



HEART TO hEART



RADIO SAI LISTENER'S JOURNAL



When They Played At The Lord's...

COVER STORY

Sri Sathya Sai Unity Cup



PRANAMS AT THE LOTUS FEET

Journal

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Contents

Between You and Us	1
Spiritual Blossoms	
Reflections	2
Sathya Sai Speaks	3
Conversations With Sai	4
Getting Spiritually Better	5
Cover Story	
When They Played At The Lord's	11
Moments, Memories and Miracles	
The Change - Part3	16
Special Feature	
The Shirdi Connection	19
Window to Sai Seva	
Touching thousands of Hearts	21
Kindle Your Spirit	
Glory of God	24
Thus Spake the Master	24
Broken Dreams	25
Tender Hearts	
A Play For The Lord Of The Universe	26
Baba	27
Down Memory Lane	
A Pictorial Peek into His Story	28
Puttaparthi- Then and Now	29
Hospital Corner	30
From Your Heart	31

Between You and Us

Dear Reader,

Sai Ram. This is our fourth issue and despite teething troubles we are getting along well, thanks to Swami's Grace and of course your good wishes. We at *Heart to Heart* appreciate tremendously the favourable comments we have been receiving, in addition of course to many suggestions, which, be assured, are receiving our careful attention.

This time the cover story is the UNITY CUP one-day international cricket match that was played here in Puttaparthi, yes in Puttaparthi, with cricket stars from all over the world. That was way back in December 1997, and since then most people have sort of forgotten the event. But just before the match, it was hot news, especially with people wondering what a cricket match has got to do with spirituality. After the match was over, everyone promptly forgot all about it, including the possible spiritual overtones.

We are taking you back in Time not only to relive those exciting moments but also to reflect on the possible reasons for Swami to bless such an event besides taking keen personal interest in it. If we look back on the Rama and Krishna *Avatars*, most of the events of the Rama *Avatar* are quite straightforward to understand they can be “fitted” within a Divine Agenda as we can conceive of it. When it comes to the Krishna *Avatar*, the Lord leaves us baffled with many of His actions. Moving on to the Shirdi *Avatar*, the mystery deepens, while in the present *Avatar*, the Lord keeps on taking us by surprise all the time. Be that as it may, of one thing we may be certain : As Kasturi poignantly put it, even a mere wave of the hand by Swami has significance, although we might not always understand it.

Coming back to the Unity Cup Match, Swami never explained the spiritual undertones of His action. As for understanding His actions, He has tersely remarked, “If Balarama [brother of Krishna] could not understand Me, how can you?!” Very true. Yet, this much we can say. The Unity Cup Match clearly underscores certain lessons taught by the Lord in the *Gita*, and to that extent, it is not surprising that the Lord decided to stage the match; that's what we feel. What about you? Why don't you write and tell us? We would very much like to hear from you. Our address remains the same: h2h@radiosai.org

God bless. Jai Sai Ram.

SGH Team.

We all know that babies smile, and smile most beautifully. But do you know that babies smile even while in the womb? I did not, until recently, when I heard a BBC interview with a London doctor who has been doing some research on this subject. Apparently, this doctor has been researching the behaviour of unborn babies by ultra sound, and he was startled to find that they smile from somewhere around 26 weeks.

The BBC interviewer naturally asked many questions and in reply the doctor said that babies for example wink their eyes. Why should they, when it is absolutely dark in the womb? The doctor said it was reflex action, in preparation for what the baby would



have to do once it comes into the world. The babies also go through muscle movements connected with breathing. They do not have to breathe within the womb since the mother supplies all the oxygen. Yet, they go through this movement, apparently as practice for what they would have to do when they come out and are on their own as far as oxygen is concerned.

What about smiling, which apparently the babies did many times in the womb? Was that also a part of reflex action? The doctor did not think so. In fact, said the doctor, babies do not generally smile after birth for about six weeks. Why? Because of the trauma of birth, said the London doctor. But what about smiling inside the womb? What was the reason? The doctor did not know.

Now, why am I bringing up all this? Because Swami has given the answer as to why babies smile even without any apparent reason. They smile because they are close to God! In fact, Swami has gone much farther and even explained how the baby changes in its attitude as it grows up. In brief, the facts are as follows.

In the beginning, the baby knows only God, especially when in the womb [where it has not yet seen its physical mother in the birth that is to take place]. Since God is Bliss or *Ananda*, the baby too experiences Pure Bliss. Once the baby is born, it continues to seek Bliss,

but looks for it in the wrong place and soon gets lost. Where does the baby look for Bliss? In the world, of course. Why does the baby look around in the world? Because the world is full of attractive things. For example, the baby looks at toys and imagines toys would confer happiness. So it starts looking for toys. And when it gets them, it becomes fiercely attached to them and would fight to keep them we have all seen that and perhaps have ourselves fought when young!

In short, after birth, man starts looking for Bliss in the wrong place: the world. *Anityam asukham lokam*. This is what Krishna says in the Gita, and Swami reminds us of this very often. It means that world is transient and full of misery. Swami asks: "How can something that is transient confer permanent happiness?" Remember, Bliss means permanent happiness. So where does one find Bliss and how to look for it? Swami has the answer [as always!]. He says, Bliss can be found only inside, that is in the Heart. Why there? Because, the Heart is the permanent residence of God, that is why. True Bliss is union with God, and that is why Swami recommends an Inward Journey to the Heart.

This journey has no hassles. No problems about bookings, reservations, etc. Only, we must have no 'reservations' about the journey, that's all! And no cost either! All it calls for is determination!!

G.VENKATARAMAN



Man today looks at physical forms superficially, without examining their Inner basis. This is the secular or temporal approach to knowledge. In Spirituality, however, one looks beneath the "surface".

Excellence in secular knowledge may lead to great achievements and positions of power and authority; but it can never bring enduring respect to the achiever. By contrast, one who is totally immersed in God never fails to elicit respect and adoration wherever he goes. Knowledge is truly meaningful only when it leads to good thoughts.

You sow thoughts and reap actions; you sow actions and reap habits; you sow habits and reap character; you sow character and reap a fortune. Thus, fortune depends on character, character depends on habits, habits depend on actions and actions depend on thought. It all comes back to thoughts and in the ultimate analysis, thoughts shape one's future as well as fortune. Good fortune is always the result of good and positive thoughts whereas bad and negative thoughts lead eventually to bad fortune, via bad actions, bad habits and evil character. Since thought is the true basis of fortune, it is obvious that one must cultivate good and positive thoughts, if one is looking for a good fortune. Thoughts and Destiny are inter-connected.

Good thoughts alone would lead to good action. What is the meaning of good action? A good action is that which would please God. Whatever you do, you should always have the feeling that you are doing God's work. Further, you

should never forget to dedicate your actions to God. He who in this manner always lovingly offers all his actions to God would get only good thoughts and feelings; evil thoughts and feelings would never enter his Mind. All worldly activities must be inspired by noble feelings emanating from the Heart. Cultivate noble feelings, seek the Divine, and realise that the Divine transcends all attributes.

What is Divinity? Who is God? The Love that is immanent in all beings is God. Love is God, and this Love is inherent in every being. Man should give expression to the Love latent in him in the same way God gives expression to His Love and shares it with all. Love is most adorable, beautiful, infinite and beyond all measure. Pure and unselfish Love must be treated as an aspect of the Divine. It cannot be commanded or demanded, or purchased or acquired through raw physical might. You cannot hire it or obtain it on lease. No one can lend Love or borrow Love. Love is immanent and infinite. Love between beings cannot be like a business transaction, as people often tend to imagine. Pure Love can be attained only through Pure Love. Love should be the basis of life. Today, no one thinks of true, Selfless Love. People seek all kinds of specialised education, positions of authority and power. All this is a complete waste of time and an exercise in futility. Actions become meaningful only when they are born of good thoughts and rooted firmly in Pure Love.

EXTRACTS FROM
A DIVINE DISCOURSE BY
BHAGAVAN BABA

QUESTION: Swami, if God is present in all beings, why then are there differences?

The Vedas declare that God is One. There is no question of there being a second. Your doubt is, if there is only One who is present everywhere, why then are there so many differences amongst beings? A small example will explain the point. The current that flows through various bulbs is the same, but the light outputs vary so much, don't they? Some are bright while others are dim. Why? That is because the wattage of these bulbs is different. God the In-dweller is like the current. He is the same in all beings. People are like bulbs; they differ in their Gunas [intrinsic tendencies], and hence the differences.



QUESTION: Swami, if we are to progress further on the spiritual path, how much of Spiritual Knowledge must we have?

Not much, really. Many people are always reading books on Spirituality. They will be either listening to discourses or be giving discourses themselves. But what is the use of all this? Such people do not seem to change at all, and spiritually speaking, remain where they are. They do not put into practice what they hear or learn. In truth, there is no need at all to read many books or hear many discourses. Progress can be achieved by sincerely following just one or two important teachings. To commit suicide, a small needle is enough! It is only to kill others that one needs bigger weapons like knife, sickle or sword!! Those who wish to preach to others have to read a lot. Those who want to improve themselves do not have to read much; they only have to practice the little they read.



QUESTION: Swami, what is this Maya [illusion, supposed to be created by God]?

There is no such thing as Maya; it is all one's imagination. To think that you are the body is Maya. You mistakenly believe that you are something [body] that you really are not; that is Maya. Truly speaking, there is no Maya; it is all one's imagination. Maya is like the shadow of a tree. What casts the shadow? The branches of the tree and not the rays of the Sun. If there are no branches, there is also no shadow. The shadow called Maya arises from the branches called human desires. If there are no desires, then there is no Maya as well!

Restoration Of Balance

Dear Reader,

Continuing our feature Getting Spiritually Better, we offer below the third instalment. We hope you like it, and would share it with others who are interested in enquiry and self-improvement. Do write and tell us what you think, how you find it, whether it is useful, and in what ways this feature can be improved.

Thank you and Jai Sai Ram.

SGH Team.

We discussed earlier the extreme imbalance now being created by man, in the name of progress. However, one should not get scared because all is not lost. In fact, for a variety of reasons, Swami generally disapproves of too much discussion of the negative aspects. Nevertheless, some discussion is necessary, so that one gets a clear idea of what to do about the prevailing situation. The point is that the Universe is like a linked chain of gears. Even if one cog gets out of alignment, it can cause the entire system to malfunction. That precisely is what is happening at present. Man is the only single element in Creation that is causing an imbalance.

Now there is an important reason why man alone is causing havoc and not the birds and the bees. As Swami has pointed out, every entity in Creation except man, be it inanimate or animate, is “hardwired” to do its job. These entities do their respective jobs unknown to themselves. If the entities are inanimate, we say they “follow the

laws of Nature”. If they are animate, we say they follow their “natural instincts”. For example, in orbiting the Sun, the earth is “merely following a law of Nature” this is how a scientist would describe the phenomenon. Likewise, when a tigress protects its cubs, we say it follows its instincts. In the language of spirituality, every entity follows its own *Dharma*. What about man? He too has a *Dharma* that he must follow but God has endowed him with a Mind. Thanks to this Mind, man has a choice he can either follow *Dharma* or violate it. Man is not supposed to go

against *Dharma*, but for selfish reasons and personal advantage, he often chooses to. It is this excessive selfishness and self-interest [to which Swami calls attention ever so often] that has now caused massive imbalance in the ecosystem, disturbance to the quality of life, etc. We have to do something about it.

Let us now consider four words that Baba sometimes uses. These are: **KNOWLEDGE**, **SKILL**, **BALANCE**, and **INSIGHT**. Having talked of imbalance, it is but proper that we now veer the topic to balance! What precisely does Swami imply via this quartet? To make that clear, let us suppose that there is a young man who is in medical school. He studies hard and diligently, and acquires all the medical knowledge he can. Fine. This man not only crams all the texts and pours over all the journals, but, by careful practice, also develops great skills in his profession he shapes himself into a great clinician or a



The Imbalance caused by Man

surgeon, as the case may be. So far, so good. Now, this man has a choice. He can either use all his skills to make as much money as he possibly can, or he can use them for common good by rendering service. There are thousands who have chosen to do the former. We all know they exist, but Society does not honour them, or even know who they are. On the other hand, a man like Albert Schweitzer who chose to dedicate his entire life for the hapless ones in Africa would be remembered for a long, long time. That is what balance is all about. Knowledge and skill are to be used in the way they really ought to be. (For a biography of Albert Schweitzer, visit <http://www.nobel.se/peace/laureates/1952/index.html>)

Now one may say: "Listen, your example is not valid. Man has to eat, and everyone cannot be an Albert Schweitzer." Agreed. Swami says that by all means one can charge fees as a doctor, but one must be reasonable about it. Besides, one must set apart some time for specifically serving those who cannot otherwise afford medical treatment. Indeed many do this, in all lands. That is good, and that is what balance is all about. If the knowledge and the skill one has acquired are not looked upon as means for acquiring wealth, but as tools for healing, then there is balance. In due course, such balance would produce spiritual insight. A doctor who regularly serves the poor would become increasingly compassionate, develop patience, and acquire the precious virtue of *Kshama* or forbearance that Swami invariably extols to the skies. [In this context, see the book *Inspired Medicine* edited by Judy Warner, and available at the Sathya Sai Book Centre of America, Tustin, CA.]

This is one aspect of restoration of balance. There is also another aspect that needs mention; this aspect is not directly related to one's personal knowledge and skill. Rather, it refers to facing forces of imbalance and disruption that prevail in the world.

One must confront these forces in a disciplined manner. In other words, one needs a balanced and disciplined approach while facing the problems of life. If everyone does this, then the imbalance in Society would disappear or at least get substantially diminished.

There are two ways of dealing with disruptive forces. One is by external



The Evils of Indiscipline

imposition of authority, and the other is by self-regulation. The latter implies self-discipline [and this is where balance comes into the picture]. A simple example: Consider the case of a person going to a service counter in a bank or post office. When this person arrives there, he finds that there are already many customers ahead of him. In some countries, people often crowd and push their way around to get service. But in these very countries, there are also places where people stand in queues and get served in the order in which they arrived. Sometimes, when discipline is lacking, a policeman is posted. Then there is order; but this lasts only as long as the policeman is present! The moment he turns his back, it is back to square one chaos! In this case, order is possible only through external imposition. But in other societies, order is self-imposed. People ALWAYS stand in queue because they know that it is good for them and the right and proper thing to do. In this case, there is self-regulation. The same is true of driving, for example. In some countries people drive carefully and spontaneously follow rules. In other countries, people drive rashly; this is due to extreme selfishness, compounded by the total absence of any external enforcement agency. The

examples can be multiplied.

Curiously, Nature also provides such examples. There are objects called magnets. They produce magnetic fields that we use in many different ways. These fields arise because the atoms in the magnet are all aligned that is, every atom is like a tiny magnet, and all the tiny magnets co-operate by pointing in the same direction. Suppose we now take a piece of ordinary iron. All the atoms in it are tiny magnets no doubt, but they will be pointing in arbitrary directions. Thanks to this randomness in orientation, the different atoms 'cancel' each other and the piece of iron does not behave like a magnet. However, if the iron piece is brought into contact with a magnet, then this piece also behaves like a magnet we have all seen how, if a pin is

lifted by a magnet, it can lift another pin. Break the contact between the pin and the magnet, the pin goes back to its random state there is discipline only as long as there is policing by the external magnet!

Discipline imposed from outside does work; however, the moment the external force is removed, there is indiscipline once again. As Swami says, discipline is best when it comes from within. It is usual to refer to this as self-discipline. Now what is this self? Who is this self? Spirituality says that this self is NOT the lower self that we usually mistake it to be but the Higher Self. The lower self refers to the body while the Higher Self refers to the *Atma*, which is the core of our being. It is the *Atma* or God who is resident within. To use Swami's language, true Self-discipline is not the product of force but comes from the Source! It comes from the *Atma*.

Self-discipline is something we all are familiar with because we all practice it to some extent or the other. For example, when we go and stand in a queue spontaneously, it is an act of Self-discipline. When we are trying to enter a public place [say a bank], and there is an old person who is also trying to enter,

we spontaneously move aside to permit that person to go in first this also is an expression of Self-discipline.

Self-discipline also implies Self-control. True Self-control implies control over the senses as well as the Mind. A truly Self-controlled person does not have fits of anger or fly into a rage. He is balanced in his outlook and the very embodiment of equipoise. A person may not have great knowledge of worldly matters but can still be balanced in his outlook through sheer Self-control and Self-discipline. This is the point that is being made.

Now there is an important point about Self-discipline, Self-control, and Self-regulation, that is best discussed by comparing public attitude and reaction to the dangers of smoking on the one hand and the danger of AIDS on the other.

Many years ago, medical evidence revealed that smoking could lead to lung cancer or serious heart problems. This turned off many from smoking. Fear of deadly diseases made people exercise self-control and avoid smoking altogether. Contrast this with what is happening in the case of AIDS. AIDS is a killer disease. If contracted, there is almost no chance of survival. Millions have already died of AIDS and millions more are on the verge of death.

Everyone knows what causes AIDS. It is the quest for sensual pleasure that lands one in trouble. Has the fear of the disease promoted self-control? Has it kept people from sensual indulgence? Not quite. All anti-AIDS propaganda assumes that Self-control is neither possible nor required. The way suggested for avoiding AIDS is a have-the-cake-and-eat-it-too approach. Such a bypass is not possible in the case of smoking, and so in that case, people totally abstain from the bad habit. But in the latter case, it seems to be a different story.

This approach is fundamentally wrong. There are certain things one must do because it is one's duty to do so,

and there are certain things that one must NEVER do under any circumstance because it is morally wrong to do so. Life must be lived



bearing in mind the fact that there is a Moral Law governing the Universe.

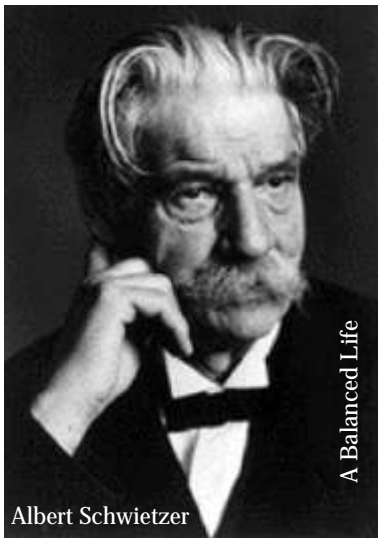
Swami describes all this via three phrases as follows: Love for God, Fear of Sin, and Morality in Society. If One REALLY loves God, then one would not do anything that would come in the way of becoming one with God. 'Sin' is anything that comes in the way. It can be of the text-book type such as stealing, telling lies, injuring a person etc. It can also be of a more subtle form. Craving for worldly things is also a type of sin, although most people would not consider it that way. One may not like to call it sin but it certainly is an impurity that impedes one's spiritual progress. If one takes care to be as pure as possible, then morality in Society is automatic. Indeed this is what was happening in olden times in all societies. But in more recent times, God has been put on the back-burner, as the phrase goes, and the concept of sin and morality have more or less vanished. Yet, people do feel the need for truth and ethics of some sort. This includes those who do not believe in God. The famous mathematician Von Neumann [who made numerous brilliant contributions] did not believe in God

but felt that ethics was needed since otherwise Society would turn chaotic. The Communists said God did not exist but Communist Russia laid down norms of ethical behaviour for its citizens.

This kind of external imposition has seldom worked. What has worked is spontaneous adherence to morality. Such spontaneous observance comes about when one loves God, and realises that one is intrinsically Divine. This is the point that Baba stresses often. One is moral because it is natural for one to be so.

A word now about the six deadly enemies of man. All these are internal. As Swami says, they come pretending to be great friends but once they have us in their hook, they literally twist us around their little finger. These six demons are: *Kama*, *Krodha*, *Lobha*, *Moha*, *Madha*, *Maatsarya*. The original Sanskrit words have been included because Baba makes frequent reference to them. They mean: 1) All types of desires, primarily lust, 2) Anger, 3) Greed, 4) Attachment, 5) Pride, and 6) Jealousy. To this list may be added two more, namely, *Ahamkara*, and *Mamakara*, meaning respectively, ego, and the feeling of 'mine'.

Note that Desire occupies position number one. Desire is a standard weakness of the senses and the Mind. Desire is actively promoted in a thousand different ways in today's world because it suits those interested in making money through the exploitation of our weaknesses. A huge industry has been built up, far bigger than any other industry, and this is the one that panders to the senses. It is a multi-trillion dollar industry. It is this industry that has exploited every human weakness and created a clinical approach to fighting AIDS, cleverly subverting a moral approach. People are in fact brainwashed into believing that a moral approach will not work. People are made to believe that they are weak! No, that is not true at all. There is in each one of us the Power of God and



with that power, any obstacle can be overcome. We just have to have faith in that power and invoke that power. We don't try that because we are brainwashed all the time.

This is one of the issues that has to be seriously examined. As Baba often tells us, "We see through the eyes of others, we hear through the ears of others, and we think through the minds of others." We would realise how true this is, if only we reflect for a minute and examine how much we are under the influence of the media.

In short, we have to judge events, products, relationships, etc., from a fundamental point of view, based on our own discrimination. God has given man the powerful tool called *Buddhi* capacity for discrimination. Why lock it up? Baba most emphatically declares

that *Buddhi* has been given for using and not storing away. *Buddhi* is what will distinguish good from bad, and right from wrong. If we wish to stay away from the bad and engage always in righteous action, then we MUST invoke *Buddhi*.

By way of wrapping up this chapter, the following observations can be made:

- Today, there is a severe imbalance in Society, and in man's attitude to many matters pertaining to Nature and to Society.
- To correct this imbalance, every individual must use the power of spiritual discrimination, i.e., *Buddhi* and then only act.
- The feeling has grown that the rights of the individual are supreme and that responsibilities do not matter much. Swami, on the other hand, emphatically asserts: Responsibility first and then only rights.

In this context, it is pertinent to recall how societies evolved. While in the animal kingdom the general rule has been the survival of the fittest, human evolution has been marked by co-operation. But for co-operation, one would not have towns and cities and the thousands of social institutions that we take so much for granted these days.

Co-operation is an important element of social evolution. That is why, Baba often recalls Vedic chants that highlight the value of co-operation. Indeed, one must go even further and aim at the higher stage of self-effacement. That is what the truly wise ones do. Instead, the slogan is competition, cut-throat competition. This may be good for business but severely detrimental to Society and human progress. By aggressively promoting extreme competition, one is literally going back to the survival-of-the-fittest regime.

The philosophy of extreme competition promotes ego, excessive feeling of mine, jealousy, greed, etc., all of which, we have seen, are deadly enemies. It makes one a demon, wiping out all traces of humanness and compassion. It is extreme selfishness that is making young people abandon old parents, casting them aside as if they are worn out socks. It also leads to stress, depression, etc. Is this right?

People hide from imbalance or sweep it under the rug. This we cannot afford to do. We must look squarely at the issue, and see how we can, as genuine seekers, not be individually guilty of it.

ADDITIONAL NOTES RELATING TO THE ABOVE

- The entities of Creation act in such a manner as to preserve a balance in Nature. All entities except man, have no choice in the manner they act. The inanimate objects [e.g., the Sun, the Moon, etc.] are said to follow the "Law of Nature". By extensive observation, scientists have discovered many such laws. The animate objects, namely the living beings [like the tiger, for example], are said to follow their instincts. In modern language, these instincts have been "hard-wired" i.e., encoded via their DNA.
- In spirituality, we do not use words like law of Nature or instinct. Instead we say that all entities follow their

respective *Dharma*, as ordained by Divinity.

- What about man? Does he have no *Dharma* to follow? Of course he has. In fact, the *Dharma* prescribed for man is quite elaborate and also exalted. But he has been given a choice by God, and that is, man can either follow his *Dharma* or violate it.
- Now why on earth has God done this? Ah, that is part of God's Cosmic Drama! For man, life on earth is really a test or an examination. The test is whether or not he follows the *Dharma* as laid down by God Himself. If he follows his *Dharma*, then God would declare man as having passed; otherwise it means that man has flunked!

- In other words, man is the only agent who can consciously unsettle the delicate balance in Nature.
- The concept of balance is closely related to four words that Baba sometimes uses. They are: KNOWLEDGE, SKILL, BALANCE and INSIGHT.
- In today's world, man acquires strives hard and acquires knowledge from the external world. Based on this knowledge, he develops special skills. For example, a person could become an expert surgeon.
- However, a person anchored solely in the external world would lack spiritual or inner balance.
- The external forces that produce compulsions in man are: Peer pressure, competition, job insecurity, etc.
- Inner balance is a must for wholesome living. They counter the unsettling nature of external forces and contribute to equanimity, composure, equipoise, etc. They help in no small measure in countering mental stress.
- Imbalance implies that senses are holding sway and are dominant. Balance, on the other hand, means that there is counter-check from within.
- Sense control is the real key to balance. Baba sometimes the word *Indriya Nigraha*. Watch out for these words in His Discourses, and flag those passages!
- Discipline is of two kinds externally imposed and self-generated.
- In the spiritual world, one wants discipline that springs from the Source within, rather than imposition by external force.
- Self discipline is often dismissed as being impossible. Not true. It all depends on one's resolution. Discipline often flows easily when Love is the basis. Thus, a devotee who otherwise might flinch at self-control might be quite ready to practice it as a token of his love for Swami.
- Self-control is vital for vanquishing internal enemies. Desire is a leading enemy, and it can be kept at bay only through self-regulation.
- External vision and bias tends to produce imbalance. Vision directed Inwards helps in the restoration of the balance.
- Closely connected with judgement leading to imbalance and balance is the faculty of [spiritual] Discrimination. This Discrimination is often referred to as *Buddhi*. If *Buddhi* is absent, then imbalance is inevitable. But if *Buddhi* prevails, then balance is achievable.
- Why is self-discipline so important? Because, without it, many of the social evils cannot be eradicated easily. AIDS is being talked about extensively. All sorts of attempts are being made to arrest the spread of AIDS. Fair enough. However, hardly any thought is being to stop AIDS at source via the inculcation of moral values amongst people. There is almost a fatalistic feeling that morality will not work.
- Morality is today considered a non-starter because God has been put on the back-burner so to speak. Moral force will prevail when people love God. Thus it is that Baba says: DEVELOP LOVE FOR GOD. THAT WOULD PROMOTE FEAR OF SIN. ONCE PEOPLE FEAR SIN, THERE WOULD AUTOMATICALLY BE MORALITY PRESENT IN SOCIETY. This is what happened in ancient societies.
- Some people argue that the clock cannot be put back. Is this really true? It is all a matter of will and determination. Today's priorities are: Rights first and then may be responsibility. But this is the prescription for pure disaster. If mankind is able to see the writing on the wall, then it would realise that the priorities ought to be changed to: Responsibility first and then may be a claim to rights.
- In the animal kingdom, survival is through competition. In other words, evolution occurs through the principle of the survival of the fittest. Mankind, on the other hand, evolved through co-operation. But today, crass consumerism is slowly converting mankind to believe in the survival of the fittest policy. No doubt the idea is cleverly sugar-coated and disseminated via slick marketing, but the hard truth is that consumerist economy thrives on greed, promotion of unwanted and even base desires, and cut-throat competition, often of the dog-eat-dog variety. Can this be called progress? Is this a balanced state for mankind? Will this not lead to a sharp and disastrous divide?
- Imbalance thrives on differentiation while balance leads to unity and a sense of Oneness. Today, mankind is at the cross roads. It has to decide where it wants to go. Does it want to sink or rise to higher levels of Consciousness? What must be done under the circumstances is quite clear. But do we have the will and the desire to do it? That is the question!

POINTS TO PONDER OVER

- What is knowledge and how is it acquired?
- People talk of secular knowledge and spiritual knowledge? What is the difference between the two?
- How does one acquire secular knowledge and where from does one acquire spiritual knowledge? [In this context, it is

interesting to learn about an important incident in the Shirdi Avatar, that relates to *Sloka* (4.34) in the *Gita*. See, Message of the Lord, page 286 etc.]

- Which must be acquired first? Secular or spiritual knowledge?
- Construct some examples of imbalance relating to the corporate world, politics, science, government administration, etc. In each case, figure out how the imbalance could be removed.
- How does balance lead to insight?
- What is the specific role if any of spiritual knowledge in

restoring balance?

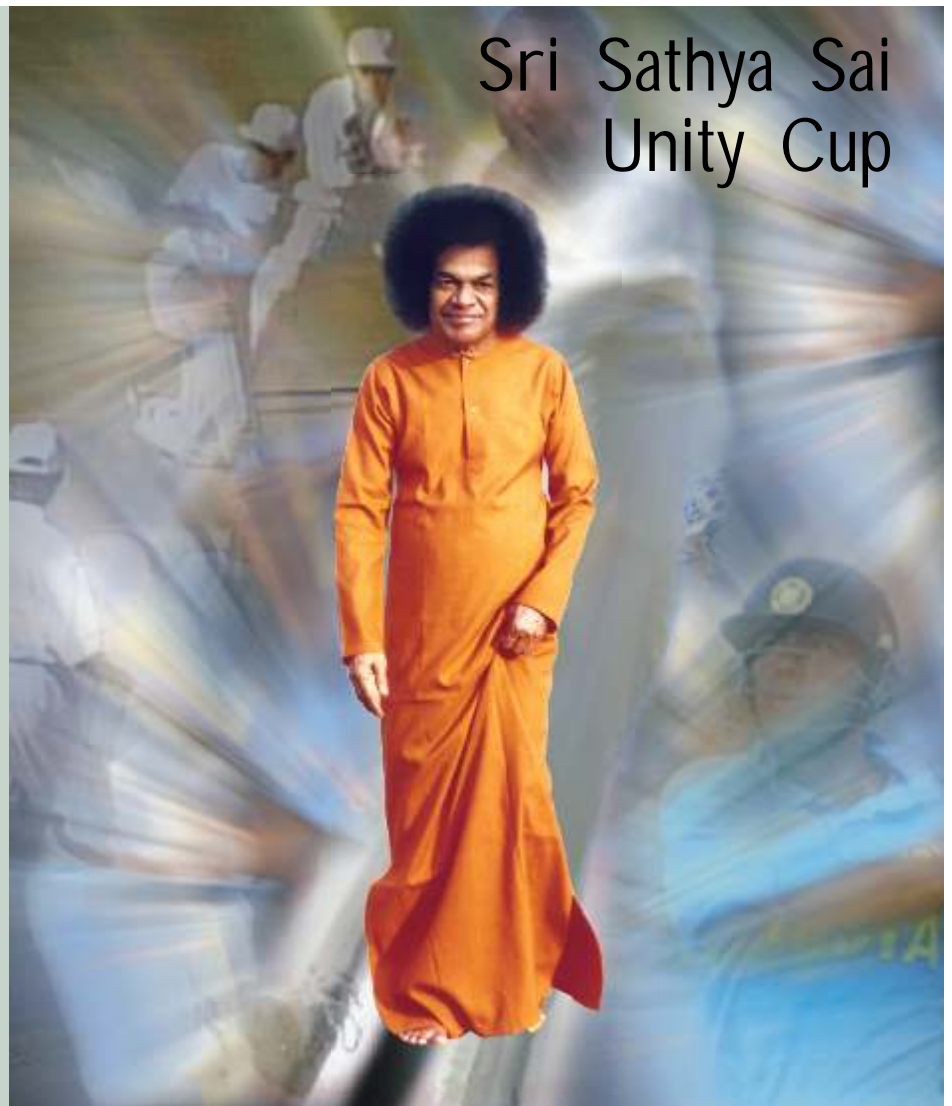
Swami often talks of bookish knowledge, general knowledge, practical knowledge etc. Find out what precisely He means, and how they are relevant in the present context. [See Divine Discourse delivered on 21st November, 2001.]

Coming Next....

A fascinating coverage of the genesis and the workings of two great institutions established by Bhagawan- the University and the Super Specialty hospital at Puttaparthi. Facts, stories and insights that you have never known before! Watch out!



" They were the best, the game could boast of...in the country and in the world. They came to play a cricket match at the Lord's.....own playground! "



When They Played At The Lord's.....

It all started on a day when Sunil Gavaskar and Alvin Kallicharan were speaking to Bhagavan. Sunil is, of course, a cricket legend while Kalli is a test star of distinction, hailing from the West Indies. Both are Bhagavan's devotees, and have been coming to Swami for many years. On that day, both of them told Swami, "Baba, we see devotees doing so much for you all the time. We too love you very much and want to serve you. But cricket is our profession, and we cannot obviously serve you like doctors and teachers do. So, please guide us and tell us in what

way we can serve you, because we both are very keen to do so."

Bhagavan smiled and said, "Well, why don't you arrange a cricket match for Me?"

The two cricket stars simply could not believe what they heard. "Was Baba really serious?" They wondered.

Soon they discovered that Swami was not joking but meant precisely what He said. And that was how the idea for the Sri Sathya Sai Unity Cup, a one-day

international cricket match between India XI and the World XI, was born.

With their wide international contacts, it was not difficult for Sunil and Kalli to get in touch with stars from overseas. Getting the consent of the Indian board of control for cricket also was no problem at all.

As everyone knows, the schedule of cricket stars is packed. Yet, when Swami wills, things happen smoothly. It came as no wonder, that the overseas players



The day Before

invited for the Unity Cup match had no problem, in finding free time slots. In fact, 30th December, 1997, the day fixed for the Unity Cup, came right in the middle of the Sri Lankan tour of India. In spite of that, Indian and Sri Lankan players participating in this match could easily make it.

Now, an international cricket match requires a cricket field meeting international standards. When Gavaskar and Kallicharan came up with the idea for a one-day international, Puttaparthi did not have such a ground. So, where was the match to be played? In Bangalore perhaps? Bangalore had a full-fledged cricket stadium, and Swami also spent many months in a year at Bangalore. So, may be one could think of Bangalore as the venue for the match, since that also was Swami's town so many thought!

But Swami had other ideas. He simply said, "The unity cup match will be played in the Hill view Stadium, here, in Puttaparthi!"

"Hill view stadium, Swami? But we don't have a cricket pitch there, in the first place. And, what about the galleries to accommodate the huge crowds that would turn up?"

Doubting Thomases had a field day, raising all kinds of questions. But they all forgot some basics. Who brought drinking water to millions? Who was it that had built an ultra modern hospital

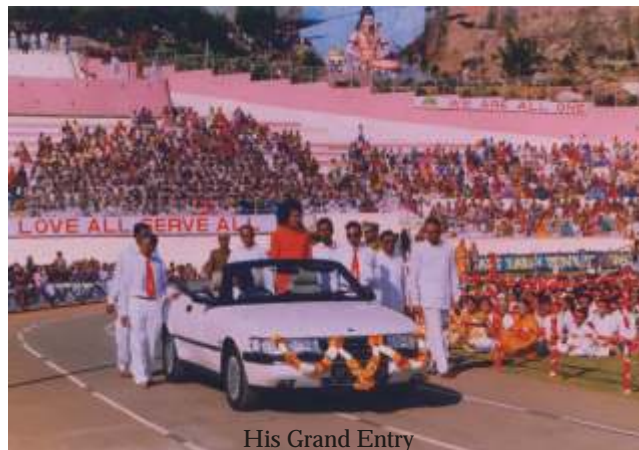
in a rural area, a hospital that was treating thousands of patients absolutely free? Compared to those achievements, a cricket ground was just chicken feed.

While the Thomases were busy with their doubts, others became busy with various details connected with the Unity Cup match.

The reputed, Larsen and Toubro, that had built the Super Specialty hospital and executed the Drinking Water project, was asked to get the stadium

chance to see an international sporting event in their environment. These young cricket fans could not afford to go to the cities and pay huge gate money. But they loved the game nevertheless, and Swami decided to make them happy. Swami also decided that there would be no gate fee for the match, something totally unheard of where such a sporting event was concerned. Not just that. On the day of the match, Swami even gave free breakfast and lunch to the crowd! But this was not all. There was another and perhaps more important reason. The Unity Cup match offered yet another opportunity for Bhagavan, to grant the Blessing of Divine Intimacy to students. And to establish a basis for this, as if one were required (!), it was decided that the Unity Cup match would be played under the auspices of Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning.

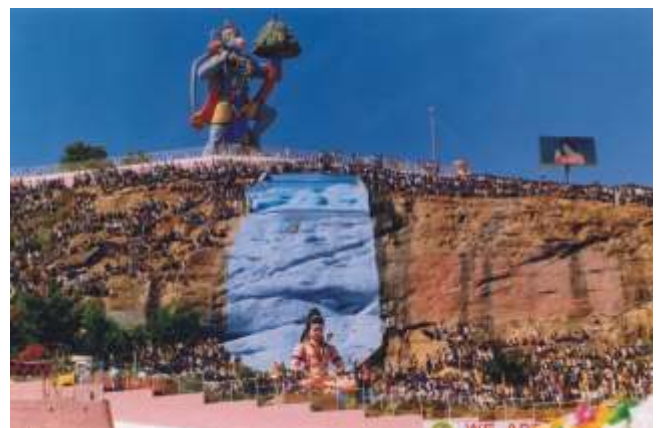
How wonderful were those days were for the students! Practically every student and teacher of the institute got involved with some duty or the other, associated with the match. That is Swami's way of giving opportunities for spiritual development and advancement. Swami once said, "God does not ever want anything. But when He comes down as an Avatar, He sometimes pretends that He wants this or that. With much love, the devotee then tries to fulfil what he believes God wants. And in this manner, the devotee earns much merit, which he otherwise would not have."



His Grand Entry

and the pavilion ready, in good time, for the match. E.A.S Prasanna, a great spin bowler of the past, became deeply involved with the preparation of the pitch, the outfield, and supervising all aspects of infrastructure development, including the pavilion and the scoreboard.

By the way, why was Swami particular that the match be held in Puttaparthi? There were many reasons. Firstly, it would enable rural cricket enthusiasts to get a



The Crowd



The Unity Squad Marches

An unprecedented event of this kind, that proclaimed global unity via sports, could not be allowed to pass without an appropriate chief guest. Therefore, with Swami's blessings, Sri. I.K.Gujral, the Prime Minister of India, was invited to be the guest of honour. The choice of Gujral was befitting, since he had personally done much to promote international amity.

D-day minus one. The whole of Puttaparthi was in the grip of severe cricket fever and there was tremendous excitement in the air. In the afternoon, the players all arrived by air, and went straight from the airport to the Hill view stadium. Almost all of them were coming to Puttaparthi for the first time; and when they saw the ground, they were overwhelmed. Such a beautiful setting, and so very different from the grounds they had seen the world over. Yes, is there any another ground in the world where Buddha, Jesus and a host of other Gods stood atop, as spectators?!

They went to the middle and inspected the pitch. It was unbelievable. Some of them said that this pitch looked far better than many they have played on. Prasanna who heard it all smiled. Yes, he had every reason to. What would these very people have said if they had come to the ground a few months ago?!

Someone said, "How about checking in at the Guest House and having some lunch?" The players had other ideas. They wanted to see every inch of this wonder. And so they went to the pavilion, only to discover that it too was world class. And why not? Had not swami come there every day to supervise every little detail, including the chairs, the curtains, and the crockery? Meanwhile, a huge crowd of fans had already gathered on the field, and movement became somewhat



They all pose with him

difficult. The players were very happy. Nothing gives players greater happiness than to play before large crowds. They now knew that Puttaparthi was not exactly in the middle of nowhere, as the saying goes.

Shanti Bhavan, the guest house, was the next stop. My word, what a scene it was! Thousands milling around to catch a glimpse of the cricket stars! "If it is like this today, what would it be like tomorrow?" that was the question many had. It was time for the evening Darshan. Devotees made their way to the Mandir. But would the players come for Darshan? They did!

Who would miss Swami's Darshan?!

Finally, the big day. Crowds started filling the stadium even before dawn. Villagers came from everywhere, and thousands perched on the hill by the side of the Gods there. All the Gods had plenty of company! There was a riot of colour all over, and the new stadium was grand and marvellous. And, what about the ground? The outfield was a wonderful green carpet, definitely world class. And all along the boundary line, there were hoardings carrying Swami's sayings. What a change from the ads that one sees in the usual cricket grounds!

Swami entered the ground in a ceremonial parade. He came in an elegant sports car, white in colour, and driven by His student. At the head of the procession was the popular favourite, Sai Geetha. This must have be the only cricket match where a caparisoned elephant formed a part of the opening ceremonies! Behind Sai Geetha came the institute brass band, in a smart turnout, followed by over a hundred students, in slow march, bearing the flags of all nations.

At the Dias, Swami was ceremonially received by the Prime Minister and other dignitaries. The Vice-Chancellor, then requested the Prime Minister, to hoist the unity flag, an impressive



Watching the Match



India on a Roll

mosaic of the flags of all nations. The Unity flag was hoisted, to the tune of specially composed music played by the brass band of the Institute. The flag bearers, then ran towards the hill, and planted the flags in an impressive row, all along the road leading up to the Hanuman statue. As the flags fluttered in the morning breeze, it really was a sight to behold!

Swami and the Prime Minister then went down to the ground for the formal introduction to the players of the two teams and for photographs. As Swami, the Prime Minister, and the players took their seats, the camera men had a field day, clicking away. Yes, the media people were there in full strength, too. Doordarshan (the National Channel) was telecasting this match, not only all over India, but also to several countries overseas! Incidentally, this was one of the subtle aspects of the divine drama. Thanks to the match, there was a telecast. And thanks to the telecast, millions of devotees all over the country and even abroad, were able to get Bhagavan's darshan. Swami satisfies

the aspirations of one and all, in numerous ways. However, very few take note of it.

It was time for the game to start. The rival captains, Sachin Tendulkar of India and Arjuna Ranatunga of world XI went out into the middle for the toss. India won the toss and elected to bat. Runs came briskly for India, and the score board, operated by the institute boys, incidentally, was moving at a good rate. And when Sachin enters, there were electrifying fireworks. The crowd was simply delirious with delight. The TV camera repeatedly swung from the ground to the dais, giving viewers a heady mix of sport and the Lord who willed it. It was just unbelievable! Swami was surrounded by Sunil Gavaskar of



Restricting The World Xi

India, Clive Lloyd of West Indies, Hanif Mohamed and Zaheer Abbas of Pakistan; and all were absorbed, watching cricket! Meanwhile, in the commentary box, Syed Kirmani of India was going gaga, waxing eloquent on Baba's love rather than the game in progress!

India piled up an impressive score of 289 runs, in the allotted overs, bolstered by a blitzkrieg by Sachin. It was then time for lunch.

The children of the primary school came on to the field and presented a most colourful as well as impressive half-time show. For the institute students, it was their finest hour.

They were on hospitality duty everywhere. In fact, everyone had been working throughout, and very few have had the opportunity to see the match, though they all would have loved to. But, as Swami says, duty first! On the dais, Zaheer Abbas, a scintillating Pakistani cricketer of yester years, was amazed by the service rendered by the institute boys. Seized with curiosity, he wanted to know all about how Swami trains his students!

After lunch, it was the turn of World XI to bat. But, they were no match for India, and were scuttled out for 161. To the delight of the crowd, India won the Sri Sathya Sai Unity Cup!

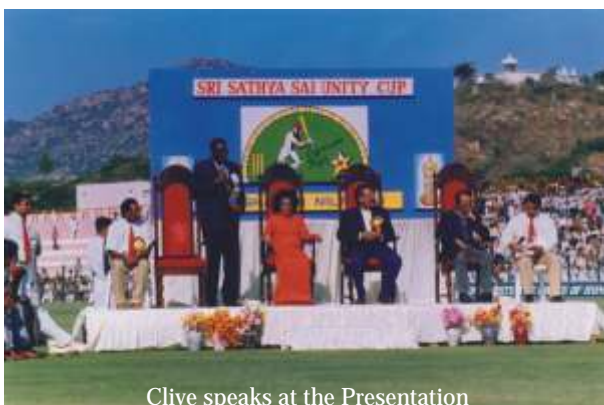
Under Bhagavan's supervision, a simple but impressive ceremony had been arranged. The visiting dignitaries made speeches; among them was Clive Lloyd, former Captain of the West Indies. He said he was thrilled to witness this great spectacle and to see the wonderful stadium come to fruition. He reminded the players that their talent was a gift from God; and what they did with their talent was their offering to God and gift to humanity. Words right out of the Bhagavad Gita. Yes, if one's heart is in the right place, as they say, then even without reading the scriptures, wisdom pours forth. It comes gushing straight from the source!

When the speech making was over, Swami gave a signal, and the Unity Cup was wheeled in from the Shanti Veda. It was huge! And made of gold too! It could not be carried, and had to be brought in a cart!



The Unity Cup

Half a dozen people lifted the cup and held it up to Bhagavan, and He blessed it by touching it! Sachin Tendulkar, the Indian captain, was then asked to come forward and receive the cup. Sachin did. As Sunil



Clive speaks at the Presentation

The Sri Sathya Sai Unity Cup

Gavaskar said, Sachin's batting performance in the field earlier in the day was overshadowed by his weight-lifting performance when he received the cup all by himself!

It was all over. The unity cup match had not only become history but a part of His Story!

But why did Swami want to have a Unity Cup? What is the connection, between cricket and spirituality?



With Sachin

It is not only cricket, but in fact everything in this universe has a connection with spirituality. Five thousand years ago Krishna declared: "Any good act if lovingly offered to Me becomes sacred. This is the way to transform even ordinary work into Worship." Baba was reminding man of this timeless message by hinting that even a one-day international becomes spiritual, if it is played entirely for the pleasure of the Lord and offered to Him with Love.



The Hill View Stadium

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The Change

(Part II of II)

Dear Reader,

This is the transcript of a radio talk on SGH by Sri B.N Narasimhamurthy; the Warden of Sri Sathya Sai Student's Hostel at Brindavan. He is an excellent orator and above all an ardent devotee of Bhagavan, serving Him in His educational institutions for the past three decades.

The first part of the transcript was presented in Volume 1; Issue 3. This is the second part.



In October 1965 I went to Puttaparthi and was conferred the Divine blessing of *Darshan*, and *Sambhashan* by Swami. I had found my Divine Master in Swami. It did not take much time for me to realize that HE had prepared me, before leading me to HIMSELF. It was baptism by fire. My heart started clamouring for HIS *Sannidhi* more and more. HE occupied my mind more and more. It did not mean that all doubts and questions inside me had vanished. The monkey mind, propelled by the sharp brain, continued to play its tricks now and then. Prayer and *Namasmarana* helped me a lot and there was Anna, always ready to guide. But I was separated by a distance of about hundred miles from

Swami and two hundred and fifty miles from Anna.

In October 1965, I was still left with one and half years of Engineering Course at Bangalore. I made it a point to go to Puttaparthi, at least once in a month and never miss any festivals there. During festivals like Swami's Birthday, *Shankranthi*, *Shivrathri*, *Guru Poornima* and *Navarathri*, I could meet Anna there and also listen to the nectarine Discourses of Swami. When Swami was in HIS Ashram in Brindavan, near Bangalore; I went there, mostly with Anna, who came down from his village, Alike, near Mangalore. Whenever I went to Puttaparthi, on days other than festivals, Swami was very kind to call me and talk to me, lovingly and intimately. The topics were always spiritual, and related to the deepest aspirations of my heart. HE never asked me about my studies at College or happenings in our family, even once.

In one of the early interviews, HE resolved a deep dilemma, arising out of my strong affinity for Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa, by speaking in the terminology of the Great Master. HE said, "It is extremely difficult to conquer *Kamini* and *Kanchana*, my son. But, do not worry. You enjoy Divine Grace in abundance. Swami will grant you peace of mind." *Kamini Kanchana* was a phrase very often used by Sri Ramakrishna, to indicate the two major obstacles in the path of a seeker;

craving for sensual pleasures and wealth. Thus my heart knew that Swami had in HIM, Sri Ramakrishna also.

On another occasion, Swami granted me HIS Divine assurance saying, "You have a strong aspiration to lead a sacred life and attain fulfilment. But your parents have other ideas. You need not worry over it. I shall change their mind." My parents, especially my mother, were afraid, that I might run away from the world, and become a *Sanyasi* or monk.

As days passed, a very strong desire to be with Swami all my life, without getting entangled in family life, developed in my heart. I kept on praying to Swami, for this boon, day after day. It was an inner prayer, which was never expressed in words, even to Swami. Nevertheless, HE responded to my prayer, in one of those early interviews. HE told me, "Swami will take you nearer and nearer. HE shall grant you the good fortune of serving HIM." Now, when I look back, I find that, HE has kept all the promises HE had made. But, I have certainly failed to keep up many of the promises, I had made to HIM. I can only say that, this is the difference between God and man!

Apart from my spiritual needs, Swami looked after my worldly needs, too. Even during my college life, HE solved miraculously one of the problems related to my studies, and strengthened

my faith in HIS Omnipotence. I had to write my pre-final Engineering Examination in March/ April, 1966 and that was six months after my first *Darshan* of Swami. During my sojourn in Engineering College, I was not very regular in my studies, for two reasons. The first was my obsession with the study of books and magazines, not related to the Engineering Course. The books of my interest at that time were those on literature, political ideologies, and political thinkers. The second reason for my neglecting my course was my over-confidence in my intelligence and memory power. I would study my course subjects for only a month before the annual examination and still manage to secure a first class.

After I met Swami in October 1965, I neglected my studies completely. Most of the time was spent in reading books on and by Swami. Also I missed many classes during my trips to Puttaparthi. Even in the classes that I attended, I could not concentrate properly. When the annual examination approached in March /April 1966, I tried my best to concentrate on studies. Three days before the examination started, I was shocked by the disappearance of Madhav from his hostel room. He had left a note on his table which read, "I am going in search of Truth. None should worry about me and search for me." I roamed around all the places which he would normally visit, in Bangalore, but could not find him. I learnt from one of the monks at Ramakrishna Ashram, Bangalore, that Madhav might have gone to Belur Mutt, Calcutta, to join the order of monks as a *Brahmachari*. Next day, I went to Madhav's native town, which was fifty miles from Bangalore, to meet his parents. It was heart rending to see their grief. Madhav was the eldest son of the family and he had four brothers and sisters. This was a lower-middle class family. I shared their grief and felt that none should desert ones parents, brothers and sisters in such a

condition, for any cause, however noble it could be. I prayed to Swami for Madhav's return to his house.

I returned to Bangalore, a day before the examinations. My concentration was totally disturbed. I did my best to study and write the examinations. That was my worst performance ever in any examination. Till then, I had never secured anything less than the first class. When I returned home after the examinations, I felt very sad for my parents, imagining their disappointment over my poor performance in the examinations. Meanwhile, Madhav returned home, after fifteen days. The authorities at the Belur Mutt had advised him to complete his course of studies first, and then go there. His return brought great joy to his parents. I was there in his house to share their joy.

As expected, I secured only a second class in the pre-final examination, to the utter disappointment of my parents, especially my father. He was worried about my future. I could not bear to see his worried face and promised him that I would secure a high rank in the final examinations, next year. My promise brought some cheer to my parents. Finally my course started in June 1966. However much I tried to concentrate on my studies, I was not successful. I had not achieved the balance between work and worship. It was like a new priest, trying to wave the *Aarthi* with right hand, ringing the bell simultaneously with the left; and could do neither successfully.

I had to choose either studies or Swami. I forgot my promise to my father and chose the latter. Still, I hoped that I would study well for a month or two before the annual examinations in March/April 1967, and do well. But it was not to be. A month before the examination, I prayed to Swami, "Lord! YOU have assured me that my future is

safe in YOUR hands. The forthcoming examination is YOURS and not mine! Help me to keep my promise to my father!"

I tried my best to study and write the examinations. But the performance was much below par, definitely not better than the previous years. In one subject related to drawing, I could attempt answering only 34 marks out of 100. The minimum for a pass was 35. I returned home after the examinations. My anxious father asked me, how I had fared in the final examination. I said that I had done well, for fear of disappointing him and making him unhappy with the actual facts. I was sure that I would fail in one paper. I had not done well in other subjects also. I started feeling miserable as the day of results approached, but my diffidence, arising out of bad performance in the examinations, became an obstacle in the path of my prayers. Surely, it was lack of firm faith in the words of Swami.

A week before the announcement of results I confided to my father, that I had not done that well. But, I was not bold enough to tell him that I might fail in the examinations. He asked me, if I would get at least first class. I answered in the affirmative. But I prayed to Swami for HIS forgiveness, for having told a lie to my father. Panic and confusion gripped me on the day prior to the announcement of the results. I had no courage to show my face to my parents, after failing in the final year Engineering examination. I was totally distraught at the prospect of failing in the examinations, for the first time in my life. I quietly left my home and went away to a neighbouring town, where Madhav lived.

I stayed in his house that night and confided to him my fears. That night became a most forgettable one for my parents and others at my home. In

panic, they looked for me every where in the town. They spent a sleepless night. On the other side, Madhav tried to give me solace and courage. He talked, through almost the entire night. At the end of it, I told him that the only hope for me was the Divine Grace of Swami. I hoped for a miracle by Swami, to salvage me. But that faith was not complete, so the fear continued to haunt me.

Madhav convinced me that I should go back to my home next morning. In fact, he accompanied me back to my town, which was twenty two miles from his



As we got down in the bus stand, news papers greeted us in the stands. But I was not eager to look for my result in the examinations, because of my pessimism. I instinctively wanted to postpone the time of learning the unpleasant news. I told Madhav that the newspaper would be available at home. As we were walking down towards my home, one of my younger brothers came running, with a news paper in his hand. His face was brimming with joy. He shouted with uncontrollable glee, "Brother, you have secured a rank, Congratulations!" Neither Madhav nor I could believe it. I could hear my heart beat. Madhav grabbed the news paper from my brother's hand and looked into it. My name was in the rank list. He congratulated me. My eyes were filled with tears of gratitude to Swami. I whispered to Madhav, "It is surely a miracle of Swami!"

When we entered my home, the celebration had already started. Everyone congratulated me on my distinction. All the time I was telling Swami in my heart, "Swami, thank YOU very much. Forgive my lack of faith in YOUR words." Next morning I went to my college office in Bangalore and received my provisional marks card. Almost in every paper, I had secured at least five marks more than what I had attempted for; and in Engineering Drawing, I had got 37 marks! While I was returning home, I pondered over how Swami had influenced the minds of at least ten examiners, and lost myself, in the Bliss of complete gratitude, to the Divine Master.

I returned home and showed the marks card to my father, who was agog with joy, at his son's achievement. I did not tell him about the Divine Miracle, which had helped me in my achievement, since my father had his reservations about Swami, at that time. That night, I confided to my mother, in detail, the handy work of Swami in helping me pass the Engineering degree examinations, with distinction. My tender hearted mother was quickly touched by the kindness of Swami and expressed her desire to go with me to Puttaparthi, to offer our gratitude to HIM. Probably, she also wanted to pray to Swami to remove her fears, of her dear son becoming a *Sanyasi*. She would have thought that, only a miracle of Swami could restore her child to herself.

Within three days, my mother and I left for Puttaparthi. We were accompanied by one of my sisters, younger to me by three years. She had developed great faith in Swami, by that time. As soon as Swami saw us, HE called us for an interview. HE accosted me with a question, waving HIS forefinger at me, a mischievous smile adorning HIS beautiful face. "Hey! How did you pass

the examination?" Words failed me. I fell at HIS feet, tears drenching HIS robe. I could barely blurt out, "Swami I passed only because of YOUR Divine Grace." Swami then chided me for what I had done, on the day prior to the announcement of results, and added with HIS right hand on HIS chest, "At least now onwards, develop steady faith. Swami will never desert any one who trusts HIM."

All the while, my mother was nodding her head with tears of joy in silent approval. The Master had already divined her feelings. HE told her, looking at me mischievously, "Now that he has finished his education, your burden will be reduced by getting him married, is it not?" My mother's face lit up with intense joy and deep sense of gratitude to Swami. She exclaimed, "Yes Swami!" Swami then looked at me and asked, "Hey! Is it not true?" I blurted out, "No Swami". Swami said seriously, "What do you mean by that? Do you have a steady mind even for five minutes?" With a feeble and unsteady voice I answered, "No Swami". "Do as Swami tells you", HE commanded and continued, "Help and serve your parents". My mother's cup of joy was full. Her faith in Swami's Omniscience was complete. Swami led us out of the interview room, after materializing *vibhuthi* for us and granting *Pada Namaskar*. My mother and sister left Puttaparthi for home, the same day, while I continued to stay at Puttaparthi. The next day, Swami told me, "Develop will power to control your mind. You have Swami's Grace."

My faith in His Grace was firm. I knew for sure, that the Lord, who had changed me, would surely change my mother's mind. I had the faith that I would be blessed to offer my life in service to Him. Today as I look back, I know that my faith, did work miracles!

-Concluded

The Shirdi Connection

May 23rd 1940. The hamlet of Puttaparthi. A young lad of fourteen, with a face radiant with compassion and love, was surrounded by the village folk. He was apparently materializing sugar candy...out of thin air! His father too, skeptically looked on. This was not the first time his Sathya was putting up such a 'show'. Sathya had been behaving strangely for quite some time, exhibiting supernatural powers. He lectured on sublime spiritual topics, way beyond a boy of his age. The father, and in fact, Sathya's entire family was perplexed and worried at the same time. That day, the father could no longer tolerate this behaviour. He was convinced that his son was possessed. May be by some evil spirit. He took hold of a stick and demanded, addressing the so-called spirit. "Who are you? Are you God, Ghost or Devil?"



Manasa Bhajare
Gurucharanam

"I am SAI BABA" came the reply.

That was the first time the world was made aware of the Shirdi Connection.

Sathya went on "I am Sai Baba of Shirdi. I have taken birth in your family because of the prayers of your ancestor Venkavadhootha".

Everyone present was stunned. They hadn't heard anything, either of Shirdi or of Sai Baba!

Someone challenged Sathya "If you are really Sai Baba, show us some proof!" Sathya picked up a bunch of

jasmine flowers and threw them on to the ground. When they fell to the ground, they neatly arranged themselves into the words SAI BABA, in the Teluguscript.

With passing days, Sathya only reinforced this revelation.

On October 20th, 1940, at Uravakonda, He came back from school, threw his books and declared, "I am no longer your Sathya! I am Sai Baba. I do not belong to you. I have my work. My devotees are calling me." He walked into the neighbor's garden, sat on a rock and gave His first message, to the faithful who had assembled there, in the form of a bhajan: *Manasa Bhajare Gurucharanam...*

A bystander photographed the young Sai Baba sitting on the rock and leading the bhajan. The image that was developed had a small statue of Shirdi Baba in front of the young Sathya. Nothing strange, except for the fact that there was never a statue in front of Sathya in the first place! Sathya had reinforced His identity. The world now hailed Him as Sathya Sai Baba.

The word soon spread that the Sai Baba of Shirdi had come again, as Sai Baba of Puttaparthi.

Sai Baba born again? At, what's that place... Puttaparthi? Many of the Devotees of the Lord of Shirdi were curious. Some came to Sathya, in humility and faith, to see and hear their Lord again. Others came to challenge this 'young upstart' who claimed to be Shirdi Sai. They stayed back, as believers.



The Floral Declaration

Ask Sundaramma, 105 years old, living at Prasanthi Nilayam. Back in 1910, when she was 13 years old, her husband was working as a stationmaster at Manmad. Manmad was just a few hours from Shirdi, the abode of Sai Baba. The husband was a devotee of Baba and he, along with his wife, went to have the darshan of Shirdi Baba. In that trip, Baba called the husband and gave him a silver coin with his padukas (feet) embossed on it. He told the husband, 'Worship these Feet everyday' (In other words 'Manasa Bhajare Guru Charanam!').

Years rolled by and the husband passed away. In the 1960's when Sundaramma was told by one of her friends that Sai baba had reincarnated again in the hamlet of Puttaparthi, she wouldn't believe it. But her curiosity got the better of her and she came to see the young Satya Sai Baba, who claimed to be 'her' Shirdi Baba. Quite some days went by and Sundaramma was not



Smt. Sundaramma



The Sacred Padukas Given By Shirdi Baba

convinced that Satya Sai could be the same as Shirdi Sai. She remarked to one of her friends, who was a devotee “ I will never bow down to this Baba. My lord is Shirdi Baba alone. I am going to leave this place soon”. Word reached Swami about Sundaramma's plans. The time had come to prove to her, the Shirdi connection. One day, He quietly walked into Sundaramma's quarters. She was cooking something. “Sundaramma! Is it true that you want leave this place?”, He asked. “Yes Swami, I would rather go to Shirdi than stay in this godforsaken village!” She was still cooking, her eyes not meeting Swami's.

“Do you want to see your Shirdi Baba?”, Swami asked.

“I would love to!But alas! He had taken *Samadhi* long, long ago”, said Sundaramma, still facing the other side.

“ Do you still want to see your Shirdi Baba?”, Swami persisted.

“ But how is that.... possible? He is no longer here!”, she said turning back to see Swami.

And what she saw...opened the floodgates of memories from her early years. She couldn't believe it. Yes, He was there: Her Baba from Shirdi, in flesh and blood! With tears in her eyes she bowed down to His feet. Time stood still....space no longer existed...Shirdi had merged with Parthi.... only she and her SAI BABA remained!

And she never ever left Prasanthi Nilayam. Even to this day, in her feeble voice, she tells the devotees, her marvelous story!

The Chaitanya Jyothi museum, at Puttaparthi, showcases today one of the greatest testimonials for the Lord's Shirdi Connection. When Swami visited it recently, He was shown a *tonga*, a horse driven cart. What was so special about this *tonga*? Well, this *tonga* was from Chincholi, a former princely state in South India. When the aged Queen of Chincholi met Satya Sai Baba for the first time, Swami remarked and described how He had visited Chincholi earlier, while in His previous body! This was in fact true! Shirdi Baba had indeed made an extra corporeal



The Tonga at Chincholi

visit to Chincholi many a time! Swami went on to describe the quarters of the palace that He stayed in, the personal moments that He had spent with the Raja and the Queen and of course, the long drives He had, with the Raja, in the Tonga! The accuracy of the details, known only to the Queen, was unbelievable! The evidence was impeccable. Here was the same Baba of Shirdi! The Queen was moved, and she presented to Swami, the tonga that He had used as Shirdi Sai. This was the very same *tonga*, which was shown to Swami at

Chaitanya Jyothi. When Swami saw it, He casually remarked, that there used to be a small lantern holder, on side of the *tonga*, which was now missing. It was, as though He rode in it, just yesterday!

On the morning of 15th October 2002, exactly 84 years after Shirdi Baba had taken Samadhi, yet another chapter was added to the Shirdi connection. On that Vijay Dashami morning, Swami went up the hill, adjoining the Vidyagiri stadium. Halfway to the hilltop, between the statues of Shiva and Krishna, was a tall statue, draped in silk, waiting to be unveiled. Swami pressed a remote controlled button and the silk veils fell down, to reveal the beautiful form of Shirdi Baba. The statue of His Previous incarnation stands today, amidst the 'Grand Gallery of Gods', in the Stadium.

Whenever Swami refers to the Shirdi Avatar, He says ' *Purva Sariramulo...* ' which means ' *when I was in the previous body.* ' The statement awakens us to the fact that He is the one who was in Shirdi. And that now He has reincarnated in Parthi. But it also points to a subtler and more profound truth: He transcends both the places. He transcends time. He transcends bodies. For, He is the Spirit. The Immortal Spirit, that reincarnates from time to time, for the redemption of Humanity.



Parthi Sai Unveiling Shirdi Sai

Touching Thousands of Hearts In Thousand Different Ways

(Part 3)

Continued from the previous issue...

By now, the Village Service work was falling into some kind of a pattern. Every evening after *Bhajans*, some of the teachers from the University would do the sorting of the clothes for the distribution and plan the loading operations. The clothes were all stored in the Poornachandra Hall [there was no other closed space big enough to store them all!], and it had the look of a warehouse, with trucks lining up one after another for loading! Other teachers would be engaged in logistic planning, based on the information collected. Vehicles were deployed as required. Student volunteers and teachers were given the necessary instructions and briefing, including route maps etc. Back-up and fall-back arrangements also were organised. After dinner, the kitchen-operations would be in full swing, and as things got ready, the lady teachers and the girl students of the Anantapur Campus would start the packing, preparing food packets in thousands, sometimes sitting all night. By 5 A.M., all the trucks would line up near the North Indian canteen, the final loading point. Huge crates containing food packets would be loaded into them one by one. Some of the trucks would carry both food and clothes. Many tractor-trailers also were pressed into service. At 6 A.M., the loading operations would be temporarily suspended so that everyone could assemble for morning Darshan.

Swami would come out at about quarter-to-seven, slowly walking past the ladies and the gents. He would then go to the veranda, have a word or two with the Mr. Narasimha Murthy,



Preparing The Prasadam



Packing all his Love

Warden of the Brindavan Hostel. The Warden would then seek Swami's permission and Blessings. That would be the signal for all the boys to rise. Marching in rows of three, the

entire group of teachers and boys (including of the Higher Secondary School) would commence their circumambulation of the Mandir, one group chanting Vedas and the other group singing Bhajans. After all the students and teachers have left the Sai Kulwant Hall, some senior devotees in the veranda would rise to seek Swami's Blessings and they too would come out to get ready for service. The idea of doing service had now become infectious, and many elderly devotees eagerly sought Baba's permission to join the students and contribute their bit. By around eight A.M., the trucks and the tractors would start rolling out, with boys singing Bhajans and shouting Jai! Over a thousand people went for service every day. Elders would accompany in cars, vans and jeeps, while two mobile squads equipped with wireless would also leave to provide mobile co-ordination as needed. To make sure that no time is lost, all vehicles were required to be refuelled the previous evening itself.

One of the elders merits special mention. He is Mr. Chiranjeevi Rao. Often described as Swami's shadow in Prasanthi



Cooked and all set to be packed



Ready to be loaded



All set to go

Nilayam, he was specially deputed by Swami to make sure that people in all the villages visited were happy, that no deserving person was missed out for any reason whatsoever, that everything went smoothly, and that all the students ate at the appointed hour. Every evening, he had to personally report to Baba that people in all the villages visited were content. As a part of his responsibility, Mr. Rao also took upon himself to give fatherly advice and guidance as required, and do troubleshooting if necessary. He knew this region like the back of his hand, and also the village elders in some of the bigger villages. Even so, it was a towering assignment for one pushing eighty-one and with a medical history behind. But when one works

for Swami, He gives all the required strength. This was very evident from the way Mr. Rao exerted himself without a moment of rest, from eight in the morning to about three O'clock in the afternoon, sometimes up to four, or even six O'clock. He took particular care to oversee operations in the so-called "difficult" centres, where there were large crowds due to high expectations. In one place,



Blessings at take off

food supply might be in excess while in another place it would be running short. Taking advantage of wireless contacts, Mr. Rao would see to it that there was the required redistribution so that the glitch was overcome.

When others were winding up operations and preparing to return to Puttaparthi, Mr. Chiranjeevi Rao would still be going round from village to village, personally checking that all the deserving poor had been given food and clothes. If he felt that some people had been inadvertently left out, he would make amends on the spot. In many villages, he would call on the local elders and seek their help if required. This was also good public relations! He would make sure that when he left, everyone was pleased with the attention they had received. He would go to any length of trouble just to make sure that everyone was happy. As if all this was not enough, he would, during his movements, stop by the roadside and distribute food and clothing to farm workers, whenever he found a deserving person [it was the ground-nut harvest season, and many people were busy in the fields]. One day he heard at about two O'clock that in a village some distance away, there were hundreds of migrant farm workers who had come in search of jobs, from as far away as seven hundred kilometres. Mr. Rao tirelessly tracked them down and made them all



When they see them coming

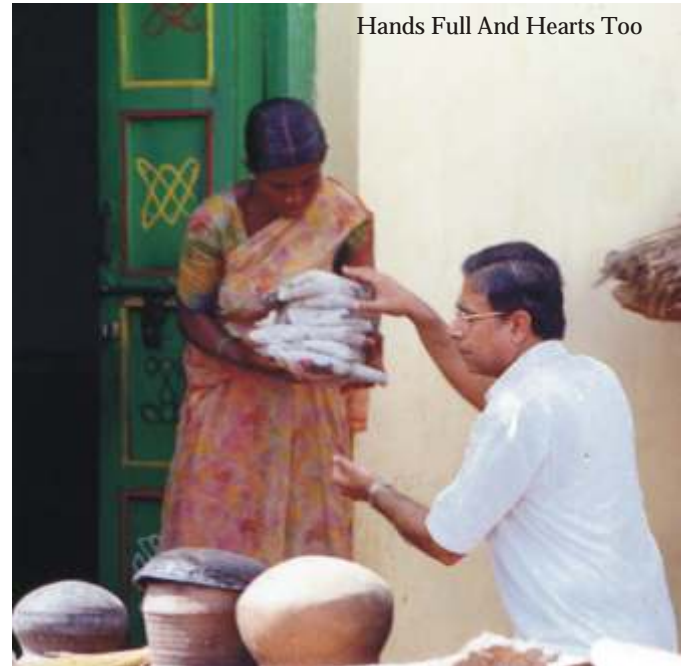
happy. While he would sternly admonish students and teachers if they did not eat their lunch promptly [as per Swami's instructions], he himself would be busy working. Only after repeated pleas by those accompanying him would he agree to stop his vehicle near a shady tree and hurriedly gulp a few morsels of food, by the roadside. The way he insisted on meticulously complying with each and every instruction of Swami, was an object lesson to all that observed him.

To get back to the main story, after leaving Prasanthi Nilayam, the convoy, made up of trucks, tractor-trailers, wireless-equipped monitoring jeeps, vans, and the cars carrying the elders, would head towards the target area for the day. Mr. Chiranjeevi Rao would form the rear-guard, having made sure that the 'launch' was smooth. En route, the boys would be singing Bhajans, and in many places people standing on the

roadside, especially children, would cheer, wave hands, and greet by shouting "Sai Ram!" On approaching the designated area, the different service teams would peel off to their respective destinations. The unwritten rule was that to the extent possible food service should begin by 9 A.M. To meet this requirement, in a few cases the food trucks would leave early, sometimes as early as 5 A.M. Despite this, in one instance, the truck could reach the designated village only by around 10.30 A.M, though the village was only 35 kilometres away that in itself is a sufficient commentary on how bad the roads [where they existed!] were.

In every village, the students would park the truck at a central spot and then go round a few streets singing Bhajans. After this *Nagarsankeertan*, the *Prasadam* distribution would start in right earnest. Unloading the food baskets from the

truck, boys in threes and fours would go from hut to hut, door to door, and distribute *Prasadam*. When the food basket became empty, they would come back to the truck for a refill. Even isolated houses were covered. Swami often arranges for the distribution of *Prasadam* in Prasanthi Nilayam, and while the distribution is in progress, He always moves around, doing spot checks, "Did you receive *Prasadam*?" This is in the Indian tradition. While doing village service, the boys did not forget the example set by Baba. While some were serving, others would do checks just to



Hands Full And Hearts Too



Together they sing his Praise

The name of God is proclaimed by the trees when they wave their heads. The birds, in their chirping, call upon us to remember the Name. The flowers, in spreading their fragrance, declare the glory of God. The bees, when they hum, announce the bliss in the Name. It is the Name that reverberates from the sky and the earth. It can be experienced anywhere. God is the indweller in the Heart of everyone.

Glory of God

Baba



Wisdom

It always pleased the Master to hear people recognize their ignorance.

"Wisdom tends to grow in proportion to one's awareness of one's ignorance," he claimed.

When asked for an explanation, he said, "When you come to see you are not as wise today as you thought you were yesterday, you are wiser today."

Anthony de Mello, SJ, One Minute Wisdom



Thus Spake the Master

Broken Dreams



As children bring their broken toys
With tears for us to mend,
I brought my broken dreams to God
Because He was my friend.

But then instead of leaving Him
In peace to work alone,
I hung around and tried to help
With ways that were my own.

At last I snatched them back and cried,
"How could you be so slow?"
"My child," He said, "What could I do?
You never did let go."

Author Unknown



**HEART TO HEART WISHES ALL READERS
A HAPPY AND HOLY DIWALI!**

On this Deepavali Day, resolve to light the lamp of *Naamasmarana* and place it at your doorstep, the lips. Feed it with the oil of devotion; have steadiness as the wick. Let the lamp illumine every minute of your life. The splendour of the Name will drive away darkness from outside you as well as from inside you. You will spread joy and peace among all who come near you.

*Sri Satya Sai Baba,
Prashanthi Nilayam, Deepavali, 24 Oct 1965*

A play-for the Lord of the Universe!!!



Offering the play at His lotus feet

Imagine.....Just let your imagination run free for a moment. Imagine you are in Whitefield preparing for a play that will be presented to the Lord of the Universe. Your palms begin to sweat profusely as you approach the stage. The hours upon hours of practice that you put into the play seem to fade away and you simply live in the moment, forgetting everything else except the stage and the Lord watching you. For 50 children from Texas, this was something that they did not have to imagine, since they were given the chance to experience this joyous bliss first hand. I was fortunate to have the opportunity to interview a young lady who had just come back from Whitefield with some very insightful experiences.

I interviewed Devi Natarajan, a Young Adult from the Sathya Sai Center of Dallas. Though Devi had not taken part in the play herself, she was in Whitefield with the children who had taken part and had firsthand accounts of the entire program. Devi said that the entire center had been deeply involved in seva right from the start of their trip. Their typical day consisted of waking up and going to nagarsankeerthan, then going to the hall for Darshan and meditation afterwards. Once they were done with that, they went for seva till lunchtime. The members of the center were given a chance to do bathroom clean up, make goody bags, clean up trash, help in the canteen, and do several other forms of seva, which was a great opportunity to serve the Lord at His abode. After lunchtime, Swami would send two speakers to talk to the congregation, and when the speakers were finished, the group went back to

Dear Young Readers

This feature from Heart to Heart is especially for you. The articles are exclusively by You and for You. It's just our way of showing to the world, the treasures that lie in your Tender Hearts.

Share with us these treasures. Send us any creative expression of your love for Him, to h2h@radiosai.org.

do more seva. Once they were done with seva, the youth would go off to practice bhajans while the rest of the children and adults would go to practice for the play. Finally, they would all meet at dinner and then everyone was free to do whatever they liked.

Devi also gave me a very detailed explanation of the exciting preparation that went on for the play. Swami had said that the play would be performed on Thursday and the children immediately set to work practicing harder than ever. They were now given the chance to practice in the shed behind the hall, as opposed to the small room that they were using.

When the day of the performance came, everyone was taken by surprise since Swami wanted them to perform in the morning! The Young Adults were also given a chance to sing two songs as Swami came out in a golf cart, his first Darshan after about 25 days. Two boys from the center then came up to Swami and asked him to bless the program, which He gladly did. One of the boys apparently reported seeing a bright light when he was blessed. Swami sat through the entire program and constantly asked one of the center members who was the best actor, all the while knowing which one was best!!



The play

After the program, the children came down from the stage and Swami created vibhuti and blew it on them. He also materialised a necklace to a girl who was about 5 years old and commented that she had been in Parthi on her 3rd birthday, a fact that surprised almost everyone in the hall. Another boy asked Swami if he could study at Swami's school, but Swami simply told him that it was not the time for him to study at the school. So, the boy asked if he could study medicine, to which Swami replied "Yes."

Once the excitement of the play was over, all of the centers from the region got together to share their experiences. Suddenly, a man came over to deliver a card to one of the actresses. The card said "My love and blessings to all," which really was a message for all of the centers.

I was so caught up with the excitement while interviewing Devi. I could just

imagine the thrill the kids must have felt when Swami was standing so close to them! Devi closed the interview with a sigh and said that while the trip and the excitement had come to a close, not one person from those centers would ever forget the thrilling feeling of presenting a play in front of Swami and the few magical weeks they spent in the abode of the Lord of the Universe.



Surrounding the Lord

(Article by Vimala Narasimhan, Sai World Student Reporter, attends and leads bhajans at the SSBC's of Encinitas and San Diego, California.)

BABA

Baba is the Man
In the orange robe
He lives in Puttaparthi
On the other side of the globe

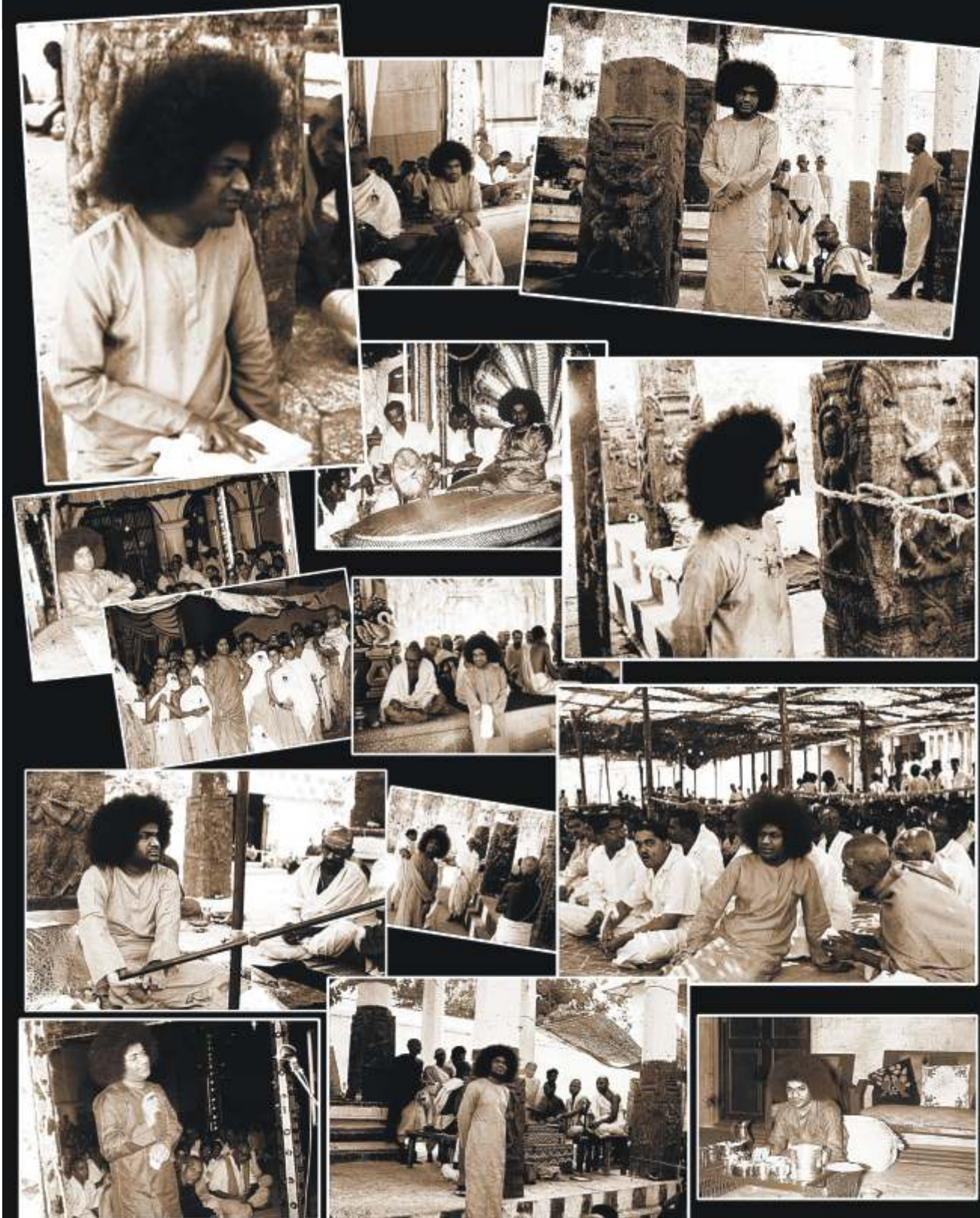
I learned about Baba
When I was three or four
And I came to the Sai center
I fell asleep, but I didn't snore.

When I saw Baba
For the first time
I had lots of fun singing
But my mom started crying

Now I go to Sai center
Almost every week
But now during Bhajans
I don't fall asleep

Keerthana Gnanapradeepan, age 11
SSBC of Boston, MA
(poem taken from Sai World, summer 2003)

The princely state of Venkatagiri has been one of those blessed places which Swami visited frequently in the 1950s and 1960s. Here are some glimpses of the moments He spent at Venkatagiri.



Then



Now

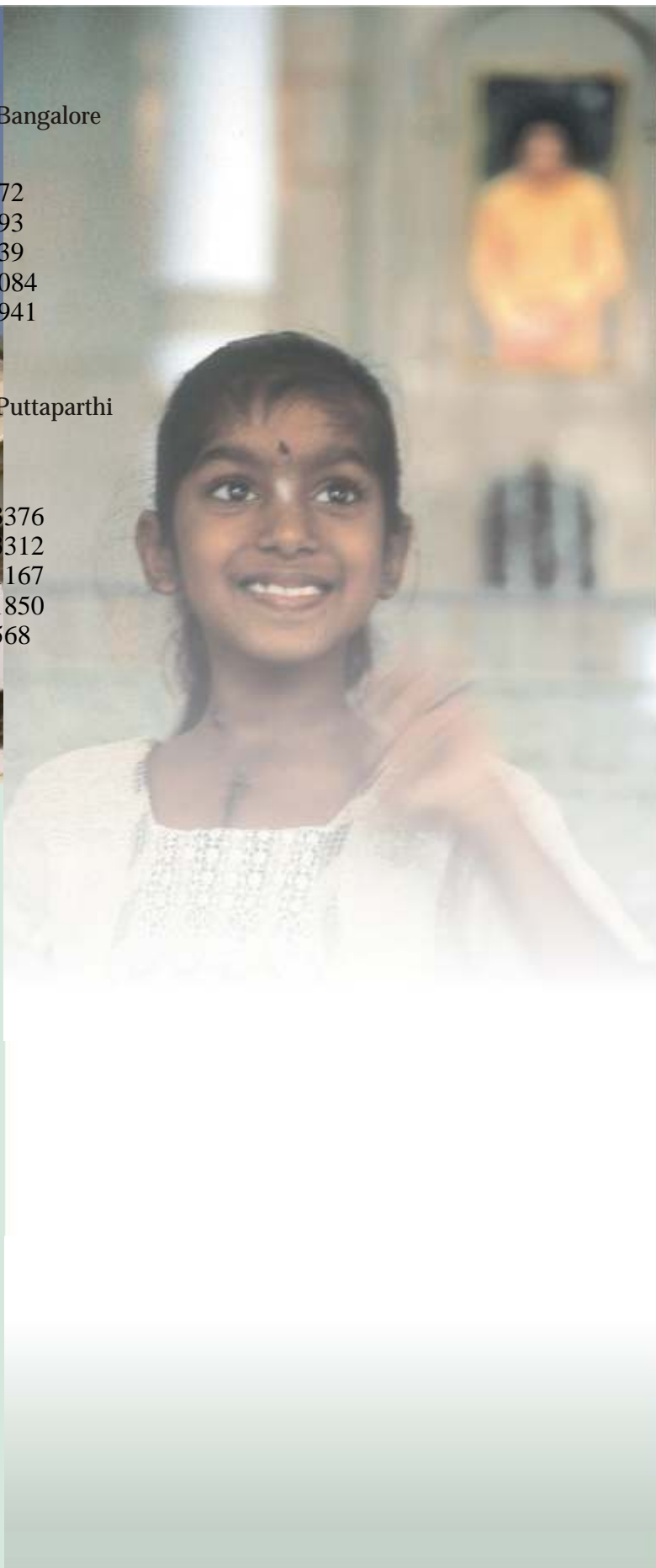


Sri Sathya Sai Super Specialty Hospital, Bangalore

Cardiac Surgeries:	3772
Cath Procedures:	6293
Neuro Surgeries:	3039
CT Scans:	11084
MRI Exams:	11941

Sri Sathya Sai Super Specialty Hospital, Puttaparthi

Heart Surgeries:	13376
Cath Procedures:	13312
Urology Surgeries:	21167
Opthalmology surgeries:	21850
CT Scans:	3568





FROM YOUR HEART!

Just take a moment to tell us what you feel about Heart2Heart.

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Cover Story	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Musings from Prashanthi Nilayam	<input type="checkbox"/>
The Shirdi Story	<input type="checkbox"/>
Prashanthi Diary	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Kindle Your Spirit	<input type="checkbox"/>
Down Memory Lane	<input type="checkbox"/>
Hospital Corner	<input type="checkbox"/>

In what way will this journal help you? Fill in the gap provided.

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 Bal Vikas work.....
 Youth activity.....
 Family relationship.....
 Other.....

What improvements and additions would you like?

.....

Please fill in your details

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 Occupation :
 City/town :
 Country :

SORRY WE DO NOT HAVE A SUBSCRIPTION SERVICE !



The body is the primary requisite for performing righteous action; the body has to be in good health. When there is ailment, health care is needed. With their wealth, the rich can go anywhere and get treatment for their illness but where will the poor go, especially those hailing from rural areas? It is primarily for their benefit that I have established hospitals.

- Baba



Love All Serve All