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The Sunday Talk Given at Prashanti Nilayam

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“Kerala Teachers’ Meeting at Prashanti Nilayam”

(Part 3)

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OM...OM...OM...

Sai Ram to everybody!

With Pranams at the Lotus Feet of our most Beloved Bhagavan,

JANUARY – A SPECIAL MONTH

Dear State President, revered elders, Dr Vedanarayan, and brothers and sisters of this august assembly:

This is the third session for teachers. As I told you earlier, I feel proud of my profession as a teacher. Hailing from a family that has had teachers for several generations, I would like to share whatever I know.

Today is January 25th. This month of January is special for three reasons: first, the 5th of January is the birthday of Guru Gobind Singh; then, the 7th of January as per Hindu calendar happens to be birthday of Swami Vivekananda; and third, the 30th January marks the martyrdom of Mahatma Gandhi. These three are very important events and we shall learn a lot from them.

There was a person wandering along the Himalayan range of mountains looking for solitude. He was a deep thinker, a seeker and an aspirant of Truth. While he was roaming around the Himalayan range trying to experience something transcendental, he suddenly heard a voice. *“This is not the place for you. Go back. Return to your country.*

Your job is to awaken the entire humanity. You cannot spend your life here in solitude. A lofty, mighty ideal has been designed for you. My dear son, go back." He heard that peculiar voice and he came down and inspired everybody with his work. He was Guru Gobind Singh.

GURU GOBIND SINGH HAD A VISION OF KHALSA

Guru Gobind Singh inspired everybody not because of his scholarly speeches and memory or recapitulation. Guru Gobind Singh inspired people because he served as an example for others to emulate and learn from. It is in this context that we will be happy to learn that Guru Gobind Singh was the greatest man born on this land in the 17th century. He had a strong will and firm conviction.

He had a vision of *Khalsa*. What do you mean by *Khalsa*? *Khalsa* means 'pure'. He had a vision of a land of purity. Thereafter he struggled hard to see that purity is established and practiced in and around him. Later from this purity, Guru Gobind Singh evolved to another level of *Khalsa*.

Khalsa is a community where, in addition to purity, he believed that there should be community prayer and community dining. They eat, pray and work together. That kind of togetherness is a sign of cooperation, integration, rising above levels of ego or self-praise. It is something to work together like that. He started working together for fraternity, with love and sacrifice as the governing principles.

TRUST AND FAITH ARE PRINCIPLES OF KHALSA

For working together, love and sacrifice are absolutely necessary. Instead today we have unhealthy competition, meaningless rivalry, prejudice and pride. Though we work together, it is meaningless and non-spiritual.

We, as teachers, should have trust amongst ourselves as well as trust in students. The management, the parents, should have trust in us and we should trust them as well. Trust is the governing principle. Parents cannot ask anything of the child without trust. The management cannot appoint us without trust. So, it is absolutely necessary to begin with trust. This is the principle to begin with, in the *Khalsa* community of Sadhu Guru Gobind Singh. That is what we call unity.

He began with purity, and later reached the state of unity; thereafter, he believed in loyalty and uncompromising devotion to God. It is not a convenient philosophy that most of us are used to because we are desire-oriented. If this god fulfills my desire, okay; else I will look for another one of the many gods spread out in the country. Guru Gobind

Singh stressed unflinching loyalty. That kind of strong faith is the principle of Sadhu Guru Gobind Singh in *Khalsa*. That is Divinity!

DIVINITY REQUIRES STRONG FAITH

Divinity is possible only with strong faith. Life is full of bumps and jumps, ups and downs, lashes and flashes. It is not a bed of roses. When experiences are painful, our faith is shaken. It is at that time that we should hold on and cling to our chosen God, not digress or deviate, run away or change the path. God puts us through different kinds of experiences. Each experience, pleasant or painful, surprising or shocking, helps us evolve into a nobler soul. Eventually we evolve into a non-dual state of consciousness, which is the experience of the spirit or consciousness. The experience of the spirit or the soul or consciousness is possible only when we are non-dual. Therefore, it is not that God is a sadist or a masochist. Torturing one's own self is masochism. Torturing others is sadism. He allows certain things to happen, giving us a long rope to hang ourselves.

GOD'S LOVE IS THAT OF A THOUSAND MOTHERS

Therefore my friends, He would like to protect us, just as a mother watches her child as he is busy playing. She makes sure that the child does not fall or run into danger or accidents, watching from a distance. God's love is that of a thousand mothers. He never forsakes us – impossible! He only allows us to play to the extent we can, and teaches us to strive to go back to the mother for help and sympathy in case we hurt ourselves. Guru Gobind Singh had a similar attitude.

I shall give you one example. One saint was sent to Guru Gobind Singh to kill him. There cannot be a test worse than allowing one's self to be killed. But these Divine souls are of that cadre! Guru Gobind Singh knew that the saint had come there to kill him. What did he do? He called him close and said, "Don't worry, nothing will happen to you."

The saint who had come to kill him started shivering, and Guru Gobind Singh looked straight into his eyes and said, "I know you have come to kill me." Then he called all the people around him and said, "Don't hurt him, don't beat him; please send him away, please let him go." That is the hallmark of forgiveness. Forgiveness is noble, Divine and spiritual.

UNDERSTAND REALITY

These days nobody forgives us for anything, even if we did something six months ago. They are vindictive until they end their life, or the other person ends his life. We have got the features of a snake!

Baba said, "Human body is a zoo." Human body is a zoo because we are so possessive. Sometimes I laugh within myself when some of my friends want to occupy the same seat as they have been occupying all these years. If a stranger comes and sits there, they get annoyed. "Why do you sit here? This is my seat."

I don't know. We are successful in leaving our families, properties, belongings, and relatives, but we cling on to the Cudappah (granite) slab on which we sit. What an awful fall, my countrymen! It is really a fall.

The other day one person said at breakfast, "Mr. Anil Kumar, I am sitting in your place."

I said, "I don't think any place belongs to anybody." I don't think so because thousands sat here before and thousands will sit here thereafter; we are only here in between. Therefore my friends, the reality has to be understood.

Guru Gobind Singh allowed the potential killer to go. Additionally, he gave his life, knowing the difficulties and the problems his father had. These brave souls ended their lives as martyrs for this country. With all the reverence and salutation, this month we think of Guru Gobind Singh, a great son of this country. Guru Gobind Singh was a scholar, a poet and an eminent leader.

TEACHERS SHOULD INSPIRE STUDENTS

Now we think of Swami Vivekananda--a few words about him. We, as teachers, are supposed to inspire our students, narrating the biographies and histories of the proud sons of our land. As Bhagavan said:

*Khanda Kandanthara Khyathi Narchinchina Mahaniyulandarunna Mathru Bhumi,
Paschathya Virula Paradrolinchiyu Swathanthramu Kanna Samara Bhumi,
Sangitha Sahithya Shasthriya Vidyalandu Dhishakthi Chupina Divya Bhumi,
Chitra Kalala Thoda Chitramai Yunnatti Bharatha Bhumi Yandu Janana Bhumi,
Bharatha Matha Bhagyammu Kapada Bhajyathanthayu Mide Vidyaarthhulaara,
Bharatha Matha Bhagyammu Kapada Bhajyathanthayu Mide Vidyaarthhulaara.*

It is our bounded responsibility that students develop the spirit of patriotism or national fervor. If our students do not have this kind of patriotic spirit, we have not done our job. We must do more than what is expected of us, not simply complete our syllabus. As I was telling yesterday, syllabus completion can be done by any tape recorder or any computer disc or DVD. We are not like that. Our future lies with these students. Our personality, our contribution, should be such that they should show our influence. Therefore, patriotic spirit is important. As Bhagavan said, this is the land of noblest, selfless, patriotic people. And it is necessary to think of our lives as role models.

PARENTS ARE LIVING GODS

The 17th of January is Swami Vivekananda's birthday. Swami Vivekananda was very fond of *Maha Nirvana Tantra*. *Maha Nirvana Tantra* is a sacred text. Swami Vivekananda profusely quoted from that text. Those who have referred to his talks from Colombo to Almora will certainly come across these excellent words of this Swami.

*What does Vivekananda say, quoting from *Maha Nirvana Tantra*? He says that all children should be trained to love their parents as living gods. They are not merely human beings made of flesh and blood, bone and marrow. They are living gods. They are moving gods. We, as teachers, should be successful in teaching our students to consider their parents as living gods--to quote Vivekananda, parents are the visible representatives of God.

My friends, I take this opportunity to let you know what Baba said in this context. Some students say, "Swami, we love you." When Swami says, "Go home and serve your parents", they say, "Swami, we love you." By that, they think they can please Swami. Do you know what He said? I am the witness to that dialogue.

He said, "Do you know what your parents like? Do you know what your parents need? Do you know how to satisfy them? They brought you up, and when you don't serve them, when you don't please them, when you don't make them happy, how am I to believe that you are going to make Me happy? How am I to believe that you know what I need? How am I to believe that you know how to serve Me?"

Therefore, we don't have to run from pillar to pillar. Our absolute responsibility is to consider parents as living representations of God. To quote Bhagavan here: "*Nee Bloodu, Nee Headu, Nee Duddu* (money) are all your parents' gift." Your blood and your head and your money are the parents' gift. Therefore, we can think of parents as God. Swami insists on that.

Swami Vivekananda goes on further to say, “Never use harsh words towards your parents. Don’t show temper or anger or resentment towards your parents”. If we show our resentment and anger, it will boomerang in course of time.

Baba gives one example. One student asks Him, “What am I to do when my parents are on the wrong side?”

These boys are in the computer age. Therefore they ask such questions. He thought Swami would support him. But He didn’t say that. “Whatever parents do, they do in your interest. They don’t have anything in life beyond the future, the career of their children. If they are on the wrong side, try to explain and convince them by your behavior. Let them agree with you, but not by enforcement, not by pressure, not by being harsh towards them.”

RESPECT TEACHERS

And further, Vivekananda also quotes from this *Maha Nirvana Tantra* that children are supposed to stand until the parents are seated. But today the children will ask the parents to get up and bring them a glass of water. It is an awful state of affairs.

I can give you one example. The tradition in this country is that our students do not sit until the teacher sits. I think it is still going on, thank God. But in the west, I was rather surprised that they don’t mind enjoying a coke in the classroom. I don’t like that. But here children stand until we are seated.

Baba Himself is the best example. In the year 1972, during one of the summer courses to be addressed by V. K. Gokak (the first Vice Chancellor when the course was held in Bangalore Whitefield campus) about 1000 students were seated. There were professors and representatives from all over the country. Baba was in their midst, inquiring from students, “What did you have for breakfast? How many *dosas* could you eat? Do you like *puris*?”

By talking that way, He comes closer. If God constantly declares, “I am God, I am God”, we will be afraid of Him: if you are God, please continue to be God, and leave me alone. I will be very happy if you leave me alone.

God wants to be closer; so He endears Himself by talking to you about your family and your job, and referring to certain habits you have that are not known to your friends or parents; by revealing certain secrets that you have kept in the inner-most recesses of your heart, hidden more safely than in the lockers and Godrej *almirahs* (closets). He breaks them open and reveals to you, of course, in secrecy. He won’t tell in public. He knows that we are sensitive, and that we are not happy about certain things that we did.

SWAMI AS A ROLE MODEL

So Bhagavan was in the midst of that large gathering of 1000 students and professors. When V. K. Gokak came there, all stood. Swami also stood around them and when Gokak sat, Swami sat thereafter. I wondered what happened to Swami. Had He forgotten His Divinity? And then on the stage, He said, "I have come here to be a role model. I practice, then I preach. I have no authority to preach without practicing."

I am sure Vedanarayan remembers this. In 1988, a man from village came here and taught our students a kind of dancing *bhajan* called *Chakka bhajan*, using two horizontal wooden pieces. Oh what a wonderful dance! Swami sent that gentleman, a villager, to teach that *Chakka bhajan* to our students. Vedanarayan was there at that time. He danced well, as I vaguely remember. Of course, I don't want to demonstrate it now because of lack of time. Swami came on the final day.

I was the state president of the organisation, and I was in the car. Both of us got down and there was a nice demonstration. Towards the end, Swami said, "Boys, get it. Get it."

What did they bring? They brought a big silver plate with silk clothes, Rs 25,000 and fruits. Swami asked all the boys to say, "Thank you, Guruji" to this village instructor who taught them the dance. Then they gave him all the money and clothes. Swami looked at me and said, "I teach my children to be grateful and respectful. I teach them." That photograph is still with me. This is what we call an experience to remember.

BE GOOD, DO GOOD, SEE GOOD

We learn over a period of time. That is the message of Swami Vivekananda. Vivekananda also laid much emphasis on getting a good name or reputation. Bhagavan goes a step further: to be good is better than being great. You can be great, but you may not be good. It is enough if you are good; you need not necessarily be great.

We don't understand the subtle distinction. Goodness is more important than being great because one can become great as per the norms established in the society, as per the prevailing order of the day. One can be good by responding to one's own conscience, by listening to the inner voice.

So Vivekananda said that one should get a good name. Bhagavan says that being good is more important than being great. What is goodness? Each one thinks that he is good. But what is goodness? It is very difficult to define goodness.

Baba has defined goodness. See good, do good, be good. That is goodness. What do you mean by 'see good'? Sathyam, Sivam, Sundaram: true goodness is beauty. Sathyam, Sivam, Sundaram are the three attributes of the Divine. 'See good' means see the Divine in everyone and all over. When you meet any person, you are not meeting a stranger; you are meeting God Himself. That is what is meant by 'see good'.

The next is 'do good'. Yes, I do good deeds. But then, you know, most of the people are after vanity more than charity. I know a gentleman who donated a ceiling fan to a charity. He had his name written on all the three wings of the fan! How do you expect people to see his name on a moving fan? He always prayed for electricity breakout or power failure? (*Laughter*) When there is a power failure, people will necessarily look up and see his name. That is awful advertising.

It is not vanity that is important; it is charity. To 'do good' means to do something selflessly without expectation or any ulterior motive. Here, in this context, I shall give you one example. One gentleman was serving in Brindavan, by the campus. His name was Rajender, an engineer from HAL Bangalore and he served alone at night. I give these addresses so that doubting Thomas's do not doubt me.

That evening, as usual, he was working on a painting job in Brindavan. Swami visited the campus. Slowly and softly, He stopped His car and patted him on his back and told him, "*Bangaru*, you work until late in the night, I know that. You look exhausted, so don't do that." In the meantime, I saw this and ran there to grab the credit, because some people enjoy grabbing others' credit. So I went there and started introducing him. Before I opened my mouth, Baba said, "*Neevu Emi Cheppanakkarkedhu*", meaning, "You don't need to say anything about him. I know everything about both of you!" (*Laughter*)

Therefore my friends, they also serve who stand and wait. They also serve in a selfless way, unnoticed, unrecognised, without a word of appreciation or recognition, praise, promotion or professional prospects. They work silently. They don't bother about words of gratitude. That is 'doing good'.

'DO GOOD' MEANS 'WORK SELFLY'

I cannot act before, and ask for the reward from God Himself, the best of actors. Such an action I did. Long back, at the time of inauguration of this university building, I came to know that Swami will be coming for the ceremony. They were preparing the ground for the ground-breaking ceremony. I just borrowed a crowbar and started acting very well in the smartest way possible because I knew Swami was coming. Since I was the state president, they showed me the way to act. Well, I started to work. Swami stopped

His car and said, “*Aha, evi acting chestunnavayya!*” “How nicely you are acting!”
(*Laughter*)

I openly said, “Swami, I am acting so that you may notice me. I am happy you have noticed.” Then Swami laughed and said, “I know you are coming from Venkatagiri. Last night you gave a talk,” and then recalled the rest of the things. What I want to inform you about is that He knows everything, even when we act. Outwardly, He may not say anything, but He knows who is a real worker.

Therefore, ‘do good’ means work selflessly, without any ulterior motive. See the Divine in everybody. Do good so that you will strengthen *Karma yoga, Nishkama Karma*.

KNOW YOUR STRENGTHS AND MERITS

What does ‘be good’ mean? Be good, yes I am good. Some people say, “I am good, I don’t smoke”. Oh good, I see. “I don’t play cards. I don’t take beetle nut.” So he thinks he has saintly qualities! Baba said to one person at one time, commenting on this *sloka*:

Adveshta Sarvabhootanam Maitra Karuna Eva Cha

Adveshta Savabhootanam

Don’t hate anyone.

Maitra Karuna Eva Cha

Show compassion and friendship towards them.

Then explaining the statement Baba said:

Adveshta Sarvabhootanam: Don’t hate anybody. This wall does not hate anybody. Do you mean to say that this white wall is a saint? I don’t chew *paan*, I don’t play cards and I don’t drink coffee. So what? You are not the savior of this world. My friends please remember this statement; it will be useful to you and will also help you to encourage those who have a guilty conscious. As teachers, this is a very important example.

What did Baba say? One must be judged by our merits, not our thoughts. When correcting school papers as teachers, you award marks for the correct answers. You don’t think about the wrong answers. Just as we evaluate and assess a paper on the basis of its correct answers, God evaluates us on the basis of our positive nature, our values, and our merits, not our thoughts. A mosquito sucks blood from your body; God is not a mosquito. God always judges our merits and not our thoughts.

Therefore, those who think negatively become frustrated, depressed and hopeless. On the other hand, when they are aware of their strengths, talents and hidden capabilities, they evolve into better teachers, into higher people. That is 'being good'. 'Be good' means know your strengths and merits. There are some people who shamelessly declare in some of our public meetings, "Before coming to Baba, I was fool number one; before coming to Baba, I was a gambler, I was a drunkard." Why? Why reveal things you are not happy about?

GOD ACCEPTS US AS WE ARE

My friends, we may have certain imperfections, but then so what? God accepts each and every one of us as we are. Yes, God is Love, Love is God. He does not say, "I love you only if you fulfill all these conditions and clauses."

I can also tell you of my deep conviction: a guilty consciousness is worse than guilt itself. It spoils our relationships. It spoils our performance. Ultimately, we become psychotic. Let it not happen. 'Be good' means be aware of yourself, accept yourself as you are.

We don't accept ourselves as we are. We are concerned that somebody else is doing more *japa* than us. So what? Let him do it. Is God waiting for him because he is doing *japa*, and disappointed in you because you are not doing *japa*? God is not an income tax officer or a businessman!

Let us understand that we do everything for our own advantage. If I tell you that I had a wonderful breakfast, what do you say? It is not a service to anybody. You ate breakfast for your own happiness. That's all. Please keep quiet.

DON'T TALK ILL OF OTHERS

So similarly, my friends, let us learn to accept ourselves as we are, with our good and bad habits, with our mistakes, faults, strengths and skills. Accept yourself as you are. When I learn to accept myself, I will accept others.

Some people say, "I cannot sit with everybody." Okay, please stay back at home and don't disturb others. And there are some people who say, "I cannot accept that man." This kind of rejection happens when someone is not able to accept himself first. If I accept myself, I will be able to accept others. If I forgive myself, I can forgive others. If I brood over the past, worry about the future, and condemn the present, it means I am not able to forgive myself. Therefore, let me forgive myself. Let me love myself. Let me

respect myself. Then I will be able to respect, love and accept others. This is the basic psychology.

The psycho-analysts and para-psychologists have come to the conclusion that the basic nature of man is to believe in himself first. That is what Swami Vivekananda tells us clearly. Don't talk ill of others. Don't publicise the blemishes of others; don't share anything revealed to you confidentially. If someone confides their problems in you, you are not supposed to report it to a journalist, or pass it on to TV9. It only leads to a loss of confidence.

Baba says, "*Maithri, Maithrah Karuna Eva Cha.*" *Maithri* means what? Three periods of time: past, present and future. *Mai* is 'my friend in the past, in the present and in the future'. This kind of friendship requires that we do not talk about others' mistakes or secrets. Pointing out mistakes of others is a psychological weakness. Some people believe that condemning others makes them better than others. This is nothing but an ego gimmick. Let us not fall prey to this kind of ego play, as Swami Vivekananda said.

I am trying to blend Guru Gobind's message with Baba's message and Vivekananda's message with Baba's message because I experience the synthesis of Bhagavan's teachings and the teachings of these great men. Baba is not for dogma or fanaticism or isolation. He always wants us to develop a spirit of congregational worship, have fellowship of faiths and unity of religions.

We should learn to correlate and interpret the great faiths of this country, using the backdrop of Sai literature and His mission. Bhagavan has laid down the principles very well, which are the key to being successful teachers. Let us know these fundamental principles and teach accordingly in our classrooms.

Parama Paavanamaina Bharataavaniyandu Sahanamu Annadhe Manaku Chakkadhanamu.

In this land of Bharat, sahana (tolerance or forbearance) is true beauty.

Vrathamulu Annitiyandu Vanne Gaanchinayatti Gana Satyaseelame Katina Tapamu.

The highest and the greatest ritual or the spiritual practice in this country is adherence to Truth.

The path of Truth is the highest, greatest ritual.

Madhura Bhavambuyedhi Mana Desamandanna Maatru Bhavamukantenu Manyamedi.

It is the sweetest feeling. What can be sweeter than the mother's feelings?

Pranambu Kantenu Maanambe Ganamu Anu Mana Desa Neetini Manta Kalipi Netikicchir.

Netikicchir Vesa Vichitra Swetchayanu Vitthukatta Aura Yemandu Bharata Palanambui

In the name of freedom, what is it that we got from foreign rule?

They gave us their tradition, administration and bureaucracy.

We are free from the British, but we are not free from their bureaucracy.

Therefore:

Netikicchir Vesa Vichitra Swetchayanu Vitthukatta Aura Yemandu Bharata Palanambui

What shall you feel of it, as Bharat is still aching and adopting the foreign rule?

Therefore, the principles are laid down from the past; our job is only to explain and interpret to make our instruction interesting.

A TEACHER IS MULTI-DIMENSIONAL

The other day, some of my students saw my notes. "Sir, what is this? These look like botany notes," they said. I make use of colored pens for my notes, so they are colorful. We should be colorful, and our notes also should be colorful, why not? I said, "This is spiritual walking."

This is to make my class interesting, so that students don't forget what I teach them. If I simply teach lesson after lesson, they conveniently forget the earlier lessons. When I teach the third lesson, they wonder whether the first two were ever taught! (*Laughter*) On the other hand, if I link the past to the present, making it an interesting journey, it becomes a beautiful song.

Teaching is music, as students nod their heads listening in our classrooms. Teaching becomes a dance, as we make our lessons very interesting. Teaching is painting and sculpting, as we design and mould the future direction of our students. A teacher is multi-dimensional. Do not consider him or her only vocal or verbal; he or she is beyond. His or her words are heard now, and reverberate later throughout the lives of his or her students. This has been the experience of many successful teachers and alumni of past years.

INDIA WILL BE THE SOLACE OF THE WORLD

Next, I want to say a few words about Mahatma Gandhi. Mahatma Gandhi's martyrdom falls on the 30th of January. I will not share with you all the details, just a few significant points. Gandhiji was certainly not handsome by any standard. (*Laughter*) No! He was frail, dark in complexion, and it is better to not speak of his attire. (*Laughter*) Though fragile in figure and short in stature, Mahatma Gandhi was not an ordinary personality. He is the Mahatma of Bharat.

I will not go into the details of his biography as this is not the stage, nor the time for it. I'd just like to share two important points with you. What does he say? In India's freedom lies the freedom of the entire humanity. India's dignity has to be preserved for the coming centuries because the world is going to follow India.

You must have also heard of Arnold Toynbee, a professor and the greatest historian. What did he say? The world will have to look to the east towards the end. The world will see glamour because of western culture, but it has to turn east some day or the other. That is what Gandhiji said. He said that India's freedom is the freedom of the world. The dignity and culture of India will be the only solace for the rest of the world.

What does Bhagavan say about it? The compartments of a train are pulled forward by the engine in the front. That engine is Bharat; the rest of the countries of this world are the compartments.

Someone asked Bhagavan, "Swami, how is it that all *Avatars* are born here in this country?" Why none were born in the United States? They could also enjoy milk shake and pizza! Poor God in India has to be satisfied with cow's milk and butter and all that. Why not? There are beautiful cities in the United States. In India, too, there are metropolitan cities like Bombay and New Delhi; but *Avatars* are born in villages. Why?

Why has God taken birth in India? Baba replied, "Where is the driver of the engine? Where do you find the guard of the train? The guard of the train is in the last compartment to wave the flag. The engine driver is in the first compartment, close to the engine. Why? The energy required to pull the compartments is in the engine up in the front of the train. This engine of the world's train is Bharat; God Himself, the *Avatar* is the driver." That is what Bhagavan said. Who else can praise this country more than that!

Furthermore He said, "You've all heard of the *Mahabharatha*. There is a character known for physical strength, who can smash anybody in no time, take any victory in seconds, and match any number of men in physical strength. That character is Bhima. A lean, skeletal figure cannot play the role of Bhima.

Another character in *Mahabharatha* known for his intellectual and academic excellence, an expert archer, was Arjuna. Arjuna means 'white, pure'. He was undefeated, and

hence called Vijaya, the ever winner. He had no jealousy, so he is called Anasurya. He not only speaks, but he practices. That is why he is called Savyasakshi. He is the representative of Mother Earth, so he is Partha. He does it in strict obedience. Therefore, he is also known as Kurunandana: *Kuru* means 'do it' and *nandana* means 'my child'. Arjuna, Partha, Kounteya, Dhananjeya, Palguna--not just one Padmashri or Padmabhushana--but Arjuna has 12 titles or names!

So, Bhima is known for physical strength, while Arjuna is known for mental strength and alertness. What did they do? Both of them had to obey the command of Dharmaraja, who was at the center. "Bharat is Dharmaraja, Bhima is Russia and Arjuna is America", said Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba. That is the spirit of this country. That is the glory of this country!

We should uphold it, and also make sure our children are committed to it. We have good thoughts to begin with. As we think, so we become. As you sow, so you reap. That is why it is absolutely necessary to have good thoughts.

Unfortunately, Duryodhana, who was a man of valour from the royal family, a blessed one who grew up in the times of Lord Krishna, was full of pride or *abhimana*. What happened to him? All his thoughts centered on the ruin of the Pandavas. Therefore Baba says, "Is any man named after Duryodhana?" No.

"Sir, there is one fellow, my neighbor, is Mr. Duryodhana." Will you say that? No! We are not supposed to have these evil thoughts. Therefore, we don't want to name our children after Duryodhana.

TEACHING ABILITY IS THE CROWN OF SUCCESS

My friends, if there is any person who is independent and has no boss, but is a boss unto himself, it is only a teacher. Please understand that. You have no boss. After all, your academic excellence, your teaching ability is the crown of your success. The boss only signs your salary certificate. That is all. Therefore, the teaching profession is one of dignity.

Alas, the level of subordination we allow! A teacher is independent, understand that. There is no need to please others or seek favours. Let us hold on to our own principles and our convictions, even if we have to lose certain favours or give up any advantages one can get by 'polishing others' shoes'.

One day, someone saw a man polishing his own shoe and asked, "Hey, do you polish your own shoes?"

He said, "Yes, I polish my shoes. Whose shoes do you polish?" (*Laughter*)

Therefore, we are supposed to have self-respect and dignity. By paying heed to others' words, we become prejudiced. That is what happened to Mother Kaika. Kaika was a very good lady, who loved Ramachandra more than her own son. But because cunning and jealous Manthara poisoned her mind, she ruined the entire plan and became responsible for Dasaratha's death. Is there any lady named after Kaika? Sisupala had bad looks. Does anyone call his son 'Sisupala' or wife 'Kaika'? (*Laughter*)

So, 'be good' means do not to have any evil thoughts; do not be bad either. Therefore my friends, let us see that our children grow in a natural way. Let us be really proud of our children.

This subject is inexhaustible. Your joy, enthusiasm, receptivity, sensitivity, and eagerness are also equal, but we have time constraints. I understand we have to have our lunch and then go in lines for evening *darshan*.

ADI SHANKARA'S INTERPRETATION OF ADVAITHA IS UNPARALLELED

First, let me express my joy. My friends, those were a lot of characters to share with you. I hopefully, respectfully, prayerfully and eagerly wait for an opportunity to visit the great land of Kerala. (*Applause*)

A son noticed his mother carrying a pot full of water in the hot sun and fainting in the *ashram*. "Oh Mother, you had to carry this water in the hot sun over a long distance. I can't bear this," the son said. He prayed earnestly, and a river started flowing by the side of his house. He is Adi Shankara, and the river is the Purna River today in Kalady. That is Kerala.

Once he stood in front of an old, poor lady who had nothing to offer him. He sang in praise of God, and the power of his praying produced gold. That is Adi Shankara--a man of history, a man of excellence whom the whole humanity feels proud of! No scientist, no technologist would ever come close, because Adi Shankara's interpretation of *Advaita* is unparalleled in human history. That state has to be experienced, having been born in this country; or else one is not born at all! (*Applause*)

STUDENTS FOLLOW OUR EXAMPLE

Baba should help me fulfill my desire that someday I may go and share some of my feelings there in Kerala. My friends, I thank each and every one of you from the bottom of my heart. My humble prostrations and salutations to each and every one of you, please take it from me. I am not a politician. I am not contesting in an election. I feel very uncomfortable down on the stage in the company of VIPs. I don't like it. Well, if

they are here, so what? VIP is 'very important person' or 'very insignificant person'. (*Laughter*) Therefore, I don't want to be in the company of VIPs.

My prayer is always to be in the company of my fellow teachers, and God has given this beautiful company of teachers! (*Applause*) What more can I want? Having spent all my life as a teacher, being proud of the teaching profession, I will not tolerate anybody speaking ill of teachers or underestimating the teaching profession.

I feel thrilled when a student says, "Sir, I am the beneficiary as a student." It has happened several times. Students repeat our lesson even after 40 years. Students imitate us; students follow our example. Therefore, if my words inspire or encourage you, then my task is fulfilled; my dream is fulfilled. May God be with you forever! Thank you. (*Applause*)

There is a nice story about this water. There used to be a great gentleman known as the Valmiki of Sai literature. He is Kasturi himself! He hailed from Kerala, got a good name in Karnataka, and settled in Andhra (*Laughter*). But he is a Malayalee by birth. Kasturi's contribution to Sai literature is matchless.

He told Swami, "Swami, while the speaker speaks, I will carry a glass of water to him, to inform him that it is time to stop." (*Laughter*) I am sure Vaidyanathan didn't do that to me. (*Laughter*) Thank you very much!