

2. Spiritual significance of festivals

*Like the oil latent in the thil seed,
Like ghee latent in milk,
Like the fragrance latent in a flower,
Like the juice latent in a fruit,
Like the fire latent in a faggot,
The Divine is immanent in every human being.*

*Just as the power of sight is present in the eye,
The power of hearing in the ear,
The sense of taste in the tongue,
Divinity is present in a subtle form as Chaithanya.*

*Remaining invisible in the visible phenomenal world,
The consciousness that shines in the cosmos
Is the form of the Aathma which sustains everything,
Like the thread in a garland of gems.*

EMBODIMENTS of Divine Love! Man engages himself in many exercises in his life. No single achievement satisfies man or society. Man constantly strives to accomplish more things. Today men seem to revel in dissatisfaction.

Youth today do not appear to be seriously concerned about how to face a rapidly changing world. The preparedness to sacrifice everything for achieving a noble objective is hardly present among the young.

Success in life consists in recognizing the truth of one's being. But youth today do not make any effort to find the Truth that is the Eternal Reality. They are prepared to go through any amount of trouble to acquire knowledge that is related to the physical and the transient. They do not make the slightest effort to comprehend the Divine that is all-pervading, that will confer enduring bliss and make one's life meaningful and worthwhile.

Festivals in Bharath have been designed to promote awareness of this truth. Their inner significance as well as their scientific basis have to be understood.

Four important transits of the Sun in a year

Every month the Sun moves into a new house in the Zodiac. This movement is called *Sankramana*. In a year the Sun transits twelve houses of the Zodiac. Of these movements four are important. *Makara Sankramana* is the first one. It relates to the entry of the Sun into *Makara* (Capricorn) from *Dhanus* (Sagittarius). The second one is *Thula Sankramana* the entry of the Sun into the zodiacal sign *Thula* (Libra). The third is *Mesha Sankramana*--moving into the sign

Mesha (Aries). The fourth one is *Shashi Sankramana*--entry into the Moon sign (Cancer). Of the four, the most important and sacred is *Makara Sankramana*. This marks the apparent movement of the Sun from the south to the north. The northward movement of the Sun is considered highly significant, both spiritually and scientifically. It has immense spiritual meaning.

The inner meaning of the Sun's northward journey has to be properly understood. The north is represented by Himaachala. *Hima* means snow. It is pure, untainted and extremely cool. All these endow it with the quality of *Prashaanthi* (perfect peace). *Achala* means that which is steady and unshakeable. Himaachala does not refer to the physical Himaalayan region. It represents that which is cool, peaceful and steady. From today the Sun is said to move towards such a state. The Sun symbolises the vision of man. The northward movement of the Sun is a call to human beings to turn their vision towards that which is cool, peaceful and unchanging. This means that men should direct their vision inwards. This is the lesson taught by the Sun.

Uttharaayana is an occasion to develop inward vision

Man's vision should not be confined solely to the external objects and worldly things which are transient and perishable. Man has been given this vision so that he may see the pure, sacred Divine consciousness abiding in his heart. The northward motion of the Sun--*Uttharaayana*--is the appropriate occasion for developing this inward vision. This is the royal road for the spiritual aspirant to realise the Supreme.

It is not enough, therefore, merely to recognise the northward movement of the Sun in this period. Every effort should be made to direct the vision inwards towards the pure, sacred Indwelling Self. This is the period for cherishing sacred thoughts and performing holy deeds. The sages and seers of ancient times used to wait for the arrival of the *Uttharaayana* to embark on their sacred tasks. The great warrior, Bhishma, lay on a bed of arrows for 56 days on the battlefield, awaiting the arrival of *Uttharaayana* as the right time for giving up the ghost. The scriptures have declared that those who pass on during *the Uttharaayana* have no rebirth. This does not mean that one should hang himself in *Uttharaayana* in the hope of securing freedom from rebirth! The right way to give up one's life is to fill one's mind with holy thoughts and let the end come in the natural course.

Sage Vaalmeeke wished to distribute the composition of hundred crore verses on the Raamaayana to the denizens of the three worlds in equal measure. After this was done, only two letters remained, which were offered to people in all the worlds for recitation. The two letters spell the names of Raama, Krishna, Hari, Eesha and Saayee.

Man should abide by the laws of the Creator

This illustrates how Bhaaratheeyas attempted to sanctify every holy festival by dedicating themselves to the chanting of God's name and to other spiritual activities. Youths today should realise that festivals in Bhaarith are not intended for feasting and pompous celebration but for concentration on devotional activities.

For mankind, the Sun is the most important entity in creation. When the Sun himself is proceeding northwards, why should not humanity direct its vision Godward? Men today are a prey to many troubles because their vision is diverted towards ungodly objects. Man should abide by the laws of the Creator. Otherwise humanity is doomed. Religious festivals are observed all over the world for the purpose of raising humanity to a 'higher level of consciousness and conduct.

***Pushyamaasa* brings with it a season of joy**

From this day, the Sun wears a peaceful and pleasing aspect. The nights get longer and the days become shorter. The day marks the beginning of the harvest season. As the crops are brought home, the granaries are full and joy reigns everywhere. A cool breeze blows all the time. Farmers sing with full-throated joy from their fields in the moonlight. The cold dew drops on the fields shine like garlands of gems. The chrysanthemums are in full bloom.

This month, known as *Pushyamaasa* (according to the Hindhu almanac) is noted for the peacefulness, prosperity and joy which it brings with it. Hence it is regarded with special distinction. Unless men give up their bad thoughts and actions, the month, however great in itself, will be of no avail. The observance of *Uttharaayana* should be marked by spiritual transformation of the people and not by lavish feasting and revelry.

In connection with *Sankraanthi*, many auspicious functions are arranged. Newly wedded bridegrooms are invited to the brides houses. Sacred bulls are taken from house to house by traditional performers who relate the Raamaayana story with the bulls playing their own role in it. In this way, with songs, plays and discourses, they celebrate the festival. The songs and plays had a sacred role in the celebrations.

Unfortunately today music and sports have been commercialized. There is a price for every game, whether it is cricket or football or any other game. The sacred character of the games and dramas of the past has been tainted by the money nexus.

It is clear that originally sports were promoted in the interests of health and strength. People took part in games for the improvement of their physique and to provide *entertainment* to the public. There was a time when a musician, if invited to sing songs at a wedding in his locality, would readily oblige. But today the musician will ask, "How much will you give me for my performance?" Singers have become sinners. Their music does not confer joy on the listeners because they sing, not out of the fullness of their heart, but for the sake of money and name.

This was not the case in olden days. The performers with the sacred Gangi bulls used to gather in the centre of the village and provide *entertainment* as the members of one large family. Little children used to join in the fun, singing songs to gather all the children to watch the performance of the bulls.

Sports should form an integral part of studies

This month witnessed the annual sports meet of our students. I don't like to comment about students elsewhere, but I do wish to say something about the accomplishments of our students. Indeed, the students participated in the sports and games with great enthusiasm. Sports form an integral part of the scheme of studies in our institutions, along with various academic subjects like Physics and Chemistry. That being the case, why does not everyone take part in them? Not only should there be participation, but there should also be an awareness of the philosophy and principles governing the sports and games. The aim in sports should not be victory by any means, fair or foul. Whoever may win, others should greet it with fraternal feelings. The rules of the game should be strictly observed. Prizes do not matter. What is important is the sense of self-satisfaction derived from playing the game well.

Students enthusiasm in preparing for activities

Looking forward to the sports meet, the students have been enthusiastically practising for nearly a month. In other universities, sports activities are supported by grants from the U.G.C. or other agencies. In the Sathya Sai Institute, no request is made to any outside agency for funds to pay the teachers salaries or to meet medical or other expenses. Education is provided *free* of fees, from kindergarten to Post-graduate studies. No fees are collected for sports, library, or other amenities. Not did the Central Trust or the College offer any funds for the sports programme. We do not desire to proclaim to the world the spirit of sacrifice and dedication of our students. We only express our own satisfaction with the performance of our students.

In the preparations for the sports and cultural meet, all the expenses have been met by teachers and students out of their voluntary contributions. No one knows, not even the Registrar or the Vice-Chancellor, how this is done. It is rare to find students of such an exemplary nature, who cooperate with each other in a spirit of brotherhood. In all the three campuses--Brindhaavan, Ananthapur and Prashaanthi Nilayam--the dresses and other materials required for their programmes were got from their own resources.

Kudos to primary school children

Special mention should be made about what the Primary School did. If we make an earnest and truthful enquiry into what is happening all over the world, we will find that where women are in charge of schools, everything is done well. The children are well taught. The teachers concentrate on their duties, without diversions of any kind. Consequently, whatever they do is pleasing to the eyes, the ears and the heart. Look at the way the teachers look after little children in the primary school. You all know what trouble it is to look after a single child in the home. You can well imagine what an ordeal it is to look after eleven hundred young children. There are a large number of children between the ages of four and five. What discipline they displayed in their performances in sports! Their eating, dressing and other activities are regulated from a tender age. The world outside does not know what is being done here. Even many in Prashaanthi Nilayam do not know the facts.

The teachers, the Warden and the Principal are engaged in teaching work all during the day They work all through the night, preparing the dresses for the sports events. All the dresses worn by the children were stitched at night by the teachers. My heart melts when I look at these teachers. Their eyes are swollen owing to sleepless work. When you see the children perform in their multicoloured dresses, the scene looks like a glorious garden blooming with flowers of all kinds. When the children come out in formation for their mass drill, you cannot see who is directing them. Every movement of theirs is regulated by themselves in perfect co-ordination and harmony Imagine what it costs to make these dresses. They are made from expensive material and each dress differs from another. All these are made by the teachers themselves. The children feel that Svaami has given them free education and they must show their gratitude to Svaami at least once a year by such activities, whatever sacrifice they may call for.

Decline of discipline as students go to high schools

This disciplined training which the children receive in the primary school sustains them till they go to the Higher Secondary School. There, the temperature (the degree of enthusiasm among them) goes down a little. What is the reason? The encouragement and inspiration they receive get reduced. But, even in the Secondary School the teachers work day and night. Thereby, they

maintain the standards built up in the primary school. But by the time the students reach the Institute (University) level, the "temperature falls below normal." The discipline deteriorates. The reason is the failure of the Institute authorities to take sustained interest in the students. The teachers are mainly concerned with carrying out their teaching duties; and are not concerned about the welfare of the students as a whole. They do not try to preserve what had been built up earlier.

Nevertheless, most students who have come from the primary school adhere to the discipline they have learnt and by and large, continue to observe it. It is association with students who have come from outside which erodes their discipline and spoils them.

It is the duty of every Institute teacher to see that the discipline inculcated in the primary school is maintained in the Institute. Look at the manner in which pay-scales are being laid down by the University Grants Commission and the manner in which dearness allowance is being fixed. This is contributing to the rise in prices.

Employees in general should consider whether they are doing work commensurate with the emoluments they are receiving. There is more emphasis on rights than on responsibilities. If people in general discharge their duties properly, the country would make remarkable progress.

Students devotion to Svaami

From this new year people should develop a broad outlook and consider the interests of others as much as of their own. In our Institute the situation is very good. Our teachers and students mingle with each other in friendly spirit and the teachers coach the lagging students outside their class hours. Whether you believe it or not, there is no University in India which maintains such discipline and educational standards as our Institute. We do not publicize our performance. For instance, in the last All-India Xth standard examinations, our students got high ranks at the national level.

The student who came first in the country received an award from the Centre. Svaami asked him to go to Delhi to receive the award from the President. But the boy said: "I did not study for getting the President's or the Prime Minister's award. I studied to earn the approbation of Svaami. Svaami's satisfaction is enough for me. That is the biggest award." Such is the high-minded attitude of our students.

The children's hearts are pure, unsullied and sacred. If these qualities are praised, it is not for proclaiming them to the public, but to infuse enthusiasm in the students and encourage them to do better. When some students came to Svaami and exclaimed: "I have secured 'O' grade," Svaami told them, "The 'O' grade has been given for your studies, not to you. It is only when you put into practice what you have studied that the 'O' grade or degree will belong to you." Many persons attach the degrees to their names. The degree will be really theirs, and not to the studies they made, when they act upto that knowledge represented by the degrees. One is a hero in learning and a zero in practice. What is required is the application of the knowledge acquired in daily life. Only then the degrees really become yours.

Knowledge and service should go together

What service are you able to render to the rural population by your knowledge? You are concerned more about your careers and the earnings which may be got from your degrees. This should not be the main concern of students to-day. You must consider how far your knowledge is

of benefit to society. You must ensure the peace and security of society. That should be the principal aim of the students.

Students! You have done well in your studies as well as in sports. What Svaami wants from you is that you should conduct yourselves when you go out into the outside world in the same spirit of discipline and devotion, which you display here. You must realise that it is only in our Institute that the students have the opportunity to have continuous contact with the Chancellor Himself from day to day. You must make good use of it and hold yourselves forth as models for the world.

Spiritual practice is as important as education

Students should realise that spiritual practice is as important as secular education. You should realise how much you owe to God for all the benefits you enjoy in life which are really gifts from God, including the air you breathe and the water you drink. Should you not be grateful to God for all this? Without gratitude, life is meaningless. Be loving even towards those who hate you. Control your anger and other evil tendencies. I conclude My discourse with an advice to the Principals and Wardens of all the four campuses to co-ordinate their sports programmes in the coming years to avoid duplication of the same items. I call upon all teachers and the Vice-Chancellor and the Registrar to involve themselves in sports activities and encourage the students in every way.

As regards the Sathya Sai Super-Speciality Hospital, there is no hospital like it anywhere in the world, giving totally free treatment. Not are there doctors rendering free and dedicated service as in our hospital. Svaami is spending crores on the hospital. The money is spent with scrupulous care. Not a *naya paisa* is wasted. Many devotees, seeing the good work that is being done, are sending voluntary donations according to their capacity. All this money is being spent by the Sathya Sai Trust with unexcelled concern for economy and integrity.

Unscrupulous and envious traducers are levelling charges of misuse of the funds by the Trust. This is a grievous sin. Svaami examines every bill, minutely before making payment. The doctors for their part are looking after the patients in a spirit of dedication and team work. This spirit of unity should prevail in all our Sai institutions and organizations. The character of their work reflects on Svaami's name.

Discourse on 14-1-1994, in the Purnachandhra Auditorium.

The human body, so filled with skills, so capable of great adventures, is a gift from God to each of you, It has to be used as a raft on which you can cross this never calm sea of change that lies between birth and death, bondage and liberation. Pursue nobler ends; have grander ideals; sensory pleasures are trinkets, trivialities.

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