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Prof. Anil Kumar Addresses Youth at the National Youth Conference,

Chicago USA (Part 2)

May 30, 2009

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Sai Ram

With Pranams at the Lotus Feet of Bhagavan,

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

FOUR INITIATIVES TAKEN BY THE YOUTH OF USA

This is the second day of the Conference, and it is so nice to see you are all still lively! (*Laughter*) May Baba bless you! Often the strength to attend session after session is lost. So I am happy to see that you are still coming here.

Within the limitations of time, which has been a constraint all through my career, (*Laughter*) I can't but help mention certain salient features. As I said yesterday, my trip to this country has been very educational for me—much like an intensive training course! The type of studies carried out by our youngsters is quite amazing. I attend many conferences where speakers speak of anything but the topic! (*Laughter*) When the topic is on 'Service', he speaks about his own personal experiences in a kind of self-praise or advertisement. I shall not do that, and haven't done that in the past either. So, my friends I am amazed at the earnestness shown by the youth who have done in-depth studies on many subjects.

I understand there is a national core, working on four projects: the *Gayathri Mantra* initiative, the meditation initiative, the service initiative, and the ceiling on desires initiative. Fantastic indeed! These types of spiritual projects are better than having people come and tell you about their personal spiritual experiences.

As an example, somebody says, "I was travelling in a bus, when suddenly it was hit by a rickshaw—but Swami saved my life!" (*Laughter*) Then my question is: why has He saved your life, while others lost their lives? Many would have been happy had you been finished off there! (*Laughter*) Therefore, this kind of self-oriented talk cannot continue forever and ever. Having being convinced of the Divinity of Bhagavan, we don't have to talk on experiences like that to others. What is thrilling and exciting to me is the work of the young adults in the area of the four initiatives. Hats off to you for taking on this challenge!

LOVE THY NEIGHBOUR AS THYSELF

The next point I was happy to see was the focus of attention on youth at the global level to youth at the local level. Some people concentrate on global interaction because there are less activities to organise. Yet, the local youth activities are very important.

In the *Holy Bible*, it is clearly written: “Love thy neighbour as thy Self.” However, that can be most difficult. I can love somebody who is in America, but not so easily my neighbour, when we have to share the same corridor or the same tap. (*Laughter*) Then it is a Himalayan task indeed! Therefore, do not forget the demands at the local level, while finding out what the position is at the global level.

GROUP SPIRITUAL DISCUSSIONS

I have had the pleasure of visiting and participating in two other workshops this morning. Youngsters were sitting at tables having serious discussions. I was curious to know if they were talking about personal matters, or about trip reservations. Well, it was not so! They were deliberating on the topic in detail. That’s good! Not only are you in America, but you seem to have the American brain as well. Quite good!

I was with the group talking on “Self Confidence”. Wonderful! I shared two ideas with them, which I won’t repeat here again. There was another group that was talking about the inner connection with the Divine. We are concerned about the outer connection with everybody; but here is one group speaking of the need for an inner connection to the Divine.

Above all, the need for reflection and deep thinking on the topics was quite refreshing. Also, I have not come across any state or any nation that has produced a newsletter such as yours, so full of information. Good! Congratulations to the young adults of the United States of America! God bless you! (*Applause*)

GAYATHRI MANTRA INITIATIVE BY YOUTH

I was also happy to know that the *Gayathri Mantra* group knows the meaning and explanation of those Sanskrit words. They also organised the *Sa Re Ga Ma*: the ‘**Sai Regional Gayathri Mantra**’. I don’t know what programme you can hold for *Pa Da Ni Sa* (notes of the scale in Indian music)! (*Laughter*) Anyway, in 2007, a chanting of the *Gayathri Mantra* by five hundred adults from Region 7 (in the USA) took place. That is really very satisfying.

IN-DEPTH STUDY OF SOHAM MANTRA AND JYOTHI DHYANA BY YOUTH

Then my attention was drawn by the in-depth study you made of the *Soham Mantra* (‘I am God’). You found that the breath was most important, and that it was the controlling factor in the movement of thoughts in the mind. Also you discovered that the light is equally important in the *Jyothi Dhyana* (meditation on the Light).

SERVICE INITIATIVE BY YOUTH

The service initiative group coined this beautiful term: “living service”. This is a good expression. Many people speak about service, but they never do any living (actual) service. Many people have told me about those with acting, singing, or public speaking talents, who readily come forward; while there are others who eagerly occupy positions of authority and influence. But this second set of people are not ready to serve; it is all just talk. Therefore, the call is for doing “living service”. Life is service.

CEILING ON DESIRES INITIATIVE BY YOUTH

The ceiling on desires initiative is special. Long ago, Bhagavan said that ceiling on desires is nothing but controlling ourselves so as not to waste: don't waste food, don't waste time, don't waste energy and don't waste money. Up to now, that is all I knew. But after reading your newsletter, I now know more than ever before. That is no exaggeration—I am not given to flattery!

The newsletter clearly stated that 'ceiling on desires' is not merely a kind of practice. For instance, somebody once asked me, "Mr. Anil Kumar, what do you mean by 'ceiling on desires'? I don't have any desires. But now I must cultivate desires so as to have a ceiling thereafter, in order to practise 'ceiling on desires'". Well, I could understand his logic.

But in fact, it is much more than that. The real practice of 'ceiling on desires' can help society and the environment in general. It can also bring about a balance in our eating habits; we should have more meals at home than in places such as hotels. The study on food was very surprising. Bhagavan has clearly explained that our provisions, the vegetables we collect, the process of cooking and the way it is served, all count. Whatever the mother may serve—perhaps just curd rice—that is enough. It has more value than what you would get from a five-star hotel. The five-star hotel concentrates on your purse, while a mother thinks of your stomach, your health and your future.

I am so happy that the newsletter gave me such a lot of information. I won't give any more details here. But I am now waiting for an opportunity to meet with our university students at Prashanthi Nilayam to tell them about this very interesting subject.

Some of the words used seem quite new to me, hailing from South India—the area of pickles and chutneys! Right now my home town is as hot as a furnace. You don't need any oven to fry; you get fried yourself! (*Laughter*) But this is the time when we comfortably eat the maximum number of chillies! While it is hot outside, it is hot, hot inside. Then we are absolutely cool! (*Laughter*) See, that is what we are like.

FOOD SERVED IN 'BABA'S BISTRO

Some of the interesting words I was told by the 'ceiling on desires' group were: "blissful buffet at Baba's Bistro". "Oh, I see!" I said.

Then the talk was about what was served there: appetizers or starters: *Gayathri* nuggets, vitalising wraps. And there is an entrée: the *Gayathri* parmesan baked in *sadhana* (spiritual discipline), spiced with correct pronunciation. Also available was a lifesaving savoury dish: the *Gayathri mantra*. Above all, and this was quite interesting, the 'combo'—a sandwich of brotherliness and compassion. There was also a delectable bowl of soup, topped with feelings of selflessness. "Oh, wow!" the saliva starts functioning on its own! (*Laughter and applause*)

Another dish was *fajitas*, the Mexican meal, baked with delicious spices of Sai love, topped off with a dash of courage, and a combination of ingredients, such as service projects. Wonderful indeed! They must be fantastic lovers of food.

I joined them by creating a recipe for "Baba's Bistro". I thought of a pizza (Chicago's own deep dish) topped with the sauce of discipline, baked to perfection in the oven of *sadhana* and served with a side of equanimity. Then when it comes to desserts, the ceiling on desires people said, "It

is all sweetness as you walk your talk.” There was also customer feedback: “The kind of food stuff served in the Bistro is nourishing and nurturing. GOD is everywhere, so experience.”

THE SAI BANKING SYSTEM

Other details apart, they started speaking about money. I generally don't speak on the role of money because I have never concentrated on it, though it is necessary indeed. But I wish our M.Com and MBA students could learn from what they said, and improve upon it, if possible.

The group said, “The Sai banking system is ready to re-finance with lower desires on mortgage.” Their advice is: “Never overdraft—that's negativity or lack of faith—and never be short of good credit.” The ceiling on desires group initiative also said that the Bank of God has branches open all over Chicago and all over the USA. There is the Meditation branch, the *Gayathri* branch, the Ceiling on Desires branch, the Living Service branch. You can make deposits there, or use the Meditation, *Gayathri*, Living Service or Ceiling on Desires banking tools. Good, good!

This is the integrated system of education or Educare. Education, as applied to our secular system, will be exactly like this example. Swami will be very happy about it. Other noteworthy topics also mentioned were: time, the *Gayathri* study circle, the science of meditation, and things like pod casts and the introduction of science.

Now, as I pass on to the next aspect of my talk. I want you to give a good round of applause to those people who worked very hard on all of this. (*Applause*) Good! Try to keep it up. I return happily with all this information gained from you. I have said from the beginning that my visits are not merely to speak at the podium or share my knowledge, but that I should profit by learning from each and every one of you! “Each one, teach one” is my life motto.

IT IS NOT NECESSARY TO LEARN SANSKRIT

Here again let me talk to you on certain important aspects from the western context. If I speak to you about people of whom I have no knowledge, what value can that be? For instance, there is Valmiki (a famous sage who wrote the story of Rama) or Kalidasa (a famous Sanskrit poet), neither of whom I know. (*Laughter*) You would gain as much by watching a DVD or listening to a CD. Interestingly enough, people quote Sanskrit *slokas* (verses) that they do not understand, and repeat *mantras*, the meaning of which they do not know either.

Wherever I went in the States, I was asked, “Is it necessary, Sir, to learn Sanskrit? Is it necessary to learn Sanskrit *mantras* by heart?”

I gave this simple answer, “God knows English, also. (*Laughter*) Why do you think that He knows only Sanskrit? He is well-versed in English also.”

So let's not strain ourselves, and additionally mispronounce the Sanskrit words. Those who are interested may do so, purely at a personal level; but it should not be a practice at the central level.

THE FELLOWSHIP OF FAITHS

My friends, speaking from my vast experience in the organisation, let us not regard the Sathya Sai organisation as a sect. Let's not have anybody think that Sathya Sai represents a religion. Sathya Sai is not connected to a religion or a sect. Sathya Sai is not an object to possess. He is

not a person to be close to. Sathya Sai is not a person: Sathya Sai is a phenomenon, a spiritual revolution!

The depth of religion, the spirit of religion, spirituality is Sathya Sai. His is not a ritualistic religion, as may be thought by some from an external point of view. So let's not commit the mistake of giving the impression that we follow, adopt or highlight a particular religion or a particular form of worship.

In Seattle, to my good fortune, I could see the prayers of all the main religions on the screen, and everybody was joining in. That is the meaning of 'fellowship of faiths' or 'congregation of worshippers'. This is the unity of religions, which Sathya Sai Baba represents.

MAN IS BORN TO FIND OUT WHAT HE HAS TO DO

Now, what can I say to the youth? You should have inspiration, not perspiration. It should be the kind of inspiration that breaks through narrow-mindedness and transcends all limitations, giving ample scope for the expansion of your consciousness. Then you will be living in a wonderful world. A man of inspiration lives in a wonderful world. It is a world of our dreams, a world that we have to realise.

Someone asked me, "Sir, what does Baba say about Ceylon (Sri Lanka)? What does Baba say about the violence in Nepal?"

I told him, "Look to yourself first. What does He say about you? What does He want you to do? That is more important than what He says about Sri Lanka or Nepal. Don't bother yourself about what is happening in other countries. It is His duty to take care of them; it is not our duty."

My friends, it was Goethe, a great scholar and writer, who said this: "Man is not born to solve the problems of the world. No, he is born to find out what he has to do."

WE MUST WORK ALL THROUGH OUR LIVES FROM BIRTH TO DEATH

Some people ask me, "How long should I work? Should I work until retirement, or until I become the president or convenor of the Sai centre?"

The answer is, "From womb to the tomb, from birth to death!"

It is Bernard Shaw, the famous writer of English drama, who said, "We have to work throughout our life to the end, because our purpose is very high, our goals are noble, and we have to lead a purposeful life." What a wonderful statement it is!

Khalil Gibran, the Lebanese poet, said: "Love invisible is work. We work because of love—for no other reason than that." What a wonderful idea it is!

These statements all correspond to the words of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba who told us: "Love in action is Right Conduct (*Dharma*)."

Further it is said, "Love what you do, and do what you love." There are many people who say that they are not happy with their computer job, or happy as a doctor, or happy as an engineer. My answer to them is that you will never be happy in your lifetime until you find happiness in what you do.

Take your expertise and vision as a spiritual practise for your own upliftment. Enjoy life, while working hard and earning. Even if the work is such that it causes burn-out or exhaustion, you should still rejoice in your life.

Life is so short, my friends. This life cannot end up in gloom or worry. No, no! Life is to be enjoyed. Life is bliss, life is music, and life is laughter and celebration. If none of those are present, life is nothing, even if you acquire the whole world.

TALK LESS AND WORK MORE

“Life is a torch,” Gibran says. “It is not a candle.” No, it is a torch, burning brilliantly. This kind of light that is your life should shed light, which will inspire others in the neighbourhood.

We have heard of Mother Teresa, who became a recipient of the Nobel Prize. On her own, she went to poverty-stricken areas and worked for the sick, orphaned, and illiterate. She spent all her lifetime in slums, working for the upliftment of the poor people there. We should be ashamed that we are not even the size of a grain of sand by comparison, although we are a big organisation with many people and volunteers.

Mother Teresa! What does she say? “There should be less talk. A preaching point is not a meeting point. What then do you do? Take a broom and clean someone's house. That says enough.” So a meeting point is a point of work; it is a point of commitment. It is the point right at hand, at the moment, to take action. Preaching is not useful.

That is why Baba says, “Heroes on platform, zeros in practice.” Zeros in practice . . . as Mother Teresa says, “Let us stick to the meeting point, not the preaching point.” She also says we should talk less and work more. Baba always emphasises this: you cannot transform people by your words; but you can bring a kind of transformation by your behaviour. You can influence them by setting an example. Therefore, as young adults, let us take to work rather than be speakers on lecture platforms.

BHAGAVAN OBSERVES SILENCE

Furthermore, Mother Teresa says this: “A sage is silent, an intellectual talks, a stupid argues.” So silence!

Many people ask me, “Sir, why is Swami not talking these days?”

So, I ask them the same question: “When He was talking, did you question why He was talking? Since you did not put that question then, what authority do you have to query what He does now?”

His silence today is eloquence. As we cannot understand His words or His discourses (as we are not translating His talks into action in our daily lives), He observes silence. “It is only in the depths of silence that the voice of God is heard,” as Bhagavan said.

LOVE AND RESPECT YOURSELF

Baba said, “You people only think of computers. If you think the computer is so great, then you should say to one, ‘Hi computer! How are you this morning? Can you tell me where my wife is?’ It cannot tell you. The computer only conveys the information fed into it.”

So, Baba wants us to be composers not computers. A composer is original and creative, while a computer is a storehouse. If someone appears superior or greater than us, we should adopt the same outlook as the author and poet, Ogden Nash. He says, "Why should I compare myself with anyone? I am happy the way I am. I am what I am, with all my strengths and weaknesses. Come what may, I am quite happy. Love yourself. Excuse yourself, forgive yourself. Respect yourself."

So, if you excuse yourself, you will be able to excuse others. If you love yourself, you will be able to love others. If you respect yourself, you will be able to respect others. Lao-Tzu, a Chinese philosopher, says, "Benevolence is more important than malevolence." Therefore, this is the sort of attitude we have to cultivate.

SERVE ALL, BELIEVING YOU ARE SERVING CHRIST

Finally, we can take all those people in distress whom we serve, as the Christ in distress. This is called *Narayana seva*. *Narayana* is the Sanskrit name for God, and *seva* means 'service'. If you serve anybody, it is *Narayana* Himself or Christ. That is the spiritual approach to service.

As we give service, let us not think about the small advantages in it for ourselves. Some people seek advantage for themselves by making unwanted appearances and poking their nose in everywhere. But we should never be given to these small petty things. It was Confucius, a Chinese philosopher, who made this remark: "The small and petty things will divert your attention away from the higher things that you would accomplish later."

SEEK OUT YOUR FAULTS AND THE MERITS OF OTHERS

Another point is this question which I was asked this morning: "Sir, how should I take it when others criticise me?"

You cannot ask them to shut up, because some only know how to criticise. As the saying goes, "Those who can, do . . . while those who can't, criticise." Those who criticise are unfit to work, take it from me!

So, how are we to take criticism? William Blake (an English poet) made a wonderful statement. "There is only one governing principle in heaven—the principle of forgiving and forgetting." Anything that anybody does unto you, forget and then forgive. Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba changed this to "giving and forgiving". His revised version is: "God gives and forgives. Man gets and forgets."

There are some among us who go on judging: 'he is a very good worker', 'he shirks his responsibility', 'he shows his face once a month', or 'we won't see him until Anil Kumar visits again'.

Those who judge should feel ashamed of themselves for labelling others. How can you say, "So-and-so is good", or "So-and-so is bad?" Your judgements bind you. "Judge not, lest thou shall be judged," says Jesus Christ. Baba takes that a step further, "Seek out your faults and the merits of others." That is the attitude we have to cultivate.

INNER HYPOCRISY

We should avoid hypocrisy, too. William Blake says, "If you are angry with anybody, tell him why you are feeling that way, rather than keeping it within, saying: 'Hello sir, how do you do?' and then praying for his death." Or saying: "Glad to see you" when we are *never* glad to see him. Or, "See you later" when we hope that it doesn't ever happen.

This is the kind of hypocrisy which is responsible for our restlessness. The face, which is the index of the mind, will tell you. Wrinkles appear. The face is gloomy and displeasing because of inner hypocrisy. So let's be plain, my friends.

THERE IS NO FAILURE

I should tell you about this, too. We may make certain mistakes, and so naturally we face failure. Then, because of failure, we feel totally frustrated and depressed. My friends, there is no failure in life. There are only results. Some results are satisfactory. Some results can be improved. That's all. There is no failure at all.

This morning I was talking to a group and told them this true story. It was Edison (an American inventor) who created the battery, after having failed in the attempt 25,000 times! Somebody, instead of complimenting him, said, "Oh, Edison, you failed 25,000 times", taking a sinister pleasure in his 'failure'.

Edison replied, "Oh! I failed 25,000 times? Good! I have not failed. I simply learnt how *not* to make a battery 25,000 times!" (*Laughter*) Therefore my friends, never take mistakes as failures.

Here is a story from Emerson, an early American writer. It seems there was a quarrel between a mountain and a squirrel. The mountain was saying, "Oh, I am so big, while you are so small." But the squirrel finally said, "Oh mountain, you may carry the forest on your back; but you cannot crack a nut like me!" (*Laughter*) Therefore, accomplish little things, even if they are not noticed by others.

TRUE LEADERS ARE HARDLY KNOWN

As you are youngsters and this is a National Conference, I would like to share with you certain leadership qualities that you should have. Some people have leadership qualities like those of a politician. Some have leadership qualities where their aim is for publicity, name and fame. That is not leadership at all.

It is Lao-Tzu, who speaks of leadership qualities. Please note what he says: "True leaders are hardly known." No one knows that so-and-so is a leader, if he is a true leader. How can that be so? Well, Bhagavan Sathya Sai Baba is a leader of leaders. Though he spent 300 *crores* (about US 63 million dollars) for the Drinking Water Project in Ananthapur, supplying water to seven hundred villages, some of the villagers do not know His name.

OFFICE HOLDERS ARE NEVER TRUE LEADERS

Then there was the Chennai Water Project. Many people do not know that the benefit of fresh drinking water came from Sathya Sai Baba. Sathya Sai Baba never goes there and tells them "I did it for you!" If anyone praises Him, He will ask him to shut up.

A group of leaders came to thank Him. "Oh, Baba, You gave us water. We all came here to thank You!"

Baba said, "I am not a third person (an outsider, who is separate from you), so never thank Me. I should thank you for giving Me this opportunity to serve you."

So, the first leadership quality is not to struggle for name, fame, and recognition. And secondly, true leaders will be followed by a batch of leaders who are admired. True leaders are never admired. Their followers are admired; the next generation is appreciated. They may boast, "Well, you know, I am that, that, and that." But a true leader is never admired for having the same qualities as an office holder.

Lao-Tzu says that, "Those who hold high posts of office are never true leaders." There is no point in blaming me; I am quoting a famous author!

A TRUE LEADER APPRECIATES AND ENCOURAGES OTHERS

And further he says, "Who is a leader? The leader is one who helps others to discover themselves, and he enjoys their trust." A leader does not exploit you, or use you to advance himself, or make you a follower, no!

A true leader will help you to discover yourself. There are some leaders who say, "Do this, do that!" They are not leaders at all. Leaders who insist, command or demand are not effective at all; they will be despised later. Then there are leaders who create a sense of fear; they are very poor leaders, indeed.

Leadership qualities lie in appreciating others, congratulating others, encouraging them—not gathering people around for applause. That is the political way. Also, a true leader gives credit to others; he does not grab credit.

Take Baba as an example: whenever a conference is convened, He says, "My devotees did it" or "My students did it." Once He was praising His students so much. At that time, I was not in the faculty of the Prashanthi Nilayam campus. I was working as a professor elsewhere. He kept on praising His students, which made me feel a bit embarrassed.

I said, "Swami, if You think Your boys are so great, please admit them to our college. We shall see how well they do there!"

The same set of boys, if they were to study elsewhere, would be nowhere! It is Swami's touch, His glory, His miracle, the mysterious, inexplicable effect He has on them that makes them great. His charismatic influence transforms them altogether. Yes! That is the quality of a true leader.

SIX MISTAKES WE COMMIT

Now, my friends, let me also share with you the six mistakes we commit, according to Cicero (a Roman philosopher, 1st Century BC). I am referring to the sayings of good people and thinkers like Cicero because in this Conference, I don't want to repeat those things you already know. We can certainly think about what they say, and later implement the points we learn here.

Cicero says we commit six mistakes. Somebody might say, "Why only six? We commit sixty—including the six major ones, of course!"

The first mistake is this: to work for personal gains by putting down or shaming others.

The second mistake is: to worry about things we cannot change.

A lady visited me and asked, “Anil Kumar-*garu* (*garu* means esteemed or revered), why are people born? Why do they suffer? What escape is there?” Some people pass through so many problems. I prayed for her when she left, as there is no advice to give about things we cannot help.

Somebody asked me, “Sir, how long will the Kali Yuga (the Iron Age of corruption) last?” I told him, “I am sure you won’t live that long!” (*Laughter*)

Therefore my friends, let us not worry about those things that we cannot change. This is the second mistake that we commit.

Then the third mistake: to insist a thing is impossible because you cannot do it.

The fourth mistake: to insist on trivial preferences.

Somebody will say, “We can get you a seat on the veranda if you will just be my assistant.” Or, “I will tell Swami you are a good worker, wish me *zindabad* (long life).” These are all trivial preferences. Please refuse these offers. The opportunity will come when Swami walks straight up to you, when He blesses you.

As my good friend Kartik already remarked, for seven long years I was ignored by Swami. I was almost a non-entity, not even the size of a molecule. He would see everyone sitting at *darshan*, that side and this side, but not me. Then, on the very day I get a front line position, that is the day *darshan* is conveniently cancelled, or He avoids that line or the men’s side altogether! (*Laughter*) However, believing that Baba is the omnipotent, all-knowing God, I never wanted anybody to support me or recommend my case.

Here is another example of when we focus on a trivial preference. There is a great scholar from Andhra Pradesh called Deepala Pichaya Sastry. He is a writer and a man of humour. At a meeting, he gave a talk in praise of Brahmananda Reddy, who was the Chief Minister at that time. After that meeting, Pichaya Sastry came to Puttaparthi. Do you know what Baba said? Youngsters, please note this:

“*Emi Pichaya Sastry, brahmandamuga Brahmananda Reddy gurinchi cheppinave?*” “You spoke very highly of Brahmananda Reddy, very nice.”

Baba looks deeply into his eyes and He says—please note this: “*Raastrapathi driver, taxi driver madira vunda koodadu abba.*” “The driver of the car of *Rashtrapathi*, President of India, cannot be a taxi driver on the street.”

The lips that praise God can never praise anybody else. The lips that sing in praise of God cannot speak of one’s own choice and preference for any particular group, or individuals. That is another mistake that we commit.

The fifth mistake is this: neglecting to study. The reading habit is very important because it develops our culture. It polishes and refines us.

The sixth mistake is this: never compel others to believe in what you believe. Never force others to do what you want them to do.

I love singing, but I cannot say singing is the only *sadhana*. So please keep quiet about your belief. Who said it is the only way? Somebody loves service, but they cannot say service is the only *sadhana*. No, no! Please keep quiet.

Spirituality is a departmental store, where you can choose anything of your choice. If you love singing, good; if you like chanting, better; if you like to meditate, best. You cannot say, "This should be done."

These then are the six mistakes that we often commit.

BE ONE WITH THE COUNTRY IN WHICH YOU LIVE

Then I come to another point, my friends. It is a very important statement made by Dorothy Parker, a humorous American writer. It seems a gentleman is in Rome, but he thinks of his home. While he is at home, he thinks of Rome. What is all this? Be a Roman while you are in Rome. Being in the west, you should have western thoughts and a technical, scientific, up-to-date approach.

It was Max Muller, a German, who wrote a commentary on the *Upanishads* (earliest Hindu sacred texts.) It was Mr. Brown, an Englishman, who compiled a dictionary of the Telugu language. So nothing is the monopoly of anybody. It is important to have the humility to recognise this.

LAUGHTER, ENTHUSIASM AND SELF-RELIANCE ARE VERY IMPORTANT

I know the time is up, but still here are some highlights to mention. One is about laughter. But let it not be the cynical laughter that disturbs others. No, this is whole-hearted laughter, the laughter of a child, of innocence, the laughter of Divinity. This laughter has a charismatic influence, a lighting and lightning effect. When you smile, people like to come close to you; but not to an egoistic person. And you should know that laughing will improve your health.

My friends, enthusiasm is another quality that we have to cultivate. Never say, "I cannot do that" Never say, "Life is an empty dream." No, life is not an empty dream; it is a golden dream! "Life is a dream, realise it!" says Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba. Enthusiasm is very important as is self-reliance.

THE ABCD TEACHER

My friends, I have many things still to share with you. As teachers, we do not stop until a bell rings. But here is a bell that never rings; there is a bell that goes by the name of 'Sai-ji' (the Conference moderator) over there. (*Laughter and applause*)

Well, some teachers are conventional ABCD types, but I am not one of them. What is meant by ABCD?

A – Avoid: If a student asks an awkward question, you say quickly, "Ah!! Next question, please?" (*Laughter*)

B – Bypass: “Do you know about that . . . and this . . . and that?” until the student forgets what it was he wanted to know.

C – Confuse: “Oh, do you know the other details? Do you know about the other subject? You have studied all of it?” Finished! Confusion confounded!

D – Divide: “Last year’s batch was better than this year’s batch of students!” (*Laughter*)

So, I am not an ABCD teacher! (*Applause*)

BHAGAVAN SRI SATHYA SAI BABA’S GRACE

I do not know what merit I have done in the past. Maybe the blessings of my grandparents or my parents made me what I am today, and so brought me here to meet all of you. I never thought I would be present at such a National Conference. It is definitely Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba’s grace in abundance! (*Applause*)

I was also able to go around to many different countries all over the world. It is all because of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba. After all, a currency note, without the signature of a Reserve Bank, can be thrown away as worthless. It is the signature of the Reserve Bank Governor that gives it its value. My life is a currency note, carrying the signature of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba. With that, I find the meaning of life, and I find purpose for my life.

I want to encourage everybody to come forward and take up leadership. Finally, I am thrilled and very excited to be here amongst you. Thank you very much for your time! (*Applause*)

QUESTION TIME

(*Responding to Sai-ji*) Oh, Sai-ji is a liberal man. I say ‘liberal’ because ‘liberal economy’ is the talk of the day. Even Manmohan Singh, the Prime Minister talks of liberalisation. Good! Sai-ji is so liberal that he has given me some extra time to answer your questions, if you have any.

If students in my class don’t ask any questions, I tell them this: there are two circumstances when there can be no questions. One is when you understand everything, so there is nothing to question. And two, when you understand nothing, so there is nothing to question! (*Laughter*) It is out of the question! I do not know the category to which you belong!

CONTROL SENSES BY SEEING, HEARING AND DOING GOOD

How can we control our senses?

How to control our senses? Well, let us not be senseless about this; let us be sensible!

It is also anxious to talk! (*Referring to previous feedback from the microphone*) That is the influence of the Divine message. The lifeless speak, and objects become life full! Vitality is Divinity.

Here are the positive steps to control the senses: “See no evil, see what is good.” When you see good, you will never see evil. “Hear no evil, hear what is good!” So, by doing good things, listening to good things, seeing good things, and thinking good things, you can avoid the negativity of the senses. Am I clear? That is what Baba said.

TO BE IGNORED BY SWAMI MEANS MORE LOVE

The last question is: "Swami is a loving God. Why does He ignore people at times, especially when they are longing to talk to Him?"

Oh! The last question, but not the least! Such an important question, Sai-ji! Why are you mercilessly putting that question in your soft voice? (*Laughter*)

It is an emotional question. Why does Baba ignore and appear to neglect certain people, although we call Him a loving God? It is, my friends, believe it or not, Divine Romance!

Here is a simple example: He starts giving *darshan* to the side which is seated opposite to you. He will mark your presence on the other side. As He comes across to where you are, He looks back to the other side (*Laughter.*) I always tell those people who are disappointed this way, "He found you and looked at you; subsequently, He is avoiding you. It must be so because He cannot avoid you unless He has seen you first!" (*Laughter*) So, avoidance is also transcendence; it is sort of an indulgence. And it is a Divine Romance, because He sees you there, so He shows He knows, giving you that experience.

For instance, He presents some ladies with nice *saris* on birthday occasions. These ladies are ladies anywhere. (*Laughter*) They come back for the evening *darshan*. Why? They could wait for the next day, no, no! That evening, the ladies wear their *saris* and sit there. They want Baba to see them in the *saris* He gave them. You should see Bhagavan! He will start walking over there. He will watch them. By the time they look at Him, He turns the other way. (*Laughter*) He doesn't want them to notice, but He notices.

To be ignored by Swami doesn't mean lack of love or absence of love; it is more love!

Another point is that when He ignores you, He is giving you an opportunity to introspect, to self-examine or to self-evaluate.

He has given an example for this. On roads or highways under repair (I saw this in USA, too), a board is placed with the notice: "Road under repair, Take the diversion."

So, until the road is repaired, you must take a detour away from the main highway: 'Oh Swami, I am under repair, so I must take the diversion.' That is the other meaning, am I clear?

God bless you. Thank you! (*Applause*)

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