



NEW YEAR MESSAGE 1997

Time is a continuum. Therefore, there can not be segments of time. However, human beings have created time sections called years, months, days. There are different calendars in different systems. The Chinese linked it with harvesting and Indians linked it with trade practices. A New Year message in the context of Sri Sai takes a totally different interpretation. For us devotees, it infuses a new hope to start better ventures for a happier tomorrow. When tomorrow will be a fact, yesterday will become a fiction. Such is the game of illusion that facts become fiction, and fiction becomes fact. With physical death, the fact of life ends for most of us, whereas, the fiction continues for some generations. The entire endeavour of the spiritual seekers is to be in a continuous state of fact (truth and *dharma*) and get redeemed from the fictions (illusion or *maya*). But, we think before we begin the New Year whether we are putting in adequate effort for getting rid of fictions, illusions.

Experiences show that intellectual endeavours, howsoever potent and might they may seem, have not catapulted or thrown or raised any human being to spiritual masters are those who were uneducated in formal sense. For example Ramakrishna Paramhans, Sri Shirdi Sai, Namdeva, Tukaram, Paltu Maharaj etc. It obviously means that there is something self-limited in the intellectualism, in the path of spiritual progress. All that the spiritual masters learnt in their life and spread among others is '*bhakti*' or devotion. "*Bhakti*" means love of God. Since God is not sitting in a throne like an individual, therefore, how to love Him. The answer is that God is in everyone, and if one has the capacity to love others, he is doing real *bhakti*. Even doing all the worship, yoga, *pranayaam* or breath control etc. for one's own improvement is not '*bhakti*'. It is an activity for fulfilling spiritual/occult ambition like any other ambition.

What we learn from Sri Sai and the examples of His life style is that He went to no temples; followed no rituals, followed no specific religion or cult but only loved His people and, therefore, sacrificed Himself. Love, therefore, leads to sacrifice. The self expands from its state of isoteric or micro individualism to a more universal and macro state. Our New Year's Message, if truly should mean anything, let it be to love Sri Sai and love all the humanity He served.