in the declarations of countless saints. Yet, man turns a deaf ear to it, perhaps due to his own misfortune created by his own misdeeds in past lives. He can derive bliss through the contemplation of his Divinity, or the Divine as represented by all that he sees, hears, tastes, touches or smells outside himself.

Brahman is immanent in all. What an inexhaustible source of Bliss lies inside or outside you! Only you have to develop the mind that will respond to the call that will recognise the Truth. The baby in the cradle is the very picture of bliss; when it cries out of grief, we run towards it, for it is against its nature to be sad. Man too is essentially Bliss. Misery is alien to his make-up. ⁶

All who come embodied are Avatars, that is to say, advents of the Divine, manifestations of God. What, then, is the special feature of Rama, Krishna, Buddha, Christ? Why do you celebrate their birthdays with such reverential enthusiasm? The speciality is this: they are aware; you are unaware of the *Atma*, which is the Truth. Awareness confers grace, glory, majesty, might, splendour. Awareness confers liberation from bounds, from time, space and causation, from sleep, dream and wakefulness. For you, sleep is inaction, dream is fantasy and wakefulness a many-directional storm. *Avataras* (Incarnations of God) are ever alert, aware, alight. ⁷

Just think of this for a while. You are in this body, in this receptacle, in order to realise the God you really are. This body is the cocoon you have spun round yourselves, by means of your impulses and desires. Use it while it lasts, to grow wings so that you can escape from it! You came into this world crying, announcing your grief at being thrust into it, grief for having lost hold on God. Having come with grief, decide not to go with it, from here. Get rid of it in this life, itself. ⁸

You are not limited by any name; a baby has no name stuck on it when it is born. The name is a label fixed later, for the sake of social convenience. But, you start identifying yourself with the label! You answer giving your name, when you are asked, "Who are you?" The name separates; it distinguishes; it announces the divisive characteristics of language, religion, caste, race etc. Go beyond the name to the individual, beyond the individual to the God who is installed in the heart, then kinship is cognised and Love streams forth! ⁹

Each body that you see before you is a mirror in which, if only you open your eyes, you can see the image of God. The God in you is in each of them, too. Do not imagine the others to be distinct, they are only you, in so many mirrors. The world is filled with your kith and kin; all are sparks from the same flame.

¹⁰

Realise Your True Self

We are trying to discover God, searching for Him throughout the Universe, but we omit to investigate His existence within ourselves, as the very core and keystone of our Being. When you discover your Self, all wailing ceases and you attain supreme happiness. This is real Self-knowledge. ¹¹

Until you realise that you are Divine, that God is your core and reality, you will have to undergo these entrances and exits; the same newspaper should not be poured over again and again, day after day. One life must be enough to know the mystery, so at least recognise that there is a mystery, search for the secret, and unravel it for yourself. ¹²

All that you see in the Cosmos - the moving and stationary objects - is a manifestation of the *Atma*. In the spiritual realm, what you hear at every step is the *Atma*. What is seen is *Atma*. What makes you forget is also *Atma*. That is why Krishna declared to Arjuna: "In this Universe there is nothing that is not *Atma*." What man needs today is to take the resolve to realise the *Atma*. This is tantamount to realising one's true Self. It is knowledge of the Self. ¹³

Practise self-examination: "Who am I? Am I the mind stuff,

the will, the discriminating faculty, the intellect, the senses, the body, the limbs?" Realise that you are not any of these or all of these. You are the breath of God; it is through Him that you are alive, active, aware. But, when you are asked where God is, you point your finger towards the sky, and say, "Up above!" When someone asks you where Swami is, you say, "Upstairs" and point towards the room on the first floor! You know that I am by your side also. ¹⁴

Running after momentary joy, people exile themselves from the Kingdom of God. The value of human birth consists in this: it is only from humanhood that Godhood can be reached and realised. Contemplate on this unique good luck today; use it not for feasting but plan your future, so that the goal is quickly attained. ¹⁵

Strive - that is your duty. Yearn - that is your task. Struggle - that is your assignment. If only you do these, sincerely and steadily, God cannot keep back for long the reward of Realisation. The river strives, yearns and struggles to merge with the sea from which it came. It has that consummation ever alert in its consciousness. It attempts to make itself pure and pellucid, so that it may be welcome by its source. It overcomes every obstacle of terrain in order to journey successfully towards its goal.

Man too must utilise all the physical, mental, intellectual, moral and material endowments that God has granted him so that he may journey to the goal of Realisation. ¹⁶

12

Live as God

We can realise our Divinity and experience our true nature – which is being, awareness and bliss. Sai Baba prescribes simple but effective means for each of us to reach our fulfillment before the body dies. The constant awareness of Divinity and expression of unity, also experienced as love, can lead us to the highest realms of reality – the experience of our own immortal nature which is God.

Lead a Meaningful Life

Always have the meaning and purpose of life in view, and experience that purpose and that meaning. You are That, that is the truth. You and the Universal are one; you and the Absolute are one; you and the Eternal are one. You are not the Individual, the particular, the temporary. Feel this, know this, act in conformity with this. ¹

God is not involved in either rewards or punishments. He only re-flects, re-sounds and re-acts! He is the Eternal Unaffected Witness! You decide your own fate. Do good, be good, you get good in return; be bad, do bad deeds, you reap bad results. Do not thank or blame God. Thank yourself, blame yourself! He does not even will that creation, protection and destruction shall take place. They follow the same law, the innate law of the

delusion-ridden Universe. ²

Man has known about everything else, except death. Why should a person die? Of what benefit is it to die? Why does he die? The answer is: in order that he may not die again; he is born, so that he may not get born again. Having been born, man earns and acquires land, riches, materials, grain, articles of comfort and luxury, which he feels will give him happiness and which therefore become the objects of his struggle. But the object of realising God is forgotten. You may ask, why should any one seek good company, do good deeds, direct his mind towards good thoughts? You are listening to Me and what do you get when you so listen? You agree that I am giving you Bliss, don't you? Well what do you give Me in return? Give Me the following: of what I am telling you, practise what I teach, that is enough. That is all I ask.

Man should not die like a cat or a dog. He should leave the world better and happier than when he came into it. He must get away, full of gratitude for the chance given to him to see God in everything that he saw, heard, touched, smelt and tasted. He must remember the Lord, with his last breath. To get that recollection, a lifetime of practice is needed. ³

The king of death does not bring a noose when he comes to drag people to his abode; the noose is made by the victim himself and he has it ready round his neck, awaiting the arrival of the end. It is the noose resulting from action which each manufactures and winds round himself that ultimately drags him away.

Become aware of your reality and you will lose the sense of

identification with the body. That will make you disease-free. You will have perfect 'ease'. This is quite easy, understanding that you are not the body. For you are practising this truth every day, for at least six hours, ever since birth! If that cannot teach you, I wonder which can. Every day, when you sleep, where are you? Who are you? Your senses are inoperative, your intelligence is in abeyance: your mind creates a world of its own and after playing in it for sometime, it lapses into inactivity. That is sleep, the nearest you reach in your journey to Samadhi (super-conscious state).⁴

Meditate on the truth and you will find that you are but a sparkling bubble upon the waters; born on water, living for a brief moment on water and dying upon its breast, merging in it. You owe your birth to God, you subsist on God and you merge in God. Every living thing has to reach that consummation; why, every non-living thing too. So do it now; take the first step, purify the heart, sharpen the intellect or at least begin the recital of the name of the Lord.⁵

Cultivate Good Feelings

You must understand the wonderful human life created by God. God created everything in the world and entrusted man with the responsibility to look after them. God allowed man to use things in the world as he wished, but on one condition - he has to suffer the consequences of his actions, good or bad. So, you have to do good deeds if you want to experience good results. Doing bad deeds, man wants to enjoy good and beneficial results. It is folly to expect good results from bad deeds.

Nature is like a mirror that reflects only the object before it. In every human being, good and bad are co-existing. One should strive only to do good deeds - that alone will lead one to liberation. Liberation is not an object that can be acquired from outside. It is a way of life itself. When you follow your inherent nature and cultivate good feelings you can attain liberation from worldly bondage.⁶

God incarnates for the revival of righteousness, which includes morality, truth, virtue, love and a host of other qualities that uphold the communities of man as well as the individual. The other purposes usually given - such as serving the devoted, destroying the wicked, re-establishing the sacred tradition - these are all secondary. For, he who is righteous will be guarded from harm by righteousness itself; he who is unrighteous will fall into disaster through the evil that he perpetrates. The one task includes all else.⁷

The fire of spirituality burns equally in the theist, who declares constantly that God exists, and in the atheist, who repeatedly denies the existence of God. The feelings of love are present in the heart of the atheist, no less than in the heart of the believer. But, the feelings of love of the theist are directed towards God. The atheist's love is turned towards Nature. Because of his love for the objects of the world, the latter gets bound. When he directs that love towards God, he will become the instrument of his own liberation. Love is the impelling force for both bondage and liberation. That love is a manifestation of the Divine.⁸

The Divine is the inner core of all beings, near and far, big or small. Expand your consciousness to its uttermost limits.

Really speaking, it has no limits at all. This cannot be done on an instalment plan, or on a cash-down basis! No, it is possible only through an inner transformation, through meditation, prayer, or repeating the Name, in the constant contemplation of the Supreme Majesty that is in you. Once you reveal to yourself that Majesty, you can be an effective instrument for service and uplift, among the depressed and the distressed around you.

The Divine sprouts in the heart, grows in the consciousness, and blooms in all the mental and physical activities of man. Now the Divine Principle is beyond your experience, because you are not ready to give your best to others, who also contain the self-same Principle. When you are ready to give, you are entitled to take, not until then.⁹

It is mostly a question of the final goal that man sets before himself in life. The goal has to be realisation of the unity of the Self with the Overself. Why else should the Self take this human form? If mere 'living' or even 'happy living' was the goal, the Self could have been encased in the form of birds or beasts.

The very fact that man is equipped with memory, mind, intelligence, discrimination, ability to anticipate the future, desire to detach himself from the senses, etc., is an indication that he is destined for some higher goal. In spite of this, if man craves for a lesser consummation, he is a sinner. But, he who persists, in spite of temptations and obstacles, on the path that leads to self-fulfilment and self-realisation, is a *gopi* (person who has subdued the senses), for the *gopis* of Brindavan were the most inspiring examples of such souls.

The most effective discipline that man can adopt to attain this lofty goal, is the control and conquest of the five senses. Avoid the errors and evils that the eye, the ear, the tongue, the mind and the hand are prone to commit.¹⁰

Love is the Basis

The quest for God does not mean doing singing of devotional songs, prayer, worship and the like. These are merely means for achieving mental concentration and subduing desires and aversions. Why cry out, asking: "Where is God?" He resides in the heart. Offer service and receive Love. Thereby experience the bliss of Self-realisation.¹¹

Turning the beads of a rosary between the fingers or sitting erect contemplating the tip of the nose are only harmless ways of spending time; active participation in society in a spirit of dedication and surrender, conceiving all acts as acts of worship, all men as embodiments of the Supreme, is a more beneficial form of spiritual practice. For there is no spot where He is not, no object which is not He. For, as the Holy Scripture declares, 'He willed that He become all this!' Worship, adoration, and pilgrimage cannot be the end-all! The goal is the realisation of, "I am He, He is I." That alone can fill the heart with Bliss.

When you separate yourself as an individual, envy, resentment, jealousy and pride start defiling you. Love alone can weld you into kinship with all. You are Siva-sakthi (father-mother, inseparable aspects of the one Reality), the latent-potent, positive-negative, inert-alert principle. Be ever cognisant of this secret truth about yourself.¹²

To attain God, feats of hard spiritual practice are superfluous. Love is enough; avoid hating, envying or even disliking anyone. Put love into practice through selfless service. When the loveliness of the seed blooms, you have the flower. And God is the loveliness that blooms as man! ¹³

God is all-powerful; God is everywhere; God is all-knowing. To adore such a formidable limitless Principle, man spends a few minutes out of the 24 hours, and uses a minute idol or image or picture! It is indeed ridiculous; it is practically futile. Adore Him so long as you have breath, so long as you are conscious. Have no other thought than God, no other aim than knowing His command, no other activity than translating that command into action. That is what is meant by surrender. Render yourself unto Him. ¹⁴

The dominion of God is horizonless; it envelops space and even beyond it. So do not allow the needs of worship to put blinkers on your eye. Do not hate other names or other forms of the same Supra-cosmic Magnificence. For hate breeds fear; hate is the seedbed of anxiety, scandal and falsehood. It drains your mind of peace. You may have light without oil, fire without smoke, breeze without a bearer fanning you, a chilliness in the air of your room in the sizzling heat of summer but unless you are at peace with yourselves and with those around you, your pulse will be quick and your blood will be racing in rage and rancour. Love alone can alleviate anxiety and allay fear. ¹⁵

Man is a spark of the Divine; he must manifest the Divine in every activity of his. Activity is his lot; he cannot exist without the physical activity of breathing, or the mental activity

of thought. With every breath, he must inhale the experience of 'I am That' (*Soham*); with every thought, he must express and experience his Divine affiliation.

God is Love; Love is the divinest quality that man can cultivate and confer on himself. Be born in Love, die in Love; live in Love. That is to say, emerge from God and merge in God; be the wave on the ocean of Love. You should not die; you should merge and fulfil yourself. That is the destiny, that is the destination. ¹⁶

The spark of Love in you has to be cherished and fed so that it may reach God; then, every being will be God, every act will be Divine; every reaction you get from the outside world will be charged with Love and sweetened with that nectar.

You love the God in all beings and the God in all beings responds with love. Love God, though tribulation may be your lot; love Him though you are refused and rebuked; for, it is only in the crucible of travail that the metal is purified and cleared of blemish. Adoration of God has to be through one name and one form but that should not limit your loyalty to that particular province only. ¹⁷

Devotion means giving up all other desires and dedicating all actions and thoughts to God. When you offer every act of yours to God, it becomes worship. Everything you do must be done as an offering to God. The body has been described as the temple of God. You must fill yourself with the feeling that God is in you, beside you, around you and with you, wherever you go. When you love God with this consciousness, the love results in Self-realisation. ¹⁸

Believe that God resides in all beings; speak such words as would spread goodness, truth and beauty; do such acts as would promote the happiness and prosperity of all; pray that all worlds have Peace. Expand yourselves; do not contract into your own tiny individuality. Expand into Universal Love, unshaken equanimity, and ever-active virtue. That is the path that will bring out the Divinity in you to the fullest. ¹⁹

Remember that with every step, you are nearing God; and God too, takes ten steps towards you when you take one step towards Him. There is no stopping place in this pilgrimage; it is one continuous journey, through day and night; through valley and desert; through tears and smiles; through death and birth, through tomb and womb.

When the road ends, and the Goal is gained, the pilgrim finds that he has travelled only from himself to himself, that the way was long and lonesome, but the God that led him unto it was all the while in him, around him, with him, and beside him! He himself was always Divine. His yearning to merge in God was but the sea calling to the Ocean! Man loves, because he is Love! He craves for melody and harmony, because he is Melody and Harmony. He seeks joy, for he is Joy. He thirsts for God, for he is composed of God, and he cannot exist without Him. ²⁰

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❖031192 or Nov 92 indicates the words were given in a discourse on that date, in this case on the 3rd November 1992. All the discourses recorded in Sanathana Sarathi or Sathya Sai Speaks indicate the date of the discourse.

❖Prashanthi Vahini, 17 can be found in the Vahini series, in this case from 'Prashanthi (Supreme Peace) Vahini' and appears on page 17. The page number is different in some editions.

❖SS Oct 88, 269 indicates page 269 in the October 1988 issue of Sanathana Sarathi.

Similarly, other source books are indicated by the abbreviated name and page number.

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Glossary of Terms

Sanskrit	English		
Atma, Atman	The real self, one's divinity, the soul which is the reality; it is imperishable.	Madhava	destiny or fate; action or activity.
Brahma	The Creator in the Hindu Trinity.	Maya	The creative principle that desired the very first desire; the primal illusion; delusion.
Brahmam, Brahman	The universal, all-pervasive, immanent, nameless, formless, eternal absolute Principle, beyond time and space.	Narayana	The Creator, the Lord, the Primal Person.
Gita, Bhagavad Gita	Book 'The Song of God', story of Krishna.	Paramatman, Paramatma	Universal Absolute, Universal Soul, God, Supreme Self.
Gunas	Human characteristics or attributes; there are three -rajasic, thamasic and sathwic.	Rajasic (guna)	The passionate, active, potent characteristic.
Iswara	God, the Super-will, the Creator.	Sathwic (guna)	The pure, serene, calm, unselfish characteristic.
Karma	A universal inescapable obligation or duty;	Siva	The Destroyer of Creation in the Hindu Trinity.
		Thamasic (guna)	The dull, inactive, inert characteristic.

Vedas, Vedic

Ancient knowledge,
scriptures.

Vishnu

The Protector and
Preserver of Creation
in the Hindu Trinity.