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BETWEEN YOU AND US

Dear Reader,

‘Love My uncertainty’, Swami says. In the last editorial of Heart2Heart, we speculated on when Swami would go to Brindavan and how the people at Parthi would have to learn to enjoy His Omnipresence. But Swami has once again proved that He is just beyond any guess work! Not only did He stay in Parthi till the 19th of April, but flew directly to Kodaikanal from here in a chartered plane! This course of events was so unusual and unpredictable!

Now, why would Swami ask us to love His uncertainty? Why is such unpredictable-ness woven into His actions? Is there some message for us to imbibe? Is it part of the training? We at H2H have reflected on it and come to some understanding. It will be nice if you too send us your valuable thoughts on this aspect. We will then collate all the thoughts and carry a feature. You can send your contributions to h2h@radiosai.org

The cover story in this issue is very interesting: ‘*The teachings of Aristotle and Sai Baba*’. The article has been written by our friend from Greece, George Bebedelis who had earlier written an article for us on Plato and Swami. The article is a testimony that all great men from all lands and ages have been teaching the same fundamental Truths, though in different terminologies. Only, now God himself has come down to remind us of the timeless truths once again.

There are several other inspiring stories and experiences contributed by our readers that will make a good reading in this issue. We thank each one of you who have contributed to make this magazine so wonderful.

We have a request: If you find any article or story that has inspired you, make it a point to share it with at least ten other people. We have such a powerful medium called the Web. Why not use it for starting an uncontrollable chain reaction of inspiration and love?

Happy reading!

In Sai Service
SGH team

GOD IS PRESENT

God is present, Now and at every Now
Though no eye has seen, He is everywhere.

To save the worlds from blinding night
He waves two lamps in space-the sun and moon
He stays the million twinkling hordes of stars
Firm on firmament, lest they clash and crash
He holds aloft the big blue dome so far above
With neither prop nor pillar from below.
He rotates our globe, so fast, in silent smooth
With never a jolt or jar, with even pace
He lovingly fans soft soothing breeze
With never a demand for wages and perks.
He has chained the feet of reckless raging seas
Lest they rush on land in ruinous haste.

God is present, now and at every Now
Though no eye has seen Him, what does He do?
From behind the curtain, He directs the Dance
That happens on stage, to the tune He wills.

—Baba

(Translation of a poem that Swami sings frequently during His discourses)

CONVERSATIONS WITH SAI - PART 8

(continued from previous issue)

Hislop: Swami says that "All is done by the Lord and not by you". But, the world over, there is the concept that man is responsible for his own actions.

SAI: You are God. As long as you are being human, there may be such thoughts.

H: As long as you are being human, does that imply the human state is an act of one's will?

SAI: Not an act of will. Just a matter of being confused. It is a delusion. You come here with doubts. Swami knows that, so he gives you a chance to ask. If a *Jnani* comes, a man with direct experience of the divine, Swami does not ask him what his doubts are. The fact that you have questions is evidence that you are on the worldly level. Baba's teaching will vary according to the level of the person.

A teacher in a school may at the same time be a renowned *Vedic* scholar, but when teaching a child to read, he can only say, "This letter is 'A' this letter is T" and so on. Mother may feed one child at the breast, give soft food to another, tell the cook to serve food to another, and tell the eldest to serve himself. But though her treatment of each child may be different, her love is equal for all.

There are four different stages in which man finds himself, and God gives different but appropriate help to each: first are those persons who are in distress; second are those desiring prosperity; third are those engaged in enquiry as to what is truth; and fourth are the wise.

At present in you, there is a mixture of conscious and sub-conscious. For this reason there is confusion and doubt. In the unconscious state there are no impressions. In the super-conscious state there is no doubt, there is decision; in this state there is no body and no mind, although there may be visions. There is still another state beyond the super-conscious. This is Divine consciousness where God alone is. In the super-conscious state there is still a very slight tinge of duality, of giver and receiver. In the ordinary state there are the three: giver, gift and receiver. In divine consciousness there is the giver only.

Really, all other than the One is false. Even *Sadhana*. Here a doubt may arise: how can *Sadhana*, something false, result in something other than false? It is like this: dreaming is unreal, but the dream may become so strong, so terrifying, that because of the dream one awakens. It is likewise with *Sadhana*. For *Sadhana* to become so strong that from it one awakens to reality, the *Sadhana* must touch the super-conscious level where both body and mind are transcended. It is from the deep transcendent state that Truth blazes forth.

H: One hears about various paths to Self-realization. What does this mean?

SAI: There are three paths. There is that of devotion; the *Guru* guides and all is left to the *Guru* to perform. Then, there is the perception that God is Omnipresent; the future comes up to the present and the past falls away from the present. God is omnipresent; so the present is God; this is knowledge. Then there is surrender to God. But surrender does not mean just doing all actions in His Name. Surrender to God is when the entire Universe is known as His body. Surrender is when doer, deed and object are all God. It cannot be forced. It comes naturally. Faith is the foundation; surrender is the peak.

H: Of the many 'roads' to self-realization, what is the short cut?

SAI: The short cut is this way: the Name of God is the seed; love is the water by which the crop grows; discipline is the fence which protects the growing crop; the field in which the crop is grown is the spiritual heart; the crop when it comes to harvest, is Bliss.

H: Why should one attempt to gain Self-realization when one is always Self-realized?

SAI: As of now, there is a mixture in the mind of sensory identification. The mind is not fully one-pointed.

H: Swami, time is needed for the plane to arrive in India, but why is time needed for Self-realization? Is not an immediate awakening possible, entirely apart from time?

SAI: Immediate awakening apart from time? Yes, it is possible. If faith is full and perfect, then Grace comes fully at that very moment, just as the sound and the bullet occur at the same moment.

H: But, Swami, one believes that he does have full faith. Therefore, there must be self-deception?

SAI: As long as one thinks he has faith, he does not. Just as when one knows that he is meditating, he is not meditating. Only when meditation is automatic, all day long, there is meditation. Full faith is reached by *Sadhana*, just as Bombay is reached by approaching it.

H: *Sadhana*, as it is described, seems wrong, because it is a conscious effort aimed at getting a reward. It seems to me that *Sadhana* is real only when it is spontaneous. That is, when one naturally loves God, then he cannot help but love God, and he cannot help but make inquiry.

SAI: It is as you say, but you have not experienced that spontaneous love of God. It is still just an idea. You have a conviction that love of God exists naturally in you. That conviction is the result of many lives of spiritual practice.

A Visitor: What is the correct *Sadhana* for retired people?

SAI: Meditation morning and evening. Spend days in good work.

A Visitor: What is the *Sadhana* appropriate to ladies?

SAI: Ladies have the duty of house, children and husband. They are very busy. Meditation morning and evening can be done. During the day, all work that previously was done for others should now be done as worship of God. That is the best *Sadhana* for ladies.

(To be continued)

DUTY IS GOD

THOSE were the days when the supply of electric power for lighting streets was available only to a few big cities in India. In one of the big towns every street had three or four oil lamps each with a glass chimney set on a pole. The municipal authorities employed some labourers to light the lamps at about 6:00 p.m. in the evening. The expenses incurred towards oil, wick and chimney were met by the municipalities.

There was one lamplighter who did his job cheerfully and scrupulously. He had great faith in God and always recited the name of his dear God, *Rama*. He was very punctual and systematic in his work. He used to come to his ward exactly at 5:00 p.m., clean the chimneys, pour oil into the container, set the wick right and light the lamp. While doing

all these he would be singing, “*Janaki Jeevana Ram, Karoonga Tumhara Kam,*” meaning thereby, “Oh Lord of *Janaki*, I am doing only your work. I am only serving you.”

Reports reached the municipal authorities that the lamps lit by this devotee shone brighter all through the night while the lamps lit by others in the town were dim and many of them burnt only for a part of the night. The matter was taken for investigation. The reporting officer submitted to the authorities the fact that all the lamplighters in the town were given the same oil and other material and were also paid the same remuneration. As for the street where the lamps shone brightly all through the night unlike those in other streets, it was a unique case where the lamplighter was known to be a very pious man doing his duty as service to God.

Any work done sincerely as service to God is bound to reflect His love and glory.

-Baba

THE TEACHINGS OF ARISTOTLE AND SAI BABA
ON VIRTUE AND ETHICS
-George Bebedelis

Aristotle was born in 384 BC in Macedonia, Northern Greece. His father, Nicomachus, was court physician to Amyntas III, the king of Macedonia and grandfather of Alexander the Great. While Aristotle was 17 years old, his father died and he was sent to the [Academy](#) of [Plato](#) at Athens in 367 BC. He studied there for 20 years under his revered teacher absorbing the essence of his teachings, which we can see reflected in his works. Aristotle made use of the basic ideas and terminology of Plato, Socrates and the other philosophers before him. Aristotle left Athens after Plato's death and travelled for 12 years.

Firstly he went to the town of Assus, to a newly created academy based on Plato's teachings. After three years, Aristotle moved to the nearby island of Lesbos where he established a philosophical academy. His centre of interest shifted to [biology](#), in which he undertook pioneering investigations.

At the age of 42, Aristotle was invited by Philip II, the king of Macedonia, to tutor his 13-year-old son, Alexander, later known as Alexander the Great. Alexander later said:

"To my father I owe my living, but to my teacher I owe my life"

This reminds us of what Swami often says: "*Education is for life, not for a living*".

Alexander was taught by Aristotle that the day a king did not serve even one of the citizens of his country was a day lost. When a day passed without an act of service, Alexander used to say: "Today I did not reign, for I did not do anything good".

When nearing 50 years of age, Aristotle returned once again to Athens. There, he established a spiritual institution which was named "[Lyceum](#)" after a nearby temple dedicated to the Greek god Apollo. During the next 12 years he organized it as a centre for speculation and research in every field of scientific and philosophical inquiry and gave lectures on a wide range of relative topics. He died from a stomach illness at the age of 63.

The present article is based on Aristotle's treatise "Nicomachean Ethics". We will learn how Aristotle's philosophical thoughts are in concord with the teachings of Swami who has come to revive the ancient wisdom and to declare that:

"Truth is One, but the sages have spoken about It in many different ways"

"Ekam Sat Viprah bahudha vadanti".

HAPPINESS IS THE AIM AND CAUSE OF ALL HUMAN ACTIVITIES

Right from the beginning, Aristotle sets the subject of this work, saying that: "*Every act and every inquiry aims to some good*"(1094a, 1-2). But what is the highest good for man? The answer is very simple and clear: "*The highest good is happiness*" (1095a, 21)

The next question is "What is happiness?". With regard to this crucial question, people differ. Common men identify happiness with pleasure and that is why they love a life of enjoyment (1095b, 17-19). Others identify happiness with money, health, power, etc. However, all these are not true happiness, because **true happiness is its own ultimate end**.

Happiness is never chosen for anything other than itself. The final good is happiness, because it is always **desirable in itself** and never for the sake of something else. This self sufficiency is the main characteristic of true happiness.

"Happiness is something final and self-sufficient; it is the ultimate end of all actions"
(1097 b, 24-25)

To make the above clear we shall use the example of the five sheaths, which is found in Taaittiriya Upanishad and very often mentioned in Swami's discourses. According to this, man's true Self, *Atma*, is covered by five sheaths (*kosas*), which are: the sheath of food (*Annamaya kosa*); of life energy (*Pranamaya kosa*); of mind (*Manomaya kosa*); of intellect (*Vignanamaya kosa*); and of bliss (*Anandamaya kosa*). The sheath of bliss is the state of consciousness reached before merging with the Oneness of Divinity, i.e. *Atma* or *Brahman*; it is the final sheath and the very first cause of everything. Everything is done for Happiness' sake. That is why the *Anandamaya kosa* is also called the causal body.

Aristotle says:

"Happiness is among the things that are valuable and perfect. It is the first principle, because it is for the sake of happiness that we do everything else; and the first principle and cause of all goods - it is something priceless and divine" (1102a, 1-5)

HOW DO WE REACH HAPPINESS?

Happiness is the highest good. But how can we reach it? What is the proper activity that leads man to happiness? A flute-player, a sculptor, a carpenter- all have a special function and activity. Eyes see, hands grasp, feet walk, for everything there is a characteristic function. What is then the characteristic function of man? What is his *Dharma*?

"The characteristic of man is action guided by Logos" (1098a, 14-15)

The word **Logos** is of fundamental importance in ancient Greek Philosophy. Logos is the faculty of discrimination, what we very well know as *Buddhi* or Intellect, which discriminates between right and wrong, truth and illusion, permanent and transient. It is our Conscience, the Voice of God within. Logos is the epicenter of spiritual life, the Divine, the knower of all beings ever present in the hearts of all.

That is why this sacred word was used by John the Evangelist and all the Christian Fathers to name Jesus. In the very first line of his Gospel, he says:

"In the beginning was the Logos and the Logos was with God, and the Logos was God...And the Logos became flesh and dwelt among us." (Gospel according to John, A1-14)

Logos = Fundamental Discrimination = Buddhi= Vignana = Intellect = Conscience = Voice of God within

If a man acts guided by Logos, his actions are virtuous. That is why Aristotle says:

"Human goodness consists in action with Virtue" (1098a, 18-19)

Here again we come across a second very important word: Virtue or *Arete* in Greek. The whole book is actually a treatise on *Arete*, Virtue.

In Sanskrit we have the same word: **Ritam**. Swami very often speaks about this word as a fundamental one in spiritual life. For example in His Discourse on Educare on 20.11.01, He said:

"Education, which originates from within has a sound basis and is permanent. It is referred to as Sathyam. A step higher than Sathyam is Ritam as proclaimed in the Vedas. Ritam transcends both good and evil. This is the one you really are, the Atma. How long can we lead a truthful and ideal life in the world without trying to discover Ritam?"

This word is very ancient and is found in the *Vedas* again and again, as for example in the prayer:

"May Mitra, Varuna, Aryaman, Indra, Brihaspati and the all pervading Vishnu be propitious to us and grant us welfare and bliss.

I bow down to Brahman and Vayu in loving reverence.

You are verily Brahman perceptible.

*I shall declare: **Thou art Ritam; Thou art Satyam.***

May That Universal Being protect me. May That protect my Teacher.

Let there be Peace, Peace and Peace."

In this prayer the word *Ritam* is used for *Brahman* along with the word *Satyam*.

Aristotle emphasizes again and again that the characteristic human quality, the human good - what we would call man's *Dharma*, is to act with Virtue-*Arete-Ritam* guided by Logos (Intellect). This is a natural inherent state of man and not something that is brought from outside. This is exactly the meaning of the Latin word *Educere*, which is the root of the word Education. Swami has emphasized this Latin root to point out that the real aim of Education is a life that manifests Virtue and Character. Aristotle says:

"For most men their pleasures are in conflict with another, because these are not according to man's real nature, but the lovers of goodness and Beauty taste the things that are by nature pleasant; and such are the virtuous actions... Their life, therefore, has no further need of any other pleasure, but it is in itself pleasant, sweet and blissful"(1099a, 15-19).

"It is natural then, that we call neither ox nor horse nor any other animal happy, for none of them is capable of such virtuous action (guided by Logos). For the same reason also, a child is not happy, for it is not capable of such action, because of its age." (1100a, 1-3)

As we said before the aim of Education is to uplift the soul to the sphere of virtues and values and manifest the inner beauty. According to Aristotle this is the end of political science as well. That is why

"The man who is a true politician (i.e. who really cares about the "politia"= society, the "socio-care" man) must spend great pains in his study of human virtue above all things; for he wishes to make his fellow citizens of good and noble character, obedient to the laws and capable of virtuous acts. He must know the science of the soul, as the man who is to heal the eyes must know the science of the body; and all the more since political (social) science is more valuable and higher than medicine" (1099b, 34-37), (1102a, 9-12), (1102a,21-25).

There is a very important parameter for true happiness: it must be permanent and not transient. *"One swallow does not make a summer, nor does one day; and so one day does not make a man blessed and happy." (1089, 21-23)*

The only kind of happiness, which is permanent and lasting, is the happiness based on virtuous acts. *"For no function of man has so much permanence as virtuous activities, which are more durable even than knowledge of the sciences."* (1100b, 14-16)

The happiness that comes out of virtue does not depend in outer circumstances.

"The noble and wise man bears all chances of life becomingly and always makes the best use of circumstances, as a good general makes the best use of the army at his command, and a good shoemaker makes the best shoes out of the hides that are given to him. So, the really happy man (whose happiness is based on virtue) can never become miserable." (1101a, 1-8)

"Even in great misfortunes his nobility shines through and he bears all chances of life with serenity, magnanimity and greatness of soul" (1100b, 35-37)

"So, we should consider happy the man who acts with perfect virtue throughout his whole life" (1101a, 15-16).

Bringing together what we have already said, we see that:

The characteristic of man (his *dharma*) is action guided by Logos (Intellect, *Buddhi*), which is Virtue, and that leads to Happiness-*Ananda*.

THE DIVISION OF THE SOUL - KINDS OF VIRTUE

Having stated clearly that the way to reach the highest good, i.e. Happiness, is virtue, Aristotle continues investigating in depth what virtue is and its two kinds.

"By human virtue we mean not that of the body, but that of the soul; and happiness also is an activity of the soul" (1102, 19-21).

So, let us analyze the soul, i.e. the inner structure of man. Basically there are two parts: one without Logos, the **irrational part**, and one with Logos, the **rational part**. Again, each of these two parts is divided into two.

Of the **irrational part** one division is common to all living beings, men, animals and plants. This causes nutrition and growth and is the *pranamaya kosa*.

There is also another division in the irrational part, which however has a connection with Logos. This contains impulses and desires and many times fights against and resists the Logos, and it moves in contrary directions. However, in the man with self-control, it obeys the Logos. This second element of the irrational part is the desirous element, which we may call lower mind.

In the same way we may distinguish two divisions in the **rational part**: the one which is the Logos itself (Pure Intellect), and can be called *Buddhi*, Conscience, the Logos and

also **Constant Integrated Awareness**. The other which is obedient to Logos, which we may call higher mind or practical intellect.

The combination of the higher element of the irrational part (lower mind) and the lower element of the rational part (higher mind) is actually the *manomaya kosa*; mind and senses, which consists of thoughts, desires, impulses, emotions etc.

According to this analysis, virtue, which is a function of the part with Logos, may be distinguished into two kinds. The one which is related with Logos or Intellect itself is called “**intellectual virtue**” and the one which is related with the part which is obedient to Logos, i.e. practical intellect, is called “**practical virtue**”.

Action is a word that Aristotle uses very often in his book. Right from the beginning he emphasizes that the aim of the whole treatise is action and not mere knowledge (1095a, 7-8). Swami also is a very demanding teacher and always reminds us that we have to act. He calls that **practical knowledge**, i.e. to put into practice the values, to act with virtues.

“Education is not mere knowledge but it must take you into action”.

(Divine Discourse, 20.11.2001)

ETHICAL OR PRACTICAL VIRTUE

Once in an interview a Greek lady asked Swami: “Swami, we know all about spiritual teaching and principles of spiritual life, but we often fail in our daily duties. What should we do?” Swami answered: “It is all based on practice! Practice makes habit; habit makes nature”.

Aristotle says exactly the same about ethical or moral virtue: “*We are made by nature to receive the virtues, but we become perfect by habit (= ethos)*”(1103 a, 26 – 28).

That means that in our hearts there is a seed, which we have to cultivate and make blossom into a fragrant flower. That is why Swami has named the Human Values programmes as *Bal Vikas*, which literally means “blossoming of the children”.

According to Aristotle: “*Nature first grants the potentiality and it is up to us to exhibit later the activity. Like in the case of the senses of seeing or hearing; for it was not by often seeing or often hearing that we got these senses, but on the contrary we had them before we used them, and did not come to have them by using them. So, we get the virtues by first exercising them, as happens in the case of the arts as well, ... e.g. men become builders by building and guitar players by playing the guitar. In the same way, we become righteous by doing right acts, temperate (self-controlled) by doing temperate acts (self-controlling) and brave by doing brave acts.*” (1103a 28-1103b)

“We should therefore act righteously, because the state of character is shaped out of the kind of activities. So, it makes not a small difference, whether we form habits of one kind

or of another from our very youth. On the contrary it makes a great difference, or rather all the difference". (1103b, 27 – 30)

Swami says: **"Skill the knowledge, not kill the knowledge"**

How do we know if a virtue has really been acquired and is not superficial? By the pleasure or pain that one feels when one acts.

"The man who abstains from bodily pleasures and is happy with this is really a self-controlled, temperate man; while the man who is sad about it, is in reality a lover of pleasures, self-indulgent. Similarly, he who bears the difficulties patiently and in a good spirit is really brave, while the man who is pained is cowardly." (1104b, 6-10)

Knowledge is the basis. That is why Socrates said that "nobody is voluntarily bad". It is only because people do not know, that they do wrong.

Knowledge → Right Choice → resolute action (determination)

Of course along with knowledge, action is of paramount importance:

"It is by doing just acts that the just man is made and by doing temperate acts that the temperate, self controlled man is made; without practising no one ever would have any chance to become good. However most people do not practise, but are lost in argumentation and imagine that they are being philosophers and that they will become virtuous in this way. They behave like patients who listen attentively to their doctors, but do none of the things they are advised to do". (1105b, 10-20)

MORAL VIRTUE IS A STATE OF BALANCE

Aristotle defines practical or ethical virtue as a state of balance, an intermediate state between excess and deficiency, between too much and too little. He introduces the principle of right balance, which is of paramount importance in ancient Greece.

"Virtue is an intermediate state relative to us, determined by Logos and by the wise man. It is a mean between two vices, one being the excess and the other being the deficiency". (1106b, 40 – 1107a, 3)

Both of these extremities destroy virtues.

"Excessive or defective exercise destroys the strength of the body, too much or too little drink or food destroys health, while that which is proportionate produces and increases and preserves it." (1104a, 15-20)

"Excess and deficiency are characteristics of vice, while the mean (intermediate state) is characteristic of virtue". (1106b, 36-38)

But how is to define this intermediate state?

"The intermediate state is not an objective and absolute principle but relative to each situation and is determined by Logos or by a wise man." (1107a, 1-3)

We may compare the excess with *rajas*, the deficiency with *tamas* and the intermediate, balanced state with *sattva*. The *sattvic* man, is the virtuous man.

"It is not an easy task to be virtuous, for it is not easy to find the middle. Anyone can get angry or give or spend money; but to do this to the right person, to the right extent, at the right time, with the right motive and in the right way, that is not for everyone, nor is it easy. Therefore goodness is rare and praiseworthy and noble"
(1109a, 26-33)

ETHICAL VIRTUE IS BOUND UP WITH RIGHT CHOICE

Moral virtue implies actions performed with right choice. The right choice is what we call discrimination or *Buddhi*, similar to Logos. Aristotle elaborates on choice by saying:

"Choice (Discrimination) is not found to irrational being (without Logos), but desire and anger are. The uncontrolled man acts forced by desire, but not with choice. On the contrary, the continent man acts with choice, and not forced by desire. Desire is contrary to choice. Desire is connected with what is pleasant or unpleasant, joy and sorrow but choice is beyond pleasure or pain." (1111b, 13-20)

Right choice is beyond the pair of opposites. Swami always speaks about equal mindedness (*samatva*), i.e. to remain unaffected by good or bad, pleasant or unpleasant,

"Fame and blame all the same".

"Endowed with right choice the virtuous man judges correctly and sees the truth in each situation, so he becomes the model and the ideal. However, most of the people are deluded because of pleasure, which appears to them as good and avoid unpleasant things as bad." (1113a, 33 – 1113b, 2)

Swami speaks about two paths; *sreyo marga*, the path of virtue and goodness, which might be sometimes hard and unpleasant and *preyo marga* the path of pleasure, which might be sweet and charming in the beginning, but unfortunately it leads finally to pain and sorrow.

And Aristotle concludes: *"Man is by nature endowed with a spiritual sight, which makes him judge correctly and choose what is truly good... This greatest and noblest quality is not something that we can get or learn from another, but we have it as a natural quality."*
(1114b, 7-13)

FRIENDSHIP – LOVE

Friendship is the highest virtue and *"it is most necessary in life. For without friends no one would choose to live, though he had all other goods."* (1155a, 1-4).

"In poverty and in other misfortunes friends are the only refuge. It helps the young to keep from error; it aids older people by caring to their needs; it stimulates those in the prime of life to noble actions." (1155a, 10-15)

Friendship is a natural quality not only among men but among birds and animals. Friendship is of paramount importance for society, because it is a bond much more powerful than justice.

"Friendship (or Love) holds society together and lawgivers care more for it than for justice. WHEN MEN ARE FRIENDS THEY HAVE NO NEED OF JUSTICE, while when they are just they need friendship (or Love) as well; the truest form of justice is Friendship - Love." (1155a, 25-32)

That is why Swami says:

Duty without Love is deplorable

Duty with Love is desirable

Love without duty is Divine

True friendship is one which is based on virtue and good character and not one which is based on profit or pleasure. Among all kinds of friendship or love, the love of parents to children is the strongest and the children should serve their parents even more than their own selves.

"One should give honour to one's parents as one does to the gods" (1165a, 27)

"We should also give respect to older persons appropriate to their age, by rising to receive them and offering seats for them." (1165a, 31-32)

Aristotle analyzes the internal nature of friendship by saying that our friendship and love to other people depends on our friendship and love to our own selves. The love for our own selves is very important and comes before the love for others.

However, what does love of one's own self mean? Who is this self? Aristotle clarifies this point in many passages.

"Each man's self – man himself is the intellectual element in him" (1166a, 18-19)

"Each one seems to be the element that contemplates" (1166a, 25-26)

"The self of the virtuous man is especially the element which thinks wisely" (1166a, 20)

"Reason (Nous) more than anything else is man" (1178a, 8-9)

(Logos) *"This is man himself"* (1168b, 43-1169a, 3),

and *"This is what a virtuous man loves most"* (1169a, 4).

As we have seen so far this intellectual element that contemplates or thinks wisely is not other than Logos, *Buddhi*, Conscience, Nous, the Intellect which meditates on the things that don't change, on the Being itself. It is the Divine in man. So, according to Aristotle, man's real self is the divine self, *Atma*, Soul. Love of one's own self means love of the divine Self. Then man can truly love other people as well. Then he has true friendship.

HAPPINESS – ANANDA

Aristotle lastly considers **happiness**. This is the greatest good, because all things move towards this and it is desired by all. Happiness has a very special characteristic: we aspire for it not for the sake of something else, but it is desirable in itself.

That is why *"Happiness does not lack anything, it is something final and self efficient, and is the end of all action"* (1097b, 24-25 1176b, 4-6). This is already stated in the first book and now Aristotle comes back to give a final answer to the initial question.

"Since activities differ in respect of goodness and badness, and the first are worthy to be chosen and the latter to be avoided, so, too, are the pleasures; for to each activity there is a relevant pleasure. The pleasure of a virtuous activity is noble while that of an immoral activity is bad." (1175b, 29-34)

Pleasure is so much superior and purer the higher it rises above the material level. Spiritual pleasure is much higher than the one derived from the senses.

"Our measure is virtue and the noble man. So, what is good for the noble man is truly good. Therefore, real pleasures are those which the noble man enjoys." (1176a, 18-23)

"We should consider that the disgraceful pleasures should not be named pleasures at all, except to a vicious man." (1176a, 27-28)

"Only the pleasures of a perfect and noble man can be considered as man's real pleasures." (1176a, 31-34)

"For the noble man virtue is indeed desirable. Happiness, therefore, lies in virtuous activity and not in amusement. To work hard for the sake of amusement is silly and utterly childish." (1176b, 30-37)

"Happy life is the virtuous life; a virtuous life requires exertion and does not consist in amusement. The serious activity of the best element of our being is superior to amusement and gives real happiness. And any person can enjoy the bodily pleasures, even an animal. However, happiness does not lie in such kind of pleasures, but in virtuous activities, as already has been said." (1177a, 2-13)

That is why Swami says:

**Bend the body
Mend the senses
End the mind**

However, is there a higher happiness than the one connected with noble and virtuous activities, i.e. the one which is connected with the practical knowledge or ethical virtue. As we have already said there is a part, which is Logos itself or Nous, pure Intellect, which contemplates Truth itself and is connected with the intellectual or pure spiritual virtues like Wisdom and Divine knowledge (*Theoria*). This part is the highest part in us.

“The highest part in us is Nous, which is by nature the Master and Guide, and contemplates things noble and divine. This part is divine and the contemplative activity of this will bring perfect Happiness.” (1177a, 16-21)

Wisdom is the sweetest activity for man. Most of all, philosophy offers pleasures marvellous for their purity and permanence (1177a, 28-32). The philosopher is self-sufficient and needs nothing else, because he contemplates the Truth. Even when by himself, he is united with Truth and derives perfect Happiness; the wiser he is, the more happiness he derives.

“The (contemplative) activity of Nous (i.e. meditation, samadhi) is superior (to the practical activity or ethical virtues). It aims at no end beyond itself, the happiness that comes out of it is final and perfect, it is self-sufficient, brings peace and comfort and rest and all the other attributes ascribed to the supremely happy man. This is indeed the perfect happiness.” (1177b, 22-29)

The (contemplative) activity of Nous is called *Theoria* (i.e. contemplation of Truth, meditation, *Samadhi*), which is the highest stage of spiritual life. In it man is blessed with the *Darshan* of the Lord.

*“Such a (spiritual) life is the highest for man. He does not live anymore as a common man, but as an owner of a divine spark... His life is divine and not a common human life. So, we must not follow those who advise us, being men, to think of human matters, and, being mortal, to think of mortal matters, but we must, so far as we can, make ourselves immortal and strain every nerve to live in accordance with the most valuable part of our being. For the divine element in us, even if it be small in bulk, it surpasses everything much more in power and excellence. Moreover, this divine element **is** man, since it is the more powerful and wonderful part of him. It would be strange then, if he were to choose not the life of himself but that of somebody else. And, as we said before, that which is one’s real nature is the best and most pleasant. For man, therefore, the life according to Nous is the best and most pleasant, since **man is essentially Nous**. This life is also the happiest.” (1177b, 31-1178a, 9)*

“He who acts according to Nous and serves him is in the best state of mind and most dear to gods. For gods delight in that which is the noblest and most akin to them (i.e. Nous) and they reward those who love and honour this most, because they care for the things that are dear to them and act rightly and nobly. All these attributes belong most of all to the wise. He, therefore, is the dearest to gods and also the happiest. So, the wise is the happiest.” (1179a, 28-39)

CONCLUSION

What is the highest good, which makes a man happy? This is the initial question, which Aristotle elaborates in his treatise “Nicomachean Ethics”. The answer is not different than what his divine teachers, Plato and Socrates have taught:

Perfect happiness is attained through a life of wisdom and inner contemplation of Truth, along with virtuous activity in society.

'Know thyself', was the heritage of Aristotle's *Gurus*. This is the core of all his thoughts. Man has to cultivate the divine element in him and manifest his latent Divinity (*Educere*), becoming one with God.

God is Bliss, *Ananda Swarupa*. When man unites with God he does not only experience Bliss, but he becomes Bliss itself. He becomes what he has always been. Swami has very concisely and clearly declared that **“Happiness is union with God”**.

Let us conclude with a small passage of Swami, which actually contains all the essence of Aristotle's teachings:

"The result of Right action (Karma) is purity of heart, leading to acquisition of higher Knowledge (Jnana). The coming together of karma and Jnana leads to supreme bliss. This is the ultimate goal of every human being."

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MUSINGS FROM PRASANTHI NILAYAM **(From the talk given by Prof G Venkataraman** **on Radio Sai on)**

Loving Sai Ram and greetings from Prashanti Nilayam !

The eightieth Birthday of Swami is fast approaching, and we in the Studio are very busy with all sorts of projects aiming to bring Swami's Love and Message to devotees everywhere. This has given me a lot of opportunity to reflect deeply on many aspects of Bhagavan's Mission, and today I would like to share with you some of those perspectives.

During the last four decades, Swami has launched many projects dealing with healthcare, drinking water supply, and of course education. In this talk, I shall confine myself to education, reserving the other missions to later talks perhaps.

Where higher education is concerned, Swami first founded the College for Women in Anantapur. Following that came the College for men in Brindavan, and after that the College in Puttaparthi. Finally, in 1981, the three Colleges were neatly blended into a University, the Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning.

Old timers would take great delight in telling stories about how, many years prior to this, Swami talked of a University in Puttaparthi, how even devotees supposedly close to Swami and who missed no opportunity to hail Him as the Omnipresent and Omnipotent Lord, shook their heads in disbelief, and so on. Others would prefer to wax eloquent on the free education that is a distinctive feature of Swami's University. In short, there are many points of view concerning Swami's Schools and Colleges.

All these points of view are no doubt valid but I would like to go somewhat deeper. To understand better Swami's Mission in the area of education, I believe we must go back thousands of years to the time when India was steeped in the Vedic tradition. The pursuit of knowledge was then a serious matter, and the Guru who in his ashram collected disciples and groomed them, considered the sustenance and the propagation of the Vedas as his prime duty and a sacred mission. The disciples and the Guru lived together, and instruction was continuous, not being restricted to the formal sessions alone. Living with the Guru was true education in those days.

In every respect, the Guru was God's proxy in human form. The Guru did not expect any payment, and accepted with humility what was offered to him by students and patrons. Knowledge was not only freely shared but it was the duty of those who possessed spiritual knowledge to pass it on to as many people as possible.

What I have here tried to do here is to give a brief portrait of a school of the Vedic age. This school was called Gurukulam. However, to understand its full significance, one must place the Guru and his Gurukulam against the backdrop of Vedic Society. I shall attempt that shortly.

Boys were accepted as disciples in the Gurukulam at the tender age of five, after they had gone through the ceremony of *Upanayanam*. They then spent many years with the Guru, and typically they would leave when they attained the age eighteen or so. Once out of the Gurukulam and in the world, the graduate, shall I say, would get married and settle down to lead the life of an ideal householder, as enjoined in the scriptures.

At this point, I must bring in the structure of Vedic Society. This was organised into strata, often referred to as the *Varna* System. In the Gita, Krishna declares that it is He who created the *Varna* System. In later years, the *Varna* System came to be known as the Caste System, and thanks to the many evils that contaminated the Caste System, it earned a very bad name. In fact, many social and political activists of today have a dim view of Lord Krishna because, according to these critics, it was Krishna who started all the trouble.

It is useful to spend a few minutes checking out all this. First of all, what exactly is the *Varna* System, and what precisely did Krishna mean when He said that He is the one who created the *Varna* System? My view is this. The *Varna* System merely says that people are born with different aptitudes. This is another way of saying that there is diversity in human nature. Thus, according to me, Krishna was merely saying that all diversity in Cosmos, including in human beings, originated from Him. What's wrong with that?

I mean let us take a country like, say, Germany. They have no caste system there, right? And yet in this very same Germany, some people have a passion for sports, some are dedicated to music, some just love business, some are deep into science and so on, right? How come? All this happens because different people have different aptitudes and tendencies; and this is simply a reflection of the diversity of human nature.

Seen in this manner, the *Varna* System is a mere formal codification of the stratification of human nature that already exists. Today, in practically every country there are intellectuals, captains of industry, artists, scientists, men of the armed forces, and so on. People do different things based on their natural instincts and inclinations. This reflects nothing but the stratification of that particular country. Nobody says it is wrong, unethical, or immoral to have such stratification. This kind of natural stratification existed even in the Communist countries, and the Communists took it in their stride.

So let us be clear about this. Different people have different aptitudes and that is quite natural. Such stratification always existed and always will. Nobody can condemn or criticise this. I know some of you who are listening might jump and say: "But hey, wait a minute. You are distorting everything! You have got it all wrong!" I know exactly what your objections are going to be; please be patient and I myself shall bring them up.

OK, what is going to be the first objection? It would be that the *Varna* System institutionalised stratification, that the son of a *Brahmin* was a *Brahmin* while the son of a *Sudra* was a *Sudra*. Agreed. But you know what? If you go back say a thousand years, in all societies, activities that people pursued were largely hereditary. A hunter's son would be a hunter, a farmer's son would be a farmer and so on. By the way, have you noticed how many English names are associated with trades like, Goldsmith, Baker, Ironmonger, Carpenter, and so on? So you see, if in Vedic times a *Brahmin's* son was a *Brahmin*, a *Vaisya's* son was a *Vaisya* and so on, it was in keeping with what was common in those times in all societies; nothing wrong in that.

You might at this point argue: "We are not complaining about the hereditary business but the stigma attached to the lower castes in the *Varna* System and the indignity and humiliation the lower castes had to suffer." I must admit that you have a point there. You know something? When I was young, my friends and I were all hopping mad about the injustices of the Caste System as it was then being practiced. If you recall, even Gandhi fought against the evils of the system.

Talking of Gandhi, I must bring up one important point here. After I entered service, I was too preoccupied with Science to bother about the Caste System and all that. I began

to think about it seriously only after coming here. I found to my surprise that Swami supported the *Varna* System. I tried to read everything Swami had said on the subject – and believe me He has indeed made many comments. I recall that on one occasion, He explained the system in great detail to Hislop. In spite of all this, I had many doubts. That was when I turned to Gandhi.

It so happens that I have a book entitled *The Gita According to Gandhi*. This book is by Mahadeva Desai, a close associate of Gandhi, and is essentially an English translation of a book that Gandhi had written earlier in Gujarathi. In that book, Gandhi comments extensively on the *Varna* System and the Caste System. Interestingly, Gandhi praises the *Varna* System and sharply condemns the Caste System. But are not the two the same? Not quite; what we had to start with was the *Varna* System; what it later became was the degenerated Caste System. Thus it is that Gandhi supported the *Varna* System but opposed strongly the Caste System. You think there is a contradiction? Let us examine.

You see, *Varna* System was born when the Scriptures formalised natural stratification by declaring that Society would be divided into four castes composed of the *Brahmins*, the *Kshatriyas*, the *Vysyas*, and the *Sudras*. Further, people born to Brahmins would be Brahmins, people born to Kshatriyas would be Kshatriyas, and so on. The duties of each community were also specified. Thus, Brahmins would be models of humility, concerned mainly with the preservation of the Vedas and guiding people on how to lead their lives in accordance with what the Scriptures say. The Kshatriyas would defend the kingdom, the Vysyas would be concerned with trade and commerce, while the Sudras would take care of what today we might perhaps call the service sector.

This was how it was when the System got started; all nice and smooth, and everything hunky dory as they would say in America. But systems have a way of getting corrupted and atrophied if one is not careful and that precisely is what happened to the *Varna* System. People in the so-called upper castes started becoming selfish and greedy and began to exploit those below, especially the Sudras. That is when the entire System went haywire and remained so for centuries if not thousands of years. It is this aberration that Gandhi fought against tooth and nail, and NOT the original System. On the contrary, since Krishna had said it was He who had ordained the *Varna* System, Gandhi went out of the way to defend it!

Some of you might wonder. I was supposed to say something about Swami's educational program and here I am talking about the Vedic age and all that. What has the Vedic age got to do with Swami's University? Everything, and that exactly is what I am coming to.

Earlier, I described what the members of the different *Varnas* were supposed to do. There was something else that I should have mentioned but did not; I shall make up for it now, especially since it is a very important point. In the Vedic age, every individual was supposed to act always for the benefit of Society. Selfishness was taboo, and everything was done in the name of God, and for God. This is an important point and needs some explanation.

Let us take Brahmins. They were the custodians of Scriptural Knowledge. This Knowledge was always to be used for the benefit of Society. For example, Brahmins advised Kings on how to rule and Kings accepted their advice with humility. The service to Kings was rendered as a duty and not for any payment or reward. The Kshatriyas likewise defended Dharma because it was their duty to do so. In fact, if you remember, that is exactly what Krishna tells Arjuna, namely that it is his duty to fight to protect Dharma, and not quit giving lame excuses.

The long and short of it, when everyone worked for Society and scrupulously observed Dharma, there was really no problem. Nobody looked down upon anybody and there was no exploitation either. Problems appeared only when people started to become selfish and self-centred. Just to illustrate my point, imagine how different life would be if there were no patents especially on life-saving drugs. Knowledge is God's gift and we have no right to appropriate it and make business out of it.

We now come to the central point about stability in Society. The question is: How to maintain stability in Society when there is stratification? Will there not be exploitation? My answer is as follows: There will be no exploitation when individuals believe that they are the Trustees of the Lord and discharge their duties accordingly.

This in fact is the key point, that of Trusteeship. Each one of us is blessed by the Lord with unique gifts; that is why we are all different, and that is why there is a natural stratification. One person may be rich; his wealth is a gift of God, and he is supposed to handle that wealth as a Trustee of God. Another person may be very intelligent; that person is supposed to use his intelligence as a Trustee of God. And so on. If every one acts this way, stratification cannot lead to social problems.

Let me now bring all this together so that you do not get the impression that I have strayed away from what I promised to speak about. I started with the Gurukulam and how the Guru carefully nursed the disciples so that they would not only sustain the Vedas but spread its message. Next, I pointed out that deriving from the Vedas, a formal *Varna* System was established in Society. There were four strata, and while their roles might have varied, there was nothing inferior or superior about any particular caste; that aberration crept in later. The *Varna* System was based on heredity. This did not *per se* make any member of any caste a dis-advantaged person. That was because every person belonging to every caste acted as a Trustee of God.

At this point, let me clarify once again what the Trusteeship concept implies. According to this, no individual owns anything, and everything belongs to God. Let us say there is a surgeon who has acquired high skills. He may feel he has slogged and become what he has. However, the truth of the matter is that God has given that surgeon all the opportunities; otherwise, he would not be where he or she is. Seen in this light, the knowledge and the skill that surgeon possesses are really a small part of God's treasure, given to this particular person to manage and look after. And how does this person do that? By using that knowledge and person solely in God's service. Of course when the

surgeon serves Society, it means that he or she is actually serving God, since, as Swami has often told us, Society itself is God.

It is this kind of training wherein one regards everything as belonging to God and dedicates one's life to God's service that the Guru of old really imparted. By the way, those of you who have read Kasturi's wonderful book *LOVING GOD* would remember that when he was born, his parents took the baby to the local Siva temple, placed the child there before the idol of the Lord and prayed: "O Lord, you have entrusted us with the responsibility of bringing up Your child. Please bless us with the means to do so." Thus, even children were supposed to belong to God, parents being mere caretakers.

OK, but what has all this got to do with today's world, Swami's Institute, etc.? That is your question, right? Please bear with me for a few minutes and that would become clear. The first thing we must note is that Swami's Institute is really a modern Gurukulam. I describe the Institute thus because it beautifully and seamlessly blends the best of old traditions with many of modern requirements. The style of living in the residential Hostels and discipline that the students follow is that of a Gurukulam, but the subjects studied by students are mostly modern. Let me amplify.

According to the Vedas, man is a combination of the body, the Mind and the Atma. Swami has told this many, many times. So, strictly speaking, all three components of the human being must receive proper nourishment and that exactly is what Swami's Colleges provide, in balanced proportion and in a disciplined manner. The day begins with *Suprabhatham*, then there is jogging etc., after which students have a bath, eat breakfast and go to College. In the College, the day always begins with prayer. After this the classes, where maths, physics, chemistry, biology, computer science, etc., are taught. In the afternoon, all students assemble in the Mandir, where, in innumerable ways, often quite subtle, Swami grooms them. Discipline is the undercurrent of all activities, and in the Hostel, most support activities are managed by students themselves. They take care of the sick boys, run the Hostel Library, do all the welding etc., needed for the huge structures they put up at Sports time, stitch all the costumes needed for dramas, and so on. I was amazed at the sort of training they get in self-reliance; they do every thing from electrical repair, to plumbing. I don't think students elsewhere ever get this kind of training. This again is reminiscent of the Gurukulam where the disciples played a key part in keeping it going.

When the academic year begins, there is, in practically all Colleges in the country, a strange and barbaric initiation custom called ragging. This is supposedly a function during which the seniors get to know the juniors. That is only on paper; in practice, ragging has not only become violent and obscene but also dangerous. In fact, many students have even died but strangely the authorities do not seem to bother. I have not seen any Vice Chancellor or Chairman of UGC raise a rumpus about this primitive custom, which is totally un-Indian and alien to our Culture. The only place where ragging is absent is Swami's Colleges. In fact it has not even been heard of here. On the contrary, the academic year often begins in the most civilised manner possible, with a Summer

Course on Indian Culture and Spirituality. I am sure you all have heard about the Summer Course.

Life in the Hostel is Spartan. No individual rooms, and all students sleep on the floor. Living together breeds a strong brotherly feeling, and it is always share and care.

It is not readily apparent but a careful examination would show that in many respects, Swami's educational combines the best of the past and the present. Many misguided people think: "Oh, Swami's boys may be goody, goody and all that but when it comes to real life, they are not at the top." Let me tell you that during the recent GATE examination, that is taken by over a hundred thousand college students all over the country, our students not only had a high success rate but those who qualified came really at the top with one of them securing the All-India first rank. I hope that silences those who tend to have a dim opinion of our students. For those of who do not know, GATE stands for Graduate Aptitude Test for Engineering. This is a common entrance exam for students with Post Graduate degrees, who want to pursue higher studies and go for the doctorate degree in engineering sciences. I might also add that many of our students are doing very well as research scholars not only in elite Indian research establishments but also in graduate schools abroad. By the way, it is the unanimous opinion of all our old students who are studying for Ph.D etc., abroad, that their hostel training has stood them in good stead; they do not feel stress since they know how to space out.

Disciplined life can make a hell of a lot of difference, I tell you. Just to place all this in context let me also draw attention to a news item that a friend in America sent me. It appears that the Harvard Medical School has done an extensive survey of students of universities in America and discovered that on the average, each student spend \$5,500/- per year on alcohol. This is shocking and shows what damage the lack of discipline and self regulation can cause.

Recently, newspapers in India went gaga about the achievements of business school graduates coming out of the so-called elite institutions. They went gaga because many so-called big companies were hiring these students at real fat salaries. One boy was being offered \$ 150,000/- or so and many others were being offered salaries in the range 150,000 to 100,000 dollars per annum. And many of these jobs were in America. So the papers gushed: This is what brand names are all about.

All this may sound great, and that exactly is what it is. You might wonder what's wrong with that? Before I come to that, let me mention that the companies that offer such fat salaries also expect a tremendous lot and it won't take them more than one minute to sack a person. I know a person in the US who held a high position in a prestigious company with a salary of about half a million dollars. The top management of that company changed and within one day this man was fired, just like that! Not that he did anything wrong; it was simply that the new management wanted its own crew in! Just imagine the stress that these young graduates would be subjected to.

But more than that, I want to ask a fundamental question. Which is truly better? To be great or to be good? You do not have to search for the answer; Swami has given it.

So-called greatness belongs to the external world while goodness belongs to the Inner world, the world of God. I do not want you to jump to the conclusion that our graduates are zeros in this world. Far from it. They may not hog the headlines but I do know how a good many top Corporate executives simply adore our students. Why? Because our boys are excellent team players, work hard, and are scrupulously honest. All this flow naturally from good character. Contrast this with what a senior teacher in a business school in America said after the recent rash of corporate scandals. He asked: “Whatever happened to old-fashioned ideas about truth and honesty?” Well, in the name of training managers to be aggressive and highly competitive, values just got thrown out, that’s all.

Allow me to recall here an incident that took place in the summer of 1996 when a Summer Course was in progress in Brindavan. I was the Vice Chancellor then. One afternoon, the main drainage got blocked and gutter water was threatening to back flow into the Hostel kitchen. If that happened, we would have had a major disaster on our hands, because it was in this kitchen that food was being cooked for about two thousand people including the students.

Many stood around the drain wondering what to do. There was no dearth of suggestions of course. One person said, “We cannot handle this. We must call the Sanitation Department.” On paper this might have been a good suggestion but in practice it was not. Firstly, the Department was in the city, and it would take hours for them even to register the complaint. Next, things never happen in a hurry in these departments, even if there is a crisis. That was when something totally unexpected happened. One of our students who was attending the Summer Course, a student of our business school, simply took off his shirt, shouted Sai Ram, and entered the manhole. Imagine that. This was real gutter and this boy entered it to fix the problem. He was almost neck deep in sewage. Feeling with his hands, he located the blockage. He grasped what was obstructing the flow and pulled hard. In a minute, the obstruction gave way and flow of sewage started immediately.

I ask you: Would any of these toppers from the brand institutes about whom so much is being written ever do that? This reminds me of a nice story. It appears that an American tourist once went to Calcutta and there saw Mother Teresa drag a dying man from the gutter, cleaning him and all that. The tourist was shocked and exclaimed, “Gee I would not do that, even if I am given a million dollars.” Mother Teresa turned to the American, smiled and said “I would not too. In fact, I would not do it even if offered two million dollars.” The American was puzzled and said, “But you are doing it!” Mother had the last word. She said, “Ah, this I am doing for God.” That is perhaps a story but what I narrated is a real incident. Our student did it for Swami.

Let me wrap up. There are so many wonderful things about Swami’s Institute. First of course is the free education that is unique. Next is the intense personal attention that Swami gives to the students. Then comes the way students shape up and lead their lives after they leave.

A quick word here about *Grama Seva*. Do you know that many of the students taking their post-graduate degree this year would have gone through five Grama Sevas, which adds up in all to about fifty days of intense service in the villages? Which university in India can claim to have given such training?

It is not just discipline and honesty in the work place that makes them unique. Do you know how intensely our old boys and girls are involved in Seva after they leave? They are doing Seva all the time, all over the world, quietly and without any fuss. For example, a few months ago, during December, when it was getting chilly at nights, our old boys who had gathered here for Bhagavan's Darshan spontaneously went out at night to the neighbouring town of Penukonda and covered as many street sleepers as possible with blankets. I ask you: How many alumni of the big universities across the globe would do that? Think about that.

In the ultimate analysis, mankind, if it really wants to get out of the present mess, which, by the way, is caused almost entirely by mass selfishness and greed, can do so only when individuals develop strong character. For that to happen on a large scale, the world needs hundreds if not thousands of universities like Swami's Institute. And when students in large number receive what I would call true education for life, then in later life they would automatically act in the spirit of Trusteeship. When that happens, most of man-made problems would disappear and the world would become a much better and holier place to live in.

I maintain that without character, one simply cannot expect any major improvement in Society. Character is moulded in the home and in the educational institutions. Where education is concerned, Swami's Institute is the best example in the whole world. When thousands and thousands of young men and women go out into Society with strong character, they would for sure lead a *Dharmic* life. True Dharmic life calls for selflessness, and actions performed in the spirit of trusteeship. If people in all walks of life and even organisations follow that principle, then the Golden Age that we all dream about HAS to dawn.

People may shrug their shoulders and dismiss all this as a wild pipe dream. It cannot happen, they might say. My answer is: It WILL happen if we want it to. If you tell an educator who does not know anything about Baba to set up a University like Swami's he will say it is not possible. But Swami has done it. Others can do it too but only if they really want to. So the question boils down to: Are we really serious about changing this world or we want someone else to do it for us? If the latter is the case, we can be sure that nothing would ever happen. If a person is hungry, then that person has to eat; someone else cannot eat for that person. It is as simple as that!

I don't know if you would agree with the things I have said. You do not have to. My intention is to get you think about the issues I have raised. I would of course love to hear your comments. As always, we invite you to write to: listener@radiosai.org

Thank you and Jai Sai Ram.
Prof G Venkataraman

WHAT IS TRUTH?

Late Prof N Kasturi

"You are a King, then?" said Pirate. Jesus answered, "'King' is your word. My task is to bear witness to the Truth. For this was I born; for this I came into the world, and all who are not deaf to Truth listen to my voice." Pirate said, "What is Truth?" And, with those words, went out again to the Jews.

Pirate did not wait for an answer from Jesus. Alas! The pity of it! Jesus knew himself as the Way, the Truth and the Life. Instead of learning from Jesus what he had come to teach, Pirate went out again to the Jews who were clamouring to have Jesus crucified.

THE OATH

When we probe into the question posed by Pirate, we are confronted by a battalion of 'buts'. The person in the witness box swears with his hand on a holy book or on his chest to speak "the Truth, the whole Truth and nothing but the Truth." But the Truth, the authentic stuff, is neither cognisable nor communicable. Every one of the witnesses, while professing to speak the 'whole' Truth can indulge only in half-truths, which are often double lies! They give differing versions of the incidents or actors, since their responses are painted or polluted, trimmed or transfigured by the desire for vengeance or victory. The observation itself, though from close quarters and by persons watchful and intelligent, is mostly through glasses coloured by conceit or prejudice, servility or hatred. Seldom is truth spoken unqualified, or unvarnished. It is treated as a tool and not as an axiom. In every argument, contest, or dispute, struggle, strife or war it is the first on the casualty list.

Truth too delights in the game of hide and seek. It revels in camouflage and masquerade. The real and the genuine challenge our faculties to the utmost, for they appear only as we desire, decorated, modified or moulded in order to flatter our likes and dislikes. No wonder, an aspirant for experiencing the Truth bewailed, as the Veda records, "What thing I am I do not know. I wander alone burdened with my mind." The mind squirts its ink of aversion or attachment, avarice or anxiety on whatever he prefers as Truth. Swami declares, "The knowledge of the Truth is acquired by uninterrupted inquiry by the clarified intellect and purified mind."

PURIFIED MIND?

Our senses gather such bits of information of the objective world as can please the ego that is their paymaster. "Our brains shuffle the bits around, until they fall into some acceptable pattern", says Lyall Watson. Arthur Koestler says, "Between the retina and the higher centres of the cortex, the innocence of vision is irretrievably lost; it has succumbed

to the suggestions of hidden persuaders." Some of these persuaders have surprisingly filtered through even the subtle genetic sieve from our previous sojourns on earth!

There is another equally deluding factor—the needs and beliefs of the others amidst whom we have to grow. We are "cultured" into accented and respected patterns of action and reaction, analysis and synthesis, ideas and ideals. We are conditioned so much by the invidious forces of social approval that we imbibe and implement, customs and conventions, frills and fashions, models and maps, idioms and idols, do's and don'ts bwhich are prescribed or proscribed by 'public opinion'.

CLARIFIED INTELLECT?

An experience is an airy something, seeking a local habitation and a name. It can seldom secure admission into the realm of awareness except by means of words or linguistic labels, or vocalised visas. It has to be categorised and catalogued by the faculty of reason, compared and confirmed, before being registered. The richer one's vocabulary, the more rewarding his experience becomes, for himself and others. We have to be content with blunt multipurpose vocables for delineating the indefinite.

Much depends on the integrity of the person who utters and on the Intelligence of the listener. But even when both are so equipped, if they are yoked to a language in which sublime spontaneous experiences are not expressible through distinct words or through prefixes and suffixes, prepositions and paraphrases, it becomes difficult to have them stamped on the memory for recapitulation and reflection.

This defect was noticed centuries ago by the sages of the Upanishad texts. The Brihadaraanyaka Upanishad, while dilating on *Sathya Vidya*, the process of meditating on Brahman (the Absolute) as Sathyam (Truth) reveals that the word *Sathyam* is a tri-syllable. *Sa-thi-yam*—"The first and last syllables are Truth; in the middle is falsehood (anrtham), Falsehood is embraced by Truth; thereby, it partakes of the nature of Truth."

THE MIRAGE

Schroedinger speaks of Reality as 'observer created'. Heisenberg writes, "The object we perceive is inextricably connected with our subjective consciousness. In fact, no one can observe any object or individual without colouring it with himself. There are no observers; there are only participators."

Einstein has told us, "Whoever undertakes to set himself up as judge in the field of Truth is shipwrecked in the laughter of the gods."

The Vedic Hymn laments:

Who really knows? Who can presume to declare?
Whence was this born? Whence came this creation?
Did the gods come after non-being became being?

And being became this? How has this come to be?
That out of which creation has happened—
Whether That held it firm? or, not?
He who oversees it in the highest heaven
He really knows ... Or, maybe, He does not.

A HUNDRED ANSWERS

If Pilate had questioned a hundred persons, "What is truth?" and waited for answers from them, he would have received a hundred different replies—each one an unconfirmed guess, a tentative hypothesis, a hesitant approximation. Every person has his pet definition. Truth is Power, Truth is what I uphold, Truth is the Conscience that pricks, Truth is what the Book proclaims, Truth is what survives the onslaught of centuries, Truth is the child's lisp, the Flash of the Sword, Truth is what the stars reveal to the adept, the Oracle asserts, the lie-detector reveals, Truth is the nugget that the psychiatrist digs up, etc. etc., mostly fictitious, fragile, fragmentary figments of one's own imagination.

The path to Truth is paved with discarded certainties. The level of moral purity, mental clarity, intellectual verity and emotional stability decide the Truth we can rely upon. When the horizon widens, the waves subside and the storms are stilled, more facets of Truth come within our reach.

Our minds with their numberless preferences and prejudices, desires and designs, befog the Truth in order to please our passing fancies. This diversionary strategy stunts our intellect and stultifies our intuition. So, we have to grope for Truth in the wilderness of a vast "Perhaps". Indeed, we have in India an honest and honoured school of sceptic metaphysics named *Syad Vada*, which professes and propagates its view of Truth as 'may be', 'perchance', 'perhaps'!

This *Syad Vada* appears as legitimate. Therein, the innate incomprehensibility of "the Truth, the whole Truth and nothing but the Truth" is demonstrated by seven steps of an astonishing logic of possibilities, the *Saptha Bhangi Nyaya*, which debunks the idea of finality: (1) *Syad asthi* (perhaps, it exists) (2) *Syad nasthi* (perhaps, it does not exist); (3) *Syad asthi cha, nasthi cha* (perhaps, it exists and does not exist); (4) *Syad avakthavyah* (perhaps, it is indescribable); (5) *Syad asthi cha avakthavyah* (perhaps, it exists though indescribable) ; (6) *Syad nasthi cha avakthavyah cha* (perhaps, it does not exist and is indescribable) ; (7) *Syad asthi cha, nasthi cha avakthavyah cha* (perhaps, it exists and does not exist and is indescribable).

NO SCEPTICISM

But, *Sankara* the most meticulous exponent and protagonist of *Advaita Darshan* which collates mystic awareness of Truth with logical validity and scriptural revelation, is not enamoured of scepticism. While commenting on the *Saptha Bhangi Nyaya* he writes, "How can a teacher of this school of philosophy, who has to be assumed as an, authority, impart instruction when the means of knowledge, objects of knowledge, the Knower and

Knowledge remain indefinite in nature? Also, how can those who rely upon his views act upon his instruction?

In spite of this indeterminism, incomprehensibility and his own incompetence, man is persistently urged by an inner hunger for Truth, an inner Voice that prods him to Arise, Awake and receive instruction from the Masters. He pleads "Lead me from the unreal to Reality: lead me from darkness to Light; lead me from death to Deathlessness." When the hunger is tolerated, dismissed or suppressed and when the Voice within is jammed or joked about, the Master, the Swami presents Himself as Teacher to guide Man to his Truth.

"Human-ness and God-ness, the Role and the Reality co-exist inseparably in every one of you," Swami told a gathering of students in 1974. "They are the negative and the positive, which, together produce the warmth of Love, of light, of Wisdom. Once you establish yourselves in the awareness of Reality, you can wander safe and free in the alleys of the Apparent."

GOD IS THE TRUTH

Swami says, "God is the Truth of all beings and things. Every wave and particle, every atom and cell is filled with God and functions in and through God. You may, out of perversity, pride or poverty of intelligence reject this Truth, but life has been assigned to you again so that you free yourselves from the shackles of falsehood and reach the goal of Truth." Subjective defects and objective distractions are the challenges one confronts, but they are not as formidable as they seem. "Ask; it shall be answered. Knock; it shall be opened. March; you shall reach," we are told.

Countless numbers of pilgrims and pupils have criss-crossed the earth, along its highways and bye-ways, in search of Truth, the Truth of themselves and of the scenario and struggle into which they have been thrust. The trek of patients in search of cures towards the doors of the wise has continued throughout history. Man can find no peace until he understands the Truth of whatever arouses wonder, awe, sympathy, reverence, curiosity and fear. He strives for unity and coherence, harmony and beauty. He wants to know things as they really are, not as they seem to be or pretend to be.

Luckily, there is a bright side to the story of man's journey to Truth. Prophets, sages and saints, Masters and Messengers, have appeared among all peoples and taught men by precept and example the Truth that can free them. The Cosmic Consciousness itself, when it becomes aware of its fragments getting fogged and frustrated, wills to shape Itself into a Form that can move among men and move them Home towards Itself. Such a Form is known as an *Avatar*, a particularisation of the Absolute. The Avatar happens in order to fulfill a felt need and so, it's Wisdom, Love, Power and Compassion pour over all who need them. All men, indeed all living beings, are its concern. And, 'lifeless' matter too.

For, as Swami says, *Sarvam Brahmanam*, everything has emanated from Brahman, the vast Ocean which emanates ripples, wavelets, waves, foam and flakes of snow and icebergs. The Atom is a replica of the Cosmic energy; cell is an echo of Cosmic will. "Vasudeva is all," the Gita declares, without exception. The Rig Veda proclaims, "All this is *Purusha* himself, all that has been and all that is going to be." This is the Truth. The *Rudra Adhyaya* of the *Yajur Veda* commands man to adore 238 representative entities of God, illustrating thereby that there is nothing except God. (The *Katha Upanishad* condemns those who see the Cosmos as manifold and not as basically Brahman; they have to plod through life after life until they realise the error).

Rudra, the name assigned to God, is described in the Vedic texts as the motivator seated in all hearts, as the provider, the saviour of the Universe which is His self-assumed form. He is identified with the chiefs, the middlings and the lowly, the tall, the short and the stout, the aged, the young and the juvenile, the wise, the curious and the dull, and the sleepy. He is stone, sand and dust, slush, pollen and gravel, ripple, foam and wave, river, stream, lake, and canal, lightning, cloud, shower and rain, ocean, island and shore. *Rudra* is the highway, the road, the track. He is the sprout, the shoot, the leaves, the pests, the birds with throats blue and yellow, the tree and the timber. He is the one engaged in trading or farming or rearing cattle. He is the cow-pen and the crop, the food and the cook. He is the man behind the plough on fertile land or barren. He is the person who is brave and fearsome, fighting from trenches and on open fields, with missiles, arrows, spears and swords. He is the warrior who revels in duels, who moves forward in chariots with helmet and coat-of-mail. He is the foot-soldier, the horseman, the leader of dogs and the led. He is the scout, the messenger, the smith, the carpenter, the hunter, the wily guerilla, the cheat and the dacoit, the decoy and the impersonator.

Rudra is in the form of the monk, the cave dweller having a crown of matted hair, the one who has mastered the steady pose, the sage who has crossed over and who leads others across, the elderly scholar, the dialectician delighting in debates, the Vedic expert and the master of rituals. He is the person who is compassionate, sweet and tender.

In fact, God is the warp and woof, the cotton and yarn, of the fabric, apparent to us as the Universe. That is the Truth which is encased in every cell and star.

—*Late Prof N. Kasturi,*
1987 Sanathana Sarathi

THE DIVINE STORY OF
SHIRDI SAI PARTHI SAI - Part 5
(continued from the previous issue)

ACT III

SCENE 1

After the death of Patel, his wife struggles hard to bring up her boy. Young Sai continues to be a 'problem child'. One day, Sai and His friends are getting ready to play a game of marbles. They are choosing the order in which the boys would play. The game involves placing some marbles within a circle drawn on the ground and knocking this collection with another marble thrown from a distance, somewhat like in modern bowling.

YOUNG SAI: I am the first striker.

A BOY: I am second.

ANOTHER BOY: I am third.

YOUNG SAI: Hey Krishna! Each will play with five marbles; winner takes all!

KRISHNA: O.K.

The game begins. Young Sai is the first striker.

YOUNG SAI: [Counts] One, two, three, four, five.....[throws His projectile; scores a hit and shouts] I have won all these marbles! I have won all these!

A BOY: Hey Krishna, you strike next!

Krishna throws and scores some success.

KRISHNA: [counts the marbles he has won] One, two, I have won these.

ANOTHER BOY: Move over, I'll try.

After some time, the game is over. Young Sai has won everything, leaving the others empty handed. He is dancing with all His winning in His hand.

YOUNG SAI: All these marbles are mine!

SCENE 2

Altar room of a house in the village. The lady of the house is preparing for *Puja* or ritualistic Hindu worship. She is being assisted by her younger sister named Bhavani.

LADY (to girl): Hey you! Don't touch that!! That is a *SALIGRAMAM* [a *Lingam*]. It is very sacred. It must be cleaned only with sacred water.

GIRL: When does one do that?

LADY: Every Monday, Siva is worshipped by pouring water over the *SALIGRAMAM*. At that time the water becomes holy; that water is used for subsequent cleaning. Right now you can clean all these. After that, go and fetch fresh water from the well. Meanwhile, I shall get *kumkum*, sandal paste, and the various other things needed for the worship.

SCENE 3

The scene of the earlier marble game. The boys are talking amongst themselves. Young Sai has moved off some distance away, to count His winnings.

KRISHNA: That fellow [Young Sai] has taken away all our marbles.

SECOND BOY: We now have no marbles at all to play with!

THIRD BOY: Our pockets are all empty!

KRISHNA: Let us ask him to return our marbles.

BOY: Let's go!

BOY: Let's go!

Some distance away, Young Sai is seated, happily looking at His winnings. He is counting the number of marbles He has won earlier.

YOUNG SAI: One, two, three, four, five

KRISHNA: Hey you fellow! Give me back my marbles, and we will play again.

YOUNG SAI: Really?! You must be joking! Who will return what has been won? These are all mine.

KRISHNA: I agree you won but we played only for fun. Give those marbles back, we shall play again. Otherwise I'll pelt marbles at you.

YOUNG SAI: Oh yeah? I won't be idle and just sitting while you are throwing things. If you really want to play, go get fresh marbles; then we can play.

KRISHNA: So, you won't give back what you took?

YOUNG SAI: No I will not, will not, will not!

KRISHNA: You fellow! I'll tell you something. I shall bring a magic marble and win back all those you have.

YOUNG SAI: Really? Go ahead! Can you get back the mango or the banana that has been eaten?! How is it possible?

KRISHNA: He is mocking at us again. I'll go this minute to my house, bring that magic marble, and fix him!

YOUNG SAI: Go ahead and try!

SCENE 4

Krishna is the son of the lady who was preparing for *Puja* earlier. He sneaks into the *Puja* room. No one is there, and Krishna looks for the sacred *SALIGRAMAM*, without realising that it is not a marble but a sacred object of worship.

KRISHNA: [to himself] Where is it?

Locates the white *SALIGRAMAM*. Picks it up with joy.

KRISHNA: This marble is great! If I play with it, I'll surely win!!

KRISHNA: I'll now fix him!

Walks out of the house with the *SALIGRAMAM*.

SCENE 5

The scene of the marble game again. No game is in progress, but everyone is waiting for Krishna to appear and challenge Young Sai again.

BOY (to Young Sai): Do you think he will come?

YOUNG SAI: He will certainly come; after all he lost all his marbles, didn't he?

KRISHNA: I've brought it; see! [shows the *SALIGRAMAM*] White marble!!

YOUNG SAI: Great! Nice-looking marble. Shall we play with this one?

KRISHNA: Not only will I play but also win back all the marbles I lost.

YOUNG SAI: Don't just talk; show it in action.

KRISHNA: If you can't strike this marble, you have to return all the ten marbles you took.

YOUNG SAI: Yes, but in case I strike, this white marble becomes mine.

KRISHNA: O.K. Place all the ten marbles.

YOUNG SAI: Will do, but if after I strike the white marble you hem and haw and don't give it to me, I shall swallow not only the marble but also you!

KRISHNA: Bet now.

YOUNG SAI: Done.

KRISHNA: Place all your ten marbles.

YOUNG SAI: You too, place that white marble.

KRISHNA: This is no ordinary marble for you to swallow just like that. It is a magic marble!

YOUNG SAI: Your *Mantras* and tricks won't work with Me. But My *Mantras* can do wonders.

KRISHNA: We shall see; play now.

YOUNG SAI: Since you lost earlier, you strike first.

KRISHNA: Now watch my aim.

Krishna throws and misses.

KRISHNA: [to Young Sai] Now you play.

YOUNG SAI: Yes, I'll play now.

Young Sai strikes and scores a bulls-eye. Dances with joy.

YOUNG SAI: This white marble is mine! It is mine!!

To be continued....

GITA FOR CHILDREN PART 07

(Continued from the previous issue)

1. Krishna continues and says ‘Arjuna, do you know that what I am telling you now is no different from what was taught by Me to your ancient ancestors a long time ago?’
2. Arjuna frowns and asks, ‘Krishna, how could that be? You are almost the same age as me, may be a few years older. How then could You have taught all this to my ancestors?’
3. Krishna smiles and replies, ‘That precisely is the point Arjuna! You are just looking at My physical body and thinking of the age of the body. But I have already told you that I am NOT the body! Indeed, neither are you.’
4. ‘You are the *Atma* and so am I. When I told you that I taught your ancestor I meant that I, wearing a particular body at that time, taught an embodiment of the *Atma* that was your physical ancestor.’
5. ‘Arjuna, man has been told repeatedly that he is NOT the body but the Eternal *Atma*. But, like a weak student, he easily forgets the lesson taught despite many repetitions. Man seems to remember all kinds of trivial and useless information but readily forgets important truths about his real nature.’
6. ‘This is the main reason why I have to incarnate again and again, to teach the same lesson! See how man’s stupidity gives Me so much work? But I love man dearly and therefore I do not mind. Arjuna, man forgets Truth but I don’t – that is the difference between man and God.’
7. ‘Now listen to this carefully. Humans take birth, die, are born again, die again and so on it goes, in a seemingly endless cycle. This repeated birth and death is related to a processing of “settling accounts” one might say.’
8. ‘In a given birth, a human being accumulates some positive as well as some negative points. The positive points come from the good deeds done while the negative points come from the sins committed. It is this accumulation that causes rebirth.’
9. ‘When a person is reborn, he enjoys good luck in proportion to his positive points and bad luck corresponding to the negative points. The positive and the negative are inescapable for a person with an external outlook, that is to say, when the vision is focussed mostly on the world outside.’
10. Arjuna then asks, ‘Krishna, what You say is very disturbing. Is there no way to get out of this rut of repeated birth and death?’

11. Krishna replies, ‘Who said there isn’t any? There sure is; all you have to do surrender to Me. In fact, I have already told you how you can earn God’s Grace. Once you have God’s Grace, nothing can touch you, and you can get off the hook once and for all.’

12. ‘Human birth is called *Karma Janma*; it means that birth is caused by the consequences of actions performed in earlier births. That is what I just now described in terms of settling accounts.’

13. Arjuna asks, ‘Krishna what about You? Is Your birth also a *Karma Janma*?’

14. Krishna says in reply, ‘Arjuna, what are you saying? I incarnate, and am not born like you and other ordinary mortals are. I have no accounts to settle! Do you understand that? I come at specific times of My choice for specific purposes. It is all a part of My never-ending Sport or *Leela*. That is why the Incarnation of God is referred to as *Leela Janma*.’

15. ‘You want to know more? Here it is! This entire Creation is a Sport or *Leela* of God. The Universe is the stage and every person is an actor in God’s Cosmic Drama. All the ups and downs that you see in life are a part of this extraordinary Drama.’

16. ‘Now an ordinary play must have a script-writer, a director, a producer and so on. In the Cosmic Drama, all these roles are played by God Himself. He is the Author, the Director, Producer, etc., etc.’

17. ‘Perhaps you have seen in the usual dramas that there is a person hiding behind the screen who whispers the dialogue in case some actor forgets his lines. He is called a prompter. In the Cosmic Drama also something similar happens. When people forget to follow *Dharma* [which is really the script], God prompts via the Conscience.’

18. ‘However, there are times in history when such prompting alone is not sufficient. God then dons a human form and descends as an *Avatar* to play a direct role in His own Drama. This way, it becomes much easier for Him to correct man.’

19. ‘Arjuna, whenever the situation demands, I come in human form. Such an Incarnation is called an *Avatar*.’

20. Arjuna asks, ‘Krishna why and when does God deem it necessary to incarnate?’

21. Krishna replies, ‘Ah, God incarnates whenever wickedness is on the rise and good people are tormented by evil people. The *Avatar* deals suitably with the wicked and protects the good.’

22. ‘There are many ways in which the *Avatar* deals with wicked people. When the number of evil doers is relatively small, He arranges for them to be simply disposed off. This is like a surgeon removing cancerous growth.’

23. 'Do not however imagine that the every time God descends, He would do so with some sort of a weapon to slay people with. Far from it. There are times when vast sections of the population have good and evil coexisting within them. In such an event, the *Avatar* obviously cannot go around slaying people. Instead, He resorts to an entirely different strategy.'

24. 'When evil is widespread, the "weapon" that the *Avatar* uses is the most powerful of them all! The beauty of this "weapon" is that not even a single drop of blood is shed! Isn't that amazing?'

25. 'Can you guess what that "weapon" is? I am sure you cannot! It is Love Arjuna, it is Pure and Unselfish Love, Love that gives and forgives, Love gives and also forgets.'

26. Arjuna asks, 'Krishna, how on earth can just Love alone get rid of the bad guys?'

27. Krishna smiles and says, 'That is the beauty about Love! You see it does not get rid of wicked people but removes the wickedness in people; got it?'

28. Arjuna asks, 'Krishna, are you saying that Love transforms the bad into good?'

29. With visible enthusiasm, Krishna replies, 'Correct, you got it! Transformation is the miracle that Love alone can perform; and that is how a bloodbath is averted. Arjuna, it is a pity that man often tries to solve problems using violence, when Love would do the job far more simply and much better too.'

30. 'Right now, what is required is surgery but the day will come when the *Avatar* would be seen as nothing but Love. He would all the time be talking about Love and through His own life put on display the innumerable shades of Pure Love.'

31. 'Pure Love would scrub away all the contamination in the minds of seekers who come to It. The *Avatar* can charm and transform people in countless different ways, suited to the mental make up of the person concerned.'

32. Arjuna asks, 'Krishna, can you tell me some more about the *Avatar*?'

- To be continued

"ARE YOU HAPPY, SIR?"

Sundara R. Krishnaswami

We know that the Love that Swami personifies is the real prompter and doer in our lives. Even though it is so beautifully present all the time everywhere, we are mostly ignorant of this Love until, with its Grace, we get a taste of it. When we taste it, nothing else matters...

About a year and half ago, on a wintry morning in Dallas, I learned something that I didn't know. I learned that some people in this reputedly prosperous, well-systemized city actually slept on the streets! I knew of homeless people and homeless shelters, but never realized that some of those homeless people were shelter-less as well. I learned this on that wintry morning from a shivering man with fire in his eyes.

"Are you listening to me, man? Nobody believes me...I am going to do something drastic...I'm tired of sleeping under the bridge."

"Did you really sleep on the streets last night, Sir?" I asked incredulously. "Where?"

"That's what I have been telling you, man! Over there...under that bridge."

I looked, nodded as if I understood. He wanted to go to another part of the city about twenty-five kilometers away. I said that I would return in a couple of hours, after finishing our morning service activity, and take him there. I returned as promised but he was not to be found.

Swami had spoken through him and prompted me to find out more about the plight of the homeless people in Dallas.

A few of us went back to the streets at nighttime looking for people sleeping on the streets. Gusts of wind had worsened the already freezing weather. We had taken woolen blankets with us in case somebody needed them; soon, we found people sleeping under elevated highways. As we passed blankets to the people, one man asked, "Do you have a banana? I haven't eaten anything today!" This was shocking to me! We did not have any food items with us, so while praying to Swami, we drove around the downtown area at that late hour and finally located an open restaurant. We bought liberal quantities of food – in case someone else was hungry. Just before we found the restaurant, we stopped at a traffic light, where I was prompted to look to the left. Then I saw the following words written in bold letters on the building to our left – "**God is Love**". I knew Swami was with us!

"God Bless you all!" said the middle-aged gentleman as we returned with food. This was the first of literally thousands of words of gratitude these loving human beings were to shower on us in the following months.

All it takes is a drug addiction, a mental illness or a job loss to remove the roof over your head, before you slip through the societal net and get caught on the rough edges of humanity. Then you try and get into a homeless shelter. If you are not accommodated there, you go to the streets, thinking it'll be only for a few days or weeks at most, till the weeks slip into years without an end or escape in sight! As a person living on the streets for seven years would tell us later, "You fall into a never-ending, spiraling pit, down and down. You look up and see a faint light at the top, way up where the opening of the pit is. That faint light is your hope that you cling on to every day!"

The middle-aged gentleman then directed us to a spot “under the bridge.” This was a spot where the concrete sloping foundation pillars of the bridge meet the road above. He said some more people were sleeping in the crevices between the pillars and the road, sheltering themselves from the howling cold wind! Since I had a sprained ankle, I could not climb up the slope. My friends walked up the slope, leaving me in the car. As I sat in the car waiting for my friends to return, Bhagavan’s Love welled up in my heart. When they came back, this Love moved me to say, “How much suffering these people have! It is so cold! They are hungry! With Swami’s Grace, we will come here every night and care for them. With His Grace, we’ll provide them warm food, warm clothes and words of warmth every night at least for the next two months till the end of winter season.”

Thus began a mental and verbal contract with the Lord. What has since been called *Chaitanya Seva* was born.

The Lord both supported and tested the resolve in the execution of this contract. He kept reaffirming His presence in more than one way and at the same time kept throwing challenges and obstacles our way.

The first re-affirmation came the very next evening. As we drove along the down-town streets, we saw a tall, thin, elderly man walking on the pavement. We approached him and asked if he would like some soup and bread. He looked at us with a blank, sad expression in his eyes and nodded, and soon started attacking the cup of soup with such fervor that I knew he was starving. “Sir, when did you eat last?”, I asked. “I haven’t eaten for two days!”, he replied. “Please have some more soup and bread,” we told him. He accepted this whispering “Thank you, thank you!” I noticed then that he was trembling a bit in the cold temperature. He was wearing only a thin shirt, inadequate for the weather. I put a jacket around his shaking body and hugged him. Tears welled from both our eyes as he said “You are a God-send. You are a God-send!”. I knew the internal pull that put us there was the prompting of the Love that Swami is, and in this sense we were sent there by Him only. There was no giver or receiver in this occurrence – just the experience of one heart resonating to the call of another and the resulting mutual happiness.

Almost from the beginning, Swami put challenges in our way, helped us persist and overcome them.

Only a handful of volunteers came forward at first. The others were concerned about dealing with ex-criminals and drug addicts in desolate parts of the city and that too at night time. “Swami is making this happen. Why fear? He will take care. Let’s look at the people sleeping on the streets as fellow human beings, as brothers if possible, and look for the same spark of love in them as in us.” With this prayer, a few of us persisted. We prepared hot soup and hot chocolate at home every day, picked up fruits, bread and apple pies from the store, and went to the streets every night, pulled by the Indweller to serve and to love.

In addition to food, we found a desperate need for warm clothing—from blankets to socks, from shoes to caps. Again, another challenge was thrown by Swami. There was absolutely no solicitation or collection of funds. But, somehow, the clothing always became available to fulfill the need of the “dharidhra chaitanyas” throughout the winter.

Then there was the greatest challenge of them all – the test of faith and doing what Swami really wants you to do.

Winter was over. Still only a handful of volunteers were doing the seva. The thought occurred that the heart to heart contract with Swami was to serve the people who sleep on the streets only for the winter. How long could we continue this service activity? The logistical requirements of a daily service activity such as this one were a bit daunting. After the winter was over, we made a few attempts, with trepidation, I must admit, to stop this seva activity. Every time we went to serve with this thought in our minds, we would invariably get a comment from one of the people on the streets like “Thank God for you people coming here every day! The food you bring is the only food I get all day!” How could we stop this service activity knowing fully well that there would be a few people who will go hungry because we did not show up? We persisted. Swami corrected our wrong thinking and made us continue.

Then, almost imperceptibly, a few things happened. Inexplicably, more and more volunteers joined. A bakery voluntarily offered to donate regular supply of bread. A dough-nut shop donated regular supply of dough-nuts. What started off as a two-month experience is in its seventeenth month now. About seventy people living on the streets and about forty volunteers are serving each other daily. With His Grace, it will go on as He Wills it.

Several signs of Swami’s blessings have taken place and continue to take place. As a testament to His Glory, let me share one.

One evening, we were given three blankets to take with us for the service. I counted them myself. All the three blankets were given away in early part of the service itself. As we drove to the next service spot, I spotted a man placing his belongings on a pavement and getting ready to lie down to sleep. I asked if he wanted soup, which he did. I asked if he needed a blanket. He replied yes.

As I walked back to the car, it struck me that this man didn’t look like the others on the streets. His complexion and demeanor were very different. For some reason, he reminded me of *Maha Vishnu* Himself! Suddenly I realized that we had already given away our last blanket! I feverishly prayed to Swami to keep my word and to provide a blanket to this needy person. I asked a volunteer seated in the car for a blanket and he said we had given out all the three blankets. At that instant, a volunteer sitting in the back seat of the car noticed another blanket on the floor! We gave that blanket to the man. We confirmed and re-confirmed among us that we had indeed given away all the blankets we had. Swami had made the three blankets into four in response to heart-felt prayer!

We have learned that the people living on the streets may be ex-criminals, drug addicts or violent people, but they have hearts as pure and golden as God's. We bathe in their love and attachment to God every day. "Glad to be alive," says one man with a wide grin. "You are doing God's work," says another. Yet another quotes the Bible saying, "When you serve fellow men, you are really serving God." We agree enthusiastically!

A dignified elderly lady living on the streets asked a couple of weeks ago,

"Which church group are you all from?"

"Sathya Sai Baba group" I replied.

"What does that stand for?" she asked.

"Universal love."

"That is nice," she said and grinned happily.

On another day, after serving, I spoke with a man to ensure he was well taken care of and was happy.

"Are you happy, Sir?" I asked him.

He smiled, clasped my hand in his, and asked me, "Are *you* happy?"

How could I not be? I had just heard the voice of Love!

Sundara R.Krishnaswami
Plano, TX, USA
March 19, 2005
Skswami19@yahoo.com

A TRIP TO BATAM

An article written by a 17-year old Sai volunteer describing a Seva visit by 18 Sai Volunteers to a rubbish dump where there is no water, no electricity, and no sanitation system and about 600 families(3000 persons) scavenging a living. Food and clothing were distributed, and efforts made to provide a well water-supply for them.

Sunday, 13th March 2005
Time: 10:16 P.M

Time seemed to stand still. We were in another country. The eighteen of us met early, at 8:30 A.M at the Singapore World Trade Center. It was not surprising that there were already many people waiting for the ferry to *Batam*, Indonesia. All the sixteen adults were talking about what we were going to do there. I was neutral about this trip, not really expecting much from it. It was roughly about 9:20 A.M when we started lining up. Naturally, I was sort of excited since I was going out of country. We crossed the departure gates, scanned in our belongings and ourselves, checked out passports and made our way into the ferry. It was called 'Penguin Success'. It was a rather ironic name for a ferry as I thought that the two words did not match. Nevertheless, I did not bother much about it.

The journey to *Batam* took an hour. We rested, knowing that we will have a long day ahead. Finally we reached our destination and I tagged behind my parents innocently. There, Brother Christopher introduced us to Brother Eric, who originally was from Singapore, but based in *Batam*. He took us around during our trip. We exited the ferry terminal and got into a small tour bus at the car park. Firstly, we had brunch and then in the afternoon, we took a long ride to the dumpsite. At first I thought it was the remains of the aftermath of the recent tsunami, but after questioning my father about the area, he told me that this was a dumpsite where the island's rubbish was dumped. And there were people living in the slums and squatters on the site. I was wondering how they could stand this horrid sight and unpleasant smell. A man who was involved in the water well project explained to us his idea of digging a well for the village and his difficulties in accomplishing his goal. He explained to us that they were trying to find potential spots and drill a hole to find an underground stream. We got on the bus and drove right into the rubbish site. It was huge. I have never seen so much rubbish in my life. There was lots of smoke and there were swallows flying all around, not to mention lots of houseflies.

The bus stopped and everybody except my mother, my brother and me got down. We looked out from the window uncertainly, not really sure what to expect. About ten minutes into distributing the packets of instant noodles, the villagers made a beeline from their homes like ants to a pot of honey. They made their way quickly to our tour bus and the brothers and sisters gave away the goods in posthaste.

The way the villagers came up for the goods and the way they thanked us with such graciousness made me think that I am very fortunate and it also gave me a sense of warmth in my heart seeing them so happy. We moved on deeper into the site, into other areas. This time all of us got out from the bus carrying the boxes. But then I switched jobs and I took the job as a photographer, taking the pictures of the village homes and the people. The people allowed us to take photos of them with much zeal. Despite the searing heat, I enjoyed interacting with the villagers. And their children were just so adorable! Myself and father then made our way back to the bus, and one of the brothers joked that they nearly went off without us. I just didn't notice the passage of time! I was already thrilled with the fact that we were going to visit more of the other areas as I found that it was quite enjoyable.

We visited other areas and when we finished, we followed all the other brothers through woods and we came into a huge clearing with only tree stumps that seemed to be burnt. We came to a spot where our German brother used an instrument to detect a possible area that has water. We watched as they discussed what they would do with that spot. We gathered around the area and Brother Wee Lin told the village chief to say a prayer. He sounded so sincere that it moved our hearts. Though the prayer was in another language, we could feel the gratitude and hope in the prayer. We later came to know that this was his prayer:

God, it is Your Will only, if we are to live.

God, it is Your Will only, if we are to die.

God, it is You only, we pray to, if we are to find water!

Then Brother Christopher led us in another prayer. It lasted for about fifteen minutes. Then, three brothers broke the coconuts over the area, a ritual that is supposed to remove obstacles. Then we made our way back into the tour bus. We did a little shopping in the city and went back to the ferry terminal.

It had been an exhausting day and tiredness had begun to sink into every one of us. But in our minds we were glad that we had made people happy. They felt cared for and wanted.

We must remember that we are living in a fortunate society in a well-developed country and that there are many people not as fortunate as we are. Therefore, we must show our love and care for them. ***I realized that we did not distribute the items out of pity, but because we wanted to share what we have with them.***

-----X-----

BECOMING A VEGGIE.....

Jeroo Captain

I grew up in a family where meat, fish and eggs were part of the daily diet. I had some friends who were vegetarian, but the thought of becoming a vegetarian myself never occurred to me.

In 1993, I heard about Sathya Sai Baba's work and my two children and I started attending weekly bhajan sessions at our local Sai center in Sacramento, California. Soon after that, my daughter, a teenager, watched a T.V. program that was particularly disturbing for her—it portrayed the inhumane treatment of poultry and cattle prior to being slaughtered for food. "I am not eating any meat or chicken any more," she announced.

‘Oh well, just another teenage fad,’ I thought, ‘This will probably last a week, or may be two.’ But I agreed as long as she was ready to prepare her meals herself.

Weeks passed and I marveled at her resolve. She did not flinch even once as she quite happily prepared her veggie meals. Soon she started working on her younger brother. Being very resolute and articulate, she had him convinced in no time. Now they both began to work on me.

We had subscribed to the *Sanathana Sarathi*, and each time it arrived in the mail, my daughter read it cover to cover. She would run to me with any quotes from Swami she could find to support her case. Trips to the supermarket became battlegrounds: my son would look at me with big soulful brown eyes, “How would *you* feel if you were this chicken’s mother—would you like your kid to be cut up and served for food?” Oh please! Up until then, chicken was simply a well-packaged piece of high-protein food—I did not think of it as having been alive at some point, let alone having a mother!

Soon my defenses began to crumble and I half-heartedly agreed to try. I decided to give up cooking meat every other day and so Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays became vegetarian days for a while. But my heart was not in it--and needless to say, I did not succeed. Giving up a habit of over 40 years was not easy, I found out.

Then one day I was in my back yard. There is a small lake behind our property. The water was clear and I could see the fish swimming around. Does God *really* exist in all creatures, I wondered. Without much thought, I threw out a challenge. “OK, Swami, if you are really present in every creature, make that fish swim to me,” I said in my mind. Sure enough, a fish made its way slowly to the shore where I was standing, then turned to the right and swam away. My doubting mind jumped right in “Oh that was just a coincidence,” I thought. “Surely the fish was just swimming with the current!” No sooner had I finished this thought, the fish made a sharp turn around, swam swiftly back to where I was standing, paused in front of me, and for several seconds, *looked directly into my eyes*.

After that experience, the desire to eat any fish, meat or fowl simply vanished, and to this day I remain a happy vegetarian.

Mind full of doubts?
Habits too hard to bend?
Ask—He will reveal the Truth
In ways *you* can comprehend:

On land, sea or sky
Creatures great or small
Bhagvan Sri Sathya Sai
Resides in one and all.

Jai Sai Ram!

- Jeroo Captain

LETTER FROM A READER

This is a letter sent by one of our readers via e-mail, on 6th April 2005. It is one more testimony of how Swami is always hearing our prayers...

Dear Sai brothers and sisters

Sairam....

Every passing day, a new dimension unfolds and engulfs us with His Grace which is **Kaalathita...**(Beyond Time)

I was having some difficulties in collecting my dues from my earlier organisation and this had been precipitating over 6 months.

Yesterday I was told that I would not get any of it as there was a very convoluted rationale for the same.

I was upset not that my money would not come in but at the *adharma* of the whole thing. I got over it as I thought that should Swami want me to get the same, I would. This morning at 6.30 am I wrote out a one page letter to Swami - which I am yet to post - about this problem and how I could have avoided the same.

I just got a call - at 10.30 am - from the organisation as to how the issue was resolved and that they were computing what was payable to me.

HOW DO YOU EXPLAIN THIS?

Swami is there within us - *nee inta, nee vinta*...as He always says ...taking care of the small little nitty-gritties of our lives, when He has so much to do....

And are we all doing our bit to get at least somewhere closer to what He wants us to be? We need to take stock - especially when Swami responds in record time - why are we taking our whole lives to do what He wants us to do...

I thought I should share this with someone as the feeling of thrill is so high and I did not know whom to tell....

Thank you

Warm regards
Sai ram
Gita Nair

THE MILLION DOLLAR QUESTION FOR GOD

A poor man walking in the forest feels close enough to God to ask, "God, what is a million years to you?"

God replies, "My son, a million years to you is like a second to me."

The man asks, "God, what is a million dollars to you?"

God replies, "My son, a million dollars to you is less than a penny to me. It means almost nothing to me."

The man asks, "So God, can I have a 'Penny' of yours?"

God replies, "In a second."

Moral: Don't get too clever with GOD!

THREE OF A FAMILY

This is a unique case pertaining to three members of a family: two sisters and one brother, all three having congenital heart diseases. Basheer, Fauzia and Zohra are all patients in the SSSIHMS for *acyanotic heart disease*. This is a rare case where the same congenital abnormality has affected three of a family. The condition was diagnosed to be *Patent Ductus Arteriosus* commonly called PDA. Like any disease its progress only foretold a limited quality of life for all the three.

They are from a very poor family hailing from the village Perla near Kasargoud. The father of the family has four children, two boys and two girls. Imagine his condition when he knew that three out of his four children suffered from a malady that could only be cured by medical intervention. All three of them had breathing problems and difficulty while walking.

Further, they had to run from pillar to post for raising funds to obtain treatment. They had to go to Mangalore, about 80 kms away to consult a cardiologist. It was at this juncture, they came to know about SSSIHMS, Bangalore through some devotees.

The three patients arrived at the hospital on 27.12.01 for check up and treatment. Basheer was operated on for PDA or *Patent Ductus Arteriosus* on 25.01.02. The second sister Fauzia was operated on 21.06.04. The other sister Zohra also has undergone operation for PDA on 25.06.04.

Here is a case where all three siblings have benefited from Swami's benevolence and have been able to improve the quality of their lives.

PRASHANTI DIARY

Chronicles of Heaven on Earth

MARCH 19, 2005: BURRA KATHA PROGRAM BY THE XIth CLASS BOYS

The Eleventh Class boys presented a Burra Katha, a native folk art where 3 colourfully dressed singers render praise to God and His devotees in rich songs and melodious music. The boys rendered the *katha* (story) of Bhadrachala Ramdas, a great devotee of the Lord. Bhadrachala Ramdas' real name was Gopanna, who received the divine blessing of a golden voice, which he used to express his devotion for the Lord.

His life was beset with tragedies. He lost his parents early. The king also had him imprisoned and beaten as he used the tax collected to build a temple for the Lord. But with his steadfast devotion to God, he made Lord Rama Himself come down to earth and grant him liberation from the bondage of this world.

Swami expressed His pleasure to the boys, created a chain for the lead singer and also posed for group photos with all the 3 singers.

MARCH 20: KAVI SAMMELAN BY SSSIHL BOYS AND PEN DISTRIBUTION TO ALL THE STUDENTS

In the afternoon of March 20th, there was a *Kavi Sammelan*, a gathering of poets. Swami, after He entered, had chairs brought and arranged for the poets in a semi-circle in front of Him so that the budding poets need not sit on the floor.

The age old dictum that our best songs are those that speak of divine thought was proved once again. The student-poets spoke feelingly in a number of languages - Tamil, Oriya, Malayalam, Hindi, Telugu, Kannada, English, Marathi, and Assamese. There were poems in Nepalese and Lithuanian also. They expressed a myriad of emotions- they spoke of their love for Him and His love for them; they spoke of how He has protected them time and time again; they spoke of the bliss of *darshan* and the exquisite pleasure of seeing Him for the first time. They spoke of His life and His message. They also spoke about His teachings and the bliss of *bhakthi*. The entire program was compered by 2 students who introduced each poet and gave a brief outline of what he was going to speak about.

At the end Swami distributed a special pen (a pen cum a flash-light) to all the poets and then He just kept on distributing till He had personally given a pen to all the 700 plus students of the School and the Institute. It took about 45 minutes, but He had a smile for each and every boy that came to receive the pen from His divine hands.

MARCH 25, MORNING: TWELFTH CLASS FAREWELL PROGRAM

In an emotional and touching program, the outgoing class of the Sri Sathya Sai Higher Secondary School expressed their gratitude to Him for the countless blessings that He had showered on them during their sojourn at His Lotus Feet. The program titled "Sai Message" was an interesting mix of a number of items that had the audience enthralled.

It started with "dumb charades" - wherein a student would act (without speaking) one of Swami's pithy messages like - "Hands that serve are holier than lips that pray", "Birds with Me and wings with You" etc and the audience was asked to correctly guess the message. The next item again depicted (through acting), incidents in the lives of strong spiritual personalities like Kuchela, Jatayu, Sabari and the audience was asked to name the devotee of the Lord connected with the incident. Another interesting item was the asking of questions on significant incidents from Swami's life. The whole program was interlaced with students' songs that expressed their love for the Lord as well as spoken testimonials of His benediction and protection. A well thought out skit next expressed Swami's teaching on discipline. Using a cricket match as a back-drop they showed how when the rules were followed, made for an enjoyable game; but when there were no rules to regulate the game there was utter chaos. The program was brought to a close with another skit of a story of two sons. The elder one who respected and saluted his father by touching his feet became a judge in a High Court, but the younger son who did not respect the father only became a peon in the same court and now had to salute everyone who entered the court.

MARCH 25: HOLI AND GOOD FRIDAY PROGRAMS BY THE SSSIHL BOYS

This year, Good Friday and *Holi* (a Hindu festival) both fell on the same day. The students had prepared skits to celebrate in a fitting manner these important festivals to both the Christian and the Hindu religions.

The skit started as a discussion between Joseph (a Christian) and Arvind (a Hindu) on the significance of Good Friday, the day when Jesus was nailed to the cross. Jesus taught 3 important lessons on this day- the infinite Love that God has for man, death is the dress of life, and the body is the temple of the Lord. They explained that Jesus was referring to the body as the temple of the Lord, when He asked the priests and money-lenders in the temple to break it and that He would rebuild it in 3 days.

The skit on Holi explained the significance of the festival wherein Holika was destroyed when she tried to kill Prahalada, a devotee of the Lord. This festival thus commemorates the triumph of good over evil as well as being a celebration of Prahlad's devotion to the Lord. They also explained the nine types of devotion and compared it to the colours of

the rainbow. The program concluded with a play in Telugu wherein there was a competition in Heaven as to who was the best father between divine personalities like Dasaratha, Indra, Nanda and Dronacharya. It concludes with the observation that God Himself is the best father when He incarnates on earth and is the Divine parent of every child on Earth.

MAY 26, 2005: HOLI CELEBRATIONS IN PRASHANTI NILAYAM BY THE SEVA ORGANIZATIONS OF BIHAR AND JHARKHAND STATES

THE MORNING PROGRAM:

The morning program featured a Bala Vikas dance-drama entitled "Pavitra Holi". The festival of *Holi* is connected with Prahlad's devotion to Lord Narayana and his escape from death at the hands of Holika. Prahlad's father Hiranyakashipu had ordered his death as Prahalada worshipped his arch enemy, Lord Narayana, in spite of being expressly forbidden to do so by his father. Hiranyakashipu failed in all his attempts to kill this devotee of the Lord. Finally, he ordered his sister Holika, to take Prahalada into a fire and seat him on her lap, as she had a boon that fire would not harm her. But due to the Lord's grace, Prahalada escaped and Holika was reduced to ashes.

The essential element in the *Holi* festival is the singing of *Holi* songs related to the frolics of Krishna with the Gopis. These scenes were enacted in the drama through dance to a back-ground of enchanting songs. The drama started with the Shanti *mantram* and a *vandana*. The songs included, "Khelat Holi Shyam Murari", "Baba Ke Aangan me aaye ham", "Ras Bahri Holi Khelat Murari", "Aaj Biraj me Hori hai re rasiya", and "Garba Geet". The final song was "Sandesh Bihar me Jab se aaya", which was a paean of praise to Swami. The song brought forth that Sai's message in Bihar is turning the land of weeds into Heaven. The compassionate Lord has woken up the residents from slumber and given them shelter at His Lotus Feet. They have all taken to *seva*, resolving all the differences amongst themselves and leaving all worldly attachments.

THE EVENING PROGRAM

The evening program continued with the same theme. It started with a *Holika Dahan*, where a symbolic effigy of Holika is burnt. The drama continues with people playing Holi by throwing colours on each other. Playfully the people also apply colour on a Parsee, a Muslim and a Christian who happen to be in the crowd. This makes them angry as they regard *Holi* as a Hindu festival. Things heat up, and Vishudak a wise man albeit with a clownish nature tries to explain the catholicity of the celebration of *Holi*. Through a story about 2 warring groups that fight to see who has the right to light the Holika and how the issue was amicably resolved, he brings out that Holi is celebrated to signify the unity amongst the diversity and that the different colours represent the unity of one rainbow. The play ends giving the message that devotion is timeless and universal and all of us have found Sai love that will help us cross the *Samsara Sagara*.

APRIL 9th: UGADI CELEBRATIONS IN SAI KULWANT HALL THE MORNING PROGRAM

The devotees from the Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organizations assembled in Prashanti Nilayam to usher in Ugadi, the Telugu New Year at the Lotus Feet. About 30 devotees from Mehaboobnagar had decorated the Mandir with *kalasam*, *rangoli* or floral patterns, mango leaves' buntings and floral arrangements on the Mandir facade in the traditional Andhra style for this auspicious occasion.

Sri S.V. Giri, the ex Vice-Chancellor of the SSSIHL gave the introductory speech and rendered thanks to Swami for allowing the devotees to celebrate this auspicious event. The event was kicked off by the *Panchaga Sravanam* (reading the almanac to predict the events of the coming year) by Vedic scholars from the Keesaragutta Veda Pathasala, Nalgonda district in Andhra Pradesh.

About 40 youth from Hyderabad next presented a musical program "Vasantha Hrudayam" to celebrate Ugadi. The program had nine melodious songs revolving around the theme of the Sai message of Sathya, Dharma, Shanti, Prema and Ahimsa. The unity and integrity of the nation, value based systems in life, selfless service, gratitude to mother and motherland were the highlights of the songs rendered in a mellifluous voice and divine music. This auspicious day also saw Swami bless a quarterly magazine "Sai Seva Jhari" that will bring out the news of the various service activities of the organization in Andhra Pradesh on a monthly basis.

THE EVENING PROGRAM

The Ugadi celebrations continued in the evening. Swami blessed Sri Sanjay Sahni, Principal of the Brindavan campus, SSSIHL, to address the gathering. Sri Sahni chose to speak on the importance of time and how we should sanctify it by using it to realize the Lord. This was followed by the long awaited divine discourse. Swami spoke on the nature of love. He stated that there is no power more powerful or more valuable than love. Love is your only true and eternal property, which should be treasured in your heart and used for sacred purposes. He exhorted as He has always done, to live in love for that is the only way you can understand love and experience God.

This was followed by a concert "Sayee Saranam" by a youth group from Visakhapatnam. The melodious songs included "Siddhi Vinayakam Gananayakam", "Vachindhi Vachindi Sai Ugadi", "Andhari Bhandhuvaya Bhadrachala Ramayaa", "Shirdi Nivasi Sai Shankara", "Rang de Chunariya" and so on. After some more songs, Swami asked the group to sing *bhajans*, before the program concluded with Arathi and distribution of *prasadam*.

APRIL 11 TO 13: KERALA YOUTH *SADHANA* CAMP

APRIL 11

About 1250 youth from Kerala gathered in Prashanti Nilayam for a 3 day *sadhana* camp. The day's activity would commence with Swami's *darshan* and a morning programme in Sai Kulwant Hall. After a short break, the youth would assemble for talks by students and staff of the Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning. They would assemble again later

in the evening, after the afternoon *darshan* and program, for discussions among themselves.

The camp was inaugurated by Swami with a divine discourse on the morning of the 11th, wherein He exhorted everyone to realize the term "human quality" as something that emerges from one's own self. The festivities in the afternoon was a concert with a presentation of devotional songs by Smt. Radhika Tilak and Kum. Gayathri Asokan.

APRIL 12th:

The morning of the 12th saw 4 speakers from the youth addressing the gathering in Sai Kulwant Hall (Kum. Nadiya and Kum. Rajila and Sri Manoj and Sri. Rakesh). The youth all spoke of Sai love in their young lives and its effect on transforming them.

Dr Anandmohan, a famous gynaecologist from Kerala next addressed the gathering. This was followed by a vocal concert by Sri T.S. Radhakrishnan who sang devotional songs like "Nada Thanu Manisam", "Hey Shyama Sundara", "Vanamali" and "Pibare Rama Rasam". In the evening another famous singer from Ernakulam, Sri Padmakumar sang for Swami and also enthralled the audience with songs like "Maha Vanapathim", "Sadguruvam Choni-Abang", "Nirtha Mudu Krishna", and "Sri Vayam". Swami materialised a gold chain with an OM symbol as a pendant for him as a token of His appreciation.

This was followed by a drama entitled "Uthistha Jagaratha" which tells the story of Kiran, a modern wayward youth from the U.S., who is taught by his grandparents the values of *Bharatiya* culture and transformed into a Sai Youth. Using the grandfather as a narrator, the drama narrated some incidents from the life of Sri Ramakrishna to effect a transformation in his young disciple Sri Vivekananda. This has a telling effect on Kiran and the transformation is complete.

APRIL 13th:

On the morning of the 13th, there were again speeches by 4 youth - Dr. Vinayan Uthaman and Sri Shajith and Kum. Malini and Kum. Uma. They all spoke of how much they had benefited by the camp and expressed gratitude to Bhagavan for all the attention that He had showered on them. After this Sri E. Mukundan, Kerala State President of the Sri Sathya Sai Organization also spoke and expressed his gratitude to Bhagavan.

Swami in His divine discourse said that in this short conference, the youth have dealt at length on various aspects such as the duties and responsibilities of youth and how they should mould their character. But however, He said, let all your activities be suffused with love and do not be carried away by the vagaries of the mind. Love everybody only for the sake of love. When you extend your love to all others, you attain the state of non-dualism, which is true devotion.

This was followed by a music program by the famous vocalists -Sri Ganesh Sundaram, Sri Biju Narayanan, Sri Padmakumar and Sri Radhakrishnan. Their songs included "Vinayaka Vignashaka", "Bhaja Govindam", "Chandana Charchitha", "Oruneramenkilum" and many others before *arathi* was taken.

The afternoon session saw a magnificent concert by Sri Kavalam Sreekumar, a famous singer from Kerala. Fittingly he sang the "Sree Ganapathini", "Yarukuthamtheriyum" and many Meera *bhajans* that brought the conference to a close on a deep and fervent devotional note.

APRIL 14th: TAMIL NEW YEAR DAY AND VISHU CELEBRATIONS IN SAI KULWANT HALL

This year Tamil New Years' day and Vishu (the Kerala New Year day) happened to fall on the same day according to the Hindu calendar. Thus the morning of the 14th saw devotees in their thousands from these 2 states gathered in a richly decorated Sai Kulwant Hall, to usher in the New Year at the Lotus Feet.

Sri G.K. Raman, Convenor of the Sri Sathya Sai Trust, Tamilnadu addressed the gathering, in which he sought Bhagavan's blessings for the New Year. He also profusely thanked Swami for the gift of water to Chennai city that had considerably reduced the woes of its citizens. Sri Rama Subramaniam, a prominent Chennai lawyer, spoke next of his family's long relationship with Swami and also the divine protection that He extended to all of them in times of need. The last speaker of the morning was Sri E. Mukundan, President of the Kerala State Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organizations who again thanked Swami and also spoke of Swami's blessings for the youth and devotees of Kerala. A fine *bhajan* rendition by singers from Kerala and Tamilnadu brought the morning's festivities to a close.

In the afternoon, in spite of the sweltering heat, we saw a superb rendition of devotional group songs by the Sundaram Bhajan group from Chennai to a thrilled audience. The songs included "Om Gam Ganapathe", "Sayeeshwara Nee Padamula", "Brahman Okate", "Vandanamu", "and Sri Marga Bandu Stothhtram" and so on. A beautiful "Venkatachala Nilayam" brought the concert to a close.

APRIL 18th: SRI RAMANAVAMI CELEBRATIONS IN SAI KULWANT HALL

With Swami remaining in Puttaparthi this year, even in April, we had the unexpected bonus of celebrating Ramanavami, or the birth anniversary of Lord Rama in Prashanti Nilayam. Usually this festival is celebrated in Brindavan, where Swami goes a few days after Sivarathri.

After Swami's arrival in Sai Kulwant Hall, He signalled Sri S.V. Giri to speak. Immediately after Sri Giri's speech, Swami immediately got up to give the divine discourse. Swami transported everyone back in time as He thrillingly recounted Rama stories. The Ramayana came alive as He talked of the divine births of the 4 brothers, the bringing up of the brothers and the close relationship between them. He went on to recount how Rama and Lakshmana accompanied Sage Valmiki to protect the *yagna* and also how Sri Rama won Sita's hand in the *Swayamvara* contest. Swami stressed how Rama always upheld dharma in all His actions and asked everyone to emulate Him.

In the afternoon, the boys sang some group songs in the *mandir* on Lord Rama before the evening *bhajans*.

APRIL 19th: SWAMI LEAVES FOR KODAIKANAL

The whole ashram had been abuzz for about 3-4 days with word that Swami is leaving with a group of people to Kodaikanal. Soon after April 14th, one by one Swami started picking the chosen few, students and devotees, who had won His Grace to accompany Him for a lifetime trip with the Lord to the scenic hill station of Kodaikanal in Tamilnadu for a few days.

On April 19th, Swami boarded a chartered Indian Airlines Airbus to make the flight to Madurai with about 85 excited and thrilled devotees and students. The boys had come in early and were waiting for Swami. Soon the devotees and their families also arrived and checked in at the Prashanti Nilayam airport. After the airplane landed around 11:30 am, Swami's car also arrived in a few minutes. His car had taken almost a half hour to make the short journey from Prashanti Nilayam to the airport due to the emotional send-off given by the residents along the route. Swami also in His infinite mercy went beyond the airport to grant His *darshan* to the residents of the neighbouring villages who were pining for Him. After entering the airport Swami directly drove to the aircraft and entered it. The boys and devotees soon followed and the luggage was quickly loaded. The plane took off at 12:30 PM from Prashanti Nilayam airport with its most precious passenger seated in seat 1-C.

As we write this, the Sun God is blessing Puttaparthi profusely. So till next time, we wish all of you a pleasant summer and pray for Swami's love and blessings for you and your family. Keep cool by thinking of the Lord!

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