

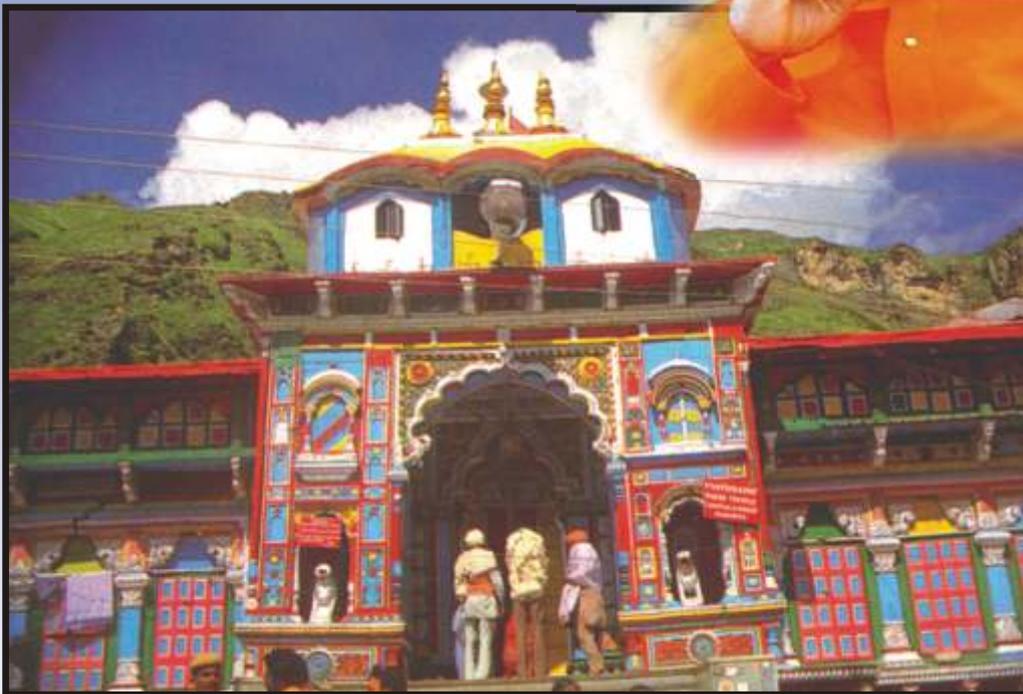
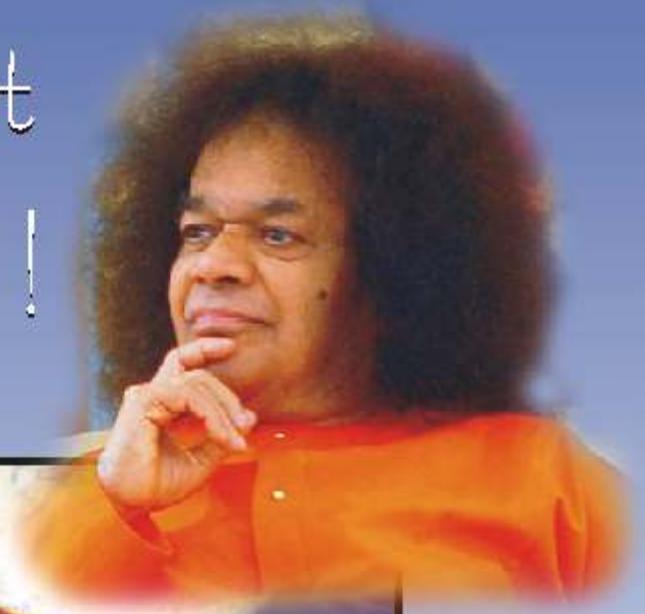


# HEART TO hEART



RADIO SAI LISTENERS' JOURNAL

With the Manifest  
to the Unmanifest !



COVER STORY

**With Baba to Badrinath**



PRANAMS AT THE LOTUS FEET

# Journal

developed by

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# Contents



BETWEEN YOU AND US	1
<b>COVER STORY</b>	
With Baba to Badrinath	2
<b>SPIRITUAL BLOSSOMS</b>	
Sathya Sai Speaks	9
Reflections	10
Getting Spiritually Better	14
<b>KINDLE YOUR SPIRIT</b>	22
<b>MOMENTS MEMORIES AND MIRACLES</b>	23
<b>TENDER HEARTS</b>	
Parable of the pencil	26
Test your Spiritual Quotient IV	27
<b>PRASHANTI DIARY</b>	
Glimpses from Shivratri 2004	28
The significance of Prasadam	29
<b>WINDOW TO SAI SEVA</b>	
Sai Seva in El Salvador	32
<b>DOWN MEMORY LANE</b>	34

# Between You and Us

Dear Reader,

Sai Ram and greetings once again from Prashanti Nilayam. It is now almost six months since we started publishing H2H, and when we started, many wondered how far we would go before closing down. Some even said, "Do a monthly and not a fortnightly, for you cannot sustain it." Right from the start we knew we could not sustain H2H if we were the ones who were doing it, but then, is this not being done by HIM? In fact, even just a few days ago, an important person in the Organisation came to us and asked, "Can you really sustain it?" Our answer was, "No! We cannot! But HE WILL!"

Indeed it has been that way. We just took the first step, and He has been taking all the rest. So what has been done thus far and what has been achieved? We don't know what has been achieved but we do know what we have done thus far. Basically, we have managed to reach out to more and more people across the globe, with good news that is. Slowly but surely, the word is spreading and now people have even started asking us: "Why don't you print this? Many of us find it difficult to download on account of various practical limitations. If printed copies are available, we can keep them in the Library, and people can read them at leisure. As time passes, some of the old issues would be very valuable."

We have taken this suggestion very seriously, and something is being worked out. When things take a concrete shape, we shall let you know the details. Meanwhile, please, would you tell as many people as you can about H2H that is, people who do not know about it yet? We would appreciate that very much.

Also, may we take this opportunity to request that you graduate from being mere passive readers to proactive readers, contributing whatever you think would fit in? For example, why don't some of you pose Spiritual Questions? We will throw the questions open to the entire readership, and publish answers that deal in depth with the questions posed.

For a starter, here is a question:

*It's all very well Baba telling us "BE HAPPY!" How can I be happy when I'm worried, sick and just don't know which way to turn to sort things out? Let's get REAL!*

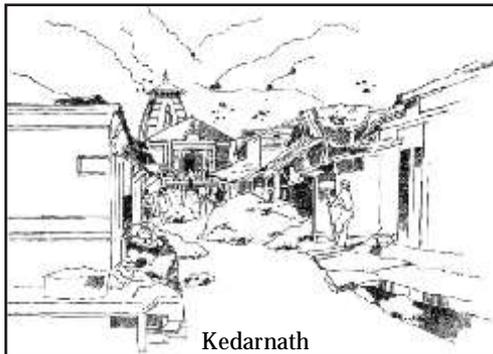
By the way, we have not made this question up. This question was actually asked by a New Zealand devotee in the monthly SATHYA SAI BABA NEWSLETTER published by the New Zealand Sai Organisation. If you were to give a reply, what would you say? Let us know!

As always, all the best and may God be with you. Jai Sai Ram.

SGH TEAM



## With Baba to Badrinath



Kedarnath

Unmanifested Form! There is a holy aura, a spiritual vibration, that pervades such sacred places and even Divinity acquires a new glory, as it were, when it is seen in the background of that aura. So, be ever alert to make the best of the rare chance that you have won by the accumulation of merit through many births. Be friendly, helpful and loving to all; repeat always the Name of the Lord; never loose courage or joy". He disclosed that the place was called Badarikashram, and that Lord Narayana was supposed to be doing *Tapas* here.

I began to see light, and the doubt that assailed me on the Chitravathi sands three years ago about 'Sri Sathya Sai and *Tapas*' melted away in a blaze of joy!

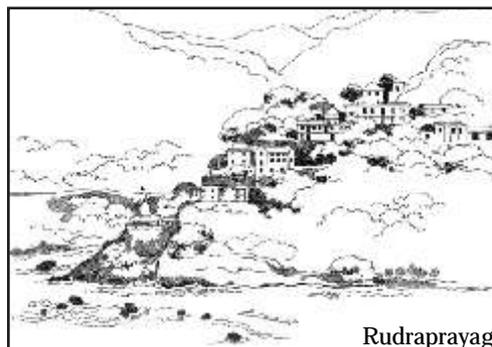
Baba then described to the group, the Shrine at Badrinath, how the Narayana idol appears often as a Lingam, sometimes as the Buddha and sometimes as Sakthi. He also gave details of the various subsidiary idols that are worshipped there. He spoke of the five Lingas brought by Sankaracharya from Kailasa and installed at Badri, Puri, Sringeri, Dwaraka and Chidambaram; of the Four Vedas which he revived by appropriate ritual, the Rig at Puri, the Yajur at Sringeri, the Sama at Dwaraka and the Atharvana at Badri. He put everyone into the pilgrim mood of expectancy and elevation, of Love, brotherhood and service.

Most members of the party had assembled at Madras on 7<sup>th</sup> June at

the Yathiraja Kalyana Mantapam, Alwerpet and had reached Delhi on the 9<sup>th</sup>; there, they were joined by others from as far as Calcutta and Bombay and Lucknow. They had all arrived at Hardwar on 10<sup>th</sup> and proceeded to Rishikesh to see the holy spots there and to visit institutions like Swarga Ashram and Githa

Bhavan and Paramartha Nikethan. On the 11<sup>th</sup>, they had witnessed the Evening Harathi to Ganga Matha at the Brahma Kund, a ceremony which was sanctified that day by the Presence of Baba at the sacred place, with H. E. B. Ramakrishna Rao, the Governor of Uttar Pradesh. Their Excellencies performed Harathi to Baba himself there, as a preliminary to their own Badri Yathra, along with the Bhakthas chosen by Baba.

From Hardwar to Badrinath, a distance of nearly 182 miles, every inch of the ground is saturated with history, myth and legend, all woven around the heroic endeavour of Tapas, whether by gods or men. Hardwar itself is the scene of Daksha Yagna and of the penance of the Seven Sages. At Rishikesh, Lakshmana performed Tapas. There is a Vyasaghat a few miles away where Vyasa did penance and at Devaprayag, the meeting place of the Alakananda and Bhagirathi rivers (and what a marvellous Tapas it was, that of Bhagiratha which induced the heavenly Ganga to descend on Earth!) Sankaracharya did penance and installed a Siva Parvathi Lingam!



Rudraprayag



Badarikashram

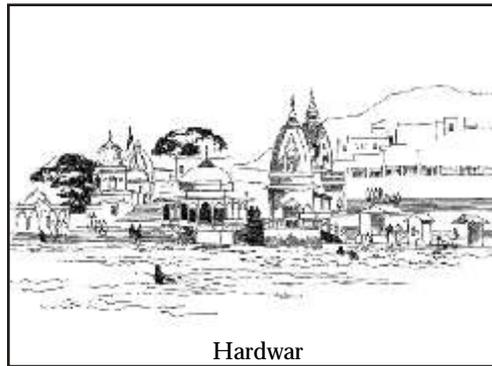
At Bilva keda nearby, Arjuna went through rigorous asceticism to acquire from Siva the weapons for the up holding of Dharma. At Srinagar, Sri Rama is said to have engaged in penance to realise Himself in the Siva Form! At Karna Prayag where the Mandakini coming from Kedarnath joins the Alakananda, Karna prayed for years and years to get a vision of Surya. At Rudra Prayag, Narada did Tapas in order to become the Singer of Divine Glory and he won from Siva the Veena that plays upon; Nandaprayag, 33 miles away, is associated with the hermitage of Sage Kanva immortalised by Kalidasa. Rajarajeswari herself is said to have engaged in Tapas on the Saranyavathi river bank to acquire Siva as Her Lord; while, on the banks of the Virahi Ganga, Siva is described as having done penance to win Dakshayini back as His consort! At Bhavishya Badari on the way, Agasthya performed Tapas. At Joshimath, (elevation 6100 ft) Narada by His Tapas succeeded in getting possession of the Ashtakshari manthra which is the key to salvation; Markandeya performed austere penance here and Sankaracharya established a Mutt to revive and foster the Sanathana Dharma.

Beyond Joshi Math we have Pandukeswar, reminiscent of the Tapas of Pandu, Sesha Dhara reminding us of the fact that the thousand tongued Sesha too was a Muni so that he might realise the Lord and Hanuman Chatti where Hanuman proved His superior

# With Baba to Badrinath

proress to the second of the Pandava Brothers; finally at Badrinath itself ensconced between the Nara and the Narayana mountains, at the foot of the snow diademmed Nilakanta Peak ( the Queen of the Himalayas, 21640 ft high ) the Puranas declare Narasimha came to shed His ferocity and Narada, Agni and Indra did penance. King Visala by His Tapas there won the distinction of Badri being Badri Visal; King Ghantakarna by his austerity there won the honour being the watchman of the Lord. Uddhava is doing Tapas there even today by the special command of Sri Krishna. And the Lord Himself is depicted as in Tapomudra, in keeping with the elevating and inspiring mood of the entire Himalayan area for miles around and is worshipped by Gods for half the year and by men during the other half.

The Ganga from Hardwar to Devaprayag and the Alakananda from there onwards for over 138 miles keep inseparable company with the pilgrim, now coming up near the road in a surging swelling stream, now gliding deep down the yawing canyon, murmuring along a silver thread. At first, the roar of the waters is frightening but gradually the river becomes a friend and companion and the thunder of its waves is distinguished as but the recital of the Name of the Lord or of Om, His verbal symbol. O! What shall be said of the high voiced Alakananda, the multimillionaire heiress of Kubera's wealth, gaudily tripping the rocks,



Hardwar

from Alakapuri, his capital? And what of the tiny tributaries: the milk white Ksheeraganga. Neelaganga, the blue, Ghrihaganga the oily, Kanchanaganga the golden, Keerthiganga the famed, Rishiganga the ascetic, Virahiganga the forlorn! Consider all the hot springs at Badri which the God of Fire spouts forth in obedience to a command by Narayana Himself in order to rid Agni of the sin of being an Omnivorous Glutton.

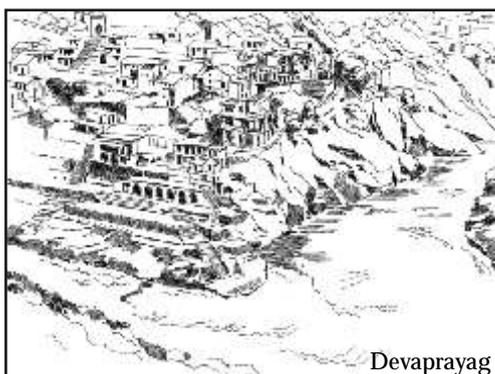
What again shall be said of the magnificent 'manorama' of snow capped peaks and glaciers, enormous cliff's enervating gradients escarpments and precipices, cascades and springs, and the multicoloured flower carpets that are spread by nature in every little vale? Indeed, every step of that road is a stride towards God!

To be lead by Baba along this Holy road is indeed a unique piece of good fortune and when one looks back on the much talked of calamities that lurk round every curve, the landslides and the land slips, the unheralded

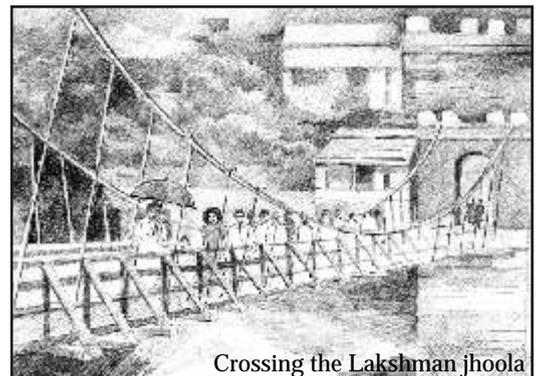
breaches and blockades, the bitter cold, and the pouring rain, the strain and the exhaustion, one feels specially blessed because Baba's Abhaya Hastha was present always to stem the fall, to prop up the slip, to ward off the rain, to warm up the air, to inspire the drooping and refresh the tired.

The caravan of cars, jeeps, buses and trucks left Hardwar on Monday, 12<sup>th</sup> June at 8AM and reached Devaprayag at noon. The bath at the confluence was a refreshing and exhilarating experience. Srinagar, the ancient capital of the Kings of Garhwal, was reached in the afternoon and we halted there for the night. The people of Srinagar organised a programme of Pahari and Tibetan dances depicting the simple hilarity of the hardy tribesmen and Baba, Their Excellencies and all of us appreciated their earnestness and sincerity. On the 13<sup>th</sup>, the party left at Sunrise for Joshimath, 86 miles off, taking breakfast on the way at Rudraprayag, bathing at the junction of the Mandakini and Alakananda at Nandaprayag and taking lunch at Pippalkoti at about 3PM. The night was spent at the sacred Joshi math.

Bardinath was beckoning us from just beyond 18 miles! ..... Eighteen miles along a narrow five foot 'road' of rubble and stone, trodden into smoothness by million of pious feet; of sudden climbs and steep declines; of 'Danger from Falling Stones' announced on boards enroute! The rapture of ravine, cliff and snow ever before the eye, the cheer of the torrent ever in the ear! Broad glaciers bravely descending down the mountains into the river bed itself and even mischievously lying across the pilgrim path! Streams of pilgrims from every corner of this country crossing each other with a gleam in



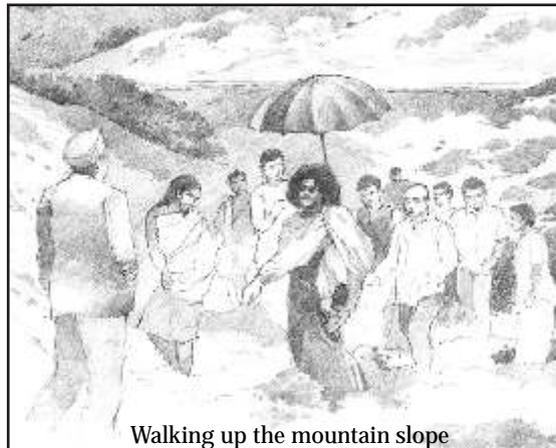
Devaprayag



Crossing the Lakshman jhoola

# With Baba to Badrinath

the face when the password, Jai Badri Visaal, is uttered! Pilgrims resolutely pulling themselves along on foot, or pathetically perched on ponies trotting on the perilous edge of the precipices! Long lines of men, mules horses, yaks and goats loaded with beds and bundles, boxes, baskets and bags belonging to the pilgrims and silk and sandalwood, scents and sweets, flour, flowers and fruits for the shops at Badri Town!



Walking up the mountain slope

All these give the Sacred Road a sublime satsang atmosphere wherein the Lord is experienced as a constant and comforting Companion!

On the 14<sup>th</sup> morning, conveyances were booked, the mules and horses were loaded, and the party started off in high spirits, to Lam Bagar eleven miles away, where it was decided to halt for the night. Baba and a large number of devotees walked the entire length of the road. Oh! How can I adequately describe the tenderness with which He encouraged everyone along that arduous road, advising one person to get into a dandi, another to ride a horse, a third to check the pace, a fourth to rest awhile, keeping everybody's enthusiasm in good trim by a timely quip or joke or pleasantry, or sometimes even by means of the Divinely created Vibhuthi itself.

From Lam Bagar, it was an exhausting climb and the devotees

succeeded in persuading Baba to ride a horse; but, to their great disappointment, He resumed His walk within a few moments. Badrinath was reached in the late afternoon on the 15<sup>th</sup>, and the party occupied the Gujarathi Dharmasala, very close to the temple.

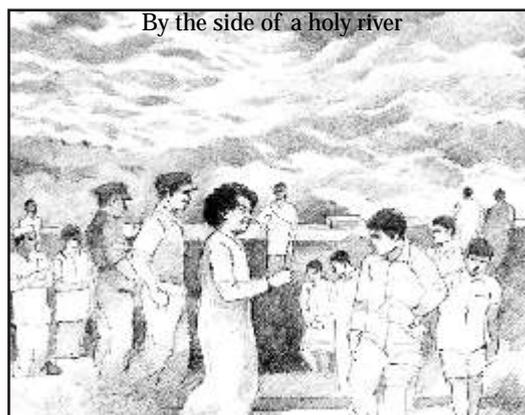
On the 16<sup>th</sup>, Baba gave Darsan and blessings to a large number of officers and citizens and members of the Temple Committee and He attended the evening Arathi, in company with their Excellencies. Later, Baba inaugurated the X ray unit at the Badrinath General Hospital. The first 'patient' to be screened was the doctor himself; he declared joyfully, "Babaji! You are seated in my heart!" Baba said, "The X ray can't reveal it; but, it is a fact, Doctor, I know it". A supreme moment indeed, in the history of that hospital and the life of that doctor!

17<sup>th</sup> June was a Day of Days, a Day that will be enshrined in the memory

re invigorated Narayana worship at Badrinath, by means of a unique ceremony, whose significance is beyond our tiny understanding!

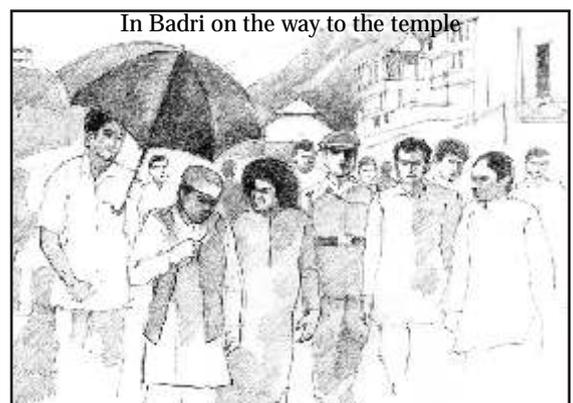
During the morning Abhishekam to the idol of Badrinarayana, while Baba was inside the temple facing the shrine, about 8.15AM, Baba mysteriously materialised a four armed Narayana icon with Sankha, Chakra, Gada and Padma, about 12 inches, perhaps sublimating in that form the Divine Essence of the Narayana Tejas before Him. He also created a charming thousand petalled 'gold' Lotus, and before the wonder of the people around Him could express itself in an awe stricken gasp, He waved His hand before the Shrine and, lo, there was a Jyothirlinga in His palm, which He placed on the shining Lotus. Baba came away to the Dharmasala with the devotees and the large number of officers and citizens of Badrinath. Their Excellencies also soon joined the gathering.

Materialising a 'silver' Abhisheka Vessel full of holy water from Gangothri itself (as He announced), Baba Himself performed Abhisheka to that translucent Nethra Lingam. He had graciously taken the Linga round to everyone and made all to wonder at its quit effulgence and at a clearly visible Eye that was somehow incorporated in it. Devotees recited Sri Rudram, Purushasuktham and Narayana Suktham, while Baba was



By the side of a holy river

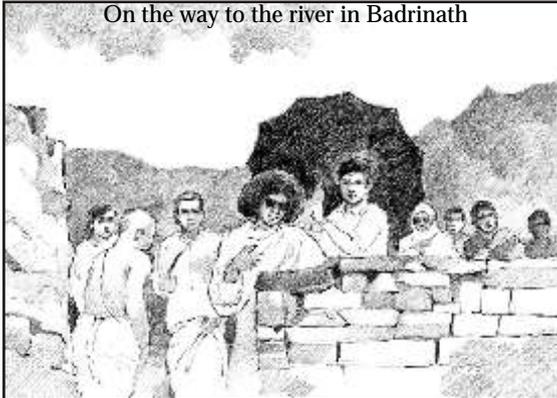
of everyone in the party, for years and years. In pursuance of His Mission of re- infusing spiritual efficacy in all Holy Places where men congregate for acquiring peace and joy, a Mission which took Him recently to Ayodhya, Kasi and Prayag. Baba that day



In Badri on the way to the temple

# With Baba to Badrinath

On the way to the river in Badrinath



Icon, He granted to the devotees; the Bilva leaves of 'gold' He gave to members of the party, as mementoes of the Momentous Day, for being duly worshipped by them.

pouring the sacred water on the Lingam. Then, Baba created 108 miniature Bilva leaves or rather replicas of that holy leaf, in 'gold'; they fell in a lightning shower from His Palm on to a silver plate. He again waved His Hand and this time, O Blessed moment, 108 actual 'thumme' flowers fresh with even the touch of the morning dew, fell from that Divine Palm! With these, Baba directed Dr.B.Ramakrishna Rao, presumably on behalf of all assembled to do Puja to the Linga, the Ashtottara Puja, as mentioned in the Sastras. After Puja, Baba collected the Abhisheka Ganga and gave a share of it to each one, Himself pouring it into the mouth with His own merciful Hand.

Needless to say, the Lingam, one of the Five, which according to Baba, Sankaracharya brought from Kailasa, and which he installed in a sacred spot in the shrine to vivify the Badarikasram returned to the place from which Baba had drawn it for this epoch making ritual of re invigoration. The Lotus and the

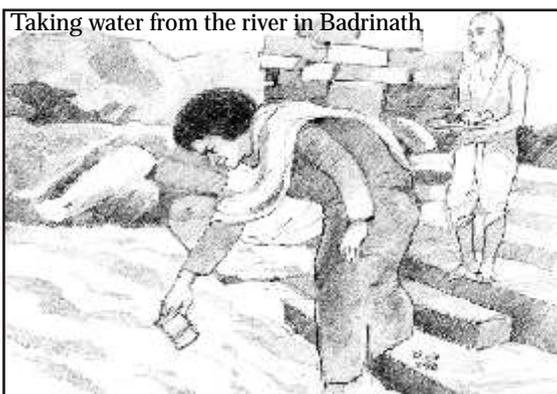
About 12.30PM, the same day, Baba condescended to come to Brahmakapal, where the devotees had arrived to offer oblations to the pitris (forefathers). He advised everyone to pray for their ancestors and departed relations, in a spirit of faith and sincerity. Every member of the party had a rare good fortune of paying off the debt to the departed in the immediate presence of the Lord Himself!

Then Baba went down to the Alakananda and took from the surging torrent a glass of water, but, lo! The glass held also a lump of Vibhuthi with the mark of Pranava on it and the til essential for ancestral rites! He poured the water on to the palms of the devotees who were handicapped by disqualifications form partaking in the Pinda Pradan, asking them to offer that water instead! Surely, the manes of all who shared in that day's Brahmakapal ceremony are thrice blessed!

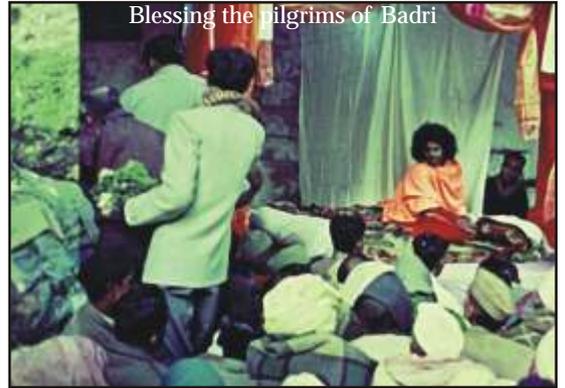
In the evening at 6PM., the Badrinath Temple Committee accorded a welcome to Baba at a formal

ceremony at the Temple premises, which His Excellency Dr.B.Ramakrishna Rao also attended. About 3000 thousand pilgrims and citizens attended and the precincts were packed to capacity.

Taking water from the river in Badrinath

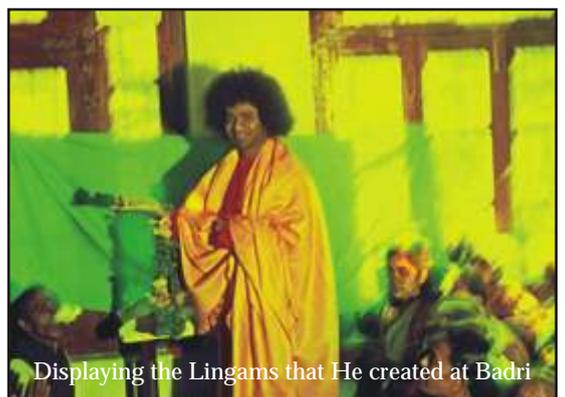


Blessing the pilgrims of Badri



Baba spoke of the five Lingas brought by Sankaracharya and of the sanctity of Badri. He asked everyone to decide for himself where real happiness lay and rigorously to pursue the path to win that happiness. He emphasised that Prema is the very essence of Bhakthi, the light with which the Lord (who is Premaswarupa) can be seen and realised and understood. He asked the citizens of Badri to appreciate the ordeals, trails, tribulations and expenses undergone by the pilgrims, the illnesses and accidents which they had braved, and the faith which heartened them from the first step to the last. He advised that they should learn from the pilgrims a part of their faith in Badri Narayana and treat the pilgrims with greater kindness and brotherliness. Dr.B.Ramakrishna Rao translated Baba's Telugu speech into Hindi.

The Secretary who thanked Baba said that the announcement, regarding the 5 Lingams, and Badri being repository of one of them will thrill everyone and will instill greater faith



Displaying the Lingams that He created at Badri

## With Baba to Badrinath



The Badri idol, the nethra lingam and the thousand petalled lotus

in Badri in the hearts of every Hindu.

In the night Baba arranged for the feeding, on a truly lavish scale, of all the mendicants around the Temple of Badrinath and He distributed a blanket each ( or its equivalent in money) to more than five hundred people. No wonder they all joined in the chorus of thanksgiving and cheered “Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba Ji Ki Jai”.

On the 18<sup>th</sup>, about 9AM, Baba and the devotees left Badri and, reached Lam Bagar for lunch, halting for sometime on the way to bless the organisers of a Yajna named Sri Rama Krathu. The next day, Joshi Math was reached and the return journey by bus and car was undertaken from there on Tuesday, 20<sup>th</sup>.

It is worth noting that Baba walked back the distance from Badrinath to Joshi Math and on the second day, he was among the earliest to reach the destination, ascending the steep



The Divine horse rider

heights of the Vishnu Prayag Joshi Math mountain road, without the least sign of tiredness.

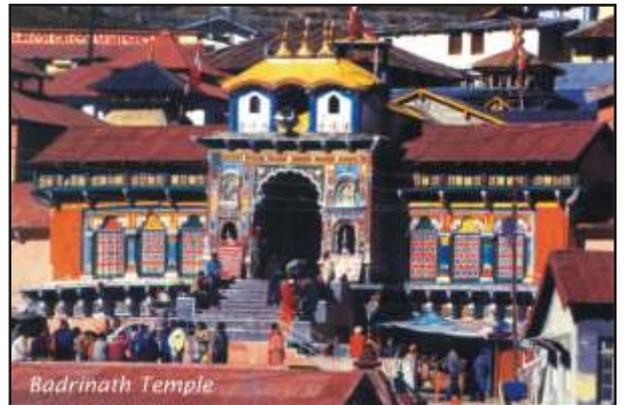
Baba had said during the forward trek that the rains shall not come until the party was back in Rishikesh and true to His command, the rains held back, until the 'caravan' was within 20 miles of Rishikesh when the party got the first drops of drizzle!

It must be mentioned that while nearing Rishikesh, Baba miraculously anticipated, by a few minutes, a landslide which came down across the road causing even a slip, but only after all members of the party had safely come across the doomed spot. A party of more than a hundred devotees, mostly old and not quite sturdy could go through all the tossing and twisting in the buses and all the tramping and climbing of the hills, in strange climes and with strange foods and come back hale and hearty, as per schedule, only through the Ever present Grace of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba.

We were all back in Hardwar on Wednesday 21<sup>st</sup> June and we left on 22<sup>nd</sup> for Dehra Dun, from where we had to entrain for Delhi. Baba encouraged all the devotees to collect G a n g a j a l from Brahmakund so that they could take it to their homes. He had a kind word and an encouraging smile for everyone. He came to every bus when the party was on the point of leaving. He blessed e v e r y o n e a n d commanded them to

share their joy with others and to life thereafter everyday of their lives as real pilgrims towards the seat of Narayana. With our eyes full of tears of joy, we sat in the bus, unable to speak, for when the heart is full, the tongue is silent.

Baba left for Naini Tal from Hardwar; He spent three days there with Their Excellencies, but they were, inevitably busy days full of interviews with a large number of high officers and dignitaries, who had come for Baba's Darsan. Baba also visited the 'Githa Sathsang' established by Swami Vidyanandaji.



Badrinath Temple

A welcome address in Hindi was presented to Him at the Sathsang He addressed the members on the need for practicing the path of Sadhana laid down in the Githa.

In the discourse Baba said, “Mere scholarship is just a burden, without putting what is studied into action. It is only that part of it which is put into practice, felt and experienced that becomes one's undisputed possession”. Baba pointed out, “The Githa was propounded to every one who is afflicted with the delusion and ignorance. Arjuna was just a representative of struggling mankind, at the crossroad of conflicting duties, without the Light necessary for discovering the right path”. “In the 18<sup>th</sup> Discourse, Krishna asks Arjuna, “Has all these been heard by you, with one pointed attention? Has the delusion caused by ignorance of the Reality been

# With Baba to Badrinath



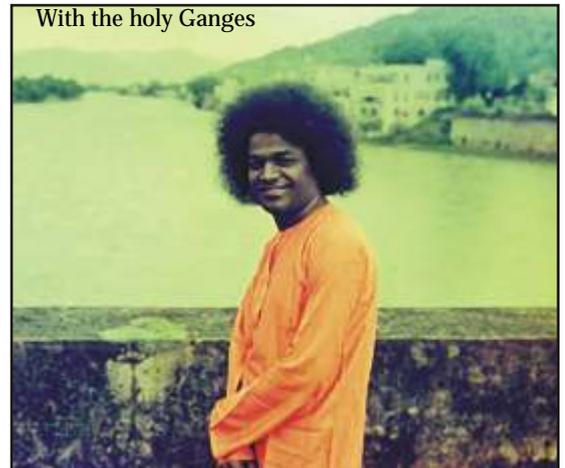
The golden bilva leaf manifested by Baba destroyed?" This shows that the purpose of the Githa is to destroy Moha, or Delusion, which is the result of misunderstanding the unreal as real, the transitory as the permanent, the source of sorrow as the source of joy" Baba concluded. He said that the Githa was a Universal textbook of Spiritual Science which could be studied and practised by people of all climes and creeds. The only qualification needed was a yearning for the higher ideals and an earnestness to discover the source of lasting joy.

Baba returned to Delhi on the 26<sup>th</sup> and emplaned for Madras on the 27<sup>th</sup>. He reached Madras just in time to meet the members of the party who arrived by train from Delhi the same evening, and to send them with His Blessing to their respective homes.

Baba reached Puttaparthi at noon on 3rd July and the Bhakthas there welcomed Him with great Joy. On the 4<sup>th</sup>, Baba gave the devotees a graphic description of the journey and an inspiring account

of the Three Eventful Days at Badri. He wanted that everyone should draw inspiration from the devotion and faith of thousands of old, decrepit and poor pilgrims who brave the dangers and disasters of the road every year, just to get a glimpse of the Lord in the Badri Narayana Form. He said that those who visit Holy Places must prove in their daily lives that the holiness has entered their hearts and changed their habits and thoughts for the better. He said that Sankaracharya installed the Narayana idol at Badrinath, and every one must install the Name of Narayana in the Shrine of the heart. Then, He gave every one the Theertha of Gangotri with which He had performed the Abhisheka at Badri as well as the prasad of Badri itself.

That was the blissful consummation of the Badri Yatra for all.



With the holy Ganges

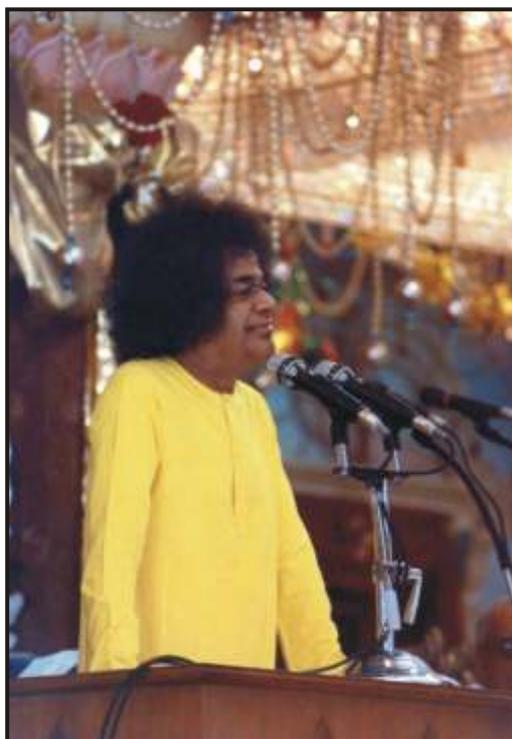
With the Manifested, we proceeded to the Unmanifested! At every step among the Himalayas we experienced the Prema of the Lord whose was with us! At every turn, His Grace guarded and guided us.

May He be our Guard, our Guide and our God forever!



With the chosen ones

# The importance of the Human Body



**W**ealth, friends, property, and even wife if lost, can be acquired again, but the human body is not like that; once it goes, it can never be got back, no matter how hard one may try. Human life is most precious, highly sacred, beautiful and invaluable. It is therefore the prime duty of every individual to take the greatest possible care of the body. The body is an indispensable vehicle for experiences. Without it nothing can be done, not even a simple task. The human body is, therefore, more precious than worldly wealth and such other material acquisitions. Life must be sanctified by making proper use of the body and engaging it in sacred actions. Time gone will never come back. Once the Ganges merges in the ocean, you cannot get back even a drop of its sacred water. Likewise, once life ebbs out and the body is gone, it cannot be recovered.

The human body is also a clock marking time and the passage of life. It ticks away the seconds, minutes, days, weeks, months, and years. Man knows that life is ticking away and yet he does not bother to enquire about the real purpose of life. No one can say when the clock will stop. It is, therefore, most essential to make proper use of life while it is still available. The body is the vehicle for the journey of life. If the vehicle is not properly maintained, then one must be prepared to face serious problems on the way.

The body has been gifted in order to serve others. You must firmly resolve not only to take care of yourself but also others. Unfortunately, man today does not know what service means. The essence of all the eighteen *Puranas* can be summarized in two short sentences: Help Ever. Hurt Never

Though God has given the body for service man does not seem to understand what help means, being ever immersed in selfishness. Every thought, every word, and every action is driven by selfishness. Man has become a puppet in the hands of selfishness and self-interest. How can a puppet ever be called independent? Selfishness must therefore be totally rejected and selflessness must be wholeheartedly embraced. Then alone would the real purpose of the human body and human life be realized.

You must make an effort to realize that the body is just an instrument given to you for a specific purpose, and must further understand that purpose. The body must be used only for performing good deeds. You must lead a virtuous life. In the end, you must give up the body with good thoughts. Do not assume that the body has been given for enjoyment, comfort seeking, beautification, and useless pursuits of that nature. Indulgence in pleasure seeking, comfort and luxury can be dangerous. God has not given this body for indulgence.

Safeguard your body by all means and take full care of your health, but use your body solely to perform good actions.

# Truth Will Always Triumph

From time to time, many listeners and readers write to us and say: “There is so much negative propaganda about Swami. Why don't you use the Radio, H2H etc., to rebut this nonsense?” The latest occasion for such remarks happens to be a TV program that has apparently been aired in Australia, which, not unexpectedly, made many devotees there extremely agitated, to say the least. I would now like to break our silence and comment on why we refuse to waste our time on pointless rebuttals.

Perhaps you would understand our attitude better if I were to start by telling you that our attitude to such matters is always conditioned by what Swami has said and continues to say. To give you a better idea of what I mean, let me take you way back to the year 1947. I wonder how many of the present devotees were born then. In that year, Swami wrote a letter, to be precise on 25<sup>th</sup> May. That letter is a landmark and we reproduce it below, but before presenting the letter, I must give you some background.

You will recall that it was in 1940 that Swami truly revealed Himself. Till then, He was just Sathya Narayana Raju, son of Pedda Venkama Raju and Easwaramma and the grandson of Kondama Raju. But on 20<sup>th</sup> October, 1940, the world realised that Raju was none other than the reincarnation of Shirdi Baba, and thereafter, He came to be known as Sri Sathya Sai Baba. As many would know, this happened in the small town of Uravakonda. Shortly after that Swami returned to Puttaparthi to make it His permanent home. In those days, He stayed in a tin shed, now known as *Paatha Mandiram*. The *Mandiram* still exists, though in a different form.

You may be surprised and even shocked to know that in those days, there was no direct road to Puttaparthi, as there is now. One had

to first come to Bukkapatnam, and from there travel by bullock cart to Karnataka Nagepalli, a small village on the eastern side of Chitravathi. Thereafter, one had to cross the river on foot before reaching Puttaparthi. Altogether, it was an arduous trip but believe it or not, many came in spite of the hassle involved. How come? Well, that is what Divine Magnetism is all about! By the way, though a road of sorts came into existence a few years later, as late as 1968, Puttaparthi continued to remain quite backward. In fact Hollywood Director Schulman who came to Puttaparthi in 1968 wrote: “Puttaparthi is 160 km from Bangalore and ten minutes past the Stone Age!”

Be that as it may, people began to come to Baba in increasing numbers, and that included many Princes and their families. For example, the Maharani of Mysore used to come to have Baba's Darshan. She was a Maharani but she too had to get down from her car in Karnataka Nagepalli and walk the rest of the distance. But such was the hunger of devotees that they started coming, first from nearby places and soon from much greater distance. That is what Spiritual hunger does to the true seeker, making him or her forget all the problems.

Now in those far-off days, not many accepted Swami as an incarnation and understandably, there was a lot of bad-mouthing as they say. This happened in Bukkapatnam, and indeed even in Puttaparthi itself, as some of you would recall from one of my Musings Talk, in which I described an extra-ordinary incident once reported by the Rajah of

Venkatagiri. But I shall not go into all that here. What I want to say is that the Press too started to make unfavourable noises, and that really hurt the elder brother of Swami's body, namely, Seshama Raju. At that time, Seshama was not yet quite able to appreciate Swami's true Avataric nature, and in a purely brotherly fashion, wrote a letter of advice, warning “young” Sai Baba of the cunning ways of the world on the one hand, and his various deep concerns on the other. In brief, Seshama was worried about the impact of the attention that his younger brother was receiving. Would this adoration go to the head of young Sathya? Would He fall a victim to various temptations? Such were the thoughts expressed by Seshama Raju.

On 25<sup>th</sup> May, 1947, Baba wrote a reply. Though Baba's letter was intended for Seshama Raju, it was in fact addressed to 'all who are devoted to Me'. That letter is a powerful declaration of the purpose of the Sai Avatar. In that letter, Baba wrote:

*My dear One!*

*I received all the communication that you sent. I found in it the surging floods of your devotion and affection, with the undercurrents of doubts and anxiety. Let Me tell you that it is impossible to plumb the hearts and discover the nature of Jnanis [Wise men], Yogis, ascetics, saints, sages, and the like. People are endowed with a variety of characteristics and mental attitudes; so, each one judges according to his own angle, talks and argues in the light of his own nature. But we have to stick to our own path, our own wisdom, and our own resolution,*



# Truth Will Always Triumph

without getting affected by popular appraisal. As the proverb says, it is only the fruit-laden tree that receives the shower of stone from the passers by. The good always provoke the bad into calumny; the bad always provoke the good into doing more good; this is the nature of the world. One must be surprised if such things do not happen.



People too have to be pitied rather than condemned. They do not know. They have no patience to judge right. They are too full of lust, anger, and conceit to see clearly and know fully. So, they write all sorts of things. If only they know, they would refrain from writing or talking like that. We should not attach any value to such comments and take them to heart, as you seem to do. Truth will certainly triumph some day. Untruth can never win. Untruth might appear to overpower Truth, but its victory would fade away and Truth would establish itself.

It is not the way of the great to swell when people offer worship and shrink when people cool off. As a matter of fact, no sacred text lays down rules to regulate the lives of the great, prescribing habits and attitudes they must adopt. They themselves know the path they must take. Their wisdom regulates and makes their acts holy. Self-reliance and beneficial activity these two are their special marks. They may also be engaged in the promotion of the welfare of devotees and in giving them the fruits of their actions. Why should you be affected by doubt and worry, so long as I am adhering to these two? After all, praise and blame do not touch the Atma; they can touch only the outer frame.

*I have a Task: To foster all mankind, and ensure for all people lives full of Ananda (Bliss).*

*I have a Vow: To lead all who stray away from the straight path, again into goodness and save them.*

*I am attached to a 'Work' that I love: To remove the suffering of the poor and grant them what they lack.*

*I have a 'reason to be proud': for, I rescue all who worship and adore Me.*

*I have a definition of 'devotion': I expect that those devoted to Me treat joy and grief, gain and loss, with equal fortitude.*

*I will never give up those who attach themselves to Me. When I am thus engaged in My beneficial task, how can My Name be ever tarnished, as you apprehend? I would advise you not to heed to such absurd talk. Mahatmas do not acquire greatness through someone calling them so; they do not become small just because some calls them small. Only those low ones who revel in opium but claim to be unexcelled Yogis, only those who quote scriptural texts to justify their gourmandary and pride, only those who are dry-as-dust scholars exulting in their argumentative skill, are moved by praise and blame.*

*You must have read the life-stories of Saints and Divine personages. In those books, you must have read also of horrible falsehood and heinous imputations cast against them. This is the lot of Mahatmas, everywhere, and at all times. Why then do you take these things so much to heart? Have you not heard of dogs that howl at the stars? How long can they go on? Authenticity will soon win.*



*I will not give up My Mission nor My determination. I SHALL carry them out. I treat with equanimity, the honour or dishonour that may result.*

*Internally, I am totally unconcerned. I act, but solely in the outer world. If I talk and move about, it is entirely for the sake of the outer world, and for making the people realise the advent of Divinity. Other than this, I have no concern with anything.*

*I do not belong to any place. I am not attached to any name. I have no 'Mine' or 'Thine'. I respond to whatever name you might use. I go wherever I am needed or called.*

*For Me, the world is something afar and apart. I act and move only for the sake of Mankind.*

*No one can comprehend My Glory, whosoever it may be, whatever be the method of enquiry, and no matter how long the attempt.*

*You will yourself see the full Glory unfolding in the coming years. Devotees must have patience and forbearance.*

*I am not concerned, nor am I anxious that these facts should be made known. I have no need to write these words. I wrote them because I felt that you would be pained if I do not reply.*

*Thus, yours, Baba.*

Please read the above letter carefully. Note two things: The good will carry on with their work regardless of obstacles, and AUTHENTICITY WILL WIN. Swami gives the analogy of the tree and in fact, He has expanded on this many a time in His

# Truth Will Always Triumph

Divine Discourses. He says, man throws stones at a tree but comes to the same tree for shelter when the Sun is scorching at mid day. Not only that; in the end, the tree gives its entire self up as wood, to be used by man.

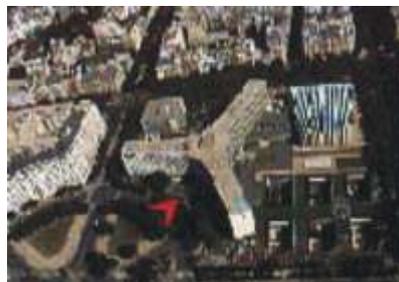
Well, if that be Swami's *Kshama* [forbearance], then how can we use the facilities He has given us for spreading His Message, for taking on all and sundry who have no better work than to raise muck? By the way, I was told that in the TV program shown in Australia recently, many of the people who made allegations about Swami had their backs turned to the camera! Imagine that!! These people want to throw mud but do not have the guts to show their face! Do we dignify such people by condescending to "reply" to them?

Perhaps I should also mention this. Once a devotee complained: "Swami, how can we really keep quiet when so much abuse is being hurled at You? Why don't You understand the pain we feel?" You know what Bhagavan replied? He said: "Bangaru, the man who is flinging abuse is in the gutter. If you want to fight him, you too have to get into the gutter? Do you think Your Mother would like to see Her dear child get into the gutter?"

It is these facts that made us to withhold from impulsive and intemperate responses to irresponsible utterances by foolish people. At the same time, when there is misstatement in high quarters, we do make a quiet effort to set the record straight. Let me give two examples. A couple of years ago, the London *Times* wrote something nasty about Swami. Now the *Times* is not only the leading newspaper in Britain but one of the leading newspapers of the world, that is held in high esteem everywhere. Clearly if it writes or publishes something incorrect and inappropriate, we have a duty to place the correct facts before it so that its

readers do not get wrong ideas. In fact, this is the right of reply that the Press is supposed to offer. So many of us wrote letters to the *Times* but believe it or not, the *Times* simply refused to publish any one of our letters. In fact, Air Chief Marshall [Retd.] Nirmal Suri, an ardent devotee, was in London at that time and he personally went to the office of the *Times* and tried to talk to them; but they did not even bother to meet him. So much for a decent and free press!

Another event and that really is what I wanted to write about all the above is just a long preamble so that you would get the background. Some years ago there was a big conference in Prashanti Nilayam on Educare. It was an international meet with delegates from many countries and started off as a joint venture with UNESCO [United Nations Scientific, Educational and Cultural Organisation]. I remember the event very well. And do you know what happened on the morning of that conference? The



newspapers reported that the UNESCO Office in Delhi had issued a statement withdrawing from the conference because of allegations about the Sai Organisation! The muck-rakers had managed to poison the mind of the powers that be in the UNESCO, and the Head Office in Paris immediately sent a message to its Delhi branch to withdraw and issue a press release.

We were all shocked. How could a responsible body like the UNESCO pull out just like that and that too without bothering to verify? If they wanted they could have pulled out in a polite fashion but the statement issued was far from polite. And that

too from Delhi!

In the years that followed, I tried in vain to tell the brass that came regularly from Delhi for Swami's Darshan, "Listen! You all know how much Swami has done and is continuing to do for the people of India in a thousand different ways. You also know how false and malicious the content of this statement is. Is not Swami respected all over the country? Is not an insult to Swami a slap on the face of the country? India is a member of the UNESCO. Why don't you officially write and take objection? You have every right to and also the authority to. Can you keep quiet when a UN body is casting aspersions on one of the most respected citizens of the country, one who has and is doing so much for the people?"

My passionate appeal did not work. I was totally disappointed but then God works in His own silent way and according to His own timetable. Recently, an Official of UN Habitat was here for Darshan and he complained how his initiative on

Human Values in Water Education programme based on Swami's Principles, was being thwarted by trouble makers, who were trying to influence the UN Secretary General, quoting the UNESCO Press Release, which was still on the UNESCO website. By the way, the programme that UN Habitat was working on is a sequel to Kanu's successful project on Human Values in Water education in Africa, based of course on Swami's teachings.

I had a long talk with this Official of UN Habitat, and he subsequently went to Delhi where he managed to meet the Foreign Minister directly. By the way, the Foreign Minister is a

# Truth Will Always Triumph

devotee and has come here many times. In addition to this, I personally had a long meeting with a top diplomat, another devotee of thirty years or so. This other person had earlier been the Ambassador for India in Paris and also India's representative in the UNESCO. Both the Foreign Minister and this diplomat were terribly upset that nothing had been done this far, and now, all of a sudden the wheel began to crank.

First, the Indian Rep to the UNESCO wrote [in part]:

*The media Advisory dated September 15<sup>th</sup> 2000 and viewable at the address: [www.unesco.org/education/highlights/media\\_advisory](http://www.unesco.org/education/highlights/media_advisory) is posted to explain UNESCO's inability to participate in a Conference organised by the Institute of Sathya Sai Education [Thailand]. In doing so, it attempts to gravely tarnish the reputation Sathya Sai movement by casting aspersion on the personal integrity and character of its leader, based on hearsay, and unconfirmed press reports.*

*Shri Sathya Sai Baba is a highly respected spiritual leader and public figure in India and abroad. It is well known that the life and message of Shri Sathya Sai Baba has been devoted to promoting peace, non-violence social harmony and is a moving force behind numerous philanthropic social projects. In this context, it is pertinent to mention that the UN Human Settlements Project [UN-HABITAT] launched a major education initiative three years ago, using human values approach propounded by Shri Sathya Sai Baba, to introduce a value-based water education programme through the national curriculum in Africa.. The initiative has been widely accepted at high political levels and among educationists in Africa and is now being replicated by the UN-HABITAT and the Asian Development Bank in Asia and the Pacific. You will agree that issuance of a casual and negligent press release by UNESCO cannot but do disservice to such valuable projects.*

*Government of India considers Shri Sathya Sai Baba and his movement a national asset and takes strong exception to UNESCO press release, which spreads wholly unfounded and unsubstantiated allegation against Shri Sathya Sai Baba.*

*I would therefore request you to take immediate steps to remove the objectionable press advisory from the UNESCO website. I would also appreciate an expression of regret for the damage caused to one of India's revered public figures, without first verifying the facts and any consultation with Indian authorities.*

Well, that is the letter from India's permanent representative to the UNESCO. Strong letter, is it not? Naturally, the UNESCO hurried to give a reply. Here it is, in part. The letter is from Assistant Director General of UNESCO.

*I do appreciate this concern and wish to inform you that following your personal intervention, the media advisory in question was immediately withdrawn from the archives of the UNESCO's web site for education.*

*I should also like to take this opportunity to say how much the Organisation regrets this unfortunate incident and to reiterate to you, on behalf of the Director General, that the Organisation attaches the greatest importance to the varied forms of fruitful collaboration that we have enjoyed with your country for many years.*

*I hope this letter will set your mind at rest and dispel any misunderstanding.*

So, there it is. As Swami said long ago, authenticity will always win. I do hope you will share this expression of regret by an important UN body with others whom you know and that slowly the word would spread so that negative propaganda would be laid to rest once and for all, as it indeed must be.

The moral of it all is that we must be patient, without giving up our efforts

to overwhelm negativity with positivity. That really is the important point. We can never win by fighting slander with counter slander. It is only the misguided who place their faith in the "eye for an eye" philosophy. As a wise man once remarked, if we followed that philosophy, then pretty soon the world would have only blind people!

What do you think? Let us know, and all you have to do is to write to: [h2h@radiosai.org](mailto:h2h@radiosai.org)

All the best. Jai Sai Ram.

G.VENKATARAMAN

## A FUNDAMENTAL QUESTION

Dear Reader,

Having discussed Dharma, which is really the CORE issue of Spirituality, we now turn to an interesting but knotty question. To know more about it, read on!

Good luck and happy reading. Jai Sai Ram.

SGH TEAM

**A** fundamental question arises. It is said that God is Abstract and Formless. The Hindus, on the other hand, worship so many Gods; and now, we have a walking God! How does one understand these seemingly contradictory facts?

Swami has beautifully clarified the point. To start with, one must note that the question of the nature and form of God must be dealt with at various levels. To set the stage for later arguments, let us first consider the case of water. Water is present in the atmosphere as vapour; this vapour has no form; nor can it be seen. Occasionally, depending on the circumstances, some portions of the vapour become visible as clouds. In contrast to the invisible and all-pervasive vapour, clouds have shape and form and are also finite. Water is also present in snow, rain and hail-stone. It is present in rivers, lakes and oceans. It is present in oceans as iceberg. It is also present underground where we cannot directly see it. What this example tells us is that though the vapour in the atmosphere is not visible, this vapour can manifest itself as clouds, can come down as rain

and snow, and having so come down, accumulate in lakes, rivers, oceans, etc., or disappear below the ground. In the same way, we can deal with God at various levels, depending upon our state of spiritual evolution.

To the most highly evolved, there is only one God who is Formless, Omnipresent, Omnipotent, Omniscient, and Eternal. However, if one who is not so evolved imagines God to have a particular form, then the yearning of the devotee makes the Abstract and the Formless to take that particular Form that the devotee wants to see. This is what Swami says. Seen from this perspective, when some religions talk of only one God, they are obviously meaning God at the highest level. When others talk of 'different' gods with 'different' forms, they are obviously talking of particular manifestations of the One Supreme God.

As regards Hinduism, Swami says that ancient Hindus felt complete freedom of choice is best because this way the devotee can relate easily, effectively, and most comfortably with God. If the devotee thought God was Abstract, He was so to that devotee. Alternately, the devotee

could choose the form he wants. Baba says that God is ever anxious to please, and He will take on whatever form the devotee wants. If he wants to see God as Siva, he will see the form of Siva. If he wants to see Ganesha, he will see the form of Ganesha. It is not the form that is important but the underlying Divinity. Take the case of sweets there are so many of them. Yet, they all have one common property they all taste sweet without exception. In the same way, no matter what form one visualises, it is the Divine aspect that is central to the issue.

It is pertinent to introduce at this point the term *Ishta Devata*. It simply means 'favourite God'. For some it may be Rama, for some it may be Krishna, for some it may be Sai, for some it may be Allah, for some it may be Jehova, for some it may be Christ or Buddha or whatever. In some manner or the other, they all fall under the category of 'favourite God'. Baba says, it does not matter by what name you call Him; but when you call, it must be with a deep feeling of Love. [In fact, there is in one of the *Bhajans* a line that stresses this very point. Some readers may remember that we asked readers to identify this Bhajan, and in fact many did so correctly.]

## A FUNDAMENTAL QUESTION

The *Ishta Devata* concept may be abhorrent to those who think of God as Formless and Abstract. But for lesser mortals who cannot contemplate and meditate on the Formless and the Abstract, the *Ishta Devata* is a most convenient 'handle' for developing one's devotion. Sage Vivekananda says that for ordinary mortals, it is very difficult to contemplate on something that is Infinite and Formless. This is because we are finite ourselves, and live in Universe that also is finite. With limited minds and thinking, how can we easily contemplate on the Formless Infinite? Not at all easy. It is precisely here that the *Ishta Devata* comes in very handy, offering hope of redemption to lesser mortals. There is a song by an Indian saint addressed to Krishna in which he [Tukaram] says, "O Krishna for Tuka's sake, You the Formless and the Infinite have come with a finite form! Otherwise, how could a simple fool like me worship you?"

To sum up this part of the discussion, though God is Formless and Abstract, He can be worshipped with any form pleasing to the devotee. And if the yearning of the devotee is intense enough, God would even manifest to the devotee in that particular form. The concept of *Ishta Devata* is particularly relevant in the context of the *Avatar*. A particular devotee may worship Siva, and to please this devotee, the Lord may momentarily manifest as Siva. But what about the others? They would not be able to see this manifestation. This problem of selective appearance is completely solved when the Lord incarnates as an

*Avatar*. Then anyone can see Him, relate to Him, and receive His Grace. And one can do this for years and years. That is the unique speciality of the *Avatar*. In other words, the *Avatar* is the most convenient choice for the *Ishta Devata* or Personal God. Thus, when one lives in the same time as the *Avatar*, the blessing that one enjoys is incomparable.

This brings us to an important point made by Krishna in the beginning of the 12<sup>th</sup> Chapter of the *Bhagavad Gita*. Arjuna asks [in essence], "O Krishna, which is the best way of worshipping You?" In His reply, Krishna points out that there are basically two paths open to the seeker. In the first, God is reached by what may be called the Inward Path, which essentially implies worshipping the Formless and Abstract God. In the second, God is reached by focussing on Him via the Personal God or *Ishta Devata*. Krishna adds, "Arjuna, for you the second option is easier." Now, an amplification of this most important piece of advice.

As a preliminary remark, it may be mentioned that in both the paths, the key issue is the extinction of the individual ego. The two paths differ mainly in the strategy employed for the annihilation. Let us start with the second path, the path of devotion [especially to the Personal God]. Here one becomes so much obsessed with God, that one literally forgets oneself. God becomes the entire object of life, with every aspect of daily life revolving totally around Him. In the process, the individual slowly loses his ego, and his identity. Eventually,

having dissolved himself [i.e., his lower self], there is only God; in other words, he has attained God.

We now consider the first path, which is essentially 'inward looking'. The Inward Path is more 'sophisticated'. Here, the individual consciously reminds himself that he is Divine in origin by chanting SIVOHAM [I am Siva], SOHAM [I am THAT], AHAM BRAHMASMI [I am *Brahman* or God]. These statements ought not to be misconstrued as arrogant declarations. Rather, while chanting these *Mantras*, the seeker makes every effort to become immersed in Divine feelings such as Compassion, selfless Love, Forbearance, Sacrifice, etc. If one keeps on with this drill day in and day out ceaselessly for years, a stage would come when feelings of Compassion, Love, Sacrifice, etc., are automatically aroused and become second nature to the individual concerned. At this stage, the seeker has arrived. As Swami often reminds us, *Yad Bhavam, Tad Bhavati* As you feel, so you become.

In this the Inward Path, one constantly has to battle body-consciousness, not an easy task. In the path of devotion on the other hand, one just loves God like a child loves its mother. Slowly, God occupies so much of one's time that ego alias body-consciousness has no chance to manifest. Eventually, ego just withers away, having had little practice! Loving God is a lot easier than reminding oneself that one is God; in the latter, there is the great danger of the entire exercise misfiring through the

## A FUNDAMENTAL QUESTION

boosting of one's ego! That is why Krishna says that for ordinary mortals [to which category 99.9999999% belong], the path of devotion is both easy and safe. The path becomes particularly easy to follow when one is living at the same time as the *Avatar* this important point has to be kept in mind.

There are innumerable advantages and concessions that are available in the path of devotion. Firstly, when one surrenders to God, He takes over, vastly reducing our problems. [You take one step towards Me and I shall take a hundred steps towards you.] Next, no one is excluded; even great sinners are offered the chance to turn a new leaf, being assured of full blessings and Grace. Thirdly, one need not be afraid that one cannot become infinitely pure, etc. God knows very well our frailties and is fully prepared to help us in every possible way. All that is required is the DEEP yearning for God. If deep and genuine yearning is there, He will just stretch out His hand and pick us up even before we have become perfectly pure. This is a remarkable bonus.

One can give the following analogy. Let us say one has to go to the top of Everest. One method is the hard way actually climb the mountain! This is by no means easy. Another way is to go to the summit by helicopter, which is clearly a lot easier than climbing! The path of Self-enquiry is like climbing to the summit, while the path of devotion is like taking a helicopter ride to the summit. Of course the

ride does not come free; one must buy a ticket. And what is the currency that is to be offered for purchasing the ticket? Not dollars, not euros, not pounds, not yen, not rupees the currency is FAITH, TOTAL FAITH. "Place your faith in Me and I shall take care of everything." This assurance has been given by Krishna and reiterated by Sai.

We conclude by citing two analogies [both given by Baba] that illustrate the two paths currently under discussion. Let us first consider two circles, a very large one [an infinite one actually] and a small one. The large circle represents God and the small one represents man. Let us imagine that the small circle lies outside the big circle. We now suppose that the small circle starts shrinking progressively, till it finally disappears altogether. At this stage, only the large circle is left. The shrinking of the small circle symbolises the gradual elimination of the individual ego. When ego vanishes completely only God is left, the individual having become one with God.

Consider now an alternate scenario. Here we start with the small circle lying wholly within the big circle. Now imagine the small circle to progressively become larger. Eventually a stage would be reached when the small circle becomes one with the larger circle. This expansion process symbolises the attainment of Self-realisation by the path of enquiry. In this path, one constantly keeps asking one self: "Who am I?" The answer is: "I am NOT the body or the mind." The question now reduces to:

"Then who exactly am I?" And the answer is "I am the Real Self or the *Atma*." This answer must not come from the head but the Heart that is important!

On now to the second analogy. In this, man is visualised as being held by fetters or chains. Suppose the man starts reducing himself in size. When he becomes thin enough, he can slip out of the chains this is the equivalent of pursuing the path of devotion. Alternately, the man can make himself bigger and bigger; a stage would then come when the chains would burst and give way, making man free. Becoming free by 'expanding' oneself is the equivalent of pursuing the path of Self-enquiry.

To conclude, one should not get caught up in pointless debates about whether God has a Form or not. For those who believe He is without Form, He is indeed Formless. For those who would have it otherwise, He is ever ready to adopt the Form favoured by the devotee, and confer His Grace. The important thing is to Love God and overcome one's ego. This objective is more easily achieved by worshipping a God with Form, than the Abstract God. In particular, one ought to take advantage of the *Avatar*, and adopt Him as the *Ishta Devata*.

### ADDITIONAL NOTES RELATING TO THE ABOVE

- In this world there are people who believe in God and there are people who do not.

## A FUNDAMENTAL QUESTION

●Amongst believers, there is a wide spectrum, since each religion offers its own special view about God. Thus, while some assert that God has no Form, others go so far as to declare that God not only has Form but can in fact assume any Form favoured by the devotee.

●As if this diversity of opinion is not enough, devotees who believe in a Formless God sometimes argue [based on their religion], “My Formless God is the only Real God. Your Formless God is no God at all!”

●All this diversity of opinion provokes many to totally deny God! Yet, we must not dismiss such “disbelievers” because many of them are wedded to Truth. According to Swami, Truth is God; therefore we must take it that these people also believe in God in their own way, although they might not like to use the word God.

●So, what are we to make of all this [man-made] confusion? Let us turn to God Himself for an answer.

●Here is a digest of Baba's declarations on this subject [in essence]. Swami says:

There is only one God.  
He is Abstract and Formless.  
He is *Sathya, Dharma, Shanti, Prema, Ahimsa*.  
Therefore it is said that Truth is God.  
This God is above Space and

Time.

God is truly Nameless but man has given Him many Names nothing wrong in that.

In the framework of Creation, God is Omnipresent, Omnipotent and Omniscient.

He pervades the entire Universe.

He is *Sathyam, Sivam, Sundaram*, or as Plato put it, He is Truth, Goodness and Beauty.

God's Power is manifest in the Universe as Consciousness and Divine Energy.

All aspects of God are immanent in the atom.

Thus God is present in the micro as well as the macrocosm.

He is present in every being as the Indweller.

And so on it goes.

●If all the above is true, then it implies that God is without Form. What sense does it make then to talk of God with Form? Is it not a contradiction to talk of God with Form?

●This is not a contradiction. To appreciate this, just recall that water can be present in various states and forms. If water can be without form [as in the vapour state] and with form as in ice, for example, then why should it be so difficult for God to exist both in a Formless aspect as well as with Form?

●Indeed, even where liquid water

is concerned, we see ponds, lakes, rivers, waterfalls, and ocean. All these contain only water; yet we perceive them as being different.

●From all this we learn the lesson that Swami has often taught us: TRUTH IS ONLY ONE THOUGH SCHOLARS REFER TO IT BY DIFFERENT NAMES. God is only One, though devotees perceive Him in many different ways. And God is kind enough to oblige the devotee by appearing to him in the Form that he prefers.

●Swami gives another simple example. He says, “Take water. People speaking different languages refer to this water with different words. In English the word water is used. In Tamil it is *tanni*. In Hindi it is *paani*, and so on. Imagine a Hindi-speaking person arguing, “This is *paani* not water!” How stupid would that be!”

●Yet this precisely is what humans do very often. For example, Hindus refer to God using the word *Bhagavan*. In Urdu the corresponding word is *Khudha*. Most Muslims in India speak Urdu and therefore refer to God using the word *Khudha*. Though both the words mean the same, ignorant Hindus are allergic to the word *Khudha*, and likewise ignorant Muslims bristle at the word *Bhagavan*. All this is utterly foolish.

## A FUNDAMENTAL QUESTION

●Swami's views on all this are beautifully echoed in a Sai Bhajan where the following words occur: *jo naam chahe who naam bolo, prem se bolo bahava se bolo* ,It does not matter what Name you use, but make sure you utter the name with Love and Feeling.

●Here is a story that proves the point. Many years ago, a devout Muslim lady in the southern State of Kerala in India became quite ill. She suffered a lot of pain and could not bear it. Constantly she prayed, "Allah! Please either cure me or take me. I just cannot bear this pain!"

One night, she had a dream. Baba appeared before her and said, "I am the Allah you are praying to. Don't worry; you will become alright." Next morning when she got up, she recalled her dream. She knew nothing about Swami and wondered: "Allah is supposed to be without form but a person appeared before me and said He was Allah. What does it all mean?" She did not know whether to believe in her dream or not. However, exactly as had been promised in her dream, within a few days she got completely cured. She was happy but even more mystified. She just could not understand who had cured her.

Soon after this, one day this lady visited the house of a friend of hers. As she entered the house of this other lady, she saw at the entrance a large photo of Swami with a

beautiful smile on His face. The Muslim lady stood there frozen, staring at the picture. She then asked the lady of the house, "Who is this in the picture?" The other lady replied, "Oh, that is Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba." "Do you mean to say that such a person actually exists?" "Yes of course." "Where?" "In Puttaparthi." "Where is that place and how can I go there?" "I am going there next week for service [Seva Dal] work. If you wish, you can come along with me." "I would very much like to." "Good, but why are you so anxious to go to Puttaparthi?" The Muslim lady then narrated her extraordinary experience.

Swami tells us again and again: "Call Me by any Name, at any time, and at any place; I shall respond without fail." Indeed He does, as this episode reveals. He has been doing so from times immemorial and He will go on doing so till the end of Time.

●OK, granted all this. What about God with Form? Can one shed further light on that? Yes one can, and let us start with an analogy from science. In 1905, Einstein gave the celebrated equation  $E = mc^2$ , an equation now known even to school boys. It says that gross matter and physical energy are inter-convertible. For example, Hiroshima got wiped out when about five grams of uranium 235 got totally converted into energy.

The converse, namely the transformation of energy into matter is also possible and students of science know all about it.

●May be, but what is the point of all this discussion? Simply this. Gross matter can be touched, felt, seen, etc. But no one has ever actually seen energy! This obvious fact is hardly ever discussed. From this we see that energy which is unseen can manifest as visible matter in many different ways.

●In other words, even at the purely physical level, something that is formless can manifest with diverse forms. The same is the case with God.

●In this context, the following incident is worth narrating. Once when Baba was with students in Brindavan, a devotee narrated an incident about how Swami manifested in a far-off land and came to the rescue of a devotee there. After describing the thrilling episode, the narrator asked, "Swami, how is that though You were here in Brindavan, yet You appeared in that far-off land? How could You be in two places at the same time?" Swami replied: "You are wrong to think that God goes from one place to the other or manages to be in two places at the same time. He is present everywhere all the time. Only, He may not be manifest. If a devotee at a particular place intensely desires to see God, He will

## A FUNDAMENTAL QUESTION

manifest then and there, irrespective of His presence in other places in other physical Forms”.

- God can have many Forms but there is a Form that is special, namely the Form that God takes as an *Avatar*. This Form is in a category all by itself.
- OK, granted that God is Formless and can also have Forms. Now in which aspect is He to be worshipped? This is what they call a good question! Interestingly this is the very question that Arjuna puts to Krishna at the beginning of the 12<sup>th</sup> Chapter of the *Bhagavad Gita*. Krishna replies, “Arjuna, both forms of worship lead to Me, but for you [meaning all of us ordinary mortals], worship of God with Form is a lot easier. I therefore recommend that you worship the God with Form.”
- OK, but which Form to choose? Here the Hindus have a very liberal prescription. They say, “Choose the Form that appeals to you most!” However, through practical experience, most people have converged on the Form with which God appears as an *Avatar*. In other words, the Form preferred by most is that of Rama, Krishna and now, Swami.
- The *Poorna Avatars* just mentioned incarnated with human form. Thus, it is very easy to regard the *Avatar* as mother, father, *Guru*, friend and so on. And such a view enables one to literally spend one's entire life in the company of the *Avatar*, if one so chooses.
- The lives of many Saints illustrate the point. Saint Tyagaraja was one such Saint. He lived in South India in the period spanning the eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries. A great devotee of the first *Poorna Avatar* Lord Rama, Tyagaraja used to spend the whole day singing for Rama. In the morning he would imagine that he was waking up Rama and sing a song for Him. During the day, there would be songs with praise, adoration, moving recollections of His Story, and even complaints! And at night Tyagaraja would sing lullabies. People may say that Tyagaraja was mad; yes he was, he was God-mad! As Baba often remarks to be God-mad is infinitely better than to be mad about power, position, money, one's husband or wife and so on!
- Once again the point about why Krishna strongly endorses the worship of the personal God. Swami Vivekananda explains it very nicely. He says that the thinking of most persons is very limited. Their vision too is quite restricted. This being the case, how would they be able to properly worship God in His Abstract, Formless and Infinite state? The abstract must follow the real and come after it. Indeed, in mathematics, students are taught first about real numbers and it is only after about ten years of such exposure that they are exposed to imaginary numbers.
- Swami sometimes tells the stories of two wise men named Jnanadev and Namdev. Their legend is very popular in North India. Jnanadev was immersed in the Self-enquiry; he was in quest of the Formless God. Namdev, however, was a simple soul, always given to chanting the name of the Lord. One day the two were trekking through wilderness and in the process became thirsty. Just then, they came upon a well. There were no steps and hence they could go down to the level of the water, which, incidentally was way down. There was also no bucket for drawing water. Jnanadev used his powers, transformed himself into a bird, flew down, drank water, flew up and then reverted to the human form. Namdev did not possess such powers. He just stood there and kept chanting the name of the Lord. And then all of a sudden, the water level in the well started increasing. Soon, the water came right up to the top and Namdev was able to drink water with great ease. Swami says that the man of Knowledge had to go the water whereas water came looking for the man of devotion.
- The question arises: How does one go in quest of the Abstract and Formless God?

## A FUNDAMENTAL QUESTION

According to Baba, this has to be in stages. First, one imagines God to be distinct from oneself. Here, devotion is quite easy, conceptually. It becomes particularly easy when one worships the Avatar as the personal God, as many have discovered over the centuries. Swami refers to this dual state with the Sanskrit word *Dwaitam*, which means duality. With spiritual advancement, there comes a stage where one realises one is a part of God but not God Himself. This is what philosophers call Qualified Monism; in Sanskrit it is called *Visishtadvaitam*. Still higher is *Advaitam* or Pure Monism, where one identifies oneself totally with God. Obviously, this would take a long time and many stages of spiritual refinement.

- Baba often quotes Jesus to illustrate these three stages. He says that in the beginning Jesus declared that he was a Messenger of God. This corresponds to *Dwaitam*. Later Jesus said that He was the Son of God; Swami says this showed that Jesus was now in the stage of *Visishtadvaitam*. Still later Jesus said that he and his Father were; with this, Jesus had arrived, meaning that he had climbed fully to the stage of *Advaitam*.
- It must also be pointed out that many ardent devotees of the Lord have, unknown to themselves, reached the pinnacle of *Advaitam*, by the sheer intensity of their

devotion. They became so involved with God in their daily lives, that world ceased to have any significant meaning. God alone remained, and in practical terms that is what *Advaitam* is all about.

- Saint Tukaram who lived in the state of Maharashtra many centuries ago is a classic example. He was a great devotee of Krishna. Once a savant came to him and tried to persuade him to listen to a discourse on *Advaitam*. Tukaram resisted stoutly. Yet, towards the end, this very same Tukaram was seen with Divine Effulgence emanating from him. Unknown to himself, he had become one with God. When that state is reached, one has essentially attained the state of *Advaitam*.
- As Baba often tells us, *Yad Bhavam, Tad Bhavati*, meaning, as you feel, so you become. Think of God always and God you become! In other words, one need not be bothered about the intricate technicalities about the state of *Advaitam*; that is for scholars to debate and argue about. Sheer and intense devotion *can* definitely take one to the goal. In other words, even the worship of the so-called Personal God can and does help one to finally merge and become one with the Formless and the Absolute.
- So, one need not really split hairs about 'God is without Form or has Form'. He makes

Himself available in both versions, according to the preference of the seeker. The important thing is to adhere firmly and devoutly to the chosen path, whichever it is.

### AN IMPORTANT POINT TO CONSIDER

- This topic about God having Form or no Form is not only an important one but also a difficult one. Many have a mind-set created by centuries of frozen ideas. If one encounters such people, it is better not to raise the topic of God and Form with them. For example, conservative Muslims stoutly believe that there is no God other than Allah. They will not concede that the One whom they call Allah is the same as the One whom others call by other names. Similarly, there are others to whom any one other than Christ is unacceptable. Under such circumstances, it is better not to raise this topic with others, unless one is sure that there would be no misunderstanding or confusion.
- At the same time, it is pertinent to draw a lesson from the life of Gandhi. He made no secret of his adoration of Rama; yet he made himself easily acceptable to Muslims and Christians, for example. How? Because his accent was on Compassion and Non-violence. This is also how Mother Teresa became widely adored in India despite its Hindu

## A FUNDAMENTAL QUESTION

tradition. The point simply is that people readily converge when the **qualities** of the Divine are talked about. But when it comes to names.....! Hence, a good thumb rule is to postpone discussion of the question of names and forms till there is a climate of convergence. That climate is easily created by focussing on Love, which is universally accepted.

HOW DO YOU LIKE THIS SERIES ON GETTING SPIRITUALLY BETTER? DO YOU FIND IT HELPFUL? IF SO, HOW ABOUT DRAWING THE ATTENTION OF OTHERS ALSO, SO THAT THEY TOO BENEFIT? AND, IN CASE YOU HAVE TO COMMENTS TO OFFER, YOU KNOW WHERE TO REACH US., DON'T YOU? THANKS AGAIN.

### In The Next Issue.....

**W**atch out for a special feature on the festival Rama Navami in the presence of Bhagawan..... and many more features on the Divine Incarnation of Rama.....



# Love And Concern



**T**here is a true story of a very touching experience. An old man collapsed on a street corner in Brooklyn, New York, U.S.A. and was rushed to Kings County Hospital. The nurse on duty, after some inquiry, "discovered" that a certain marine stationed in North Carolina might be the man's son. She called the officer-in-charge and requested that the marine be sent to the hospital.

When the marine arrived, she took him immediately to the bedside of the dying man and said, "Your son's here". The old man was heavily sedated, but he slowly reached out his hand. The marine grasped it gently, and held it for the next four hours. As the nurses came and went, they asked the marine to go out and relax for a while, but he didn't.

After the man died, the marine asked the nurse. "Who was that man?" "Wasn't he your father?" the nurse said. "No", said the marine, "but I saw he was dying and needed a son badly. So I stayed!"

Love and Concern have no limits; Love and Concern have no relatives; Love and Concern embrace all, and in a special way those who suffer, those who have no one to assist them, those who are abandoned, and mark my words, even those who do not deserve our love! "For if you love those who love you, what credit is that to you?"

# Rendezvous With Anil Kumar

The Kodaikanal Experience (Part 3 of 3)



Prof. Anil Kumar

## Introduction:

It is said that Prasanthi Nilayam is Swami's office, Brindavan is His home and Kodaikanal is His playground. In a manner of speaking, this is particularly where Kodaikanal is concerned, for it is here, that one gets a glimpse of the Sai of the Forties, especially where Divine Leelas are concerned. It all lasts only a few weeks, but what extraordinary weeks they are, for those blessed to enjoy Divine intimacy then!

Kodaikanal is a hill station in South India about four hundred and odd kilometres south east of Bangalore and near the Temple Cities of Madurai and Palani. In former years, every summer Swami used to take a few selected students with Him to Kodai. To help you to know more about Swami's Kodai sojourn, we reproduce below the transcript of a dialogue between Prof. Anil Kumar and Prof. Venkataraman, broadcast earlier over Radio Sai. Both are from the SRI SATHYA SAI INSTITUTE OF HIGHER LEARNING.

(continued from the previous issue)

GV: Straw hats? In fact I think I have a photo of Swami and Narasimhamoorthy with straw hats.

AK: Swami got down from His car one day and purchased a straw hat and put it on His head. When Swami wore that hat, the whole Kodaikanal was soon full of these straw hats. Bhagavan said, "See they now have plenty of money and are very happy". These are all poor people and they wait for Bhagavan to arrive in Kodai because with Swami, Lakshmi [the goddess of Wealth] follows and takes care of their life. And one day, Swami called two servant maids, very poor ladies, and gave them silk sarees. I was wondering why.

GV: How did He pick these two women?

AK: They were working there in the Ashram, washing utensils. Swami gave them silk sarees. I asked, "Swami, silk sarees for servant maids?" Swami looked at me and said, "It is I who give; why should you cry (laughter)? Are you jealous?" I replied, "No, Swami they cannot afford these silk sarees, I don't know why You give them such expensive clothes?" He replied, "So that they may wear them and attend marriages and such functions. When they visit relatives wearing these sarees, they would say, 'Sai Baba gave this'. That would give them a lot of joy. Why do you think like that?" Sai loves everybody and His Love is uniform.

GV: He always tries to make people happy.

AK: Extremely happy.

GV: The message is that we also should try to do that. Tell me how Swami, in subtle ways, teaches the students. I ask this because you say living with Swami is an experience. What are the lessons?

AK: He watches how every student conducts himself and immediately points out deficiencies.

GV: X-ray eyes!

AK: If there is any mistake, He will notice it. To begin with, dining-table manners, how one should conduct himself while dining with others. Usually boys serve first. There are so many points to consider here - how to serve, how to receive guests, how to extend hospitality, how to talk to elders, how to dress, all sorts of minute details. These days, parents do not have the time to observe and teach. They are busy in their own way. But Bhagavan is more than a parent. He cares for His boys. With the result the boy becomes so good that his parents would wonder whether he was the same child. When they leave home the boys are of one type while when they come back they are totally transformed. That is the transformation that Swami produces.

GV: Did you feel it was kind of very strange that God is

# Rendezvous With Anil Kumar

The Kodaikanal Experience (Part 3 of 3)

doing all this?

AK: Well, God comes down for both for reformation and transformation. Reformation of the world and transformation of the inner being.

GV: You say Swami selects boys with talents. How does He put these talents on display in Kodaikanal?

AK: In many ways. During Bhajans He will ask them to sing. Later, boys would be asked to play on musical instruments. Boys with talent for speaking would be asked to give talks.

GV: Are there some K A V I SAMMELANS or sessions devoted to poetry?

AK: The Sathya Sai Institute is rather unique in that we have students from many parts of the country. We have all together a b o u t

fifteen languages or so. Thus each student would compose a poem or a song in his own language. One day Swami would organise this KAVI SAMMELAN, or an assembly of poets, rendering their compositions. Swami will tell every boy, "Come on, sing a song or recite a poem in your mother tongue." And while the boy is doing so, Swami would translate, add explanations and interpretations, besides correcting the boy wherever he went wrong.

GV: Translating? If it is a Bengali poem ?

AK: He translates all languages.

GV: Then, why does He need you?! Anyway, this is amazing. Now tell us something about the picnic. That must be something very unusual.

AK: Swami will take the boys to a nearby mountain area in

Kodaikanal. The party would go there with food packets. All would sit in the form of a circle and Swami would start joking on the dress and the walking style of boys, besides imitating them, much to the amusement of every body. It is all quite light-hearted. Of course, when He pokes fun, it is really to help the boy to correct his mistakes. He says to one boy, "You are walking like a lady," and that boy would know how to walk properly. He will look at another boy and ask, "Why you are so fat? You had better do some exercises," making everybody laugh. After some bantering like this come the games. Small slips of paper are prepared with various instructions written on them, such as: You must dance, you should sing, you must crack a joke, and so on.



The Perfect host

T h e number of slips so prepared is equal to the number of people seated around in a circle. A slip is put in a box and the box is passed around while music plays. Suddenly the music is stopped and the boy holding the box at that moment

has to do exactly what is written on the slip inside.

GV: Everyone gets a slip including Swami?

AK: Including Swami.

GV: Oh, My God!

AK: It so happened, Prof. Sampath was there in the group. He got a slip. Prof. Sampath is a wonderful person, a well-known scientist, a man of ready wit and humour, and a personification of human values. When Prof. Sampath's turn came and he looked at the slip inside, it said, "You should sing a song." Professor said "Swami, I cannot sing." Swami said, "I cannot help you. You have to follow the rules of the game and do just what your slip says". Prof. Sampath then pleaded, "Swami, can I be exempted?" Laughing merrily, Swami said, "No, no, you should do what

# Rendezvous With Anil Kumar

The Kodaikanal Experience (Part 3 of 3)

is said in the chit”. Professor started singing in his coarse voice; he was not used to singing at all, and every body started putting their fingers into their ears, and plugging their ears so that they don't have to hear him. That added to the fun and frolic. Every body was reeling with laughter.

GV: I remember Prof. Sampath telling me this story. He did it all in good humour. He is a very sportive person; a wonderful man. So if you were to summarise this extraordinary experience that Swami gives in Kodaikanal, how would you do it?

AK: Well Sir, in Kodaikanal we have a number of opportunities to put any number of questions to Bhagavan covering all topics under the sun. Boys also get influenced by what they see. When they go out with Bhagavan, they see thousands of devotees waiting for Him by the roadside. That is when they realise how lucky they are! They say to themselves: “These people have been waiting since the early hours of morning in the cold, to have just a glimpse of Bhagavan. We, on the other hand, are all the time with Swami. We are so very fortunate.” That is the first reaction. Number two, Swami watches a boy eating a particular item. He sees to it that he is served extra. And how He cares for them! Swami's extra-ordinary concern and love naturally touch the boys, and that is what brings about the transformation. They ask: “What shall I do in return, for all the time He spends with me, and for all the concern, love

that He shows me? How am I to repay?”

GV: What does Swami say about that?

AK: He says: “I don't want anything from you. All I want from you is for you to get a good name for yourself, for your parents and for your Institute - that is the way of expressing gratitude to Bhagavan”. That is what HE says, “Do good, be good, see good,” - that is the quintessence of His message.

GV: It is so unimaginable. This broadcast would be heard all over the world and so literally you have brought Kodaikanal experience to thousands of people all over the world. We are very grateful to you from Radio Sai, and we do hope we will have more opportunities to talk to you on this subject. After your next Kodai trip, you had better report immediately to our studio here to tell us all about it!

AK: I eagerly look forward to that opportunity.

GV: At least for that sake, I hope you will be taken in the next trip! Thank you very much and Sai Ram

AK: Thank you, and Sai Ram.

----- The end-----



On a picnic with the Boys

# Parable of the Pencil



**T**he pencil maker took the pencil aside, just before putting him into the box. There are 5 things you need to know, he told the pencil, before I send you out into the world. Always remember them and never forget, and you will become the best pencil you can be.

**ONE:** You will be able to do many great things, but only if you allow yourself to be held in Someone's hand.

**TWO:** You will experience a painful sharpening from time to time, but you'll need it to become a better pencil.

**THREE:** You will be able to correct any mistakes you might make.

**FOUR:** The most important part of you will always be what's inside.

**AND FIVE:** On every surface you are used on, you must leave your mark.

No matter what the condition, you must continue to write. The pencil understood and promised to remember, and went into the box with purpose in its heart.

Now replacing the place of the pencil with you; always remember them and never forget, and you will become the best person you can be.

**ONE:** You will be able to do many great things, but only if you allow yourself to be held in God's hand. And allow other human beings to access you for the many gifts you possess.

**TWO:** You will experience a painful sharpening from time to time, by going through various problems, but you'll need it to become a stronger person.

**THREE:** You will be able to correct any mistakes you might make.

**FOUR:** The most important part of you will always be what's on the inside.

**AND FIVE:** On every surface you walk through, you must leave your mark.

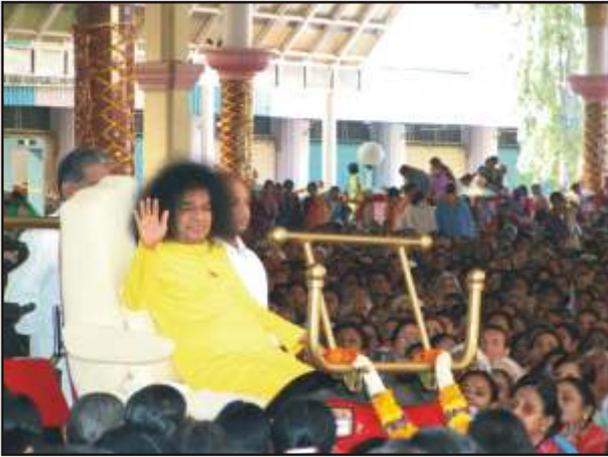
No matter what the situation, you must continue to do your duties. By understanding and remembering, let us proceed with our life on this earth having a meaningful purpose in our heart.

## Test Your Spiritual Quotient IV

- The Trinity of God, according to the Hindu belief, consists of Brahma (the creator), Vishnu (the sustainer) and Shiva (the destroyer) which we are aware of. What does the word 'Vishnu' really mean?
  - that which pervades everywhere
  - that which is the master of everything
  - that which provides for everybody
  - that which is beginningless and endless
- How does Bhagawan Baba explain the eternal longing of man 'I want Peace'? How can one attain the much-coveted peace?
- In the sacred epic Ramayana, there are numerous episodes that demonstrate the virtue of ideal friendship. Whom did Rama befriend while searching for Mother Sita in the forest?
  - Guha
  - Hanuman
  - Sugriva
  - Jatayu
- When and where was the First World Conference of Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organisations held?
  - November 22, 1965 in Prashanthi Nilayam
  - November 22, 1968 in Prashanthi Nilayam
  - May 16, 1965 in Mumbai (then Bombay)
  - May 16, 1968 Mumbai (then Bombay)
- Each of the eighteen chapters in the Bhagavad Geeta, we know, is given the special name of a 'Yoga'. What is the meaning of the term 'Yoga'?
- Fill up the blanks in the following famous sayings of Bhagawan Baba
  - \_\_\_\_\_ union with God.
  - \_\_\_\_\_ are holier than lips that pray.
  - A man with dual mind is \_\_\_\_\_.
  - \_\_\_\_\_ is the only way to immortality.
- In the great epic Mahabharata, when the pandavas during their exile where undergoing hardships in the forest, Krishna appeared and gave them a scroll saying that they should open it when they feel they can no longer bear the ordeals. What were the words inscribed in that scroll?
- Who leads the prayer in Islam, which is followed by a sermon?
  - Maulana
  - Qazi
  - Imam
  - Mullah
- In which year and occasion was the monthly magazine "Sanathana Sarathi" released by Baba to convey His message to every home. What is the meaning and significance of its name?
- When did late Sri N. Kasturi place at Baba's feet the completed first volume of the full-length biography of Baba, 'Sathyam Sivam Sundaram'?
  - 23<sup>rd</sup> November, 1960
  - 23<sup>rd</sup> November, 1961
  - 23<sup>rd</sup> November, 1962
  - 23<sup>rd</sup> November, 1959
- Who is currently the contact person if you want to send a prayer to Baba when HE is in His ashram in Bangalore?
- Can you pick the odd one out from these notable books on Baba:
  - Sai Baba Invitation to Glory
  - Sai Baba Man of Miracles
  - Sai Baba Holy Man and the psychiatrist
  - Sai Baba Avathar
- We know that The Cross is the most revered and celebrated religious symbol of the Christians. How does Baba explain the inner significance of The Cross?
- What is the most satisfying work that any individual can do which can give heart-filling joy and peace according to Baba?

For answers see page 31

# Moments from Shivratri 2004



Arriving for the evening darshan



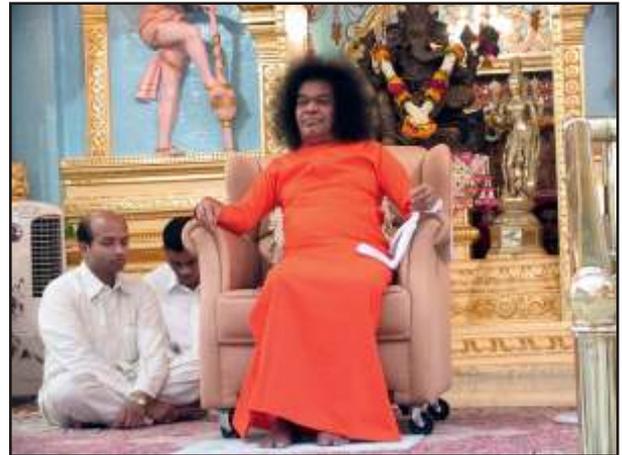
Bringing Shivaratri live to the nation via sanskar tv



The golden linga that emerged from Him



The magnificent shivaratri cake



The morning of Shivaratri

## The significance of Swami's *Prasadam*

One of the most time honored practices in *Bharatiya* culture is the distribution of *prasadam* after worship or a religious ritual. The word *prasadam* implies a benediction and normally refers to cooked delicious food that has been consecrated by first offering to God. Partaking of the remnants of this offering is believed to be free of sin, as all beings including plants have life. Partaking of the *prasadam* in a reverential manner or honoring this *prasadam* as being God Himself, is also believed to confer great spiritual benefits.

While perhaps this practice is part of the hoary traditions of *Bharatiya* culture since millennia, it has its resonance in recent times from the following verse of the *Bhagavad Gita* (3.13):

*Yajna-sistasinah santo  
Mucyante sarva-kilbisaih  
Bhunjate te tv agham papa  
Ye pacanty atma-karanat*

“The devotees of the Lord are released from all kinds of sin because they eat food, which is offered first for sacrifice. Others, who prepare food for personal sense enjoyment, verily eat only sin”.

So while food is partaken only after offering to God as a sacrifice, emphasis is also placed not only on the correct procurement of materials for the preparation of *prasadam* (out of money earned in an honest and truthful way) but also on the cooking process. Hence it is stressed that there should not only be personal cleanliness but also mental and emotional cleanliness during the cooking process. So *prasadam* preparation is usually done after taking a bath, to the chanting of *Vedichymns* or the singing of *bhajans*, when the mind is totally focused on God. After the offering of the food thus cooked in a *sattwic* manner to God, it becomes *prasadam*.

Food in the Ashram is “offered” to Swami by the recitation of the *Brahmarpanam* prayer, comprising of two verses (4.24 and 15.14) of the *Bhagavad Gita*, as under:

*Brahmarpanam Brahma Havir  
Brahmagnou Brahmana hutam  
Brahmaiva Tena Gantavyam  
Brahma Karma Samadhina*

*Aham Vaisvanaro Bhutva  
Praninam Deham asrita  
Pranapana Samayuktah  
Pachamy annam Chaturvidham*

“The whole creation being a gross projection of *Brahman*,

the Cosmic Consciousness itself; so the food too is *Brahman*, the process of offering it is *Brahman*, it is being offered to the fire of *Brahman*. He who thus sees *Brahman* in action, alone reaches *Brahman*.

I am the fire of digestion in the stomach of all living entities, and I join with the air of life, incoming and outgoing, to digest the four types of food (solid, liquid, semifluid, and fluid) which they eat”.

These stanzas from the *Bhagavad Gita* makes us aware that food is not intended merely to appease the endless demands of our senses of taste and smell. It is a reminder that by thinking of God in every act we do, even the act of taking food becomes an excellent *sadhana* or spiritual exercise. If we thus remember the Divine and then start eating food, then the food also gets purified and becomes *prasadam* or a Gift of God.

Following this ancient ritual, *prasadam* is distributed on a grand scale on two major occasions in the Ashram. (A token *prasadam* of a sweet or a fruit is also distributed after Swami's discourse or on major festival days). The first major *prasadam* distribution is after the 24 hour *Akhanda Bhajan* (about 2 weeks before Swami's birthday) in November. The second distribution is after the all night bhajan singing on the occasion of *Maha Sivarathri*, usually in late February or early March. The fast is broken the following morning by the serving of *prasadam* to the thousands of devotees assembled in Sai Kulwant Hall.

Normally 2 dishes are offered as *prasadam*. The first is *Tamarind* rice, a sour dish and the other is usually *Sakara pongal* (Sweetened rice) or some sweet item. As with everything Swami does, there is an inner significance to this also. The mixing of the sweet and the sour in the same bowl, represents that the opposites of life, the pleasure and pain, the hot and the cold, grief and happiness, etc. are all mixed together. We have to partake of both with equanimity, digest and go beyond.

Or as Swami says, “Pleasure is an interval between two pains. Pain is an interval between two pleasures. Life is like a piece of paper; there is no chance of having only one side of it. Both sides will be there”.

Swami has also said, “The face is pleasure and the feet are sorrow. When a guest comes to your home, you can't allow only the face inside and keep the feet outside. If you want to welcome, you must welcome both pleasure and pain equally. If you don't want to welcome, you should reject both”.

The preparation of these two (sweet and sour) items and their timely distribution to the thousands of assembled

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devotees in Sai Kulwant Hall represent a lot of planning and labor. Procurement of items is done a few weeks prior as the amount of items used are colossal. The cooking starts a few hours before the distribution, and many cooks as well as *Seva Dal* volunteers are involved. The cooks doing this preparation have to do this in addition to their normal duties of cooking for the canteens, and they do it cheerfully as yet another way of serving the Lord, by serving His devotees.

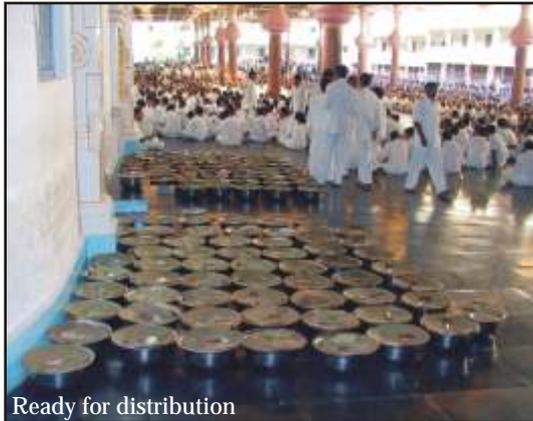
Once the items have been prepared they are stacked for distribution usually in the Women's Canteen close to Sai Kulwant Hall. Swami's students provide the necessary labor for distribution at the completion of the *bhajan* singing. A human line is formed that snakes its way from the entrance of the canteen to the verandah of Sai Kulwant Hall. The serving vessels containing the food is passed from hand to hand and stacked neatly in rows on and beside the verandah. Adequate quantities are also made available on the women's side, for distribution by the lady teachers and the girl students of the Institute.

At the conclusion of the *bhajan* singing the food is blessed by Swami and the distribution starts. The devotees arrange themselves in rows facing each other, leaving a small space for serving in between. They are given bowls or plates made of leaves (hence bio-degradable) in which individual portions are served. Students from the Institute, even young boys from the High School, volunteer to serve their Lord by serving *prasadam* to the devotees. All the devotees then honor Swami's *prasadam* by eating it quietly and with reverence, relishing every tasty morsel while their minds and hearts are still on the Lord, spiritually surcharged by the many hours of *bhajan* singing.

Heart to Heart captures this unique event for you in pictures, and thus brings for you a small slice of Puttaparthi Ashram life.



# The significance of Swami's *Prasadam*



## Answers

Continued from page 27

1. a
2. Bhagawan Baba always has emphasised that peace is within each individual and not in the exterior world. In the phrase 'I want peace', 'I' represents Ego and 'want' represents desire. One who can get rid of ego and desire can undoubtedly attain peace has been Baba's formula for peace.
3. C
4. d
5. Yoga means union with God or pathway to union with god as well.
6. Solutions to the fill in the blanks :
  - a) Happiness is union with God.
  - b) Hands that serve are holier than lips that pray.
  - c) A man with dual mind is half-blind.
  - d) Removal of immorality is the only way to immortality.
7. This too shall pass away.
8. c
9. Baba released the monthly magazine 'Sanathana Sarathi' on the sacred occasion of Sivarathri in the February of 1958. The term 'Sanathana' means

eternal, timeless and 'Sarathi' means charioteer. So, it implies Baba is the eternal charioteer. He is, was and will always be our guide, God, master and beloved like He was to Arjuna (His dear devotee) when He came down as Lord Krishna about 5000 years ago.

10. b
11. A googly. Swami always says that He has no intermediaries, no middlemen. His relationship with the devotee is one to one, heart to heart, love to love. The devotee has the most powerful channel of communication: a sincere heart-felt prayer. There is nothing that can substitute prayer in this world.
12. Except the book 'Sai Baba Holyman and the Psyciatrist' which is authored by Samuel Sandweiss, all other books are written by Howard Murphet.
13. The cross constitutes a vertical bar cut across by a horizontal bar. Baba says that the vertical bar 'I' represents one's ego which has to be sliced and subdued as represented by the horizontal bar cutting the 'I'.
14. It is the act of Helping others, serving and giving and sacrificing for others.

## Sai Seva In El Salvador



About 1985, the Sathya Sai Organization started visiting a group of invalids, (wheelchair people) who lived in a dilapidated house on the outskirts of town. The visits were infrequent in the beginning, and the devotees took mostly food items for distribution. The house was very inadequate for their needs since it had two floors and they had to leave their wheelchairs downstairs and pull themselves up the stairs to the bedrooms. About 1990, the Sai Organization found a one floor dwelling in the center of town where everything was close by. The house was very old, but it was much bigger than the one where they were living. The Sai devotees rented this place for the handicapped and the group increased to 20 at the new location. In 1995, the lady who rented this house decided to sell it, and one of the devotees was able to buy it and donate the same to the Sathya Sai Foundation.

It had become apparent after so many years of association with the handicapped that their biggest problem was to live, and work or study in the same place, as the wheelchairs are not adequate for moving long distances, or in traffic. The Sathya Sai Foundation decided to build a residence and workplace for them by tearing down the old house and making a new one with three floors. On the ground level were several workshops including sewing, computer center, watch repair, electric appliance repair, bakery, shoe repair, and wheel chair repairs and a kitchen and dining area. On the first floor were 11 dormitories and a social area. The third floor is a Sathya Sai Center. The building has an elevator and a large cistern for water storage. By Swami's Grace, this new building was inaugurated November 23, 1997. About 20 handicapped are able to live there without paying any rent. They only pay for their food with the money they can make in the workshops, and from pensions which some of them have.

The Sathya Sai Organization has not made any efforts to convert the handicapped residents into followers of Sai Baba, but some of them have become interested in His teachings and voluntarily attend the Sai Center. One fellow, who had fallen from a tree nine years back had two long pins supporting either side of his spinal column. He could hardly walk with crutches, and used a wheel chair most of the time. The pins had become infected and pus was coming from an opening made by doctors. He had become interested in Swami and was reading some Sai books, including Howard Murphet's "Man of Miracles". A medical ship had docked at El Salvador, and specialists from USA were doing free operations on board. A devotee took this fellow to the boat, and one of the doctors, after analyzing his x-rays decided to take out the pins and treat the infection. When the patient was returned to home after the operation, he was unable to move. He was sleeping on the floor on a mattress for about two weeks. Then one night, Swami appeared in his room, sitting on the floor besides his mattress and asked him in Spanish, "How do you feel?". The fellow could hardly believe that Swami was there in person. He told Swami that he was completely paralyzed and the operation had been for the worse. Swami told him, "You can now walk, get up". Swami disappeared. The fellow got up without crutches and walked to the phone. It was 2:00AM, but he called the devotee who had taken him to the hospital boat and cried over the phone, "I can walk ! Swami has come and healed me!" He was later able to reunite with his wife and assume a normal life. His character also changed for the better.

This labor of love has continued to this day by the Sai Organization. The youth group recently shared a Christmas dinner prepared by them for the handicapped members of this home.

## Sai Seva In El Salvador



One of the boys is showing his manual arts and handicrafts which he makes by winding colored string around ball point pens. he then sells these to different political parties to use as propaganda.



One of the handicapped in the sewing workshop.



A doctor from the Sai Organisation is giving consultations to some of the boys in the home. He comes twice a month to give free service and medicines. The lady is the mother of one of the inmates, and she is also the cook for all.

# Down Memory Lane

**D**evotees from various countries constantly plead that Swami's Lotus feet must sanctify their land. In reply, he just smiles and says " Sugar candy does not go in search of ants; rather it is the ants that come in search of sugar candy!" yet, Bhagavan did make one exception; that was way back in 1968, when He went to East africa. Here are some glimpses of that rare event!





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*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