

HEART 2 HEART
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BETWEEN YOU AND US

Dear Reader,

In a historic discourse on the 17th of May 1968 in Mumbai, the most populous metropolitan city of India, Bhagawan announced: "This is a human form in which every divine entity, every divine principle, that is to say, all the names and forms ascribed by man to God, are manifest...You are very fortunate that you have a chance to experience the bliss of the vision of the *Sarvadaivathwa swaroopam* [the form that is all forms of the Gods] now, in this life itself."

God comes down in human form once in a millennium and those who are His contemporaries are truly blessed, but imagine the great good fortune of the soul God selects as the Mother of His Incarnation. It happens only to one individual in an entire age, such as Kausalya in the days of Rama, Devaki during *Tretha* Yuga, Mary in more recent times, and Easwamma during the Sai Avatar.

Swami once said, "It is because Kausalya bore Him in the womb that Rama shone forth as God...It is because Putlibai fostered him that Gandhiji became famous as Mahatma; it is because the chaste Easwamma brought Him up with love and affection that Sathyanarayana [Swami's childhood name] earned name and fame."

The Mother was a confluence of those noble virtues for which Indian women have been revered for centuries and an outstanding example of purity and love for the lord just like the Divine Mothers of yore. Every devotee craves for God's love but in some very special cases the Lord craves for the love of an individual. Easwamma was one such blessed soul. Did Easwamma know from the beginning that she was mothering the Master of Creation? Did she undergo similar agonies and ecstasies like Yashoda did? What is that which gave her mind-numbing nightmares yet also carried her spirit to realms of ecstasy? And finally, what is it we should emulate from her glorious character and integrate into our lives? You will find answers to these and much more in our cover story.

You will also learn how the Incarnation slowly and subtly chiseled her being through a soothing smile, a piercing look, a cutting remark or an intriguing interaction until bit by bit all traces of maternal attachment fell away leaving her shimmering like a radiant star in the ever-expanding galaxy of the Sai family, steering fellow devotees to His feet. This month's cover story is a tribute to Easwamma's life as we not only honor her passing but celebrate the purity she attained through her selfless love for God and His Manifestations.

Selfless love: That has been the main thrust of Sai's message, be it during Birthday, Christmas or Shivarathri, whether in Mumbai, Chennai or Puttaparthi. We take heart in watching Sai devotees from every corner of the globe transforming their lives and becoming willing instruments of His message and love. Dear reader, did you know that more than 4500 cataract surgeries have been performed by Sai sevaks in some of the most inaccessible regions of Africa? This has been going on for over a year in six African nations. When you read our report in this month's Sai Seva section, it will surely be an eye opener for you as well.

Similarly, Sai devotees from New Zealand recently conducted a series of medical camps in some of the poorest and remote villages in the islands of Fiji. A village elder said, "We pray that you come next year too," while a school headmaster proclaimed, "You bring us God's love...please come again," and a Sai volunteer remarked, "The unity and love here is incredible." The Sai volunteers went to serve and uplift others but were themselves spiritually and psychologically rejuvenated and deeply moved by the love and grace supporting their efforts. We are certain when you read, you will be moved as well.

Recently we began a series of articles on Latin America with Mexico being the focus country in the last issue. This time you will read about Sai's influence extending all the way to El Salvador and how the small Central American nation and its capital San Salvador are being transformed into "Sai Salvador." This country was named after the Spanish word for "the Savior" and now Sai has become the refuge for this earthquake prone and volcano ridden land whose political history has been equally chaotic.

Sathya Sai's love flows exactly at the right time to the person who is in need. Distance is immaterial and His methodology is unique for every individual. When fate struck Agnes in the form of a serious cardiac ailment, her husband Godfrey, a humble farmer in Kismula village of Uganda, did his best but was unable to find adequate medical care for her. However, just when all hope seemed lost, Sathya Sai entered their lives and now they once again communicate through smiles. How did it all happen? Read this inspiring story in the Healing Touch section.

In Sai Service,
Heart2Heart Team.

YOUR SAY - FEEDBACK FROM OUR READERS

RESPONSE TO THE APRIL ISSUE OF H2H

Feedback on the Supplementary Article to the Cover Story

Dear H2H Brothers,

The article appearing in H2H on Easter authored by Reverend Father Charles Ogada is simply superb, explaining the spiritual significance of the whole chain of divine events, for both the pious Xian as well as the Hindu, nay, any discerning spiritualist who may read it! May the spirit of Jesus / the love of Sai guide us to reach that level! Thank you abundantly Rev. Father and the H2H team.

Yours in the loving Soul,
Badri - from Sangita family



Sai Ram Dear Brothers,

I would like to say a few words with regards to the cover story – “The Story Of Easter – Jesus Is Risen!” by Reverend Father Charles Ogada. About the meaning of Easter this is probably the first time I really understood what Easter is all about and relate it to our *sadhana*. Also what Jesus had to go through for mankind.... Also I read the article on Lingodbhavam by Prof. Venkataraman and it really was an eye opener for me personally. The way the article was written and explained stage by stage the events and the meaning of Lingodbhavam and how we should relate to our every day life with it's ups and downs.

Sai Ram,
Sarika.



Feedback on the Spiritual Quiz

Dear Heart to Heart Team,

I wish to congratulate you on a fine quiz. The questions, answers and level of interactivity are all fine in my opinion. The information focuses on some

beautiful essentials that demonstrate the true extent of how being a Sai devotee can open one's mind to the appreciation of spiritual faiths other than one's own.

Your quiz is a great example of what Sai devotees can produce to prove that we are hardly a cult or anything for the world to fear but that the Sai approach is one founded upon a charity of the human heart which is found in all of us, and that one does not have to leave one's religion at all in order to benefit from the enhancing wisdom of Sai spirituality. In this respect, the emphasis in the quiz on the practical value of the teachings of Sai Baba and other great spiritual world leaders is commendable.

Good work, Heart to Heart people! Keep it up!
Laura



RESPONSES TO SAI INSPIRES

Sairam.

I cannot wait to read Sai Inspires every morning. It actually makes my day. I forward it to many people and they all say that just by reading Sai inspirations they are learning to make a change in their lives by practicing the 5 human values. Most of these people I send to are not even Sai Devotees. Reading the stories also helps in knowing what goes on in other parts of the world, and reading the miracles of other people brings so much tears to my eyes and joy in my heart. My love for Swami is growing by reading Sai Inspires. I myself have had so many miracles in my life and reading other peoples stories makes me want to cry. I have made a lot of changes in my life just by reading Sai Inspires. I try my best to practice what Swami wants of me. My Sai Love to the wonderful team out there. You will be truly blessed by Swami as your work is inspiring a lot of people like myself. Keep up the good work!

Devi Kisten



Dear H2H team,

You cannot imagine my impatience each day for the next day to come to work and read the message from the H2H team. Your messages are so inspirational and divine that, just by reading it, it enlivens my spirit and gives me an opportunity to reflect each day on my deeds and actions. I must confess I am not an overtly religious person, but reading each day's message makes me feel that I am building a closer bond between God and myself.

Roy.



Dear Brothers,

I've been receiving your "Sai Inspires" since the beginning. I have almost all of them. Only a few are missing. It's a wonderful job you're doing. I've translated your messages into Portuguese and posted on the Net and e-mailed to other people. At Orkut I've been posting "Sai Inspires" in English and Portuguese, as well the "Thoughts for the day" since 2004.

Sai Ram
Antonio Paiva



Sai Ram,

One of the first e-mails I open every day is the message from the Heart2Heart Team. Why? Because you are inspired by our beloved Bhagavan choosing the right message for every day, for everyone. It occurs when I cannot get an answer from the heart it comes some days later via one of your messages. That is my experience. Please continue sending these messages, they are valuable to me. That is one of His ways in which He works.

Sai Ram
Mrs. Zatsia Renfurm (Holland)



Sai Ram

I am very happy to receive mails and blessings from Swami through e-mails. It is like having a sip of cold water in mid summer hot sun which gives us energy, relaxation & peace of mind. The message whatever H2H team sends me, is guides me "A lot" in my day to day matters. Keep Continuing.

Sai Ram.
P.Venkateswara Rao.



Sairam,

An excellent service from this team. I am a working women and the first mail I read in the morning is "Sai Inspires" before I commence my day to day tasks. Being in Sai family you all know Swami need not come in front of us or we need not go to Parthi / Whitefield / Kodai to seek answers / blessings from HIM, through many means he answers to our prayers. One of the means for me is "Sai Inspires" messages.

My heartiest wishes to the entire team and request you all to continue this service.

Thanks,
Jayashri.



Sai ram,

The messages you send everyday are truly inspirational in my life. This has become one of the ways I receive messages from Swami. Let it be a confirmation from Swami about a decision, a pick-me-up line when I am down and out on my luck, or just something that puts a big smile on my face in the morning. I look forward to the messages everyday without fail at around 11 plus in the morning, Singapore time. The discipline in which you always send it around that time is also remarkable. May Swami bless you today and everyday for doing this wonderful job that you do.

Prakash, SSEHV teacher,
Singapore.



Sai Ram Dear Brothers in the Heart2Heart Team,

Messages from Heart2Heart and RadioSai programmes help me a lot to purify myself. Very often I enjoy tears of love for Bhagavan through the messages I listen and read. Some guide me, for example, the true meaning of surrender, I learnt it through these messages. I am far away from India and unable to come to Prashanthi as much as I want but due to Prashanthi Bulletin I am able to know what's going on at Prashanthi and it gives me so much happiness. Special Sunday Special message sent for Rama Navami about Ramayana really touched my heart. In the monthly journal articles, "Swami and Me" section always bring tears of love and gives me joy. These are only few examples of what I really liked. I did not come across anything which I do not like, but for my taste I would like to humbly suggest the following,

1. Heart2Heart Sunday special - You can write more about devotees experience with Bhagavan, specially in the old days or ask devotees to write how Bhagavan came into their lives and select the most touching articles.
2. If possible, please include Bhagavan's recent photo's and specially the one's which look like looking at us in the daily Sai Inspires messages.
3. Is it possible to send these messages daily to the internet so that anyone could see it if he/she wants? I think that sending these messages to more than 9000 people everyday consumes lot of your precious time.

With love and regards,
Subodhini Ramanan

(Dear Subodhini, regarding your first question, we already have two sections dedicated to devotees experiences in H2H and generally we would like to give 'Spiritual food for thought' in the Sunday special messages as there is a hunger for it. However, we will have devotees experiences too on certain occasions. Then with the respect to your second question, we do not have enough photos of Swami looking straight to send one everyday. And regarding having Sai Inspires on the web, we are working on it and in the near future Sai Inspires messages along with archives will be on www.radiosai.org. – H2H Team)



RESPONSES TO THE SUNDAY SPECIAL ARTICLES

Feedback on “Law and Justice’ sent on 16th April 2006

To The Team at H2H,

Thank you for your wonderful article on law and justice. I agree with Justice Dinakaran's and your ideas about how the common law needs to strictly adhered to the principals of *Atma* dharma or divine law. You both have provided accurate information on right conduct through law which is sorely needed in today's society, world wide. This is in keeping with the principals of eternal law as taught by Sai Baba.

Kind regards
Sylvana Bonaddio
Melbourne Australia.



Feedback on “How Much Salary Does A Man Really Need?” sent on 26th March 2006

Sairam. Your article was an eye opener, I came to Doha Qatar (by His grace) for a high salary, in Nov 2002. First one and half year, life was just like the desert - dull and monotonous! Money was not giving satisfaction. I prayed to SWAMI to make my life more meaning full and purpose full and He answered.

I joined Doha Sai Samithi in May 2004, doing seva and attending bhajans and study classes. Believe it or not, my desire to earn more has vanished. Being in the second richest country in the world with all its attractions has become meaningless.

How fortunate are Swami's (property and wealth) His own students that they have the good fortune to realise the truth of the value of high salary right at His lotus feet at a very young age.

Sanjeev menon
Asst. sales manager



Sairam!

Curriculum of all business schools is generally the same but the Specialty of Sai School is helping students 'Evolve as Humans' and this is the ultimate in any subject of Education!

Supreme Happiness is in Self-confidence, Contentment, Tolerance, Ethical Values, Commitment to Help Others and these are the Basic Traits chiseled here.

Sai Graduates stand-out as Composite Masters and blessed will be those corporations who employ them.

Sai Pranams!
RAMSU



SPIRITUAL BLOSSOMS

THE ESSENCE OF BUDDHA'S TEACHINGS

May 13th is sacred as Buddha Poornima, celebrating the birth of Lord Buddha. Let's recapitulate Swami's message on this occasion in 1998.

Happiness Is Union With God

All that is connected with body is temporary and transient. What men should seek is enduring bliss. Happiness is union with God. Buddha prescribed five duties: good vision, good thoughts, listening to good things, good speech, and good actions. These five-fold duties constitute true *sadhana* (spiritual practice).

Man is misusing the talents given to him by the Divine. He is giving free vent to the six cardinal vices like lust, anger, and greed. They are not the gifts of the Divine. They have been fostered by the food people eat. They are animal qualities which have to be got rid of. People should speak the truth and avoid speaking what is unpleasant even if it is truth. The entire gamut of human life should be based on truth.

Bharatiya (Indian) culture has placed the foremost emphasis on "Speak the truth; act righteously." Speaking truth is a supreme virtue for all people, anywhere. In any circumstance one should adhere to truth. Truth is God incarnate. Righteousness should accompany one like a shadow.

When you have truth and righteousness as your guiding stars you can achieve anything in life. All powers are inherent in these two virtues. Man can realize bliss only when he turns his vision inward. Only proximity to God can confer happiness. It cannot be had elsewhere, from anyone else.

It is a mark of ignorance to expect that some other person will give you happiness. Buddha felt sad that people should be subject to such ignorance. He practiced many spiritual exercises and came to a certain decision.

He decided to go to Gaya and experience bliss by his own way. He found the source of bliss within himself. He realised it could not be got from outside.

Every man's heart is the dwelling place of God. Hence everyone should take good care of it and cultivate it as the source of divine bliss.

Cultivate Sacred Feelings

Because Buddha's teachings were not properly propagated, Buddhism steadily declined in this country. All religions suffer a decline because those who profess them do not practice them in their daily lives. People should practice what they profess.

People should live up to the truths in which they believe. People do not act upon the truths they have learnt. Unfortunately, people today have only outward vision. The external vision is characteristic of animals. You must sanctify your vision by turning it inward. Then you can get rid of animal qualities and divinise your life. Hence, develop godly feelings within you.

The divine dwells in the heart of everyone. You must enthuse those who entertain godly feelings. Such people should not be discouraged. Divine feelings arise in one only as a consequence of good deeds done in many lives. Only a sacred heart can experience the Divine. The pursuit of any object other than the Divine is a futile exercise - worldly possessions come and go, but divinity comes and grows.

There are three things required to be done in life. You should try to do good to those that have done harm to you. You must forget the harm done by others and also the good you have done to others. So you should forget what needs to be forgotten and remember those things that require to be remembered. What are the things you have to remember? The good that others have done to you. You must remember the good that has been done to you as something sacred. You must express your gratitude to them. Make all your actions conform to righteousness (*dharma*). Whatever actions you do remembering God will get sanctified thereby.

*See no evil; See what is good.
Hear no evil; Hear what is good.
Speak no evil; Speak what is good.
Think no evil; Think what is good.
Do no evil; Do what is good.
This is the way to God.*

This is the essence of Buddha's teachings. When you are indulging in evil pursuits through your senses, how can you get peace? Peace should come from *hridaya* (the spiritual heart) filled with compassion. *Embodiments of Love* ! The Divine dwells in each of us in the form of Love.

- *Divine Discourse, 11th May 1988*

- Heart2Heart Team

CONVERSATIONS WITH SAI - PART 20 (Continued from the previous issue)

H (Hislop): At times, Swami, sounds are still heard as usual, but every sound is surrounded by silence, and it is the silence that is heard.

SAI: That silence that surrounds outside sounds is God. Inside that silence is the eternal sound of 'Om'. There is only one sound, and that is 'Om'. Every other sound arises from Om.

H: One is conscious of a force, a strength that rises up in oneself. What is that?

SAI: That life force must be turned to God.

H: How does one direct that force?

SAI: Through faith and love. These must be tended with love and care like tender plants. The bud cannot be forcefully pulled up into a tree.

THE TRANSFORMING POWER OF SAI

H: Baba said Ramakrishna Paramahansa merely touched Vivekananda and transformed him?

SAI: Yes. But it was temporary. After a while it fell away. Vivekananda's strong temper rose again and he had to work out his own *sadhana*. What Ramakrishna accomplished was to reverse the trend to Vivekananda's life from downwards into material life to upwards into spiritual *sadhana*. Without that, Vivekananda would have continued in materialistic life.

H: Can it be said that the reversal given to Vivekananda's life by the touch of Ramakrishna is given to our own lives merely by the Darshan of Baba?

SAI: **Baba does not do that. He slowly and gradually changes the lives of his devotees. But the change is permanent.**

H: How should one listen to Swami when He is in conversation or giving a discourse? That is, Swami's words have so many deep and deeper levels.

SAI: Swami is speaking to you in body with a voice. Listen in the natural way. At length, body and mind drop away and there is divine direct understanding.

SWAMI SAYS 'YES' TO EVERYTHING

H: Swami is often heard saying, "Yes, yes, yes".

SAI: 'Yes, yes, yes', refers to inner acceptance. Experiences and situations arise in the life of a person. His tendency is to say 'yes' to that which is pleasing and 'no' if the prospect is otherwise... This is a great mistake. **Swami says 'Yes, yes, yes' to everything that comes to Him. All is the gift of God. Every experience given by God is good. Through sincere and loving inquiry, that "good" will be found in every experience.** 'Yes, yes, yes' refers to inner acceptance. But there is bad work and good work. Whatever they are, they are real. 'Yes, yes, yes' does not change them. A man locks his valuables in a safe and carries away the key in the belief that it is safe. But thieves take the safe and break it open. So, one must be sure that he understands the essentials of every situation.

H: All the subtle inside and outside tasks to be done! Spiritual life seems very difficult.

SPIRITUAL LIFE IS EASY!

SAI: **Vital to spiritual life is self-confidence, the conviction that one is the Atma. Spiritual life is easy.** There are some initial problems, as in learning anything. But it is easy. A bowl turned upside down remains dry no matter how heavy the rain. Whereas a bowl turned up collects some rain even though the rain is very light. **If the heart is turned towards God, some grace will be received. If the interest and devotion is intense, grace will fill the bowl.** It is life in the outer world that is endless trouble, whereas spiritual life is easy. One already has the necessary concentration. To be reborn again requires no work. Not to be reborn again requires much work. To gain wealth requires much work. To remain poor requires no work.

THE 'REALITY' OF THE DREAM AND WAKING STATE

H: When a person is in the waking state, he can observe that the dream experience is a projection of his own mind. Swami says that the waking state is also a dream. But where is the vantage point from which we may observe that the waking state is only a dream?

SAI: One may have a dream that he is a child, that he attends school, makes friends, marries, is a father and has a career – a sequence of events that covers 45 years of his life. The dream may occur at 3:15 a.m. and be over by 3:17 a.m. In two minutes of waking time the dreamer has experienced events that extend through 45 years of dream time.

When the waking state is transcended, it also is seen to be a dream, and a lifetime in the waking state has taken only a few moments in the transcendental state. The waking state is seen to be a dream, and the dream state, a dream within a dream.

The dream state is unreality in truth; the waking state is truth in unreality; and the transcendent state is truth in truth. The 'I' in the dream state is taken to be the body. The 'I' in the waking state is taken to be the mind. And the 'I' in the transcendent state is God.

H: But Swami, there is another difference between the dream state and the waking state. In the dream state one does not doubt his reality, whereas in the waking state there is an extremely strong doubt. In the waking state one cannot believe that he is a real entity; one sees himself as a shadow and not as a real person engaged in activity.

SAI: You see yourself as a shadow. And then there is a change, and you experience yourself as real. Like this it changes back and forth. The two sides of a coin, the face and the obverse.

H: Yes, it is like that.

SAI: But that is not the typical experience of the waking state. It is a yogic stage due to *sadhana*. People ordinarily experience the dream state as truth while dreaming and they experience the waking state as truth while awake. What you experience is qualified monism. In the *advaitic* (non-dualistic) state, even the shadow is seen as a reflection of the Divine.

SAI: *(to the college boys in the group)* It is necessary to understand topics such as these, although they are somewhat difficult to grasp.

SAI: *(to Hislop)* What is that beneath your shirt?

H: *(taking a chain from around his neck and giving it to Swami)* It is the ring that Swami gave that is now broken.

SAI: *(after passing around the ring to the college boys)* What do you want?

H: If Swami could repair the ring?

SAI: Only that?

H: Whatever Swami pleases would delight me.

(Sai held the broken ring between thumb and forefinger and blew His breath on the ring. Immediately there was a new ring, which He gave to the college boys to pass around. When the ring returned, He took the left hand of Hislop and put the ring on the fourth finger. It was a gold ring of delicate filigree setting. The enamel stone was large and oval with a smiling portrait of Baba on a light blue background.)

SAI: In the world, the metal, the stone and the jeweller are all separate, as is the one who will take the ring, and they must be brought together. **Whereas, in the world of Swami, the metal, the stone, the jeweller and the one who will take the ring are all one, and that One is God.** In the world, time is needed. But God is beyond time. Immediately the ring is ready.

A Visitor: It would be of interest if Baba would do a large creation.

SAI: Since Swami has taken a body He has imposed certain proper limitations on Himself. Swami has created idols of gold and could just as easily create a mountain of gold.

STAGES IN SWAMI'S LIFE

H: Swami, people are thinking that after His 60th birthday Bhagavan Baba will step away from contact with the world and that His devotees will no longer have access to Him.

SAI: No, not at all. Sai is not separating from the world, nor will He separate from His devotees. The course of an Avathar goes invariably through the same stages. It is the same for every Avathar at all times. The first 16 years are characterized by constant *Leelas*; then *leelas* and teaching up to age 45. From age 45 to 60 the emphasis is almost wholly on teaching. At age 60 there is a very big change.

SWAMI REVEALS DETAILS ON THE CRUCIFIXION OF JESUS

H: The crucifixion of Christ, the metal figure of Christ on the cross that Swami created, the metal, when strongly magnified appears to be more or less covered with small bumps. What are they?

SAI: They are blood, knots of blood. The body was in a bad condition. It had been hurt and injured over the entire body. At death, the blood came to a sudden stop and the bumps are clots of blood.

H: Swami, on the photo enlargements of the statue it also looks as if a sort of slice of the nose had been removed.

SAI: The nose is whole. That is a heavy blood stain. When the face itself is enlarged, it is seen as a dead face. Swami made the metal of the body after its death.

H: Because of pictures being around and the story and pictures being in books, the little figure on the cross is becoming quite famous. What should be done with it – should it be placed in the new Sathya Sai Museum?

SAI: For the museum Swami will make a big image of Christ. The small one was for you. You keep it. What do you make of Christmas?

H: I was never really interested in Christianity, but I have paid more attention since Swami made the crucifixion.

SAI: I mean what does Christmas represent?

H: The birth of Christ is represented.

SAI: The 25th is not the birth. It was on the 24th, near midnight.

H: Not long ago, I found out something very interesting about the Christian religion. The early Christian Fathers of the Eastern Church knew something of which modern Christians have no idea. The early Fathers taught that one should constantly say 'Lord Jesus Christ have mercy on me'. There is the constant repetition of Christ's name until the name goes into the heart where the repetition continues without cessation. Along with the repetition of the name, the form of Christ is visualized in the mind. I learned of this through reading an old book, *The Way of the Pilgrim*, translated from the Russian.

SAI: As time goes on, the significant factors of the spiritual path are lost. The Christian mystics took up the repetition of the name of Christ starting about 19 years after his death. As time goes on, human nature comes to the front and the divine is put aside and forgotten. That which was known of the spiritual path after the time of Rama was no longer there at the time of Krishna. And that which Krishna taught was gone when Sai came. It is the same with the Buddhists, the Muslims and the Jains.

H: What the early Christian mystics taught was surely the heart of the Christian religion. And one never hears of it today from Christian people.

(To be continued)....

– Heart2Heart Team

CHINNA KATHA - A little story from Bhagavan

PRACTISE AND PREACH

RAMAKRISHNA PARAMAHAMSA was an ideal guru. There is an interesting anecdote to illustrate how he never preached anything he did not practise himself.

One day, an old lady came to Ramakrishna Paramahansa with her ten-year-old grandson. She prostrated before him and said, "Master! I have come to seek your advice. This boy is my grandson.

"He lost his father and mother when he was just a child of five. I have been taking care of him. He is very fond of sweets. He eats so much that his health is deteriorating day by day. The doctors have advised him not to eat sweets but this fellow does not pay any heed to their advice. However, he has great respect and admiration for you.

"So I have come to request you to stop the boy from eating sweets. I am sure, you alone can do this." Ramakrishna said, "Mother, don't worry, come with your grandson after one month. In the meanwhile I shall think of a plan to convince the boy that one's health is very important, more important even than wealth." The old woman thanked him and took her leave.

Exactly a month later she came back with her grandson. Both of them offered their salutations to the master. Ramakrishna made the boy sit beside him and said, "My dear boy: remember, one's real wealth is health. Unless you take proper care of your health you will not be able to grow into a strong and healthy young man. You will not be able to do anything great in life if you are weak.

When something that we eat does not suit our constitution, we should give up eating that item. From tomorrow you should not eat sweets. After some time you may eat moderately. You are a nice boy and will listen to me, will you not?" The boy nodded his head and promised that he would not eat sweets.

The old woman sent the boy on some errand just to have a confidential talk with the master. "Master, may I ask you a question?" said the old woman. "Certainly mother," Ramakrishna replied. "Master, this advice which you have given today to my grandson you could have given last month. Why did you ask me to come again after a month? I don't understand."

Ramakrishna replied with an understanding smile, "Mother, I myself eat lots of sweets. How can I advise the boy to do something that I am not doing myself?"

One has no right to preach anything to others before practising it himself. So I asked for some time. This one month I did not eat sweets. So I have earned the right to advise your grandson.” The old woman marvelled at the righteous conduct of Ramakrishna. She fell at his feet and took leave of him.

We should never advise anyone about anything which we ourselves have not put into practice.

– Heart2Heart Team

COVER STORY

EASWARAMMA – THE CROWN OF MOTHERHOOD

"Easwaramma was the chosen one. I chose her to be My mother. That is the intimate relationship between Mother Easwaramma and Myself."

That was the emphatic declaration of Bhagavan on the most auspicious Easwaramma Day, the 6th of May, 2001. In no uncertain terms Swami communicated how lofty, grand and glorious is the stature of Mother Easwaramma. The thronging crowd in Sai Ramesh Hall exploded into loud applause that evening as they heard these Divine words from Bhagavan.

Easwaramma - Mother Divine

Mother Easwaramma, truly, was a divine effulgence which graced mother Earth with a sacred mission and purpose by the inscrutable will of the Divine just like Kaushalya, (Mother of Sri Rama), Devaki (Mother of Sri Krishna) or Mary (Christ's Mother). She underwent similar agonies and ecstasies, fears and dilemmas, trials and triumphs, and ultimately bliss and beatitude that the Divine Mothers of yore passed through.

Like Krishna, Swami was the eighth child of Mother Easwaramma and the turbulent times she went through before he took birth were akin to what Devaki experienced before Krishna graced her lap. None of Mother Devaki's previous seven children could escape from the heinous designs of the demon Kamsa. Easwaramma too suffered at the hands of cruel fate. She had four miscarriages in a row before the Light of the World descended as her Son.

"Easwaramma" – The Name Said It All

It was not as if it was totally unannounced, for Kondama Raju, father-in-law of Easwaramma, had dreams of the family preceptor Venka Avadhootha instructing him to be prepared, though for what he was not told. As Swami explained:

Kondama Raju, the grandfather of this physical body, being a jnani (one of wisdom), was blessed with a vision of the future. One day he called his son, Pedda Venkama Raju, and told him to change his wife's name to Easwaramma. He told this because he felt the divine vibrations originating from within. His intention was to convey that she was the mother of Easwara, God Himself. But Pedda Venkama Raju was not aware of the inner meaning of this name. He implicitly obeyed the command of his father and changed the

name of his wife to Easwaramma. Easwaramma was first christened as Namagiriamma at the time of birth.

So long before Swami was born, Namagiriamma became Easwaramma, meaning, the Mother of Easwara, or God, and in his own inimitable way the Divine Lord announced his coming advent.

Many years later, a Pundit well versed in the Puranas asked Swami, “Was your Incarnation a Pravesa (an Entrance) or a Prasava (Enceinte)?”

Turning to Easwaramma seated in front, he said, “Tell what happened that day near the well after your mother-in-law had warned you.”

The Mother said:

She had dreamt of Sathyanarayana Deva and she cautioned me that I should not be frightened if something happens to me through the will of God. That morning when I was at the well drawing water, a big ball of blue light came rolling towards me and I fainted and fell. I felt it glide into me.

“There you have the answer!” Swami said, “I was not begotten. It was Pravesa, not Prasava.”

The First Miracle

So it was the Divine had decided to descend and had chosen the womb of Mother Easwaramma as his temporary abode. When the sacred moment arrived in the early hours of the morning on that holy Monday, the day dedicated to Lord Shiva, on the 23rd of November 1926, the Chosen Mother had just consumed prasada (consecrated food) given to her by her mother-in-law after the hour-long Sathyanarayana *Puja*.

She accepted and relished the sanctified food and before the sun had spread its morning light on the Rathnakaram household the house was bright with jubilation, joy and gaiety – the long awaited son was born. Those present were blessed to witness the first miracle of the Divine Personality, described by Prof. N. Kasturi, Baba’s biographer:

A mat covered with a thick bedspread had been placed in a corner of the room, when the labor had begun, and now the baby was placed on it by the grandmother. Suddenly they found the bedspread rising up and falling down on either side of the baby. She grasped the child and held it close. A serpent was coiled beneath! Of course, snakes there were in plenty at Puttaparthi, creeping through crevices, crawling along the walls, and hiding in holes. But a

serpent in the lying-in room pretending to be a bed – it was the role of Adishesha for the Vishnu who rested on its coils. This was the Incarnation's first miracle. When Easwamma was asked about this epic event, she confessed she had been so filled with joy at the birth of a son she had never even noticed the agitation all around.

Sathya's Attitude Baffles Easwamma

Yes, the "Rathnakaram" family, meaning "a treasure chest of gems," now had its most precious jewel and the home was a hive of activity. With his bewitching looks and captivating smiles, little Sathya (Swami's childhood name) instantly become the cynosure of the village. Later, his prodigious talents in music, dance and poetry, and his divine *leelas* enacted right from early childhood on would bring joy to many. As for Easwamma, she was the one who fretted over Swami every moment and suffered the most from his indifferent-to-this-world attitude. In her own words:

He [Sathya] never asked for any particular food or clothes. A bundle of clothes would be brought from Hindupur or Anantapur and one of the grownups, father or grandfather, would call the boys in the family asking each one to choose for himself. But Sathya always sat aloof until the others had made their choice and then he would take whatever was left behind, rejected by the others. He never seemed to have any desire or wish of his own, but his face would light up with a beam when he saw the other children happy. When we asked him what he wanted, a smile was the only reply. I would hug him close and try to get him to confide his wish to me.

'Sathya, tell me what you want. I will give it to you,' I would say. 'I do not need anything' was his only answer. 'Whatever you give me, I will accept. That is enough for me. I will not choose.'

Sathya used to play with other children and sing bhajans for hours on end. Her daughters reported that he performed a very intricate dance a child artiste demonstrated during a drama in Bukkapatnam even better than the original. But Sathya's solemnity inside the house disturbed his mother beyond measure. Years later Easwamma would recount:

This was something I could not understand. How were we different? What made him so deeply sober and serious? I began at last to wonder whether the label Brahmajnan (a realized soul) the village elders had stuck on him and which I had thought a mockery was indeed a tribute after all.

Then Yashoda, Now Easwaramma

Like Yashoda, Sri Krishna's foster Mother, Easwaramma would often pray for Divine intervention for Sathya to turn into a normal Puttapparthi boy. Still, Easwaramma could see in him the potentials of a poet, a singer, a dancer, a playwright and a director and she hoped he would blossom in these fields. In fact, such was Sathya's theatrical skills and such was Easwaramma's simplicity that whenever she saw him being "tortured" in a drama he acted in, she wept aloud and even tried to protect her Sathya!

And again like Mother Yashoda, who was troubled and torn by instances of demons vying for the life of her sweet darling child, Mother Easwaramma too faced agonizing and abnormal experiences. After every display of Sathya's supernatural powers her worries only increased. Here is what she experienced told in Swami's own words:

When Swami was staying in the Old Mandir, one day there was an unusual crowd. Sensing danger, Easwaramma came to Me and said, 'Swami, these people seem to be having some ulterior motive. I am afraid they may try to harm You. I am unable to sleep peacefully.' I infused courage in her, saying, 'Be fearless. The body is bound to perish one day or the other. So, give up body attachment.'

Those days I used to sleep all alone in a thatched hut. That night, as Easwaramma feared, some evil-minded people set the hut on fire from all four sides. There were raging flames all around. Seeing this, Subbamma and Easwaramma came running. When they reached the spot, they found to their utter amazement, there was a heavy downpour on the hut. However, there was absolutely no rain in the surrounding area. When I came out of the hut, both of them were overjoyed to see Me safe and sound.

Similarly, on another occasion Swami shared:

One day, somebody invited Me to their house for food. Actually their intention was to poison Me. They were feeling jealous of My growing popularity and prosperity. In those days I used to relish vadas made of Alasanda grains. Hence, they mixed poison in vadas and offered them to Me. Before going there, I had told Easwaramma and Subbamma not to be afraid if any untoward incident was to happen. When I returned from there, My entire body turned blue and My mouth started frothing. I told Easwaramma to wave her hand in a circle. She did accordingly, and to her utter amazement there appeared vibhuti in her hand. She mixed it in water and gave it to Me. Instantly, I became normal. She wondered, 'Swami can create vibhuti with a wave of his hand. But

how is it that vibhuti appeared in My hand?’ In fact, I had given her that power for that moment.

Easwamma went through many trying times mothering the “infinite power” incarnated in her humble home, though of course there were also mystical and profound experiences. When Sathya was just nine months old, one singular episode baffled her beyond her limits.

I can remember the whole incident fresh and clear. I had just bathed and dressed him and applied on his eyes cooling collyrium. I applied vibhuthi from the Shiva temple and a dot of kumkum from the Sathyamma temple on his brow. I put him in the cradle, gave it a swing and turned to the hearth where the milk had come to a boil. Suddenly I heard him cry. I was surprised for, believe me, he had never cried since birth for any reason, hunger, or pain, or discomfort. I picked him up and placed him on my lap and he stopped the wail. I saw a halo of brilliant light all around him, a circle of radiance surrounding him. But the light did not hurt me, it was so cool though so bright and near. I sat still, lost in delight. It was there a long time, before it faded slowly away. I closed my eyes and probably lost awareness of everything around until my mother-in-law came to me and I awoke. The child was apparently asleep. She asked me what had happened and I told her about the halo that I could see even then in clear outline. She put her finger on her lips and said, ‘Don’t tell anyone of this. They wouldn’t understand. They would spread all kinds of tales.’

Easwamma would be blessed with countless such experiences and every one increased her love for the beloved son she had been gifted with after so much prayer and penitence.

The Mother’s Heart Bleeds...

Sathya was so bright that denying him further education seemed a sacrilege, so as there was no high school within a radius of twenty miles he went to live with his brother so he could attend school at Uravakonda. Easwamma had to sigh and cry alone, and it must be added, now and then to exult and enthuse, for stories seeped through the intervening miles of the marvels Sathya had authored, the cures he had effected, the problems he had solved, as well as of the hardships he had to undergo.

During a visit to Puttaparthi from Uravakonda, Easwamma gave Sathya an invigorating “oil bath” and observed on his left shoulder a broad length of blackened thickened skin. Sathya did not complain of pain when the patch was touched or pressed and laughed it off when she asked how he had acquired that mark. But when Easwamma insisted, he told her that the skin

was rendered so as the result of carrying water pots hung on both ends of a pole borne on his shoulder for the household where he stayed. There was only one well at Uravakonda for drinking water which was nearly a kilometer away, so he walked to and fro about six times daily, thrice in the morning and thrice in the evening.

Easwamma was alarmed. "You must come away from there. They are exploiting your goodness and your desire to serve. Why should they depend on you for water?" But Sathya responded, "I felt it as my duty, *Amma*. How long can the children survive on the brackish poison? I carry the water of life from that distance gladly, Mother. I have come to do this service." Mother was in tears and could hardly speak. Immediately, Sathya was back home in Puttaparthi.

The Mother's Greatest Anxiety – Swami's Food Habits

If Swami was away from her for some time and a visitor came from that place, Easwamma would invariably ask, "How is Swami? Is he keeping well? Does he eat anything at all?"

Swami's eating habits were always a subject of concern for the Mother. Every now and then Easwamma would go into the Mandir, for there were no regular hours for her or anyone else, and she would note the new arrivals, talk to them and then move quietly towards the women who were mothering her son. "Serve him and nurse him with care," she would plead. "Look at him; one can count the ribs, they are coming through so clear. He won't listen to what we say. He insists on his own ways, all the while telling us how to behave. And somehow he justifies everything he does as good for himself."

Noon and night, lunchtime and dinnertime, whenever she thought about it **Easwamma was confronted by a conundrum. How could the Ananda of others be Ahara [food] for him?** He ate so meagerly. He relished so little. He set aside so much. He had no obvious preference, no visible appetite, no taste to satisfy, no hunger to appease, and no time to spare. How could he derive sustenance from this Anandaless atmosphere? She prayed for him to eat but it was all in vain. Swami would take a mouthful just to satisfy her and then stand and walk away.

It took Easwamma a long time to reconcile herself to this Avataric trait. Whenever she was around she personally supervised the preparation of the menu for Swami by going into the host's kitchen. She believed that Swami would eat a few more spoonfuls if the cuisine was Telugu, or better still, if it was genuine Rayalaseema, the region to which Puttaparthi belonged. **When Swami was at Jamnagar with the Rajmatha of Nawanagar (in Gujarat),**

Easwamma feared that the Gujarati dishes might not be acceptable to her son. She smuggled herself into the palace kitchen and sought permission to prepare a little chaar – a soup based on boiled pulses – so Swami would have some food of familiar taste.

This mother's concern never left her alone. Her eyes were on his plate to discover how much he tasted of what and how his health reacted to the restraints he imposed on himself. When Bhagavan was forty-four-years-old, Easwamma was heard to say, "He does not like their cooking. He used to eat well as a boy when I cooked his food. But he does not care for my cooking now. He says I must have rest and quiet and not to worry about such things."

When Swami was a child, Easwamma would have to spend an hour to persuade him to swallow a mouthful. The thinnest of excuses – a crow cawing for a morsel, a mendicant voice from afar, a child crying next door – sufficed for him to run away from the plate before him.

On one occasion Swami took to drinking only a cup of buttermilk per day...for thirty-six days! One can imagine the heart-rending pain Easwamma went through, struggling to hold back tears which threatened to well up throughout the day. When at last Swami said in response to the devotees' prayers he would resume his normal schedule of breakfast, lunch, and dinner, Easwamma was happy beyond words and asked him to never tease them with such tactics again. Even years later, whenever she recalled those thirty-six days, it was with a sigh and expression of resignation.

Her Childlike Simplicity

Mother's concern for Swami extended to every detail of his life. Apart from his spartan food habits, another subject which troubled her was Swami's travels. **She was always apprehensive of him leaving Puttaparthi even if it was for only a day to a nearby city or town. So imagine her distress when she heard about the planned trip to East Africa in 1968. She was extremely nervous, to say the least.**

Not much was known about Africa in those days, and the popular impression was that it was a dark continent full of wild animals, savages, and cannibals. Easwamma had heard this folklore and feared Swami would be in danger if he went there. She resolved to have the trip cancelled and expressed her reservations to someone involved with the expedition. The person replied, "Mother, do not worry. Swami will be visiting only big cities where he will be absolutely safe – no threats from animals or savages there!"

Easwamma was dissatisfied with the reply and felt hurt that the person was making light of a serious matter. She approached someone else and told him, "Listen, all of you are merrily planning a jaunt to Africa without being conscious of the risk to Swami. It is not too late yet, and you must do everything possible to dissuade him from undertaking this trip." The person she spoke to gave a patient hearing and then replied, "Amma, have no fear. Swami will have very high security protection."

Easwamma felt frustrated that no one was taking her misgivings seriously. She sought out a senior devotee and conveyed her worst fears to him. This devotee said, "Mother, it is true that there are many dangers in Africa. But how can they affect Swami? He is God, is he not?" Hearing this Mother Easwamma became furious and shouted back, "You fool! I know Swami is God and you know he is God. But do those savages and wild animals in Africa know he is God?"

That was the Mother's childlike concern and simplicity. Though she had realised her son's divinity, motherly anxieties often overwhelmed her. Sri Jayalakshmi Gopinath, who was fortunate to interact with the Mother and observe her at close quarters, recalls:

I knew the Divine Mother Easwamma so well. It was mutual love between us. I loved her because on her face there was such brilliance that you could not find anywhere in the whole world on any sophisticated face. Whatever one would put on the face it could not match the glow on her face. I have seen it myself. She was as simple as a child.

Easwamma Travels With Swami

Ask any of those old timers who knew the Mother and they will say, "She was so humble, so lovable, so simple." Swami, who was filled with compassion at Easwamma's rustic upbringing, believed that travel was the surest way to broaden her views. Swami persuaded her to come with him and the devotees to Bangalore. Fast cars sped them along macadamized highways, through stretches of brown barrenness, and then carpets of cool green, jowar, paddy and ragi, sweet sugarcane and cotton. At Madras she saw the sea for the first time. Swami had described the ocean to her in epic terms, for these were the waters that Rama and his monkey hordes had crossed in the Tretha Yuga on their way to Lanka. A few drops sprinkled on the head purifies a person to perfection, he said, for into it flows the holy rivers Ganga, Jumna, Kaveri and Godavari.

Easwamma was touched to the depths of her being as she gazed in awe at her first vision of the ocean, boundless in its immensity, eternal

in its rhythm of surge and swell, forever changing yet ever the same, an endless expanse with the horizon as its limits, the sky as its roof, and the subtle colors of space – blue, deep gray-green, cloudy-white. She burst into an exclamation of wonder that this was the very Mirror of God reflecting the majesty of his many moods.

For the first time Easwamma knew the hurry and scurry of cities, the noise of bazaars. She greeted lions and tigers, pythons and peacocks, and those most strange creatures of creation, the giraffe and the kangaroo, at the Mysore Zoo.

She enjoyed the cool comfort of Bangalore and weathered the biting cold of Ootacamund on the Nilgiris and the Blue Mountains of Tamil Nadu. She visited the fabled temples and sacred rivers of India, while Swami showered his constant attention upon her. This was his special grace, she knew, for she had not yet completely severed her maternal attachments and soared into the blissful freedom of supreme trust and devotion.

Easwamma would often be a part of the troupe accompanying Baba to remote spots in Andhra Pradesh and other parts of India and would ride in the car following Bhagavan's.

During the summer months these excursions could become unbearably hot and Swami would ask her to relax in his car to be cooled in the air conditioning but she always politely declined the offer. Easwamma never hankered for physical comfort and was satisfied with the way things were.

When Swami and his devotees left Lucknow for Benares; the Secretary to the Governor drew up the order of precedence according to protocol for the entourage of cars: the pilot car with Swami and the Governor, the Police car, the Rolls Royce with the parents, the Secretary's car, the car with the Editor of the Sanathana Sarathi, and so on. Easwamma, however, preferred to ride in the van with her sister devotees whom she could regale with her colorful anecdotes to the lonely luxury of the Rolls Royce.

Her Innermost Fears

In 1956, a *sanyasi* and learned scholar, Swami Amrithananda, came from Thiruvanamallai for Swami's Darshan. He had lived with the great master Ramana Maharshi for a long time and Swami invited him to stay for several months in Puttaparthi. As it was Dasara, Swami was blessing the devotees with discourses every day. During one such discourse, Easwamma asked Swami Amrithananda in Telugu, "Ememo cheputhu unnade, sariga

cheputhada?” meaning, “He is telling so many things. Are they all correct?” That was the motherly concern of Easwamma for Swami. Though she had seen many instances of Swami doing the impossible, yet her heart was always anxious and her lips silently praying for her son’s welfare.

Then there were the village rumors: “This is not going to last long,” “Sai Baba’s powers will soon be drained away,” etc. Whenever such gossip assailed her ears she would pull out from the private treasure trove of her memory remembrances of the incredible events she had witnessed bearing testimony to the authenticity of the Avathar that was now before her. On that occasion when Swami Amrithananda replied, “Amma, he is Parabramha. He knows everything. He is my Guru and God,” it was yet further confirmation to her of Baba’s divinity.

When Swami made plans to visit the holy sites of the Himalayas , Easwamma became alarmed that her son might fall victim to black magic motivated by religious rivalry from the yogis and monks of that area. She confided her reservations to Professor Kasturi, and he calmed them by promising to recite the Gayatri mantra and invoke its protective powers.

“Easwamma Was Like Yashoda” – Baba

These accounts remind one of Mother Yashoda, who likewise often looked upon Krishna as her son and found herself forgetful of his true status. Perhaps God had willed it so, otherwise how could she have experienced the bliss of mothering the master of all creation? Comparing her to Yashoda, on Easwamma Day 2001, Swami said:

...The following week, I went to see Kondama Raju again after visiting Subbamma's house. He came to know that I was coming to his house. Immediately he called Easwamma and told her, ‘I am not going to live any longer. Having known that my end has approached, God is coming to shower his grace on me.’ She responded in an innocent way saying, ‘Where is God? How do you know that he is coming?’

Then Kondama Raju said, ‘O mad woman, still you are deluded by the feeling of a mother toward her son! Look there, God is coming.’ So saying, he pointed at Me as I was entering his house. She too was aware of My Divinity but she used to get carried away by her motherly affection toward Me. Similar was the case with Yashoda. Though she had seen all the fourteen worlds in Krishna's mouth, she thought it was a dream or an illusion.

The Mother's Distress As Sathya Becomes Sai Baba

Yes, there were many occasions when she vacillated between being a mother and devotee. The transition from doting mother to adoring devotee was a long and tortuous path as her son was revealed as the Source of divine light shining his benediction on humanity. Just picture this scene as the anxious parents had rushed to Uravakonda to visit Swami, who was then still a mere lad. They were confronted with a large crowd of devotees who cheered them as, "Matha Pitha ki jai," (Victory to the Parents!) close on the heels of each full-throated "Sai Baba ki jai" (Victory to Sai!). Sathya was seated on a chair with flower garlands piling up on his right as he accepted each one that was offered and added it to the mound. But when pressed to identify his parents, Sathya said concisely, "They are Maya" [illusion].

"Maya!" exclaimed Easwaramma, and fell in a faint. When she came back to her senses she sat by Sathya's side, tears coursing down her face, for her son was but a shadow of his former self though only three months had elapsed since she last saw him. "Sathya, speak to your mother!" she begged. A few minutes of silence ensued.

Then, "Who belongs to whom?" asked Sathya, remote and cold. It was not a question but a pronouncement. Baba continued with her lesson. "It is all Maya, it is all Maya."

Her only consolation was when Sathya agreed to eat some lunch. She finished serving and nervously signaled that her offerings be accepted. With a swift movement Sathya swept all the food into one mass and rolled it into three balls. "Maya! Maya!" he kept repeating.

Someone told the stupefied mother that Sathya was bidding her come near and she moved a few feet forward. He put one of the balls of food in her right palm and kept his palm before her to receive it. As she gave it back, Sathya ate, whispering, "Maya is gone, Maya has left."

This scene is unique in the annals of human experience, for who can fathom what Easwaramma must have felt in her heart – nothing could have prepared her for the jolt as her little Sathya became Sai Baba, Guru to the whole world. She alone bore the brunt of this metamorphosis of her dearest Sathya to a discreet and distant Sai Baba.

Prashanthi Nilayam Is Born But The Mother Is Worried

As the years went by Easwaramma had to adjust to many other changes that followed the ever-growing glory of her son. She strained to retain whatever

contact she could as Swami's time became taken up by the needs of the devotees.

In fact, she was the one most aggrieved at what she considered Swami's determination to keep Puttaparthi at arm's length. The existing Mandir was already at the fringe of the village and the new site was a half kilometer further away. Gathering all the arguments she could drum up against the project, Easwamma went rushing into the hall where Baba sat among a group of devotees from Kuppam and cried out:

'Swami, what is this I hear? They say you are going to build a new Mandir on that hill. How can you go to a spot that is so far from the village, a place that is surrounded by jungle and filled with snakes and scorpions? How will people who are old and sick and mothers with tiny children get to you? Aren't you going to bother hereafter with their troubles? Are you going to deny them your Darshan? What of the fate of those who come to you in the future? You have the mark of the wheel [the chakra] under your foot and you will never stay in one place!' she went on agitatedly, 'You must always be climbing a hill or crossing a river to find a place to sit singing bhajans. Which godforsaken place have you found now? Don't you know that you must consult astrologers before you think of moving anywhere? And, listen to me,' she warned, 'this Mandir is enough for you. It is better to have a small place that is filled with people than a huge building half empty!'

There was no interruption to this torrent of protest. Swami sat in patient silence letting her have her say and merely smiled at the end of it all. "Speak to me! Tell me something in reply!" she exclaimed at last in vexation.

Swami softened. "Why do you bother with people's talk?" he gently asked and assured her, "There will be no jungle and no snakes when I go there. There will be hundreds of pilgrims pouring in every day – and that place will become a Shirdi, a Tirupati, and a Kasi."

Stumped by this ringing pronouncement, Easwamma fell back on her eldest son as her Court of Last Resort. Swami must be persuaded to contain himself within the Puttaparthi Mandir, she pleaded. Seshama Raju wrote to Swami voicing their protests, but the letter he received in reply rendered them even more breathless. Such immeasurable audacity from a mere sixteen-year-old! He was not to be considered a "son" any longer, Sathya wrote. It was the result of his own will that he had come as man among men in order to liberate all, both the good and the bad from misery. He went on to claim that millions from the four quarters of the world will come seeking him and soon those standing at the far edge of the crowd would consider themselves lucky if they could but get Darshan of an orange speck in the distance.

“Millions will come? Here? Where would they stay or stand?”

Easwamma wondered as she sent up frantic supplications to the gods to solve this conundrum of strange events that threatened to overwhelm them all.

Though she witnessed Swami’s miracles in the company of others, her response was typically more anxiety rather than awe. She calculated that one miracle would lead to another, for those attracted would clamor for it again and again. She feared that every miracle would drain Swami’s spiritual power. A few townfolk had whispered in her ear that his power would not last long for he was using it up at a fast pace. She had dared to warn Swami once or twice about this prospect but had received in reply only a loud, “Bah! I must make everyone happy. I have come for this, to lead the poor and the miserable into Ananda. Their Ananda [bliss] is the food that sustains me.”

Still, Easwamma was apprehensive of the growing number of devotees and losing her Sathya. On the eve of His ceremonial move to the new Prashanthi Mandir in 1950, she seized the opportunity and secured a boon from Swami that he would have his dining room on the east side of the upper floor even though he had chosen the rooms at the other end in which to live.

Swami was very strict in enforcing the rule that men and women must keep apart, so while the men used the staircase at the west end, Easwamma and her daughters climbed up the one at the east side and spoke to him there. They were no longer allowed free entry into his apartment.

They would be waiting and waiting anxiously in the dining room and only when they were almost desperate would he come, sauntering along the veranda. He came to give Darshan and not really to eat. Sitting at the small table he would finger one or two of the carefully prepared and nervously offered items, utter a few replies to their questions and rise, humming a tune, to return to the quarters now inaccessible to them. Swami, like Shirdi Baba, allowed devotees to place offerings on the table, but the hope that he would eat something from these was a vain one on most days.

The easy familiar days at the old Mandir were gone forever. But Swami, in his compassion, granted Easwamma a few minutes of access to him whenever she needed the healing touch of his vibhuthi or relief from routine.

Easwamma, like many of her sisters and brothers, was pestered by follies and fears when worldly desires clashed in conflict. **Swami guided her into the realm of happiness, goodness, and wisdom. He raised her whom he had chosen as the Mother to the status of his foremost pupil and led her**

from perplexity to preeminent faith in the Divinity that deludes us as diversity yet stands ready to help pierce the veil of Maya and realize the Eternal Truth behind the game of life he so enjoys playing.

The Lord Resides In Puttaparthi...Thanks To The Mother

There was another boon the Mother secured from Lord Sai that literally shaped the mission of Sai and made Puttaparthi what it is today. Four years ago Swami recounted this incident during the Dasara celebrations. He said:

Maharani of Mysore, coffee planter Sakamma, and Desaraj Arasu, the maternal uncle of Mysore Maharaja, were among those who used to come here [in the 1940s]. One day they prayed, 'It is difficult for us to come here often. Hence, please come and settle in Mysore. We shall build a big mansion for You.' I told, 'I don't want palatial buildings. I want to be here.'

That night, Mother Easwamma came to Me with tears in her eyes and said, 'Swami, people want to take You here and there for their selfish purposes. If you leave Puttaparthi I will give up my life. Please promise me that You will remain in Puttaparthi forever.' I gave her My word that I would never leave Puttaparthi. This is why I have constructed many buildings in the Ashram for the comfort and convenience of devotees.

So it is the Mother to whom mankind owes Swami's allegiance to his birthplace and his gift to us of a beautiful and sublime ashram and temple which have now become a spiritual lighthouse for the entire world. In fact, as years passed by, Mother herself found it increasingly irksome to live in her village home. She could not endure the pettiness of caste-bred conflicts and as the years passed, sensed more and more pollution in the village sky. Scandal, slander, eavesdropping, trickery, and teasing were the sport of the disbelievers. Mother found the atmosphere suffocating and with Swami's permission stayed within the premises of Prashanthi Mandir. Swami arranged for her to reside in a small cozy room on the ground floor of the Mandir itself and she felt very comfortable in the company of women devotees, guiding, encouraging, consoling and caring for them.

Women's Well-Being And Welfare – Her Passion

Easwamma had a soft heart especially towards women who were widowed by fate and ostracized by society as if their misfortune was infectious. She also sought out young women deserted by their husbands and left alone and helpless. Many such women were brought by their parents or kinsmen so that they might recover from the shock and renew their lives. She discovered that a large number of women who were brought to Puttaparthi were afflicted by

“ghosts” and these victims of dark spirits were amenable to the softness and sweetness that emanated from her heart.

The love with which she treated these women blossomed as she watched Swami healing the stricken. He showered compassion on them and applied vibhuthi on their brows. When they were restored to normalcy and returned home, Swami used to narrate the reasons why their thoughts went awry and their words were soaked in spite. Listening to Him, Easwamma decided that she would not condemn or ridicule any woman on the basis of her apparent faults or failings for they were only, she knew, the results of persecution and poverty. The Mother thus became more than their own mother to growing number of sisters in distress.

Mother possessed a rich spring of native wisdom (*medha*) with which she quenched the thirst of the desolate and deprived. She not only knew the simple folk remedies for physical illnesses but also many “psychotherapeutic strategies” (to use an aristocratic word) that could demolish depression and remove fear from the minds of those who came to her. They often confided to her what they would not tell their own mothers. Her sympathy in listening unlocked the chambers of their hearts wherein their agony was interned. She tolerated the long narrations, never evincing impatience, boredom, or judgment, and the teardrops that shone in her eyes were sufficient to drown their distress.

She was happy beyond words that Swami accorded such an honored status to motherhood. During the Nine Days of Dasara celebrations in Puttaparthi women gathered in the Prayer Hall every morning and evening to worship the Cosmic Feminine as Goddesses Durga, Lakshmi, and Saraswathi. Mother was also pleased that women were permitted and encouraged to recite the mystic syllable OM.

In truth, the taboo was so inculcated in womenfolk that they had never dared to challenge it. Mother felt that women should not be denied access to the presence of God, and if OM is the purest sound and symbol of the Impersonal, women also had a right to invoke it. She told Swami how happy she was at this, his singular Blessing to women of all castes and races.

Serving The Needy Gladdened Her Heart

There was another event that was planned and consummated at Puttaparthi by Swami early in 1968 which touched her motherly heart and brought her immense satisfaction – the Optical Diseases Diagnosis and Treatment Camp which lasted ten days. Four thousand patients were examined and more than a thousand operations were performed to restore vision to those blinded by

cataracts, glaucoma, etc. Groups of old men and women led by their children and grandchildren came hobbling along the village roads to the Nilayam. Easwamma had never realised how many there were in need of the help Swami offered. There was great enthusiasm among the devotees, men and women, to serve them. More than a hundred women devotees volunteered to nurse the female patients and Easwamma was with them, elated at the promise that awaited the sightless multitude. The Mother was at ease and full of joy as thousands of indigent and ailing villagers were fed and clothed, repaired and rehabilitated.

Swami encouraged her to share in the service activities and commissioned her to hand out saris to the women. Easwamma was delighted at the chance and by the gleam of gratitude in their eyes as the women took the saris in their hands. She had learnt the art of enthusiastic giving from Swami, as he in turn placed dhotis and towels in the palsied hands of the sons of toil. She experienced the thrill of sister meeting sister when the sari brought them together. Earlier, when Easwamma walked through the long rows of women with bandaged eyes who groped for her touch, they had sensed the presence of the Mother beside each of them

“Easwamma – An Embodiment Of Sacrifice” – Baba

Recalling her virtues as an ideal for our modern society, during his discourse on Eswaraamma Day 2000, Swami remarked:

Easwamma was born in such a poor family that she did not even have proper food to eat. All that she had to eat was ragi sankati (gruel prepared from a coarse grain). Easwamma was illiterate. When I see the egoistic attitude, perverted mentality and ostentatious behavior of the present day educated people, I feel it was better that Easwamma did not have any schooling.

When I was seven and a half years old, I used to teach Pandhari bhajans to small children in our village. Easwamma and Subbamma used to feel ecstatic watching Me sing Pandhari bhajans and dance to their rhythm. Sometimes her husband Pedda Venkama Raju would give Easwamma some money for the household expenditure. Once two annas were remaining with her out of this money. One could buy two bags of puffed rice for two annas in those days. So Easwamma bought two bags of puffed rice with the two annas and distributed it to the children. She always used to give away whatever she had with her. She was the embodiment of sacrifice. She would talk lovingly to all those who came to her. When devotees would feel sad that

Swami was ignoring them, she would console them saying, 'Whatever Swami does is for your own good.'

She Was Always There For The Devotees

There are any number of instances when Easwamma was unable to bear the suffering of a devotee and went straight to Swami and pleaded on their behalf. If ever she took any liberty of her accessibility to Swami, it was for the sake of some distressed and disconsolate soul. In one instance there was a couple from West Godavari who had come with a terribly sick child and had waited in Puttaparthi for a week. Due to financial constraints they were not in a position to extend their stay and were about to leave crestfallen. As a last resort they met Easwamma, and when the Mother heard their plight she took the boy by his hand and immediately led him upstairs to Swami's room and pleaded with him to cure the child. Swami gave her a patient hearing and then calmly said, "*Chustanu*" meaning, "I will see." But no, she was not satisfied and insisted that Swami show mercy to the poor family now...and Swami finally gave in to her prayers and healed the child. As is said, a mother's prayers never go unfulfilled.

After the Prashanthi Nilayam Mandir was constructed, the Mother who did not want to miss an opportunity to be beside her son chose to live in the Prashanthi temple itself. This was a boon for the devotees for they benefit immensely from her comforting advice, caring counsel, and ever-ready-to-help attitude. She was accessible to all and devotees found in her someone genuinely interested in their welfare.

In those days entire families would come to Puttaparthi and as the Mother interacted freely with everyone, they would confide in her their problems and worries to such an extent that she brought twenty members for an interview. Swami had graciously permitted the family to perform *Padapuja* (worshipping the feet of the Lord with rosewater, flowers, etc.) to him.

As they did the ceremonial rites, they beseeched him to grant them the opportunity to perform *Puja* to Mother Easwamma, who was seated beside him. Swami initially refused saying, "No. Do not call her as she will start recommending," but the devotees persisted until Swami gave in and Mother Easwamma reluctantly acceded to their request. All the while the *Puja* was going on, Mother was intently watching the members of this family from West Godavari and as predicted by Swami, she started "recommending" saying, "Swami, that boy does not study. Please give him vibhuti so that he gets good marks," and "Swami, look at that poor girl. She has been suffering so long. You must cure her," and so on.

That was the beauty of her goodness. **Easwamma met untold numbers of devotees who would cry out their heart to her and pour forth their sorrows. She would listen patiently and not only remember their problems in detail but bring them to Swami's notice whenever she found an opportunity.**

On Ladies Day in 2002, Swami acknowledged this noble trait of Easwamma.

Griham Ammayi, the mother of this body, used to speak to all with love. She could never withstand the suffering of others. She would come upstairs and plead with Me, saying, 'Swami, they are in a sorrowful state. Please call them and talk to them.' Her heart was filled with compassion. That is why her fame has spread so much. In order to attain a good name you have to utter sacred words and help others.

Whenever Mother Easwamma came to Me with such a plea, I used to pretend to be angry and chide her, saying, 'Why are you coming here with recommendations? I don't want to listen to them.' But she would persist and continue to plead, 'Swami, please take pity on them. They are in dire need of Your help. Please talk to them once.' I used to be happy thinking, 'How compassionate and kindhearted she is.'

Truly, she had a heart of gold. Never was there even the slightest trace of ego in her that she was "The Divine Mother." She mingled unselfconsciously with everyone like any other simple village lady and shunned special recognition, undue attention or publicity.

A Loving Mother For All

In the late 1960s there were a few brick houses situated around the Mandir. One morning, a lady who lived alone in one of these structures, was burning charcoal for cooking when the smoke overwhelmed her and she fainted and fell unconscious to the floor. When she did not come out by 10:00 , some people sensed something wrong and broke open the door to find her lying unconscious.

When this information reached Swami, he was far from pleased and told the devotees, "It is one's duty to know the well-being of one's neighbours. The least one can do is inquire how they are, what they need and the state of their well-being. Every day when you get up, find out how your neighbours are. This is a pleasant thing to do in the morning." These words of Bhagavan touched Mother Easwamma's heart. From that day onwards she took it upon herself to go to each and every house in the morning and personally find out whether all were comfortable.

Once it happened that the Mother was on her daily rounds, checking from house to house as to whether everything was fine, when she tripped over a pile of bricks and sprained her leg. She was in acute pain and unable to even stand. Immediately some devotees took her to the nearest house and the message was relayed to Swami, who rushed to her and jovially asked, "Why do you have to move like this to every house unnecessarily?" She replied, "Swami, nothing is impossible for you. You can get all the work done without going anywhere. But such a thing is not possible for me." Swami merely smiled, created vibhuti and said the pain would soon stop. The next day she was fine.

The genuine love that Mother Easwamma had for devotees was something very laudable. She spoke sweetly at all times, her speech emanating patience and forbearance and fully free from pretense with no sharp edges to hurt the hearer. During the time Swami was still at the village Mandir, there were many women apparently "possessed" by spirits who were brought to his presence by distraught relatives.

The unfortunates screamed, sulked, moaned, and ran helter-skelter. Sometimes their condition had been aggravated by quacks who had treated them with the rod. Easwamma offered the soothing balm of sympathy to the victims and a few minutes with her was an effective tranquillizer which calmed their explosive emotions. Whenever people called her Mother, it was with quivering lips and tears glistening in their eyes.

Three Selfless Desires – Three Models for Mankind

There is perhaps one legend that will always dance around her hallowed name, and that is her direct inspiration for the mammoth social service projects which make the name Sathya Sai shine throughout the world. On several occasions Swami has recalled this beautiful facet of her life.

Once she told Me, 'Swami, our Puttaparthi is a small village. Since there is no school in this village, the children are forced to walk long distances to attend schools in the neighboring villages. I know that You are the ocean of compassion. Please construct a small school in this village.' I asked where she wanted the school to be built. She said she had a piece of land behind her house. She wanted the school to be constructed there. As desired by her, I got the school constructed. Though it was a small school, the inaugural function was a grand affair attended by many devotees.

The next day Easwamma expressed her happiness over the inaugural function and said that she had one more desire. She wanted a hospital also to be built in the village. She said, 'Swami, I don't want to put You to trouble. If

You are troubled, the whole world will be in trouble and if You are happy the whole world will be happy. So if it gives You happiness, please construct a small hospital.' As per her wish, I got the hospital constructed. Bejawada Gopal Reddy, a highly reputed person in those days, was invited to inaugurate the hospital. The inauguration was attended by thousands of people from the neighboring villages. Easwamma did not imagine that this would be such a grand affair.

Next day, she came up to Me and said, 'Swami, it does not matter even if I die now. I have no more worries, you have fulfilled my desires and mitigated the suffering of the villagers to a great extent.' I said, 'If you have any more desires, ask Me now.' She replied hesitantly that she had yet another small desire. 'You know that the river Chithravathi is in spate during the rainy season. But in summer it dries to a trickle and people do not have drinking water. So, please see that some wells are dug in this village.' I told her that I would not stop with these small wells and that I would provide drinking water to the entire Rayalaseema region. Easwamma said, 'I don't know what Rayalaseema is. I am satisfied if our village is provided with drinking water.'

Thus it is that Easwamma's vision and compassion lit up the lives of countless numbers who are benefiting from her unselfish wishes. This was not merely an ideal she encouraged her son to make real but one she expressed actively through her love for all

The General Hospital – A Dream Come True For Her

The Mother was perhaps the person most gratified when Swami announced that a twelve-bed hospital would be raised on the hill to the south of the Mandir. For her part, while Swami was at the village Mandir and even later, she could avail herself of the expert medical advice of Dr. Lakshmi, the famous physician and gynecologist from Nellore who stayed for weeks in the presence of Swami.

Whenever she, her daughters, or others of the Ratnakaram family received the kind attention of that doctor, Easwamma prayed to her to examine, diagnose, and prescribe medicines for other village women too. **She longed for a lady doctor who could stay at the Mandir year in and year out and help women in times of dire need. So when the news of the hospital came to her, she was overjoyed.**

Easwamma joined the women devotees hauling sand, stone, bricks, and cement from the road up to the construction site and lifted bricks herself, brushing aside protests from the women. When the wards were ready, she sought out women patients, brought them to the doctor, pleaded that they be

admitted, and looked after them until they could move about and take their normal share in the work at home and in the fields.

Dr. Jayalakshmi, who served in the Sathya Sai Hospital , related that Easwamma was a pioneer in serving pregnant women and babies. She advised against magical rites and the offering of fowls and lambs to Maariamamma and lesser deities to drive diseases away. She sat with the patients while they were questioned, waited for the diagnosis, and held them firm as the dreaded needle was administered. When ladies were admitted as patients, she climbed the hill to the hospital to make sure they know there was a Mother interested in their recovery.

Easwamma – A Living Goddess For The Devotee

Pedda Bottu, who knew her well, was warm in her admiration.

“She had no trace of envy and she never relished scandal. Her speech was sweet with affection and compassion. Her complexion of gold-brown, the eyes collyrium bordered, the magnum dot of kumkum shimmering on her broad brow, they all reminded us of the popular image of the Goddess Lakshmi.”

Devotees prostrated whenever they chanced to meet her and sought to earn her maternal blessings. Her wide eyes gleamed and her toothless mouth was half-open as she smiled in recognition, satisfaction or appreciation. They spoke to her in various languages and received her reply in the one tongue available to all on such occasions – the language of the heart.

The devotees discovered in the Mother a never failing source of strength and wisdom. They sought her out more and more often and honored her as the Mother, assigning her distinct roles during festivals and holy days. Easwamma did not yield as soon as the women surrounded her and pleaded that she should guide them or bless them, but how long could she keep them at bay?

On days dedicated to the worship of Varalakshmi (the Goddess of Wealth ready to grant boons) or Gowri (the fair Consort of Shiva, mother of Ganesh), she had to accept the first offering of homage from every woman who needed her. During the nine days of *Navarathri*, the Festival of the Mother, she was honored for the first three days as Durga, the next three days as Lakshmi, and on the last three as Saraswathi.

During The Festival Of Nine Nights...

During these days Swami directed the women devotees to assemble at the Prayer Hall of the Nilayam every morning and evening to worship the Mother Goddess reciting the 1008 Names which attempt to capture a glimpse of her Glory. Easwaramma vehemently declined to be installed on this occasion as the visible symbol of the Divine Mother.

She even wriggled out of participation since the women insisted that she must at least be seated at the head of the row. She preferred to enter unannounced, sit through the ritual unnoticed, and slip away quietly. Such was her humility.

But on the Jhoola evening she had to yield to their wishes. Swami's darshan while on a floral swing was the valedictory event in Navarathri. Women devotees offered fruits, flowers, and sweets and arranged lamps in attractive patterns before him. Arati would be offered when he came off the swing, so when Swami indicated he intended to leave and the camphor flame should be readied, a series of lamps were waved before him by women singing traditional lilts.

Easwaramma was then sought out and brought to the Nilayam to wave the first Arati lamp, despite her protestations that the privilege must be granted to someone else who was more devoted and deserving than she was.

During The Lord's Birthday...

Every Hindu child has his "birthday" celebrated at home as a festival with extra prayers and special offerings of sweets to the family deity. The child is seated facing East on a sanctified plank. The mother pours a few drops of oil on the head and others follow her. The child is given a ceremonial bath and dressed in new clothes. He has to touch the feet of elders and sit in the shrine while prayers are offered by the parents for his long life, health, progress, and prosperity.

Prashanthi Nilayam was inaugurated on Swami's Birthday in 1950. Previous to that year, the Birthday had been rather informal. Swami delighted the Mother and the Father and their sons and daughters by visiting their home and going through the ritual of lunch in their company. After the parents had placed a few drops of oil on his cluster of hair, the ceremonial bath was administered and Swami fulfilled the longing of one devotee by accepting the robe and dhoti he placed at his feet. All those present then touched his feet praying for boons and blessings.

The new Prashanthi Nilayam, however, challenged the devotees to inaugurate a more impressive though still intimate celebration of the birth of their Lord Sai. Elderly women gathered at the Nilayam in the early hours of the twenty-third of November. Each one had a plate with piles of flowers, fruits, sweets, coconuts, turmeric, kumkum, rice grains, betel leaves and areca, sandal paste, blocks of jaggery, glass bangles, and other auspicious materials.

Shining pots filled with consecrated water were carried on their hips. One of the group bore a silver plate with a silk sari upon it. A few elderly men joined them with a silk dhoti for the Father and they proceeded to Puttaparthi village preceded by pipers and drummers. When they reached the Ratnakaram home, they announced to the parents that it was the Birthday of Bhagavan and invited them to Prashanthi Nilayam. One could sense their awkwardness for both of them would rather be left alone than placed before the floodlights on the center of the stage.

Nevertheless, the Mother and Pedda Venkama Raju satisfied the wishes of the thousands present and were themselves filled with gratitude for the opportunity given to them by Swami. **As soon as they stood before him they lost all sense of time and space. Easwamma placed flowers on Swami's feet and stood up to dip a rose in oil.**

When she lifted her palm to drop the oil on the son's hair, he bent low so that the head would be within easy reach. The father, too, did the same and as both of them descended from the dais, the devotees hailed the occasion, expressing their joy in loud acclaim. It was only then that Easwamma became aware of the hall and the crowd, the Nilayam, and the village. It was an embarrassing moment for her but she was soon relieved, for she found another wedded couple climbing the steps to place flowers at Swami's feet and apply oil on his hair. Swami used to select about eight others from different linguistic and geographical regions to share in the joyous ceremony who were invariably old in age and rooted in faith. Easwamma shunned publicity and prominence and preferred to lose her identity in a group of devotees, but on the Birthday she had to submit to what she dreaded most – a public and preeminent role. Humility was her very nature and publicity anathema to her.

The Ideal Hindu Wife

Easwamma's humility was no empty pose. She was very shy before the camera and argued persistently against being photographed. This was not the false humility that parades itself to draw attention to the possessor of that virtue. Many are proud that they are not proud and protest against praise but are secretly sad if it is denied. But Easwamma was temperamentally allergic

to the limelight. She was raised in a cloistered hamlet and stuck to the boundary stones her forefathers set up to demarcate the fields of feminine activity.

Fate brought women from all the corners of the world, speaking a hundred languages, as well as from all castes, classes, and creeds to her door. She let them come and speak what they wished but seldom sought to know what their words meant, for as she confessed, “Why bother yourself with wishes you cannot fulfill and problems you cannot solve?” She had no desire to mislead visitors that she had special access to Sathya Sai and could extract his grace for them. She was aware that there were millions who deserved his grace and that she was only another candidate seeking to qualify.

Easwamma possessed the age-old reverence for the husband which prescribed mutual distance and silence and proscribed joint appearances on the same seat or even the same room. She retreated into the inner apartments whenever Pedda Venkama Raju was around and avoided all chances of a dialogue. But as an obligatory duty, on Swami’s Birthday they submitted to the demands of the devotees and allowed themselves to be honored as the Parents and to be taken in procession to the Nilayam. When she traveled to Badrinath and Benares with Swami, in accordance with the ancient injunctions, the sacred idols had to be offered worship by the husband and wife together. In fact, the absence of the wife might even annul the fruits of the worship. Every gift made by the man has to be endorsed by the woman. He holds the coins in his hand and waits for the wife to pour some water on them before they are handed over. Easwamma was the model Hindu wife on these and all other occasions.

The piousness and politeness of Easwamma apart from her devotion to the Lord won the love and respect from the women of the village and those who cultivated the lands of the Rathnakaram family. **Every Saturday, she visited the Hanuman temple along with the other women of her age. The idol of Hanuman had been installed centuries ago as the guardian of the fort that enclosed the village. On Mondays, the day dedicated to Shiva, she offered worship at the Shiva temple and whenever possible, visited the Venugopalswamy temple too.**

A Rare Blessing – Amazing Divine Experiences

Easwamma would never boast about her status as the mother of Sri Sai. Swami has oft said her simplicity and humility are an example for all of mankind to emulate. Like the other devotees, she addressed Bhagavan as Swami and was full of reverence for him. It was these virtues, along with her

golden heart, that made Easwaramma so very special. And Swami too rewarded her with many beautiful experiences.

Speaking during her Samadhi anniversary celebration in 1999, Swami said:

...From that day onward, [after Kondama Raju's demise] Easwaramma never stayed at home and started staying in Prasanthi Nilayam. Every day, in the morning and evening she used to come upstairs and talk with Swami. She also understood My Divinity very well. When I appeared in the form of Lord Shiva to her, she would ask, 'What Swami? Why are you adorning the snakes around your neck?' I would act innocent, 'Well, I don't have snakes on Me.' She would move away saying, 'Look, there are some snakes inside.' But later, on not finding any snake inside, she would ask for forgiveness. Like this on many occasions she had the experience of My Divinity.

But one of her greatest blessings was a vision she had a few days prior to passing away which she confided to another elderly lady. We know of this directly from Pedda Bottu:

'Pedda Bottu,' Easwaramma said to me, 'I want to tell you something that happened to me. But tell no one else.' I sat closer and said, 'What is it, tell me.' 'Our Swami is God!' she whispered. I laughed. 'Why do you laugh?' she asked. 'No, no, I was not laughing at you. I am only happy you have realized it now. Well, tell me, how did you come to know?' I asked. 'You know I have been having high fever for four days. Swami came to me then.'

'In a dream?' I asked, 'No,' she said, 'He really did come to me when I was rolling restlessly in bed. 'Ammayi, how do you feel?' He asked. 'My whole body is aching,' I replied, looking up at him. Then what can I tell you? It was not he that you and I know. It was Ramachandra with Kireetam and Kodandam (Crown and Bow)! I raised my folded hands and struggled to sit up and get out of bed. But in a few moments he became Swami again, gave me Vibhuthi Prasadam and said, 'The fever will go,' and went.'

'You are indeed blessed. What a rare piece of luck!' I exclaimed. 'No one of us has had a vision of Sai Rama as Ramachandramurthy while fully awake and alert.'

The Flame And The Fire Become One

This vision and revelation was surely the fittest prelude to the mergence of that sacred ray in the Paramjyoti, the Supreme Flame, from which it had emerged. Swami, the embodiment of that Paramjyoti, himself disclosed the

events and incidents of Easwaramma's last day, May 6, 1972, during one of his discourses on the 6th of May, the day dedicated to her memory. He said:

It was the day before her passing away and I suddenly asked her, in the midst of casual conversation, 'Tell me, is there anything else you desire?' She said, 'I have finished my pilgrimages to all the temples. I have seen the biggest temple of all and the God that resides there. I have no desire for anything more.' But I knew that a small wish still lurked in a corner of her mind – she wished to give a gift to a granddaughter on her birthday. So I insisted that she should accept Rs. 500, go to the bazaar and buy whatever she wished. I sent her along with a companion and she returned happy with what she had bought.

On the 6th of May, 1983, Swami continued the narrative, speaking in greater detail of Easwaramma's Day of Deliverance:

This day is Easwaramma Day. The significance of the day is that it is celebrated as Children's Day, a day when little children are to be reminded of the ideal, a day when she presented an ideal. No one can escape death, but the aim of everyone should be to remind oneself at the time of death of the divine or have some holy or sacred thoughts. The importance of this day is known to many. There is a saying in Telugu: 'The proof of the good is the way they die.' Genuine devotion is evidenced during the last moments. I shall point out a small incident concerning the goodness of Easwaramma.

The summer classes were on at Bangalore. In the morning at 7:00 breakfast had to be served to the students. They went round with Nagara Sankeertan and returned at 6:00. I gave them Darshan at its close. Then I went for my bath. Meanwhile, Easwaramma had finished her bath. She drank her coffee as usual quite happily and took her seat on the inner veranda. All of a sudden proceeding to the bathroom, she cried out, 'Swami, Swami, Swami!' At this, I responded, 'Coming, coming.' Within that period she breathed her last. What greater sign of goodness is needed? She had no need to be served and nursed. Swami will come to the memory at that time only for a very few. The mind will usually seek and stay on some object or the other, some jewelry or valuables.

From the ground floor she called, 'Swami! Swami!' I replied, 'Coming, coming,' and she was gone. It was like the elephant's calling (Gajendra of Indian

mythology) and the Lord proceeding to bless it – the two wires achieving connection, the release happening instantaneously.

This is the authentic consummation that life must strive for. Beside her at the time she had her daughter Venkamma and her granddaughter Sailaja but she called out only for Swami. Getting this yearning at the final moment is the fruit of holy purity. It is the sign of an ideal, adorable life. Such attitude must emerge of its own accord and not by means of some external force. Here is an example to learn from.

Every Child - A Darling Sathya

Truly, the whole life of Easwamma is a shining example and ideal for Sai devotees to emulate. “Amazing love for Swami and constantly seeking happiness and welfare of others” – this is the summary of her life. She had a special love for children because in every child she saw Sathya hiding, inviting her to seek and succeed. Naturally, they cuddled in flocks around her. They watched with delight the twinkle in her eyes and the wrinkles on her cheeks and chin as she joked and laughed. They were amused and their attention was aroused when her gold and glass bangles jingled as she gesticulated, while stressing a point or underlining a caution. When she found a child chubby, she squeezed and pulled its cheeks to see the patch of pink, the thrill the impact lent to the angel face.

She could be easily inveigled into the narration of hair-raising or heart-warming tales in order to keep the children wrapped in excitement. Her pleasing pliant voice reproduced the screams of the kidnapped heroine, the wail of the wounded demon, the plaint of the frightened son, the roar of the victorious warrior, and the crooning of the child cast on the jungle track. In fact she was quick in adding to her repertory stories about Sai Baba of Shirdi and Swami.

The children watched the pictures she so realistically designed and described – the white umbrella with tassels of gold held over a pair of sandals, the emergence of the lion-faced God from the marble pillar of the royal audience hall, the dance of the child on the hood of an angry serpent. Easwamma forgot her physical ailments, the deeper deprivations, and the assaults on her inner peace when engaged in storytelling. Invariably she rounded up the tales with emphatic words on humility and honesty, love and loyalty. These lessons were lapped up by the children for they were soaked in the syrup of her affection.

She appreciated the earnestness and enthusiasm of the young. Her grandsons were a bright lot and she insisted that they join higher classes and

educate themselves to the utmost. She loved to encourage the sons and grandsons of others, too. She prevailed upon Swami to agree with her choice and send money to them to meet their tuition fees and the cost of books and boarding. She felt pained whenever she discovered that the dispatch had suffered delay. "The boys cannot study well now," she used to say, "they will be too worried to read in peace." When she found that a name had been dropped because the boy had left school, she tried to persuade the parents to keep him enrolled. **To immortalize this warm love and moving concern she had for children, Swami established the Easwamma High School within two months of her passing away in Puttaparthi. Every year hundreds of village children graduate from this school confident and conscientious to pursue higher studies and make their parents proud.**

Every Easwamma Day Is A Children's Day

May 6th is also celebrated as Children's Day in all Sai Organizations throughout the country. Bal Vikas groups in every Sai centre perform songs, dances, and value games glorifying God and expressing their gratitude to the blessed Mother for having gifted them with the most precious possession of their lives, their Swami. In the divine presence too every year small children perform various plays and Swami lovingly showers them with gifts and love after their presentation.

Lessons To Emulate

On almost every Easwamma Day, Swami gives a discourse and lauds the devotion and love she held for him and the compassion and concern she showed towards others. In these discourses Swami has shared events which provided deeper insights into her noble life and character. For instance, on Easwamma Day in 1999, Swami revealed:

Once, on Shivaratri day, after I had completed My discourse and the Lingas were ready to emerge from My mouth, I sat on the chair and was in severe pain. Seeing Me suffering, Easwamma got up from the gathering, came up to Me and said, 'Swami, why do You suffer like this? Come inside, come inside.' I said I would not come inside and rather than watch My suffering, she went inside. As soon as she left, Hiranyagarbha Linga emerged. All the devotees burst into thunderous applause. Hearing this, she came back, but by then the Linga had already emerged and I was showing it to the devotees. All the people got up to have a glimpse of the Linga. As a result, Easwamma could not see it.

Next day she pleaded with Me to show the Linga to her. I said I had given it to somebody. But she said, 'Swami, I have not seen. I want to see.' I told her that

she would see in the future anyway. She said, 'I do not want to put You to inconvenience,' and went away. She never had put Me to trouble any time. Whenever she asked Me for something she would come back and ask if she had given any trouble. To all the devotees who came she used to entreat not to cause any inconvenience to Swami. She used to be very much worried whenever any minister came to have My darshan. The situation in those days was such that even a policeman with a red cap was enough to frighten the villagers. Easwaramma used to be very much afraid of the ministers, thinking that they might cause some problem to Me. This was only the result of her sacred love for Me.

The Eternal Bond Of Love

They say great and noble souls never die but continue to inspire after death. Easwaramma was one such being who unceasingly is concerned about Swami even after her death. During a discourse on May 6, 2001 , to the utter amazement of the audience Swami disclosed:

You may be aware or not, but even after thirty years of her passing away, Mother Easwaramma continues to express her love for Swami in a number of ways. Even to this day, she moves around in her physical body. At times she comes to Me and expresses her motherly concern for My well-being.

Once she cautioned Me not to accept a handkerchief from everybody. I told her that I had to accept when people offered it with devotion. She said, 'Swami, no doubt there are crores of such noble persons. But there are also a few evil-minded persons who may smear poison on the handkerchief and offer it to You. This can prove dangerous when You use it to wipe your lips.' I promised her that I would follow her advice.

Even to this day she makes her appearance in My room. The boys who sleep in My room have witnessed this. Whenever she comes and talks to Me, they sit up on their beds and listen. One day I asked the boys for a belt to keep the silk dhoti tight around My waist. The belt they gave Me had a shiny buckle and could be seen through the robe I wear. I did not want to use it lest people should think that Sai Baba wears a gold belt. After this, one day Easwaramma came to My room early in the morning and started talking to Me. Then Sathyajith, Sainath and Srinivas woke up and wanted to know with whom I was conversing. They wondered how anyone could enter My room since the lift was locked and the key was with them. Then I told that Griham Ammayi (Mother Easwaramma) had come. I showed them the belt that she gave me. It had no buckle. There are many such noble mothers in this world but Easwaramma was the chosen one. I chose her to be My mother [cheers]. That is the intimate relationship between Mother Easwaramma and Myself.

Truly...The Crown Of Motherhood

So that is how intimate is the bond between Swami and Easwamma. No doubt the crown of motherhood was acquired by Easwamma as a reward for her accumulated goodness but in this life too she rose to those heights which made a laudable example of a great devotee of the Lord. Her love for him was unparalleled and as well as being an ideal wife, sister, mother, and grandmother, she was a constant source of support, inspiration and love for the village folk and the ever-expanding Sai family. The Lord chose her as his Mother not only as a reward for her past deeds but also, as Prof. Kasturi noted, "in appreciation of what she was capable of in this life." And with the Supreme Teacher to guide her, she learned every lesson Swami gave her with his glance, a word, a question, or a smile, and became a living saint radiating love and purity. Ultimately, the great soul we know as Easwamma reached a state where she took every event and emotion, every thought and activity as a gem set doorway through which she could cognize the One.



Most of the content for this cover story is taken from Prof. Kasturi's book "Easwamma - The Chosen Mother". We have also interacted with several long time devotees of Bhagawan and integrated their experiences into the story.

- Heart2Heart Team

FEATURE ARTICLES

UNDERSTANDING PURUSHA SUKHTAM CONCERNING THE VEDAS - 04

(Musings From Prashanthi Nilayam By Prof.G.Venkataraman)

Loving Sai Ram and greetings from Prashanti Nilayam,

I hope you recall that my main aim in this series of talks on the *Vedas* is to first give you a broad flavour of what this great heritage of humanity is all about, and then move on to a description of how, in olden times, the *Vedas* kept company with man during his life. As a part of this programme, I offered in the first two talks a general introduction of sorts and in the third one, that is my previous talk, I gave you a glimpse of the famous *Taittiriya Upanishad*.

In the same spirit I shall, in my present talk, offer a short overview of the equally famous *Purusha Shukhtam*. The *Taittiriya Upanishad* and the *Purusha Sukhtam* are but mere samples. There are many other examples that could have been chosen, but one reason why I have focused on these two is that they are heard very often in Prashanti Nilayam. Moreover, Radio Sai has already presented an elaborate series on these two favourites and I thought maybe by locking on to these two I might be able to connect more easily with you on the subject of the *Vedas*.

The Meaning Of ‘*Purusha Shukhtam*’

Now what exactly is a *Sukhtam*? Very simply put, the word *Sukhtam* means a good word. Thus, *Purusha Sukhtam* means: in praise of *Purusha* – that is what this wonderful hymn with twenty-four stanzas is all about. This of course raises the questions: Who exactly is this *Purusha* and why are His praises being sung? *Purusha* is none other than the Supreme Lord Who, it turns out, is known by many names. In this particular *Sukhtam* the term *Purusha* is the name that is most often used. As Krishna explains to Arjuna in the *BhagavadGita*, in the ultimate analysis God is Formless, Absolute and beyond both Space as well as Time.

Purusha is one name for this Formless and Abstract God. There are of course many other names like *Paramatma*, *Brahman*, *Parabrahman* and so on. Call Him by any name including Allah, Jehovah or whatever, the fact of the matter is that God Supreme, whom I am currently referring to as *Purusha*, is Infinite, Timeless, Eternal, Changeless, etc., etc.

The above statement might immediately create a doubt. If the Lord Supreme, namely *Purusha*, is so “remote”, then what does it mean when Swami says: “I am in you, above you, below you, ahead of you, behind you”? The answer to this is simple.

Though the Supreme Lord is supposed to live in His Eternal Abode beyond Space and Time, He has also projected Himself into the finite Universe to appear in various forms. In this sense, He also pervades the Universe.

Thus, God is both above Creation and also below it. Above Creation He is in an Absolute State. OK, but what about below Creation? The Lord in His *Avatar* as Krishna has clearly explained that.

All Is God

Krishna says that in Creation, God is both Unmanifest as well as Manifest. The manifest aspect is easier to understand. In brief, it means that everything that is a part of the physical universe is, in the ultimate analysis, God and nothing but God. Thus, if you go to the very roots, the wind is God, trees are God, mountains are God, rivers are God, a crow is God, a vulture is God, and so on. You name it and it is God! Sounds extraordinary, does it not? Yet, if we think about it carefully, we cannot escape that conclusion.

The Power Of God

Hardcore non-believers of today would shake their heads at all this and smile, perhaps condescendingly. “What nonsense”, they would exclaim. “How can the wind be God?” Let us hear what Swami has to say about the wind. He sometimes asks in His Discourses: “Has man made any fan that can blow as fiercely as a typhoon or a hurricane?” Those are not His exact words, but they convey the gist of His remark.

Just pause for a moment and reflect. How many of us realise that during a typhoon wind speeds touch 250 km/hour, yes 250 km/hour? Do you know that a category four hurricane – and these do sweep across the Atlantic from time to time – is as big as the state of Texas, that it not only brings nearly half a metre of rain, that is, 500 mm of rain, and that even at the periphery of this typhoon the wind speed is about 60 km/hour? As Swami asks: “Has man made a blower that can generate that kind of air speeds and that too over such vast areas?” That is the real point; where can such power come from except God?

Let us now swing to the other extreme and consider the crow. Ancients in India revered the crow. They were not crazy but deeply appreciative of the fine

balance in God's extraordinary Master Plan. How many realise that the unimpressive and somewhat ugly-looking crow is actually Nature's scavenger? Throw perishables and the crow comes from somewhere to eat it all! Ancient Indians revered the crow because they saw God in the crow coming to their help.

Nature's Intricate Balance

If we look carefully, every little thing in Nature, right from the plankton upwards, plays a delicate role in preserving the integrity and balance of Nature. Take the fish. As Swami says, the fish cleans up the waters including the great oceans. But what does man do? First, he pollutes the waters and then he destroys fish stock almost *en masse*.

So, if we choose to think about all this carefully and objectively, it should be abundantly clear that Nature does have a carefully-crafted Master Plan in which there are many players, big and small, each with its own unique role to play. Although these players may appear to us with various forms, in the ultimate analysis all roles are in fact played by God.

We may not understand all of it but that does not mean that the Master Plan and the Cosmic Drama do not exist. The non-believer might perhaps reluctantly concede that there is possibly some kind of a plan, but at the same time argue that the existence of a plan does not mean that there is a guiding spirit behind it. The ancients of India had no use for such evasive and meaningless arguments. They freely accepted, and with much joy too, that there was a Lord Supreme and that not even an atom could move without His Grace or He willing it.

In a nutshell, the *Vedas* loudly proclaim that God is everywhere and in everything, from the tiny ant to the galaxies. This, incidentally, is a phrase that Swami often quotes – *Kshimalo Brahmalo*. In other words, God is present everywhere in the manifest or the material world, from the ant to the galaxies. But what about the Unmanifest presence of God in Creation? That also is not difficult to understand, at least in principle.

The Unmanifest Presence Of God

Scholars discuss the Omnipresence of God using three important words. They are: Immanent, Transcendent, and Absolute. In the Universe, God is both Immanent and Transcendent; His Absolute aspect extends even beyond the Universe. Let us take in all this slowly.

What do I mean by saying God is immanent in the Universe? Let us take the physical Universe. I am a physicist by training and I have written many books explaining how physical laws operate in the Universe. When it comes to the atom, with relativity, quantum mechanics and electromagnetism we can more or less completely describe all the properties of the atom. All these predictions of science have been meticulously verified and, in fact, many have won the Nobel Prize for doing just that. The point about all this is that we can explain physical behaviour using the laws of science alone, without explicitly bringing God into the discussion.

Fine, does that mean that God does not exist? Atheists would of course argue that God is not necessary, God is irrelevant, etc. But the wise would say, "Yes, the Dirac equation and its extension in the form of quantum electrodynamics by Feynman explains a lot of natural phenomena no doubt, but where did the laws of relativity, the laws of electrodynamics and the laws of quantum mechanics pop from? God is immanent in all these beautiful laws."

Gandhi once said:

There is an undefinable mysterious Power that pervades everything. I feel it, though I cannot see it.

Gandhi was merely saying God is immanent in the Universe, in every atom of it in fact.

OK, agreed that God is immanent in the Universe. What about the Transcendent part? Well, the way I understand it is as follows – by the way, my view is shaped by what Krishna says in the eighth chapter of the *Gita*. Let us consider a living human being or for that matter even an ant. I find the ant absolutely amazing. Incidentally, the brilliant physicist Feynman did too, and he once spent days studying their behaviour. At the chemical or biological level, the ant is just a collection of biomolecules of various types. But this collection can do amazing things. It can move and also react to situations.

Let us say an ant is moving on the ground. Place a small piece of paper across its path. It immediately reacts and moves away. If the ant senses danger, it tries to protect itself. In short, it is aware it exists, it is conscious of its existence. That awareness, that consciousness of being alive, is a capacity, a power that is beyond the power described by the laws of physics, chemistry or even biology. The laws of physics are mere mechanical laws. **Till today, Science has simply not been able to say what life is, what awareness is, and what consciousness is; and yet life, awareness and consciousness do exist – we all know that.** That life-force or *Praana* as the

ancients called it is the transcendent aspect of God. There are many such arguments I can give, but shall skip them for the moment.

Turning next to the Absolute aspect of God, even this is evident on earth. Consider a human being full of *Daya* or compassion and *Kshama* or forbearance. *Daya* and *Kshama* are eternal virtues, beyond Space and Time; and they are aspects of the Supreme God or *Purusha*. When they shine in a human being, they represent in some measure the presence of the Absolute within, what Krishna refers to as *Adhyatma*.

A Summary Of The Above

So the long and short of it is that in the Universe or if we prefer in Creation, there is the manifest aspect of God and also the Unmanifest aspect of God. *Purusha Sukhtam* draws attention to all this as did Krishna later, with much clarity I might add. Putting everything together, we have the following picture.

- There is, above everything else, the Absolute level of God, who is Eternal, Changeless and Formless. He is the Lord Supreme.
- When the Lord Supreme brings the Universe into existence, He does so essentially by projecting Himself into Space-Time.
- Thanks to this projection, the Universe too has bits and pieces of His Glory and Power, only a tiny fraction in fact; but even that tiny bit dazzles enormously.
- In the Universe, the Lord is immanent in material entities, both insentient and sentient.
- In Creation, the Lord also has an Unmanifest presence; this is what scholars describe as the transcendental presence of the Lord in the Universe, that is to say, a subtle presence transcending material entities. God is thus also present in subtle forms, such as the Life-force and the Mind. The ancients paid obeisance to the Life-force because it is nothing but the Lord Unmanifest in the Universe.

What *PurushaSukhtam* does is to not only crisply call attention to all this but also paint an allegorical and poetic picture of evolution itself. To put it in slightly different words, the *PurushaSukhtam* gives a poetic description of God, man, the Universe and the relationship between all these three.

The doubt might arise, "When God projects Himself into lower dimensions to create the Universe, does His quantum at the Absolute level get diminished?"

The answer is simple and straightforward. God is Infinity, and nothing can diminish Infinity. That incidentally is one way in which the concept of infinity is taught to students of mathematics – Infinity minus Infinity remains Infinity.

The Text Of The *PurushaSukhtam*

So much for the preliminaries. Let me now turn to the *PurushaSukhtam* proper. I shall not discuss the poetic and allegorical description it offers of Creation. Instead, I shall focus on the very first sentence.

Sahasraseerusha Purushaha. Sharaksha sahasrapaad.

What this means is that *Purusha* the Supreme One pervades the entire manifest Universe, cognising through all minds, seeing through all eyes, and working through all limbs. He is everywhere. Where is He not? Enveloping the Universe from all sides, He also transcends it, into the infinite, intangible and Eternal Realm of the Absolute. That is the gist of the opening stanza.

You might ask: what is the meaning of saying, for example, God sees through all eyes? The best way of discussing this point is to recall what happened many years ago during a Discourse given by Swami in the Sai Kulwant Hall.

A devotee speaking in the Divine presence and just before the Divine Discourse, raised the question: "Who is God?" When it was Swami's turn to speak, He said that such questions arise from ignorance because there is only God and nothing but God. Swami added, **"People ask, 'if there is only God, then why don't we see Him?' You do not see God because you have curious notions about how God ought to look. God is in everything including all human beings. When the Vedas say that He has a thousand eyes, it does not mean that God is an entity with a thousand eyes. In fact, any form with a thousand eyes would look grotesque. What it means is that God sees through all eyes because He resides in all. In other words, man must look upon Society as God."**

"People may ask, in that case why do the Vedas speak of only a thousand eyes? The answer is simple. In those distant days, the population of the world was small and people thought in terms of thousands and not millions as we now do. If those *Rishis* were to describe God today in that language, they would speak of billions and not thousands!" That is what Swami said in essence and that observation of Swami ought to make clear how we ought to interpret this opening stanza.

We Are All Connected

I now wish to follow up on this first stanza because it has a deep meaning and implication for the present time. As a prelude, allow me to draw attention to a hierarchy to which Swami sometimes makes a reference. The hierarchy is: Individual, Society, Nature and God. The words Swami actually uses are: *Vyashti* meaning individual, *Samashti* meaning Society, *Srishti*, meaning Creation or Nature, whichever term you prefer, and finally *Parameshti* meaning God.

Swami goes on to add that the individual is a limb of Society which is a limb of Nature which in turn is a limb of God. In turn, this hierarchical relationship implies that every action of the individual must be in harmony with Society, Nature and God. Take a simple example. When one throws litter and garbage, one is causing disturbance to Society, one is polluting the environment, and finally one is out of sync with God who is the Embodiment of Perfection. The hierarchy drawn attention to by Swami is thus profoundly significant.

The point being made by Swami is far from trivial. Today, the world is highly interconnected, thanks to air travel, satellite TV, internet, mobile phone, etc. Events happening in one place can affect thousands elsewhere within twenty-four hours. For example, say the OPEC or the group that coordinates the oil pricing policies of the petroleum exporting countries meets in Vienna and decides to cut down pumping oil from the ground.

Immediately the price of crude shoots up in the New York and London markets. Worldwide, the price of petrol shoots up and the people in, for example, Uganda, a poor country in Africa, are affected. Why? Because the cost of transportation goes up for them. As it is they are hard pressed for cash and if on top of it the transportation costs go up, the price of everything else goes up too.

Take SARS next. Farmers in Thailand and Vietnam have huge poultry farms where, say, a bird flu epidemic breaks out. A farmer who looks after the chicken gets infected and from him the flu spreads to Canada, France and so on. By the way, all this has happened. What I am driving at through these examples is that global connectivity has created a situation where an action by an individual can and does affect people elsewhere; besides, it can also harm the environment. The impact on Society can be in many dimensions, economic, material and even moral. Likewise, the impact on Nature can be diverse. Not only individuals but big companies, via the policies they pursue, also contribute to such global impact.

Let me give just one example of the latter. Driven by the desire to make lots of money, big corporations are today fuelling unwanted and excessive consumption of fast foods and soft drinks. In turn, this harms the health of huge sections of the population. Some types of consumerism promote pollution of Nature. **Thus there is pollution of air, water and land. In addition, greed eclipses the fear of sin and makes people forget God, compounding the problem. If all this is to be avoided, then one must pay careful attention to the content and spirit of *Purusha Sukhtam*, imbibe its teachings, and apply them sincerely in one's daily life.**

Times and lifestyles might have changed, but these changes do not make the basic lessons of spirituality irrelevant. On the contrary, they are more relevant to mankind than ever before. **By the way, let us not imagine that big corporations and rich people alone violate moral laws; if we enquire deeply, every one of us is guilty in some way or the other.** So, really speaking, we should first fix ourselves and overcome our own personal deficiencies before pointing fingers at others. As Swami reminds us, when we point one finger at others, three of our fingers are actually pointing to us.

People these days imagine that devotion for God is one thing and life is another. It is understandable if people elsewhere take such an attitude but the surprising thing is that even Swami's devotees tend to do this. Thus, while overflowing with Love for Swami in His physical form, they fail to see Him pervade Society and Nature. This can be dangerous because unconsciously perhaps they might tend to do things that are detrimental to Society and/or harmful to Nature.

The Ancient Sages Warned Modern Man

The Vedic culture shaped man in such a way that his lifestyle made him in tune with Society and in harmony with Nature. The *Purusha Sukhtam* taught man that God not only created Society but also pervades it. And this, thousands of years before man had any chance of making a global physical impact, positive or otherwise. When we reflect on this, we would see how wise the Vedic seers were to encourage man to lead a harmonious life.

Today, more than ever before, such harmonious living is a vital necessity when greedy individuals are dumping termites at the moral roots of Society through the media, while equally greedy corporations are encouraging unwanted consumerism, even though non-spiritual think tanks have warned against it. For example, just a few weeks ago, one of the think tanks set up by the UN, submitted a preliminary report on the ecosystem. It drew attention to the fact that some systems were damaged beyond repair while many others faced extinction, unless urgent control action was taken. When we consider all

such facts in conjunction with Vedic thought, we have to take our hats off and salute those in far off days who had the wisdom to see what could come thousands of years later.

As Swami says, modern man is very intelligent in worldly matters. He has extraordinary skills to do so many wonderful things. But he lacks balance; that balance comes from inside and when the inside is shut out, there can be serious trouble.

Let me put it all this way. Imaging a burning ship, a big ship like say the Queen Elizabeth. The passengers in the ship can in principle be rescued using lifeboats. But the situation faced by mankind today is not at all like that. The planet is a spaceship, making its own journey in space, and each and every one of us is a passenger on this ship. This is one ship that has no lifeboat service of the usual kind. If anything terrible were to happen to the planet, like the greenhouse effect, for example, everyone would be in trouble.

Trouble is what we see everywhere and it cannot be swept under the rug. We have to eliminate or at least mitigate these problems, and for that there is only one way – to return to Moral Law. To use Swami's words, we need *Daiva Preeti*, and *Paapa Bheeti* – Love for God and fear of sin. Only then will there be morality in Society. Morality is the only lifeboat that can save us, and to make that boat show up, each and every one of us must develop deep and true Love for God and a mortal fear of sin.

We can't come here for *Darshan* and then head straight to the casinos in Monaco or the gambling dens in Las Vegas. As Jesus said, we have to choose either God or Mammon. One cannot serve two Masters at the same time. It is in that context that the Universal Truths that the *Vedas* enshrine become very relevant. I wonder whether you would agree with me?

Jai Sai Ram.

– Heart2Heart Team

THE WORLD AND THE PRESENCE

By Sri K Chakravarthi

*Destiny waits in the hand of God, shaping the still unshapen;
I have seen these things in a shaft of Sunlight*

– T.S. Eliot, *Murder in the Cathedral*

In this brief article I have tried to set my general observations regarding the world in the first two pages and later given expression to my feelings which have sprung in my heart as grateful response to Swami's Presence. Now, please read on.

The World Has Changed, But Has Man?

Is there any generation, where men and women have not felt that times have changed, that the old order is yielding place to a new one, that prescriptions of good conduct and good behavior ought to be changed to suit their times? Allied to this is also a debate in every generation about the meaning of life, God and Man, good and evil, war and peace.

Historically, much has changed, especially in regard to man's conquest over nature. Electricity has revolutionized life in such a fundamental way that 'night' is only an extension of 'day' and human life, on a daily basis, is on a totally different trajectory from the pre-electricity era. For men of the pre-electric age, the quality and pace of today's life would have been utterly inconceivable. Similarly, transportation is another field which has altered man's life so profoundly that lands once distant and mysterious have become close and accessible. Communication has put people in instantaneous contact in today's world so that they know the happenings in any part of the globe as they occur.

All in all, there are many areas of human life which have qualitatively changed.

Technological Progress has Brought Us Closer, But Is there Unity?

Paradoxically, physical togetherness has not resulted in spiritual bonding. There is more that separates people than unites them. Countries and communities have not yet been united so as to attain the brotherhood of man.

When travel was time-consuming and arduous, there seems to have been more of a community life. As travel brings people closer, there is more of a casual relationship and the key element is not 'sharing', but 'mutual

convenience'. All this makes it clear that physical contact and networking need not necessarily lead to emotional understanding.

I do not subscribe to the view that yesterday's world was better than today's and that there has been a steady decline in values. Human history is replete with instances of aggression, slaughter, ingratitude, chicanery, vengefulness and utter self-centeredness. Whatever has been the state of external conditions, that is, whether pre-technological or post-technological, human emotions have expressed themselves in a seemingly unaltered pattern.

Seeking a Solution to Transform Society

If then we find that the external world has vastly changed, but human nature has remained pretty constant, especially in its insensitivity to fellow human beings, where do we seek a solution?

Amongst a large number of people there is a feeling that what is historically dated is not relevant in today's context. This is true in a number of cases but it is not entirely so, particularly in the context of human relations because the driving force in human behavior has shown a persistence in human history.

It is recognized that human nature is a mixture of altruism and selfishness, of generosity and meanness, of vengefulness and forgiveness, of nobility and crassness, of love and hatred. It is also recognized that a human being needs to become refined by eschewing the downside qualities and only in that conscious and consistent process of refinement, can collective well-being become established.

As a student of history and politics, I had been struck by these general observations I have made above and wondered how the world can be a better place for all to live in peace and harmony.

Economic Redistribution?

At one time I thought that if economic exploitation of the weak was the prime reason for iniquitous society, then the solution should lie in economic redistributive justice. But, unfortunately, history has also revealed that efforts made in that direction resulted in large scale misery because the laudable motive of bringing into existence a society of equals soon became corrupted and gave way to an unabashed pursuit of power resulting in a civic society suffering from an encircling sense of fear. The dream of economic emancipation dissolved into a nightmare of unbearable authoritarianism.

An International Arbiter?

At another time I thought that if the world is to be a better place for all, then there is a need for a genuinely international institution which can reconcile the conflicting claims of nations in a spirit of mutual accommodation and constructive cooperation. But, as history unfolds, it is becoming clear that this faith could be misplaced and granted that nations like individuals are unequal, there can be no greater right than might. I also realised that the peace of the world is uncertain unless men keep the peace of God.

Unbridled Freedom and Opportunity?

Later I thought that if freedom and opportunity are provided then there could be a release of great energy and power resulting in a more equal society. Such a society would be characterized by progress based on merit and not on the accident of birth. But soon I found that freedom dwindled into abrasive individualism and opportunity into cultivated nepotism.

Granted that there is no equality in nature as such in resource endowments either of regions or individuals, virtues like balance, stability and mutuality in society are to be rooted not in the domain of physical strength or emotional realm but in spiritual reality, because it is only in spirit that men are truly equal.

It is this vague feeling in me that made me look out for what could be a more plausible area for a genuine betterment of society. I must confess that this remained inarticulate or at best half-articulate.

The encounter with Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba and the years that have been spent at His Lotus feet, listening to Him and reading His works, have thrown a new light on what I took as serious issues of human life. The focus shifted slowly from an assessment of others' roles to that of my own role. Am I adding to the problems of the world or am I contributing even in a small measure to solving them?

Swami's Prescription: Transform Yourself First

A Ceiling on Desires

Swami holds that before reforming or transforming the world, the individual should reform and transform himself. What type of reformation does this involve? If I have to do something for the economic reformation of the poor then I have to address myself to the reasons which cause the problem in the first instance.

The reasons could be multiplication of wants, wasteful use of resources, personal aggrandizement, lack of education and skills, poor health and low productivity, and so on. As a person set on the course of providing relief to the poor I can reduce my wants by consciously putting a ceiling on desires, treat misuse of money (resources) as evil, consciously practise the virtue of selflessness, participate in an education programme which enhances skills and strengthens the values of the poor people, and encourage preventive health care which reduces the vulnerability of the poor.

Selfless Service

The above are precisely the prescription of Swami. Swami holds that Bharat is richly endowed and can provide for the legitimate wants of all her people but not for ever expanding (or limitless) desires. And therefore He has given us the programme of putting a ceiling on our desires. Similarly He is cautioning us against misuse of nature's gifts by over-exploitation and misuse of money. He shows us by His own exemplary life the role of utter selflessness in reaching out to the poor and neglected. The antidote to personal aggrandizement is selfless service. By establishing excellent hospitals which provide free medical care, He has demonstrated how one's altruism will render such service possible. His altruism stands self-proclaimed and does not need other's encomium. He shows that His selfless service is an expression of His universal love, a love that knows no limits or boundaries, a love that knows no discrimination on any grounds whatsoever.

Providing the Basics: Education, Health Care, Safe Water

By setting up schools and a university which provide free education, He has demonstrated again the possibility of such a venture, worthy of emulation by people who have as their cherished goal provision of good education for the poor and the underprivileged. By undertaking projects which provide protected and safe drinking water to a large numbers in backward districts of the state, He has again demonstrated that if there is a firm resolve on the part of the service provider, be it a government or private organization, then it is well within the realm of possibility. What could be the reason for Bhagavan's launching drinking water supply projects? The answer is obvious – it's because water is basic to sustaining life. In the modern world it is the poor who lack access to safe drinking water. It is therefore imperative that clean drinking water is made available to the poor rural population. It is evident that it is His concern for the poor that has prompted Him to spend significant sums of money on drinking water supply projects.

That concern is once again an expression of His universal love that encompasses all and which flows spontaneously without expecting anything in return. How do people who talk of economic planning to provide basic necessities such as water or minimum health care or education react? Do they take these visible expressions of high-class economic service as instances of good planning, effective implementation and optimal management? Perhaps. But do they also think of these services as not merely economic solutions but as noble examples of selfless love with a universal message – a message which goes beyond treating human beings as economic agents or political animals but as the embodiments of the Divine who should grow to their full stature? I really wonder!

"Time Waste is Life Waste" – Baba

It is passing strange how Bhagavan, who is beyond time, sets much store by doing things in time. He has no time to waste. Time waste, He says, is life waste. Not for Him therefore is the endless talk of how to improve the lot of the poor and the downtrodden which is the stock-in-trade of all our professional economists and public men. For Him, it's ceaseless action to alleviate the sufferings of people, to help them face life with courage and fortitude, to encourage them to move forward despite hardships, to hold each other's hands through their lives' vicissitudes and to live the day to face the morrow.

Demand Less From The World, Do More For The World

In a world which is clearly/plainly/visibly beset with seemingly endless problems, Swami is physically present and His Presence extends the assurance that we can overcome them. We need to take the first steps, those first steps are to be in the direction of demanding less from the world and doing more for the world. That should not be difficult in the presence of the One who does not demand anything at all and who does it all silently for the world.

So much of our lives are lost in debating economic ideologies, political philosophies and wasteful institution-building. Instead our lives need to be repaired by doing selfless service in a spirit that such service done to our fellow human beings is service done to God. Truly our God, Lord Sai, serves His Creation and what better testimony can we give than to do service to His Creation in the spirit that such service is indeed our service to our God, Lord Sai.

*The Lord who created must wish us to create
And employ our creation again in His service
Which is already His service in creating.*

– T.S. Eliot, *The Rock*, 1934

The Solution: A Unified Spiritual Outlook

The problems of the world will continue to be problems. We cannot solve them in the abstract. We can solve some or a few of them only by the process of identification with the sufferers and that process of identification, as Swami teaches us, can only be through a spiritual outlook which sees God in all and all in God.

All attempts at solving the problems of the world at a physical or intellectual level will be fractured because they are treated as others' problems and not our own. Because of His universal awareness, consciousness and love, Swami solves the problems by treating such problems as His own and not of others.

To the extent that we treat more and more people as our own by spiritually bringing them in our fold, we move more and more towards Bhagavan. Such an approach is a twin blessing because it makes our lives worthwhile and takes us closer to our Creator. This is realizable only when, as Swami says, 'I' and 'You' become 'We' because of His universal awareness, consciousness and love. And then there is no more separateness.

We need to attain the state about which the mystic poet speaks:

*I know that knowledge is a vast embrace
I know that every being is myself,
In every heart is the hidden myriad One.
I know the calm Transcendant bears the world,
The veiled Inhabitant, the silent Lord:
I feel his secret act, his intimate fire;
I hear the murmur of the cosmic Voice
I know my coming was a wave from God.*

– Sri Aurobindo, *Savitri*, p. 671

A True Knowledge Society

Conceiving terrestrial paradise in economic and emotional terms will be a nonstarter if we continue to look at the world through external sight. Earth can

become paradise only when we start viewing the world through, as the poet says, the inward eye. There is no paradise out there. It's in here, in everyone's spiritual heart. This 'knowledge' is to be regained so that we understand what Swami wants us to understand, namely, that we are made of His stuff, that is, His Divine Essence. We need to go beyond the currently understood "knowledge society" and enter into the *true* knowledge society which Swami envisions, in which separateness gives way to unity, pollution is overcome by purity, and human frailty is transformed into exalted divinity.

Sri K. Chakravarthi, IAS, was the first Registrar of Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning and is currently the Secretary of Sri Sathya Sai Central Trust.

– Heart2Heart Team

THE SAI MOVEMENT IN EL SALVADOR

Where is El Salvador And What's Unique There

El Salvador is the smallest country in Latin America in land area but is the most densely populated nation in the American mainland.

Due to the strong work ethic of its people and its vibrant economy, it has been called the Japan of the Americas and is the most industrialized country in the region.

From beautiful beaches on the Pacific Ocean to lush pine forests in the mountains bordering Honduras, and volcanoes (some semi active) and volcanic lakes, the country is blessed with rich natural beauty. San Salvador, the capital city, is known as "the valley of the hammocks" as it is the site of numerous earthquakes which cause the hammocks to swing.

The 'Free' People of El Salvador

The principal religion is Catholic, but the constitution allows for freedom of worship. Freedom is one trait which well describes the Salvadoran people.

Their spontaneity and desire to do whatever they feel is right can produce some interesting situations.

On any given day one might find peaceful demonstrations protesting everything from a water shortage to the right to sell illegally copied videos! These may block the streets (traffic jams are an everyday affair), but the authorities tend to look the other way.

The earliest foreigners to settle in El Salvador were Spanish priests and Caribbean pirates, the latter to whom some families can trace their ancestry. Over the centuries the newcomers mixed with the indigenous Indians so today there are no longer any "pure" natives left. The original inhabitants, who were descendents of the Mayans, built pyramids similar to those found in Guatemala, Honduras and Mexico.

A Very Brief History of El Salvador ...

Up until a few years ago the country had an agriculturally based economy with coffee as the number one export. Today, there are many textile factories and their products have taken the lead in exports.

Those working in the declining agro sector have been helped by the many Salvadorans who immigrated to the US and send checks home to their families.

Beginning in 1976, an internal conflict led to fifteen years of political strife which triggered a mass migration to the US and other countries. In 1991 negotiations successfully resolved the situation by giving both sides political representation. Now there is no more shooting, just shouting!

How Sai Entered El Salvador

So how did Swami find His way to this little country halfway around the world from India?

It all began in 1978. A group of ladies who had a yoga center invited Indra Devi, the famous yoga teacher, to visit El Salvador. It was she who first spoke about Sai Baba and gave out a few books on Swami. Within a few months, in May 1979, Elenita de Servent and Lidia de Trigueros were in India with a group from Mexico to visit Sai Baba. In December of the same year, Juan Pablo Bolens and John Behner along with their families also visited Swami and soon the yoga center in El Salvador blossomed into a Sai Center . By January of 1980, the Center was holding bhajans, a study circle, and doing service in the community.

Within two years of this, six Sai Centers were active in San Salvador, the capital of El Salvador, with about 130 members. Mind you, this was during the years when there was a lot of violence and the city buses did not run after 6:00 p.m. in the city. In fact, at one time there were fifteen study circle groups in the city.

Since then, El Salvador's Sai community has been blessed by visits from many experienced and long-standing devotees like Dr. Sandweiss, Dr. Voleti, the musical group Lightstorm, the Bozzanis, and Dr. John Hislop in 1982. In 1985, the first coordinating committee of the Sathya Sai Organization was set up when Dr. Goldstein and Mr. Leonardo Gutter visited the country and put the Sai Mission in El Salvador on a new trajectory.

Sai-Inspired Service Grows...

Despite the country's turmoil, the Sai Centers continued to grow. After the earthquake of 1986, members helped rebuild the damaged homes of devotees. In 1989, a Sai Foundation was established providing the framework for putting donations to good use. After peace finally arrived in the 1990s, the Organization began doing outstanding service work, such as participating in

relief efforts after the earthquake of 2001 when they helped rebuild a Catholic church.

Following in Sathya Sai's footsteps, twelve projects supplying water to more than 350 families have been undertaken.

Two medical clinics and a monthly medical camp are now offering free consultations and medicine. A home has been established which provides free living space for twenty wheelchair-bound men and workshops where they can learn a trade.

There is no requirement that the residents attend the Sai Center on the top floor, but some of them have started participating in bhajans and reading books about Swami.

Miracles Began Happening...

One patient, paralyzed from the waist down for nine years after falling out of a tree, had two long pins inserted on either side of his spinal column. The Sai doctors studied his X-rays and felt that the pins could be removed. One performed the necessary operation and the patient then became completely paralyzed. Two weeks later he was awakened by Swami, who asked him how he was. When he said, "Swami, I am completely paralyzed," Baba said, "Now you are well, get up and walk." It was 2:00 a.m. but he did as he was told and was amazed to discover he could now walk!

He went to the phone and called a devotee to share the good news even though it was the middle of the night. Thereafter, he got a job selling newspapers and was reunited with his wife and daughters who had separated from him because of his physical problems.

Serving the Homeless and the Sick

Devotees also prepare food for the homeless, who out of gratitude bring flowers for the lady sevaks on Mother's Day.

Hospital visits are also organized. The Sai youth group presents puppet shows at the children's hospital once a month and refreshments are served to patients at the cobalt cancer treatment center since many of them travel long distances for their treatment without having eaten anything. And in the burn ward, doctors are using vibuthi in some cases.

Sai's Grace in a National Prison

A weekly study circle is attended by inmates at one of the national prisons. One of the prisoners suffered from severe diabetes and was unable to walk. He could not eat any of the snacks containing sugar which were served after the study circle. Swami came in his dream and said, "Now you can take the refreshments after the study circle." He did so and afterwards found he could walk! All the other inmates were amazed at his stunning recovery.

Teaching Human Values...

Another facet of the Organization is the Sathya Sai Institute of Human Values. The Institute is currently offering the ninth diploma course of seventy-two hours duration, and trains public and private school teachers in the Sathya Sai Human Values curriculum. (One teacher commented that this program is certainly effective as even her marriage is improving!) The Institute has developed programs in three pilot schools with the Human Values agenda being incorporated into the curriculum of the Ministry of Education.

...And the Impact

One third grade student found a purse in the street during the week that they were studying the value of honesty. She took the purse to her teacher, who called the owner. The lady came to the school and was amazed to find all her money and documents in tact. She could not believe that in this day and age someone could be so honest.

Cultural Outreach Programs

The Institute has held two music festivals with songs highlighting Human Values in which twenty-five schools have participated. Several public meetings have been conducted with up to 1000 people in attendance. One lady emerged from a public gathering in tears and told volunteers that she just knew there was more to life than parties. She had left her house by the backdoor to escape a party which was going on in her home to attend the get-together. Two or three retreats a year are also well attended.

***Voice of the Avatar* on Radio**

Currently, there are two regular radio programs on the airwaves. One is called the *Voice of the Avatar* and has been running twice a week for twenty years broadcasting Spanish translations of Swami's discourses. The other is a radio station for children which focuses on Human Values. The announcers are Bal Vikas and former Bal Vikas students.

Moving Transformation in Children...

Speaking of Bal Vikas, one family had their three children of 8, 10 and 12 years in the classes. When the father lost his job, they had to sell their TV set to put food on the table. A few months after finding work, he had saved enough for a down payment for a new television. However, when he told his children, they said, "Father we don't want another TV as it will interfere with our studies." Now these three children are all professionals: a doctor, an engineer, and an architect.

Sai Comes To The Rescue...

Swami has blessed El Salvador with its share of divine miracles. Once He appeared as a fireman to save an electric plant from certain destruction by flames. Swami has also intervened to rescue many individuals from accidents and incurable illnesses. Recently, a female devotee who was new to the Organization was hospitalized with severe pain. Doctors were unable to diagnose her problem.

She and her husband prayed to Swami for some sign which would help the doctors discover her problem. Minutes later she passed some blood, which revealed to the staff that she was hemorrhaging internally. They operated immediately and were able to save her life.

The Greatest Miracle...

Swami has even invaded the Presidential Palace from the President himself to several Ministers. In 1981, Francisco Flores, the future president, went to see Bhagavan Baba in person. While in the darshan line Sathya Sai told him, "You will lead your country."

(At the time, however, Mr. Flores was not sure if Swami was speaking to him or to the person next to him.) But the grandest miracle is still the wonderful devotees He has brought together to work in harmony and love.

There are service activities every day of the week, throughout the year and Human Values educational programs held even during summer school.

Sai – The Formula for Peace in El Salvador

Where once there was a bloody political upheaval, now there is a peaceful spiritual movement sweeping the nation.

Through the grace of Sathya Sai, His devotees in El Salvador will carry forward the five values of Sathya, Dharma, Shanti, Prema, and Ahimsa well into the 21st century and beyond.

We, at Heart2Heart, thank Mr. John Behner and other devotees of El Salvador for sharing this information with us and pray for His blessings to make El Salvador truly "Sai Salvador."

– Heart2Heart Team.

SERIAL ARTICLES

SHIRDI SAI PARTHI SAI PART-17 (Continued from the previous issue)

ACT TWO

SCENE 5

Easwamma is in the backyard of her house, watering the sacred Tulsi plant and offering worship. Suddenly, a blue ball of light appears in the sky. It moves toward her and enters her! She feels strange. She cannot understand her extraordinary experience. She enters the house. As she does so, her father-in-law, Kondama Raju, is worshipping Lord Shiva.

EASWARAMMA: Father-in-law!

KONDAMMA RAJU: What happened?

EASWARAMMA: I had..... I had a strange experience. When I was watering the Tulsi plant, blue radiance emerged in the sky, formed itself into a glow of light, which then entered me. I felt a strange sensation, as if some extraordinary power had entered me..... some strange power.....some strange power.

Kondamma Raju recalls the words of Venkavadhuta:

“Very soon, my dear fellow. Lord Narayana is going to take birth in OUR Ratnakara family! You will certainly have His Darshan. He will shower His Love on you. He will show the proper way to the world. He will wipe out the troubles of the good and re-establish Dharma. He will, and this is the Truth!”

KONDAMMA RAJU: *[elated and excited]* What Venkavadhuta said is going to come true! A new light is going to shine in our house!!

One night a few months after the above incident, there is rain, thunder and lightning. Unable to sleep, Venkama Raju gets up. Suddenly, he hears the sound of various musical instruments. Also, lamps in the house spontaneously light up.

He is puzzled. Next morning, he goes to a temple where the priests are chanting the Gayathri Mantra.

PRIEST 1: For health, wealth, and liberation, it is desirable that the Name of the Lord be regularly chanted at home. The way to total prosperity and protection is the *Gayathri Mantra*.

PRIEST 2: It is enough if the *Gayathri Mantra* is chanted 108 times everyday with proper reverence and devotion; all difficulties would disappear and all benefits would accrue. There is no *Mantra* superior to this.

PRIEST 3: That is not all. This *Mantra* is the assured cure for all diseases. By chanting this *Mantra* in the proper and prescribed manner, one can ensure good health.

PRIEST 4: Above all, the *Gayathri Mantra* promotes discrimination. This wonderful *Mantra* is the pathway to Knowledge and Wisdom. Adoration, Meditation and Prayer – these three constitute the essence of *Gayathri*.

PRIEST 5: *Bhargo devasya* - this is Adoration. *Deemahi* – this is Meditation. *Deeyoyonaha Prachodayad* – this is Prayer.

PRIEST 4: Wonderful!

PRIEST 5: The efficacy of the *Mantra* would be immense, if the words are pronounced properly.

PRIEST 3: The *Gayathri Mantra* is considered to be the Mother of the *Vedas*. Actually, it has three names – *Gayathri*, *Savithri* and *Saraswati*.

PRIEST 4: *Gayathri* is the presiding deity of the senses. *Savithri* is likewise the Goddess of life – she symbolises Truth. *Saraswati* is the Goddess of speech.

Venkama Raju comes to the spot at this juncture.

V.RAJU: Greetings!

PRIEST 4: Greetings Mr. Raju, and my blessings.

RAJU: You all seem to be engrossed in a spiritual debate! I have come hoping you scholars can clear my doubt.

PRIEST: You have a doubt?! Let us hear about it.

RAJU: Every night, lamps in our house, light up on their own. In addition, the musical instruments spontaneously play beautiful notes.

These phenomena fill us with great joy -but then, why are these strange things happening? What could be the reason? I have come here hoping you could offer an explanation.

PRIEST: *[to assistant]* Avadhani, can you please fetch the almanac?

AVADHANI: Here it is.

PRIEST: Mr. Raju, is there a pregnant lady in your house?

V.RAJU: Yes, my wife Easwaramma.

PRIEST: The angels are producing the Divine music to please the child growing in the womb. Such things happen at the time of incarnation of the *Avatars*. They are a signal that God is going to incarnate again. I think that shortly, God is going to appear in human form in your house. Your life would be fulfilled and the world would be sanctified.

RAJU: Wonderful! Your sweet words have resolved my doubts. I take your leave.

END OF ACT 2
(To be continued...)

- Heart2Heart Team

GITA FOR CHILDREN PART 19

Continued from the previous issue...

Chapter – 8

1. Arjuna says to Krishna, 'Krishna, my head is reeling! Forgive me please, but there are so many doubts of mine that You have got to clear. You keep saying again and again "God is your Indweller, I am in your Heart", and things like that. Can you please explain these statements in simple language that I can easily understand?'

2. Krishna replies, 'Why not? After all, you are My dear friend. Let Me start this way. I suppose you understand that you are a composite of the gross body, the Mind and *Atma*. You are a three-in-one composite – you understand that, don't you?'

3. Arjuna nods, and Krishna continues. 'You are a MBA, that is, an entity made up of the Mind, the Body and the *Atma*. In various ways I am present in the body and I am present in your Mind. On top of all this, I am the *Atma* that pervades everywhere, including every cell and atom of your body. Thus, I am there everywhere within you. Indeed, My presence is very strong.'

4. 'Actually, I am present not only in you, not only in all humans, but in every single entity in the Universe, from an ant to the galaxies. By the way, and this may come as a surprise, I am also present in the wickedest person on earth.'

5. Arjuna shakes his head vigorously as if to indicate that he is confused, while Krishna smiles and continues. 'Don't worry; it will all become clear. Let Me start with your body. You know it is made up of atoms. Since I am present in each atom, you must right away concede that I am present within you as the power of every single atom within your body. OK so far?'

6. 'But don't imagine that is all. I have a much stronger presence as the *Praana* or the life force within your body. The body is a living factory in which so many extraordinary things happen all the time. The heart keeps pumping, the lungs breathe, the stomach digests, and so on; all these functions are occurring **without you doing anything about them. How? It is My life-force that takes care of all these.**'

7. 'Skeptics dismiss My presence and declare, "It is all bio-chemistry." Bio-chemistry indeed. Such people who simply do not want to acknowledge My presence are fools, that is all.'

8. 'However, the ancients were wise. They understood that all activity in the human body connected with life, from digestion to motor activity, is driven by My Divine power. They acknowledged this in many ways, via their prayers and offerings especially. They expressed their adoration for what I do inside and had special names for Me. One of these is *Vaishvanara*. Another is *Angeerasa*, and so on.'

9. 'By the way, I hope you understand how I happen to be present in wicked persons in some aspects. Their hearts also beat, their stomachs also digest, etc. Who does that? Me, of course! I do all these things, even though such persons deny Me and go against My tenets. But let that pass for now.'

10. 'From the gross body let Me now move on to the Mind. The Mind can be regarded as being made up of two parts, the lower Mind and the Higher Mind. The lower aspect is what people normally call the brain while the Higher Mind is that which is capable of contemplating, analysing, deducing, etc. The Higher part is mighty powerful and has tremendous creative capability. All this power flows entirely from Me.'

11. 'The loftiest region of the Higher Mind is just a step away from the Heart. It is called *Buddhi*. By the way, when I say Heart, you must not confuse it with the physical heart that pumps blood. I am speaking of the Spiritual Heart.'

12. 'This Heart is My permanent residence. It is My residence because the Heart is the seat of Compassion. The Heart is called *Hridaya*. *HRIDAYA* = *HRID* + *DAYA*. *Daya* means Compassion. Thus, the Heart is the seat of Compassion.'

13. 'Compassion cannot exist without *Prema* or Love. Hence the Heart is also the seat of Love, *Kshama* or forbearance, and so on. In brief, the Heart is the fountainhead of all Divine virtues and qualities.'

14. Arjuna asks, 'Krishna, I agree that God is present in a wicked man as the life force. But surely the wicked man has no Heart. Therefore, how can God be his Indweller?'

15. With a smile Krishna replies, 'No Arjuna, what you are saying is not true. Let us say there is a river and that a dam is built across it. Suppose the dam shutters are closed. Then there would be no water downstream but upstream there would be water in the reservoir. Do you agree?'

16. 'The situation with respect to an evil person is similar. That person too has a Heart and God resides there also. But the virtues of the Heart are dammed and do not flow to the Mind and the Body. That is why the person's thoughts are wicked and his actions are bad.'

17. 'Yet, just as there is always some small seepage in a dam, even so-called bad people occasionally exhibit traces of good. So don't write them off completely.'

18. 'Suppose a bad man sees a small baby smiling happily. Charmed by the baby, this man would also smile in return. The baby is close to God and that is why it is happy. And in that brief instant, even that evil man is in communion with God. By the way, it has happened many times that a bad man has suddenly turned good. Don't you know the story of Sage Valmiki, who has described My earlier *Avatar* in his immortal *Ramayana*? Earlier, he was a robber but one day he changed. That happened when the shutters of the dam were raised. Thus, God resides in the Hearts of all, without any exception.'

To Be Continued...

– Heart2Heart Team

WINDOW TO SAI SEVA

SAI VISION FOR AFRICA

The eye affected by a cataract swears there is no lamp in the room - an operation to remove the cataract makes that eye aware of the lamp. That operation is the symbol of the spiritual discipline that one has to undergo, in order to have a Vision of God.

– Bhagawan Baba

To commemorate the 80th Birthday of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba, devotees in Africa and from the United Kingdom started a Seva programme of medical eye camps in Africa for cataract surgeries in 2005.

Sai Vision For Africa

Swami blessed the programme on 25th November 2004 and instructed that the operations performed should be of the best quality, emphasizing that high quality and not the number of operations should be the goal. Swami explained that love and care should be shown to each and every patient. When service is motivated by love it is bound to succeed - and that success is ascribed to the grace of God.

The first surgery was performed on Friday, 14th January 2005 (Makarsankranti) at Calabar, Nigeria. In Ghana, the surgeries started on 19th April 2005. Surgeries began in Kenya on 14th February and in Malawi from July 18th.

Many people in Africa suffer from cataract problems because they cannot afford the cost of surgery. Eventually they lose their eyesight and are left largely uncared for. It is for this reason that free cataract operations are the only way to alleviate the suffering of this neglected portion of the population living beneath the poverty line in the second most populous continent of the world after Asia.

All the cataract surgeries were conducted with the cooperation of the ministry of health in each respective country, who were kept updated on the progress. The surgeons and hospitals used for these procedures were often recommended by the local authorities. Most of the surgeries were carried out

in small towns and villages where there were poor and needy patients and the Sai Organisation in every country and region made provisions for post-operative care with the local hospitals in the area.

The medical coordinator for this project was Dr. S. Upadyay who visited some of the African countries to verify the quality of surgeries and the hygiene standards within the hospitals. Special attention was given to the lenses that were required and where such lenses were not available locally they were imported.

The press and radio carried information on when and where the surgeries were to be performed and patients came from various parts of the country and in some cases from neighboring countries. Now we take you through the Sai Vision Project that was successfully executed in six African nations, starting with Nigeria.

Sai Vision In Nigeria

Can you, dear reader, imagine the joy that Alice must be feeling! Alice is forty-five and has three sons and two daughters. She was diagnosed with developmental cataracts in both eyes and had been blind since the age of ten. She said:

Prior to the surgeries I depended on the children and my husband within the household for every activity and house chores. This was quite frustrating, as I felt like a cripple as a result of my blindness. After I had both eyes operated on I began to do things myself and now I can even cook for my husband!

Alice is all smiles now. The operation actually came at the perfect time. As Alice explained:

This was a difficult period for us all because my husband is the chief of the village and as he could not effectively perform his responsibilities he wanted to resign.

Now her husband does not need to resign and the family is full of joy!

Or consider the case of Edward, a thirty-two-year-old motor mechanic. After developing a cataract in his left eye he lost his job due to his blindness in 2002. Following the surgery, Edward expressed his feelings as follows:

I'm very well now and have good vision - I got back my employment....For the last two years before my operation I couldn't do my work. At that time it was very hard. I had to sell some of my personal possessions, including my house.

My situation was very bad and my prospects looked bleak. I was unable to move on my own and kept bumping into people on the road....Now I start work at six every morning and am happy in my work. Back then I just cried on my own.

Imagine these two cases replicated thousands of times and you have a picture of the lifesaving effects of the Sai Vision Project in Africa, all inspired by Bhagavan's Grace to work selflessly in creating a better world. A total of over 2,800 surgeries were performed in Nigeria, all at two hospitals, one in Kebbi and one in Calabar.

Before commencing, the surgeries were turned into a spiritual event with the recitation of *Ashtotharashatha Namavali* (108 Names of Baba), Aarti, distribution of Vibhuti, prayers from the Muslim faith, and pictures of Swami adorned with flowers and incense. All the patients, their relatives and the hospital staff were invited to attend the prayers.

Sai Vision In Ghana

On the advice of Dr. Marian Hagan of the National Eye Health Programme of the Ministry of Health of Ghana, surgeries began at Our Lady of Grace Catholic Hospital in Breman Asikuma on 19th April. The Sai Organisation publicized the free operations via posters, FM radio and newspaper adverts in Ghana's capital Accra, and in the hospital's locality. The hospital in the central region of Ghana was chosen as it covered remote rural areas and people from very poor backgrounds.

After the first group of patients was successfully operated on, word spread and people from other regions of Ghana and even neighboring countries came to avail themselves of the opportunity. Over the next four months more than 500 surgeries were performed.

Surgeries were carried out on patients of all ages, from three-year-old Yaw Amoateng to ninety-two-year-old Mr. Kojo Arko.

Sai Vision In Kenya

Thanks to the dedicated Sai Volunteers of Mombasa Sai Centre in Kenya, more than nine eye camps were conducted between February and August 2005 restoring the gift of sight to over 500 people. But the unique aspect of this service was that all these camps were organized in very remote and rural areas of Kenya with Mombasa, the second largest city in Kenya, being the base.

With the help of local doctors from the Lighthouse for Christ Eye Centre, all these surgeries were conducted free of charge and with a great deal of love. The team traveled hundreds of kilometers over rough terrain and difficult roads to reach the eye camp sites and serve the poor rural folk. It was not service of convenience, but service of need.

How the Outreach Programmes Worked

The modus operandi of the programmes was simple. Usually a team consisting of four to five persons, including a few support staff apart from a surgeon, would pack all the surgical and clinic supplies in a Land Rover and drive to the remote locations.

On reaching the village, the first two days would generally be taken up in doing a survey and then screening and identifying patients suitable for cataract surgery. Over the next two to three days, these patients would be operated on.

Four to seven days was the typical timeframe for these outreach programmes. All the patients were followed up after a week to review their status.

Various Challenges

Though it may sound simple, in the field there were obstacles and challenges galore! For example, it took more than seventeen hours for the five member staff to negotiate rough and unfriendly roads to reach the town of Kibwezi. And worse, the camp unfortunately coincided with a cholera outbreak in the region. The team conducted their surgeries only after addressing all the safety issues. Later, they arranged for the accommodation of the patients in a nearby St. Paul nursery school by requesting the help of the Catholic Diocese of Kibwezi. All this made possible the forty-five surgeries which would have otherwise been postponed or cancelled.

In fact, on one occasion due to frequent power failures, the dedicated team performed the operations by candlelight as there was no alternative source of light. But the most exciting fact to note is that all the surgeries were completed successfully and no patient had any complications. All the patients were given medication and advised to return in a week's time for re-evaluation. The elation of the patients had to be seen to be believed. One sixty-five-year-old lady, who lost her vision two years ago, started dancing with joy when she found she could see again!

More Hurdles in Mwingi, Lamu and Isovya

If the way to Kibwezi was challenging, the team now had to travel approximately 550 kms northwest of Mombasa through regions where there were no roads at all and daunting terrain to access Mwingi. But for the 4-wheel drive Land Rover they could have never managed the journey.

To reach out to the Kenyan island of Lamu, the team drove 360 kms along the coastal border to Mpeketoni and then went by boat to cross the sea. Like many others, this route was by no means considered safe. Apart from the endless bumps, potholes, twists and turns, it was notorious for banditry attacks (allegedly launched from Somalia).

Likewise, to reach Isovya in Kitwe district, the team faced a grueling 600 km long trip. Full of treacherous roads, they reached their destination tired and worn out. The next day they awoke early in the morning to find patients already waiting and a busy day ahead of them. The turnout was an encouraging sight and the team conducted eighty-four surgeries over three days. Though taxing and demanding, it was also a deeply rewarding experience.

In many of these outreach programmes, some people did not come forward for the operation out of fear and apprehensions, but once they saw others being benefited and heard good reports, they too asked for the surgery.

In Witu division of Lamu, many patients who were screened and identified for surgery did not come for their operation as they did not leave their farms unguarded from...baboons! The crop was their bread and butter and they opted to stay and protect what little they had. Such is the state of these poor folk and the difficult choices that must be made in the name of basic survival.

Another sad story was that of a young boy who had cancer of the eye and had to have it removed. Six to twelve months before the camp, his parents were advised to go to a hospital in Mombasa to get the affected eye taken out. Delay meant a greater likelihood of the cancer spreading further, but the parents could not afford it and so let it be. When the team discovered this, they immediately enucleated the eyeball before it was too late. Though the damaged eye could not be restored, there was relief in saving the child's life. The parents had no words to express their appreciation and gratitude and the team of doctors and other support staff were also deeply moved.

In most of these impoverished areas, the volunteers not only screened and operated on hundreds of patients they also distributed a lot of other essential items. In Mwingi, for example, clothes were given away to needy patients and

hungry children, who had almost nothing to protect them from the cold weather, received warm clothes as well as nourishing food.

The above narration is a very brief account of the tremendous seva going on in this small African country of Kenya . To give you a complete glimpse of the Sai Vision Project in Kenya , here is a table with the actual figures. One point to note is that if, for example, at Kibwezi forty-five surgeries were done, it does not mean forty-five patients were seen. In reality hundreds were seen and given free consultation and only forty-five were found to be suitable candidates for cataract surgery and were operated upon. So the patients reached are far more than the number of surgeries done.

Schedule of Medical Outreach Programmes in Kenya		
Date of camp	Area it was conducted	No. of Surgeries
14th – 18th Feb 2005	Garsen & Wema & Others at LCEC	45 & 20
14th – 18th Mar 2005	Kibwezi & Kambu & Others at LCEC	45 & 18
29th Mar – 1st Apr 2005	Marafa & Garashi	63
10th Apr – 15th Apr 2005	Ngao – Tarasaa	25
28th May 2005	Mombasa Bombolulu	32
12th – 17th June 2005	Mpeketoni – Lamu	10
25th June – 1st July 2005	Witu – Kipini & Others at LCEC	17 & 08
17th – 24th July 2005	Mwingi, Kaloleni, Kilifi & Others at LCEC	108 & 06
7th – 14th Aug 2005	Isovyva, Vipingo & Matsangoni	107
Total		503 Surgeries

As already mentioned, Mombasa was the base of all the outreach programmes and the devotees and Bal Vikas children of Mombasa Sai Centre enthusiastically came forward to lend their support in quite a few of these camps, for example, serving hot food to the patients in the Bombolulu camp. However, more important than this is the transformation these camps brought about in the devotees and the children. It was a great opportunity to serve and an amazing and heartfelt spiritual experience.

One of the Bal Vikas children wrote of his experience:

I feel so happy to serve needy people. But I am sad I am unable to help so many others who need help and are not within my reach.

This is the most beautiful aspect of the unique service project in Africa. It gave clarity of vision not only to the cataract affected patients but also to everyone else associated with it. It sensitized people and principally the younger generation to feel for their neighbours and reach out to the impoverished and needy, selflessly and silently.

Sai Vision In Malawi

Now moving on from Kenya, during the first two camps held in Malawi a total of 3343 patients were screened and 212 patients identified for cataract surgery and operated on. Binocular lenses were inserted in 210 of them. Devotees also did Narayan Seva (serving food) during camps. In five camps conducted between July and November 2005, devotees reached their target of 500 cataract operations as their offering to Bhagawan on the 80th year of His advent. It was 516 cataract operations to be precise and a total of 5297 patients were examined.

Sai Vision In Zambia

In Zambia, Sai devotees organized the Cataract Medical Eye Camp for Cataract Surgeries in Kitwe, the third largest city in Zambia. More than 100 were treated with the support of the Kitwe Central Hospital.

All of these surgeries were done in the Kenyan-fashion – reaching out to the rural folk through outreach programmes. These were patients who had neither the facility nor the money to get their sight back and all were extremely grateful.

The devotees also organized a review of these patients in nearby hospitals and provided reading spectacles free of charge.

In recognition of their service, the Sri Sathya Sai Organization of Zambia was invited to join the Kitwe Central Hospital in celebrating World Vision Day on 13th October 2005.

Letter of appreciation and certificate of recognition from Kitwe Central Hospital, Zambia.

Sai Vision In South Africa

The Sai Vision Project reached all the way to the bottom of the continent – South Africa. On the 16th and 17th of July 2005, twenty-one cataract surgeries were performed at the Catherine Booth Hospital supported by a team of two ophthalmic surgeons and two ophthalmic nurses, who were impressed with the voluntary service programme and graciously agreed to be part of the team. In fact, they also assisted the project by obtaining important equipment (such as microscopes) that was necessary for the operations.

When the twenty-one recipients removed the bandages on the day after the operations, the surgeons were moved to tears at seeing the delight in their faces. It was truly a life-altering experience for the patients who exclaimed their joy and were unable to contain themselves. In receiving new vision, they had been given a new life.

Earlier on 3rd July 2005, Sai devotees of South Africa had conducted a dental camp at the same Catherine Booth Hospital which was also well received. More than 165 persons were treated and 145 dental extractions performed.

Over the last five years, the amount of seva done in this often neglected part of the world has been amazing. More than 4500 cataract surgeries have been done in six African nations and it is still going on. Ask the volunteers how they feel about it and they will say as great as the benefits are to the patients, they are the ones who have gained the most. The Sai Vision project has truly been an eye-opener for them. It has taught them to look at the other person in a new light...and has softened their hearts and taken them closer to Baba.

At Heart2Heart we are very pleased to bring to you these inspiring accounts. There is a lot more happening in Africa. There are leprosy homes, the mammoth "Sainet" project of providing specially-treated mosquito nets, rural service camps, and other medical camps, etc. In the coming issues we hope to bring you updated information and more moving stories of love and Sai-inspired service.

We are grateful to Mr. Kishen Khubchandani and many other Sai devotees (whom we do not know personally) from Africa who helped us in the making of this article.

– Heart2Heart Team

MOVING SAI SEVA IN FIJI

A week of inspiring service to the needy in the Fijian islands through well planned medical camps by Sai devotees from New Zealand on the 18th to 25th of March 2006.

Welfare services should be free for all. There are numerous people who cannot afford the costs of medical treatment. Doctors should render free service to such persons.

Sathya Sai Baba – Discourse on 3/06/1995

On the 18th of March, 2006, a major service project was initiated by members of the Sathya Sai Service Organisation of New Zealand. Twenty-four devotees, made up of doctors and volunteers, took a three hour flight north to the Fiji islands to take part in five free medical camps coordinated by New Zealand and Fiji devotees working hand in hand.

A Little About Fiji ...

Fiji lies in the heart of the Pacific Ocean midway between the equator and the South Pole. In the days of sailing ships it was known as the Cannibal Isles and avoided by mariners because of its fierce warriors and treacherous waters. Of Fiji's 330 islands (of which a third are inhabited), the majority of the estimated population of 840,000 lives on the largest island of Viti Levu, with about 200,000 residing on the second largest island, Vanua Levu.

Current State of Affairs

The current population breakdown is 50% Fijian, 34% of Indian descent, and the remainder from other races. Not many years ago Indians made up just over 50% of the population but since the coups many have immigrated to countries such as Australia , New Zealand and Canada.

This has caused a depletion of qualified people which in turn has led to the problems encountered today in remote areas where adequate health care is not readily available.

Medical Camps For The Most Needy

The medical camps were planned to be centred on Vanua Levu, which is primarily made up of rural villages with poor infrastructure and little or no

access to basic medical care. Most on this island live on subsistence plantations under difficult conditions. Moreover, the political upheavals of the last decade have exacerbated their hardships, creating a feeling of helplessness. Therefore the four medical camps were targeted to benefit those most in need. These few sad statistics tell the story:

- Life expectancy on Vanua Levu is 67 years while in New Zealand and Australia it is 80
- Maternal deaths from childbirth on Vanua Levu are 6 to 7 times higher than in New Zealand and Australia
- Infant mortality is 3 to 4 times higher than in New Zealand and Australia.

Volunteers Enthusiasm And Government's Support

The planning for the proposed camps began during the last few months of 2005 when the Medical Coordinator for the Sathya Sai Medical Unit of New Zealand spoke directly with Sai members in Fiji and using his own local knowledge of the conditions and needs proposed the venue sites. The message went out to all Sai Centres and groups throughout New Zealand and within a short while eight MDs (including a surgeon), one Homeopathic Doctor, a Pharmacist and fourteen volunteers had signed up and paid for their airfares.

The Sai service team in Fiji began arranging the sites where the camps were to be held. As is the norm, when one has faith in Swami's grace and compassion doors open and four of the camps were held at schools situated in the chosen area, with the fifth at a small health centre in the interior. Knowing how beneficial these camps would be for the populace in these regions, the Fijian Government's Minister of Education gave permission for the four schools to host the camps. As well, the schools gave assurances that the Headmasters and teachers supported the program and would provide lunch and drinking water for the medical staff and volunteers. Everyone working together in unity and love to provide a much needed service to those in real need without expectation of any personal reward was a living example of Swami's Love in Action.

Arrival, Preparation And Swami's Grace

At about 5:30 p.m. on the 18th of March, the team from New Zealand touched down at Nadi Airport on the main island of Viti Levu. They all knew that Swami was with them as the day they landed the weather changed from three solid months of heavy rain and tropical storms to clear and calm. Also, to make matters more interesting, prior to departing Auckland, the Australian, UK, and US Governments posted warnings on their websites not to travel to Fiji as

there was a threat of yet another Army coup. (The New Zealand Government however did not bother to follow suit.)

Nine cartons of drugs and medical supplies were brought, of which four were donated by pharmaceutical companies in New Zealand with no strings attached. The week prior to leaving, a volunteer travelled to Fiji and through a drug wholesaler purchased twenty more boxes of supplies.

This was made possible by the Sai community in New Zealand who opened their hearts and wallets to ensure that the team was self sufficient in the required medications.

Also, a volunteer group in Auckland (who are not Sai devotees) gave three cartons of used spectacles which they had sterilized, sorted, graded and packed for the trip. These proved immensely valuable, especially in the outer areas where most of the patients who needed them had no way to pay for what was to them a luxury.

At the check in counter at Auckland Airport, God smiled on the group again. Though most were travelling light, due to the cartons of medicines they were still overweight on their luggage allowance. However, without question, the Airline immediately gave a full dispensation. There is no such thing as 'coincidence' where God is involved.

After being picked up from Nadi Airport by Fiji devotees, a short briefing session was held at the Sai Centre in Lautoka – a twenty minute drive from the airport – followed by devotional singing and a meal lovingly prepared by the local Sai members. The first camp was scheduled for the following day (Sunday) at the Sai School in the Drasa area near Lautoka at 8:00 a.m., so everyone dispersed to their host's homes for a good night's sleep.

GETTING TO WORK: FIRST MEDICAL CAMP IN SAI SCHOOL, DRASA

“If They Can Sacrifice Their Time...I Can Give Up Just One Day” – A Local Doctor

Sunday morning dawned beautifully and a hired bus drove the New Zealand group to the camp accompanied by Sai devotees from the Lautoka area. They arrived at the Sai school venue at about 7:30 a.m., where to everyone's surprise, people were already queuing up to register to see a doctor.

The team was joined by six doctors from the hospital in Lautoka, a dental unit from the same area, and an optometrist who were not Sai devotees but heard about the camp and wanted to help. As one local doctor said:

I heard that a fairly large group was coming from New Zealand to hold a medical camp here and I thought that if they can sacrifice their time and effort to spend a week in the Fiji islands then surely I can give up just one of my days off.

This camp was to be a learning curve for the team as most had not taken part in such a large group venture like this before, and some felt a bit apprehensive as to how the day might go. However, it proved to be a great success. People came from surrounding villages, both Fijian and Indian together, and the wonderful team of local helpers ensured that patients did not have to wait too long and prescriptions were filled quickly. It was clear but hot and humid and at about 3:00 p.m. God smiled yet again and opened the heavens and delightful cooling rains fell. Immediately the high heat dropped a bit and everyone felt refreshed.

Holding the medical camp at a school proved an excellent idea as the doctors could use classrooms for consultations while others were available for the dental unit and pharmacy, and so on.

“It Was Incredible...All Worked So Wonderfully” – A Local Camp Coordinator

The last patient was treated at 6:00 p.m. and in total just over 530 people had been seen, prescriptions issued where needed, and referrals to the hospital in Lautoka made for more serious cases. The New Zealand team and local doctors and volunteers worked extremely well together and all felt that Swami had been with them throughout the day.

By 6 pm over 530 patients had been examined in the first medical camp at the Sai School in Drasa.

It was incredible! No one knew who the doctors and volunteers from New Zealand were until the first meeting that morning at the camp, but everyone worked so wonderfully well together, joined together in unity and Swami's love that it is impossible to try and explain. The local villagers came on Saturday and put up sun shelters and also helped set up the outside kitchen as the decision was made to feed all who attended – patients and the medical team. At the end, all went away very happy – both the patients and the team of doctors and volunteers. I thank Swami for His grace and love He showered upon us throughout the day.

- Camp Coordinator From Lautoka Sai Centre

The New Zealanders joined the local devotees at the Lautoka Sai Centre that night for a light meal, devotional singing and debriefing. All agreed that although they were tired, it had been an exercise in unity and love and a definite need had been filled.

MEDICAL CAMP NUMBER TWO AT ISLAND VANUA LEVU

Adversity Becomes An Opportunity

Monday, March 20th, was again clear and dry as the New Zealand group arrived at Nadi Airport for a 7:00 a.m. flight to Vanua Levu . This time they would be accompanied by only three devotees from the main island – one GP from Suva, one pharmacist from Lautoka, and a dentist from Suva. These three had committed themselves to stay with the team for the next four medical camps. An optometrist nurse joined up in Labasa and accompanied them to each camp held there.

The original plan was to travel by bus, ferry, then bus again – driving across the island of Viti Levu for three hours – then board the ferry for a three hour crossing, then another bus for four hours before reaching Labassa, the main town on Vanua Levu where they would have accommodations at a motel.

It was not meant to be, however, as prior to leaving New Zealand they learned that recent heavy rains had washed out some of the main roads from the ferry port to Labasa.

So decisions were made to fly into Labasa via the local tourist airline. Again this was no accident, since only needing one hour instead of ten for travel enabled an additional medical camp to be held.

How Swami Came To The Rescue Yet Again

The two planes were small twin engine aircraft. One carried twenty members of the team and the other took the rest and departed a half an hour later. Since the aircraft were small, each person was weighed with their carryon bags and allowed only 15kgs total luggage weight. As the team had picked up most of the cartons of pharmaceuticals on their way to the airport, this announcement caused some concern, but once again Swami was there. Suddenly a devotee from the Lautoka Centre appeared who noticed the amount of cartons needed to be taken and who just happened to work for the Fijian Airport Aviation authorities. Within ten minutes all the personal bags and the cartons of drugs were loaded and boarding passes issued. Silent prayers of thanks were offered to Swami as the aircraft were boarded and the pilots prepared to take off.

The flight to Labasa Airport was just over an hour and flying at 8000 feet ensured an excellent view of the coral reefs and atolls passing by below. They touched down just after 8:00 a.m. and after a half hour the second plane arrived with the rest of the group. A bus had been arranged to ferry the team around for the rest of the week and after being advised by the airline's representative that the baggage and cartons of medical supplies would arrive at 11:00 a.m. on a special flight, the team headed directly to the medical camp site. A few members returned with the bus to the airport to collect the supplies.

Mutual Love, Compassion And Gratitude

This camp was at a school in Waiqeale, thirty minutes from the airport, and would tend to the needs of those in the area and from Labasa. Many people were already waiting to register, so the team quickly set up the rooms so registrations and consultation could begin. They were ably assisted by local Sai volunteers who stayed with the New Zealand team throughout the week and proved themselves invaluable.

The one small glitch at this second camp was the distribution of prescriptions as the supplies did not reach the camp until 11:30 a.m., but after an initial busy period, things settled down and the team got into the swing of things. The staff and management of the schools were all extremely helpful and most worked right to the end. The schoolchildren were also very cooperative, making room for us by doubling up into classrooms as they had not been given a day off.

Local villagers supplied lunch to all who came and the bond of unity and love between everyone was incredible. There was the occasional sadness when the team found individuals with serious medical conditions only an impossibly expensive operation at some faraway First World hospital could fix, but the basic feeling was one of love and compassion for the patients and gratitude and happiness shown by the villagers as they waited to be seen.

550 patients were treated and over 800 prescriptions filled on day one of the second Medical Camp in Waiquele, on the Fijian Island of Vanua Levu.

The last patient was seen just after 6:00 p.m. and by the time everything was packed up and loaded onto the bus it was nearly 7:00. On this day alone over 550 patients were treated and well over 800 prescriptions filled.

Endearing Love of Local Sai Devotees

The local Sai devotees are small in number but not in spirit and had asked to host the New Zealand team for their nightly meal which was held at a different

venue each evening in Labasa. The team unanimously agreed to go to the host's houses directly from the camps instead of first returning to their accommodation, and this was the routine for the rest of the week. They would travel to where they were going to be hosted, be formally greeted, and after a brief wash up the New Zealand team would sing bhajans for thirty minutes before eating. They always made an effort to sing English devotional songs with some Maori songs included as well, and this made the local Sai hosts happy.

No matter how tired the team felt at the end of the day's seva, once they began singing to Lord Sai all feelings of weariness disappeared. It was clearly noticeable that these sessions were of vital importance and helped make the ending of each day just perfect.

MEDICAL CAMP NUMBER THREE IN LEKUTU VILLAGE

Tuesday morning the 21st of March the team arose at 4:30 a.m. as the bus was picking them up at 5:30 for a three and a half journey into the hinterlands. This camp was held in Lekutu village at a small medical centre staffed by a sole senior nurse from the hospital in Labasa. This centre treated people from villages within a 200km radius and was hopelessly under funded but always tried to do the best they could with the minuscule resources they were allotted.

Poor, Yet Smiling

The bus trip was long but seemed to go faster when bhajans were sung on the way and a stop was made for a quick onboard breakfast. The first part of the journey was on fairly good tar sealed roads but the last hour and a half they were rough gravel and stone and pitted with pot holes. On the way they saw people living in extreme poverty – small tin sheds as family homes and gardens cultivated on tiny plots of land. But it was noticed that the children who were walking to school were all tidy in clean clothes and seemed happy, greeting us with lovely smiles as we passed by. Some of these children walk two hours each way to school! The poverty affected both Fijian and Indian families though in this region most of the patients that attended the camp were native Fijians. The weather was extremely hot and humid and team members had to drink a lot of water to keep from dehydrating.

Challenges and Grace

The facilities were extremely small and it was amazing how everyone managed to fit into the three tiny buildings that were available. The pharmacy shared a room with two consulting doctors and just how the pharmacy team managed to locate the prescribed medicines was something of a miracle in

itself. The pharmacist from New Zealand had his laptop and label machine set up at the end of a rickety old bed and stood the whole day with only a ten minute break for lunch. This was the norm for all the doctors and volunteers. The pharmacist from Lautoka carefully checked each prescription once it had been labelled before handing it out. Luckily power was available as the prescription label machine made such a difference in the process. The team found out later that the current to this centre had been down for several days but was mysteriously reinstated a short time before the camp started. The power source there was solar.

“I Am So Glad I Have Come...” – A Doctor From New Zealand

An important decision had been made by the team before any of the camps started that no matter how late they had to work, all would be seen and no one would be turned away.

I had reservations when I was first contacted last year in regards to coming to Fiji to take part in these medical camps as I had never been part of something like this. I am so glad that I have come and have been a part of this wonderful group of people. Every one of the group of doctors and volunteers from New Zealand are working so incredibly well together and it is as if they have been together like this for ever. We all can feel Swami's Divine presence and know it would not have been possible without His input. I never realised how hard it is for people in a country so close to ours to have such difficulties in accessing good health care. I feel very humble and know that if I am invited to attend the next venture in Fiji then I will not hesitate to put my hand up.
– A doctor from New Zealand

“We Pray That You Come Again Next Year” – A Village Elder in Lekutu

The people attending this camp were so grateful that the team had made the effort to come into such a remote area. They told our doctors some had come from 80 to 100km away while others journeyed on horseback. They also explained that what made the difference was that the doctors listened to them, treated them with love and respect and touched them. In some cases they felt cured by just having spoken to one of the doctors and being heard. Others said that they could never afford to go to Labasa for medicines and felt that God had helped them.

At this camp, the dentist from Suva carried out over 60 extractions in one day and explained that this was the only possible treatment as these unfortunate people could not afford to travel to Labasa or have dental work done. Some of

them had been suffering from decaying teeth for a long time and their relief was plainly seen by all.

We are so happy that the team from New Zealand have come. We heard some time back that you were coming here and the word spread like wildfire. Your time with us today will give us all an everlasting memory and we pray that you will come back next year. If you do so, we will look after all of you in our village. Thanks to you all for your care and love. May God be with you always.

– A Fijian Elder from local village at Lekutu Medical Camp

Worn-out But Happy And Humbled

This camp finished at 6:00 p.m. and none of the Fijian people left the area until the team packed up. Then they insisted that every team member be presented with a fresh coconut to drink at a special ceremony, which was touching. Once again there was a lot of love and humour, but also an incredible sense of unity as everyone worked together in the humid and cramped conditions. Most of the donated spectacles were given out here as the optometrist found many villagers had been suffering from bad eyesight for years. Those people in New Zealand who made this possible with their donation of eyeglasses should be pleased to know their contribution helped a great many people. 610 patients were seen and over 900 prescriptions given out. It was an exhausting but rewarding day for all who took part.

The long bus ride back to Labasa was tiring but once the group had their evening meal and sang some bhajans, their weariness disappeared. Oh how God loves it when His devotees sing to Him with love and reverence even after a fatiguing day. It was after midnight when the team finally got to bed, worn-out but happy and humbled by what they had seen and experienced.

In the Second Medical Camp in Lekutu Village, 610 patients were seen and more than 900 prescriptions were given out.

THE FOURTH MEDICAL CAMP AT SEAQAQA VILLAGE

On Wednesday the 22nd of March, the team was up bright and early to travel to the next site at a school in the village of Seaqaqa ninety minutes away. The team arrived at 7:00 a.m. and set up the rooms that had been allocated and again found there were people already queuing up to register and another busy day was on the way.

“You Bring With You God’s Love...” – Headmaster of Seaqaqa School

This area had an equal amount of Fijian and Indian patients and a concerted effort was made to treat the elderly, the seriously ill and very young first. The volunteers involved in registrations were extremely grateful when some men from the local village offered to help with crowd control as this certainly made a difference in the number of people seen.

The Headmaster of the school, a local Fijian man, made an impassioned speech later in the day on the difference the team from New Zealand and those from Labasa were making.

We are extremely happy that you have come here to help our people. All of you have come from a long way away, yet we feel that we have known you for ever. Surely God has sent you and you bring with you His love. You have come here without any expectations yet you are willing to work long hours as part of your philosophy. Please come back again, we will always host you when you do so.

– Headmaster, Seaqaqa School

A Fulfilling Experience

The people waited in good humour and in harmony with each other. Most families who attended had brought their own lunch and made a day of it but there were some who needed feeding and this was provided by the staff of the school.

Over 650 patients were examined and 900 prescriptions given out at the Fourth Medical Camp in Seaqaqa Village.

Though the day was extremely busy for everyone and did not finish until 7:00 p.m., it was a rewarding experience for all who were part of it. Well over 650 patients were seen and the prescription count topped 900. All were seen and some with serious problems were referred to Labasa hospital for special appointments. That night the bhajans were very sweet and sung with much devotion and love. No one felt weary, just happy and grateful to Swami for making this special project possible.

THE FIFTH AND FINAL MEDICAL CAMP AT NALEBA SCHOOL

Thursday the 23rd of March was the day of the final camp, held at Naleba School, about forty-five minutes from Labasa. Though the school grounds were beautiful, this region is very poor and the people struggle to survive.

Much of this poverty is the result of the coups over the past fifteen years as Indian sugar cane farmers have had to surrender leases on the land leaving them virtually with nothing.

Once again the team began early and arrived at the school at 7:00 a.m. to find people already queuing up for registration. The school Headmaster and his staff were extremely helpful and kept the situation under control and allowed some of the senior children to help out.

The Busiest And Most Blessed Day

By midday people were growing anxious they might not be seen due to the large crowds pouring in but the team reassured everyone they would treat all who registered and people settled down under shady trees and awnings that had been erected to await their turn. The problem of registrations was solved by giving everyone a number and using a loud hailer to announce these numbers as the doctors were freed up. This worked very well and allowed people to spread out under trees throughout the grounds and not worry about being missed.

By the end of the day in the Fifth Medical Camp in Naleba School, a total of 760 patients were seen and 1200 prescriptions filled and dispensed.

This day turned out to be the busiest of all. The last patient was seen at 8:00 p.m. and by the time the final prescription was handed out it was 9:00. By the end of the day a total of 760 patients were seen and 1200 prescriptions filled and dispensed.

Before leaving, eight cartons of medicines were donated to the medical centre at Lekutu so the nurse there could administer medications prescribed to certain patients for many months to come.

Local health authorities gave assurances that prescriptions would be supplied for as long as the patients needed them.

“The Touching Love Of Doctors Helped Many People Over Their Ailments” – A Local Sai Volunteer

One of the volunteers from Labasa, a Sai lady devotee who came to help for this one day, explained through an interpreter:

I am a kindergarten teacher and I prayed to Baba that I wanted to help the New Zealanders and do some service at the last camp. Baba answered my prayers and I was allowed to close the kindergarten early and go to the school

to help. We heard that the doctors and other people there were doing wonderful work and in such a loving way. People were saying to me that these doctors from New Zealand were talking to each patient, listening to each one, helping them and touching them with love. And it was this touching that helped many people over their ailments. I could feel Baba's presence there so strongly and was so happy that He allowed me to help them. We have good doctors in Labasa hospital as well but they are always so busy that they probably do not have the time to spend with each patient as these people do. Everyone here has been so happy that the New Zealand people have come and wish that they can come more often. If they do so then I want to help again.

The team left the school at 9:30 p.m. to travel a short distance to another Sai devotee's place for their evening meal. Once again, singing bhajans before partaking of the food revived them. All experienced an inner joy and peace as they knew that these camps would never have been so successful without Swami overseeing everything in His quiet and loving way.

Heading Home And Final Thoughts

“The Whole Exercise Was Possible Because Of Sai's Grace” – A Team Member

I doubt very much if any other group of people who had never worked together before under such trying conditions would have completed these medical camps without serious internal problems or disharmony. I have never worked before with people who just seemed to be made for each job they took on. The unity and the love between all who were here was just incredible and no one showed dissent or argued against any joint decisions that were made at different times. The whole exercise was only made possible because of Swami's grace and love for us and because of our love for Him and our determination to try and be examples of His teachings.

– A Team Member

The New Zealand group flew back to the main island on Friday morning with well over 3000 patients being seen over the five days of camps. They all felt extremely blessed to have been part of the project but also humbled at what they had seen and experienced.

Over 3000 patients were examined over five days of camps in remote and rural areas of Fiji.

One can only hope that devotees in other First World nations will look beyond their own comfort zones and see the opportunities for seva that abound in nearby countries.

Fiji is in New Zealand 's backyard – a mere three hour flight away – but the difference in available health care is huge. For instance, in Fiji , whether out in the hinterlands or close to a main town, a person suffering a heart attack has no chance for an operation as there is nothing in the way of heart surgical wards or specialists available. Only those with enough money for flights to New Zealand or Australia and heart surgery and post operative care might survive. But such huge costs are beyond the means of almost all, especially those in the villages struggling to make ends meet.

The Sai-Inspired Guidelines That Ensured Success

A few important points that should be noted are:

- The team chose to be self sufficient in pharmaceuticals and not have to rely on any one else so all medical needs were ordered and paid for prior to the camps starting.
- The team paid for all their own airfares, both international flights and the internal Fijian flights and all accommodations as well. Even though they did not want to be a burden on the Sai devotees in Labasa and were happy to have arranged their own meals on returning to base each day, these evening satsangs with the local people proved to be extremely beneficial for all and an important aspect of the whole venture.
- Each morning before commencing the camps, prayers were offered to Swami asking Him for His love and guidance throughout the day ahead.
- At a planning session it was decided the camps should be continuous with no days taken off between them so the energy and commitment would not abate as the priority was in helping those less fortunate than themselves. Everyone afterwards felt that this was the correct way to do it.
- Even though the Sai community in Labasa offered to accommodate the team over the four nights they were there, it was agreed it would be best if the group stayed together in the motel accommodation. They felt if any one of them needed help or support then the entire team was available to respond as a unit...or like a family.

- The team members felt that they had been the main beneficiaries of this service project.

All the doctors and volunteers from New Zealand and Sai volunteers from Fiji could sense Swami's presence throughout the whole exercise. Small miracles kept happening that could not be explained as coincidences and it was He who ensured there were no serious hiccups or insurmountable problems. Swami's love and compassion touched each and every patient through the care that the doctors and volunteers allowed to flow through them.

– Heart2Heart Team

PRASHANTI DIARY

CHRONICLES OF HEAVEN ON EARTH

One of the problems we face when writing these chronicles is to decide on what we call the “cut-off” date. In the early days of Heart2Heart we had to cut it off quite early (by the 20th of the month) as we had to package all the articles and send it to a company in Bangalore that was helping us lay it out in the format of the Heart2Heart magazine that you are all familiar with. This always left us feeling a little unsatisfied, as quite a few of the major festivals (like the Birthday celebration on November 23rd, as an example) fall during the last ten days of the month. Hence we could include a report on these events only the following month and as much as forty days late!

But over time we have built up enough expertise “in-house” so that we now have a bit more control over the cut-off date and can include events which occur even in the last week of the month. Case in point: the 80th Birthday celebrations were covered in full and included in the December 1, 2005 issue.

The festival of Ugadi, which fell on March 30th this year, threw us new challenges. After a full day of covering the event, i.e., taking notes and photographs of the morning and afternoon sessions, would we be able to include it and bring out the magazine in time, which meant loading it by midnight of the 31st, a mere twenty-four hours later? This is where teamwork came into play. Everyone chipped in and did more than their share and with Swami's grace we managed to not only complete a full write-up of the events, but also selected, cleaned and captioned the pictures that supported the text in Photoshop, listened to and transcribed the Divine Discourse and selected excerpts for inclusion, found someone late in the night to translate the section on the *panchanaga smaranam* from Telugu to English (from the students' skit in the evening) and then finally laid it all out using a software program called Dreamweaver. All the hard work paid off, as last month's issue came out on the morning of April 1, complete right up to the events that happened on March 30. And this is in addition to the heavy foot traffic we face on holidays when we have numerous visitors with myriad questions and urgent requests.

In spite of all this there was one special event that happened on March 31 in connection with the celebration of the Ugadi festival that we just could not include in the last issue: a cultural program of melodious Telugu group songs

March 31 and April 1st 2006: Cultural Programmes By The Vizag Group

This cultural programme consisting of songs written by Sri M.S. Prakash Rao was presented before Bhagavan on the evening of March 31. Twenty-five

singers from the Sri Sathya Sai Seva Samithi, Vishakapatnam, Andhra Pradesh, presented the musical compositions ably supported by two keyboardists, two tabla players and one pad.

In keeping with tradition, they began with an invocation to Lord Ganesha – "Namami Vigneswaram" (Salutations to Vigneswara, the son of Siva. Salutations to the Partheshwara, the Lord of Parthi, worshipped by the Gods). This was followed by a very devotional song with a fast beat proclaiming, "This is Kailasam (the abode of Lord Siva) and this is Vaikuntham, the abode of Lord Vishnu (Ede Kailasam, Ede Vaikuntham)".

This was followed by a prayerful song titled "Anduko Maa Prarnathulu Anande Sai" which means, "Accept our prostrations, O blissful Sai, You are our God". This was followed by "Sayee Ram Sayee Ram, Sayee Ram Sayee Ram" which conveyed that we will sing with one voice "Sayee, Sayee" and will join together and distribute the bliss.

"Maa Swami Paaadalu Mahi Mahite Vedaalu" (the Lotus Feet of our Lord are the very essence of scriptures on this earth), was followed by "Pudami Paina Purushottamudu" (the Supreme Lord has taken birth on earth and Puttaparthi has become a land of holy pilgrimage.) "Jai Jai Sai Ram, Jai Jai Sai Ram" proclaimed the Lord of the Universe has come down as Sathya Sai and is molding humanity to attain great heights and establish Sathya, Dharma, Shanti, Prema and Ahimsa (truth, righteousness, peace, love and non-violence).

A haunting solo song (the only one for the evening) called "Siva Siva Sankara" declaring that O Siva, You can be owned only by Your devotees, was followed by the final group song of the evening – a lullaby on Sathya Sai ("Sayini Vuyalu Loopandi"):

Let us cradle the little Sai
Sing a lullaby for the Lord Sai
Let us sing the glory of Sathya Sai
Who is the very form of truth

At the conclusion of the set of songs selected for the evening, Swami called up the Music Director and told him that Swami is very happy with the singing, the singing was full of expression. See the atmosphere [in Sai Kulwant Hall] has changed and all the people are happy. That is good, singing with devotion. "Swami likes it. Swami is very happy. Sing tomorrow also".

The Music Director humbly said, “Swami, it is all Your grace. I am only an instrument”. To this Swami replied, “Yes, you have written with that feeling in your heart. That is why it is so good”.

Swami then released a book in Telugu entitled *Salutations in Words to the Universal Lord* before arathi was taken at the end of the concert.

Prakash: Yes, Swami.

Swami: When are you leaving?

Prakash: Whenever you order, Swami.

Swami: These boys are employed. Take Swami’s prasadam in the canteen and then leave.

Prakash: Pranams, Swami.

Swami: Be happy.

Swami then allowed everyone in the group to take padnamaskar.

April 7: Ramanavami Celebrations In Sai Kulwant Hall

Ramanavami, or the birth anniversary of Lord Rama, is a major festival celebrated all over India by devout Hindus. Rama, the seventh incarnation of Lord Vishnu, was born on the ninth day after the new moon (hence the term Navami, which means the ninth). He was thus born in the bright half of the Indian month of Chaitra (which normally falls during March and April) in the city of Ayodhya, in the Treta Yuga, the SecondAge.

Ramanavami is a festival which is typically celebrated in Brindavan, for Swami is usually there during the hot months of the year. For the past two years, however, Swami has chosen to remain in Puttaparthi after Sivarathri so the devotees in Puttaparthi had the rare honour this year to pay homage to Lord Sai Rama on the occasion of His birth anniversary.

To the surprise and delight of everyone, Swami gave darshan in an open red car – a Cooper that had personalized license plates proclaiming BABA.

The devotees for long had been sad they could only have a brief glimpse of Swami during darshan in His Porte, so this open car fulfils a longstanding desire and is an answer to fervent prayers for unhindered darshan of the Divine form.

The morning program started off with a veena *kutcheri* – a veena concert – by the students of the Sai Mirpuri College of Music. The boys obtained Swami's blessings for the program by praying to Him the previous day with a card they had specially prepared for Him.

They started off with a song in praise of Ganapathi – "Mahaganapathim" in Natai *ragam*, Eka *talam*.

This was followed by "Sudhamayee" in Amritavarshini *ragam*, Roopakam *talam*.

This *ragam* has an important feature in that if one sings this *ragam* well and with full feeling, it will rain.

Following this was "Endaro Mahanu Bhuvalu" in Sri *ragam* and Adi *talam*. This song is one of the five gems of Sri Thyagaraja Swami. Next came "Paluke Bangaramayeera" in Anandabhairavi *ragam* and Adi *thalam* which is a famous song written by Bhaktha Ramadas. "Brahman Okate" in Bhowli *ragam*, Adi *talam*, a keertanam by Sri Annamacharya, followed where he states God is one and conveys the advaita bhavam in the song.

The young veena players were K. Bhardwaj, V.N.S. Bhaskar, B.N. Shiva Sai, and M. Gopalakrishna. Violin accompaniment was provided by Krishna Uday while Sudheerkumar and Hari Vijay Ram accompanied them on the mridangam and Mohan Kumar played tabla.

At Swami's request three carnatic vocal numbers were sung by Sri Jyoteeswaran, lecturer in Vocal Music. "Brovabharama" in Adi *talam*, Bahudar *ragam* was the first song (originally written by Sri Thyagaraja) where he wistfully asks Lord Rama, "Is it difficult for You to save me?" This was followed by "Ramanamamu" in Adi *talam*, Athana *ragam*, another Thygaraja composition, and the final vocal song, also a keertanam by Thygaraja, called "Nagumomu" in Adi *talam*, Abheri *ragam*.

After this, at Swami's request, there was a Rama Katha in Hindi sung by Kaustab, Abhijith Sikote and Gopinath Padi. They also sang a favourite Meera bhajan "Payo ji maine rama rathan dhana payo". They were accompanied by Abhishek on the tabla, Sanket Modi on the harmonium, and Raghavan on the Naal.

To round off the program there were songs by the Institute students. Aswath Narayan sang "O Rama Nee Nama" in *Adi talam* and Om Prasad sang "O Swami" in *Adi talam*.

The final song of the morning was a group effort called "Jagadhabi Ramudhu" in *Adi talam*. Backing up the vocalists was an assortment of instruments that included two violins, one keyboard, a saxophone, a flute and a tabla.

In the afternoon, Swami sat in His chair listening to the vedam for a few minutes and then signaled for the microphones to be set up and requested the Vice-Chancellor and Sri Ajit Poppat to speak.

Vice-Chancellor Sri A.K. Gokak talked about the noble qualities of Lord Rama and the example He sets for humanity. He said that Rama is the very essence of a noble king and an ideal brother. While Rama represents compassion, Lakshmana represents love and the mixing of the two results in bliss. Talking in depth about the spiritual significance of the Ramayana, the Vice-Chancellor said that the four brothers represented the four human values – Sathya, Dharma, Shanti and Prema. The relationship between Rama and Sita is like that between the Atma and Brahma Gnana – the separation of the two results in delusion as represented by the golden deer. We can cross the ocean of delusion by building a bridge (as done by the monkey hordes in Lanka). The rajasic qualities of Ravana are destroyed and the satthvic qualities of Vibhishana are restored to the throne. Hence the Ramayana has universal appeal and is popular all over the world. In conclusion, he said that on this day of Rama Navami being celebrated before the Living God, let us pray to Him to help us rise above the level of sensuality and climb the ladder of spirituality.

Speaking next was Sri Ajit Poppat, a longtime devotee from the UK. He said that while the Vice-Chancellor spoke of the spiritual significance of the Ramayana, he would talk about Sai Ramayana. Starting with the example of Ahalya, he said that while Ahalya was transformed by a simple touch, Swami transforms by a mere look. Stating that he has been coming since 1989, Sri Ajit Poppat drew from his vast experience and talks with Swami to drive home to the crowd some of Swami's important teachings. Drawing another parallel, he said that while Lord Rama used the monkeys to build the bridge to Lanka, Sai Rama stills the monkey mind and makes it pure and calm. The bridge we must build today is one of confidence, courage and conviction. He said we must translate Baba's message into action. Transform yourself first, he exhorted the crowd, then put Swami's message into action without a sense of doership, and whatever you say, you must do.

After Sri Ajit Poppat's speech, to everyone's delight Swami signaled that the table be brought so He could deliver His Divine Ramanavami discourse. Swami said:

You all are essentially Divine. Since ancient times, Rama's story is being composed and shared by all. The story actually took place thousands of years ago but yet His story is heard by one and all even today. Right from a beggar to a millionaire, they repeat Rama's name. There is no Bharatiya who does not repeat Lord Rama's name. You all are embodiments of My own Divinity, said Lord Rama.

Truth is the foundation of Dharma. Satyam Naasti Paro Dharmaha. Therefore, the first lesson is to always speak the Truth. Act as per the word given. One should speak only after ensuring the feasibility of the word to be translated into action. Dharma is not merely an act of charity. It must come from the heart and must be translated into action. Manas Ekam, Vachas Ekam, Karmanyekam Mahaatmanam.

Lord Rama is an example of this. On the contrary, Manas Anyat, Vachas Anyat, Karman Anyat Duraatmanam. Ravana is an example of the latter. Rama stands for Satya and Ravana for Asatya.

Today, man is faced with a number of problems because of speaking untruth. Once we speak untruth, we lose the quality of life. Truth is ever lasting. It is changeless. Students, you all must observe Truth from this age onwards so that you will become ideal citizens tomorrow. Offer all your actions to God and it will get transformed into Truth.

All innermost feelings are reflections of Truth. However, when they manifest through the tongue and other senses they become false. Therefore, senses are responsible for merit and demerit. Truth shows the direction, Dharma follows it and Prema experiences and tastes it. Once you taste this Love, you will never be able to cause Himsa (violence) to anybody. Himsa is not just hurting others. Not following one's given word is also violence - Himsa.

Mind is clouded by desires, just as the moon is covered with dark clouds. But do not feel sad. The moment the dark clouds clear away, the moon is seen. We must do Naamasmarana to blow away the clouds of desires covering our minds...

Tell me your company and I shall tell you what you are. Never be in bad company. Always be in good company. Yad Bhavam Tad Bhavati. Many of us question as to why God cannot transform us. God never does anything. Your thought and action itself does everything and gives you feedback. If you eat a

mango fruit you will invariably get only the belch of a mango fruit. You cannot get the belch of a neem fruit, having eaten a mango fruit.

One who thinks constantly can never be happy. We must transcend our thoughts. Bookish knowledge leads to allergy and all our energy is lost. At a higher level, one need not think, Is it good or bad? Everything is good only. Whatever happens is for our good only. Live with this conviction.

Love all, never hate anybody. Some doubt God also. That is the greatest sin. When such bad thoughts come, consider them as enemies and brush them aside. Love will protect and nourish you. Live in love. You all are Embodiments of Love...

What we need today is not expansion of the physical heart, but transformation of the spiritual heart. Be in search of the path that can accommodate as many people as possible.

Then addressing students He said:

Tomorrow all of you will be leaving for your hometowns. Keep all that you have learnt here in your mind. Never make your parents feel sorry. Make them happy. If you are happy they too will be happy. This is your duty. Khana, Pina, Sona and Marna will automatically happen. The main purpose of our being born is to make our parents happy. Be good ideals. Then alone will you gain the fulfillment of being students of the Sri Sathya Sai Educational Institutions."

Thus concluded another memorable Ramanavami, this time held in Sai Kulwant Hall. The whole ashram was now abuzz with the word that Swami will shortly leave for His playground, Kodaikanal.

Bhagavan Leaves for Kodaikanal

On April 9, with an entourage of 60 students, staff and guests, Swami left Parthi for Kodaikanal on a chartered flight to Madurai, where He blessed many hundreds of devotees. He then traveled by road to the elevated cooler climes of the hill resort of Kodaikanal.

Dear Reader, it has not been possible for us to get pictures and stories of Swami's Kodai trip in this issue. We will bring you a detailed report with pictures of Swami's visit and stay in the emerald hills of Kodaikanal in the next issue.

– Heart2Heart Team

SWAMI AND ME

FAITH – ALL THE SPIRITUAL STRENGTH THAT ONE NEEDS!

By Sri Hemant Kumar
A Current Student of Swami's Institute

This is the transcription of the talk delivered by Sri Hemant Kumar in the Divine presence of Bhagawan Baba.

Invoking the Blessings of Mother Divine, Sri Sai Saraswathi, upon all gathered here. Loving and Humble Salutations, oh Mother Divine, at Your Lotus Feet. Esteemed elders, dear brothers and sisters, Sai Ram to all of you.

In a clearing in a forest there stood a huge banyan tree. It had a gigantic trunk and mighty knolled prop roots, and sturdy branches. And on one such sturdy branch there was a lean twig on which sat a tiny sparrow. A slight breeze set the twig into a harmonic oscillation, and the sparrow chirped in with rhythm. The breeze slowly turned into a wind and the sparrow's seat shook violently. But the sparrow just continued chirping with none to listen to its melody. The wind turned fierce and roared; the sparrow only twittered. And in the asymmetric battle that continued, the twig snapped, unable to bear the onslaught. What happened to the tiny sparrow?

The Bird With You, The Wing With Me

It was September 28, 1995 . I was in my eighth standard. Bhagavan had given our entire class an interview with Him. I was fortunate enough to be sitting right at His feet and looked up and asked Him (mentally): "What happened to the sparrow?" At this point in time, Bhagavan was narrating the very same incident. He looked into my eyes and gleefully added, "It spread its wings and flew away." The answered reached home.

Bhagavan then continued to explain, "Man lives in this world and builds for himself a home, housing in it all that he has acquired in life. And he sits in this house and twitters to the tune of life. But when the winds are not in favor and the world comes crashing around him, he hops about lamenting his plight."

The tiny sparrow on that branch did not depend upon the twig, or on the branch, or on the gigantic trunk of the mighty banyan tree. It depended on its

wings! So too in life, let us depend not upon mere twigs of passion and fashion, of pain and gain, of wealth and glory. Let us rather depend upon wings of Faith. Faith in His Name, in His Love, in His Glory, in His Benevolence, and in His Benediction!

Give us, Lord, the ability that we develop these wings of Faith, for when the tempest becomes more stormy than we can bear, we can spread these wings of Faith and glide effortlessly to our destinations.

Faith Is Verily Life

A mother loves a child for she has Faith that it is her own. A child loves his parents for he has Faith that they are his own. I stand here to speak for I have the Faith that what I speak is what I feel. And on a lighter note, many of us would have unkempt hair if we did not have the Faith that the barber in the salon would cut our hair and not our neck.

Why go so far? You would not eat if you knew the food you eat would not be digested. You would not sleep if you had no Faith that you would wake up. You would not dare breathe if you did not have the Faith that the breath of air you've taken would ever come out. Life is verily Faith. And in this Life, man tends to move towards happiness. And Bhagavan puts both of them so close together when He says:

**Where there is Faith, there is Love;
Where there is Love, there is Truth;
Where there is Truth, there is Peace;
Where there is Peace, there is Bliss;
And where there is Bliss, there is God!**

What better inspiration is there to repose our Faith upon than Him seated in our midst, the Supreme Godhead, the source of Supreme Love.

*Atita pantanam tavacha mahima vangamanasaya ho
Prataya Vritayam Chakitam abhidateyshritaneyapi*

Oh Lord! My mind and thoughts stand flabbergasted when attempting to scale the heights of Your Benevolence and Magnificence. Let us develop our Faith towards You.

Lord Narayana's Love For His Devotee

It so happened that once sage Narada upon his tour around the world in spreading God's Glory happened to meet a devotee of the Lord sitting under a

huge banyan tree. Upon seeing the great sage, the devotee prostrated before him and said, "Oh great one, when will you be going to Vaikuntha to meet the Lord?" Narada replied, "After my trip around the world spreading the message of the Lord I will surely go to Vaikuntha." The devotee then put forward his prayer. "I have been meditating for so many years. Please ask the Lord when He will give me His Darshan?"

And so the sage consented to put forward the prayer of this devotee and proceeded to Vaikuntha. There Lord Narayana asked him, "Narada, what is your news?" Narada then put forward the prayer that the devotee had made and Lord Narayana said, "Tell the devotee that I will give him Darshan only after a number of births, a number equal to the number of leaves on the tree under which he is meditating.

Narada was dejected, but He was only a messenger and so he went to the devotee and said, "You fool. Couldn't you find any other tree to meditate under? Of all the trees, you chose a banyan tree! The Lord will surely come to give you Darshan but it will be after a number of births, equal to the number of leaves on the tree under which you are meditating."

And that moment a strange thing happened. The devotee went into a fit of ecstasy and the Lord appeared on the scene. As Narada stood there, fuming and fretting, the Lord and the devotee met. It was like a calf running to meet its mother, or a river surging to meet the ocean.

After the union, the Lord came to Narada and said, "Narada why do you look so upset?" Then Narada said, "Lord, you may not have any value for your words but I have some value for mine. You said one thing and did something so contrary to it. Please explain."

Then Vishnu went on to explain: "It is the Faith the devotee had. He had Faith – complete Faith. I had given my assurance. It does not matter how long it will take, but I had given my word, and that Faith gave him all the joy that I am going to give him Darshan, and so **I had to break My Word and appear in front of him.**"

What is the path to God? There is no path to God! Who is the source of our Faith? It's a jump, for it's an abyss! In this quest for God, it is a question of 100% Faith or no Faith at all! Even 99.999% won't do! In this domain of God there is no question of "if" and "but." Every "if" and "but" is "cut"! It's a question of 100% Faith or no Faith at all.

But the plight of man is so miserable that he is ready to believe in anything and everything except his own inner voice. Every time we get into a bus we

place our life in the hands of the driver, a mortal like us. But when the Jagad Guru comes and says, “My child, give me your heart and I will ferry you across the ocean of life,” you are not interested.

When the calendar says tomorrow is Thursday, you’ll stake your life on that. But when He who has put the sun, the moon and the stars in their places and comes to you and whispers in your ear, “My child, follow My words,” you seem disinterested. Is that our Faith? Is that our belief in His word?

The Flood Of Love

Bhagavan narrated this experience which happened thirty years ago. A devotee from East Godavari had come to Bhagavan and prayed to Him to come for a house warming ceremony – the *Graha Pravesham*.

Swami consented to his prayer and fixed a date when He would be there. He even said, “I will be there on that day at 9:00 a.m.” Given this Divine assurance, the devotee made all preparations for Bhagavan to visit his home in East Godavari. As usual, the yearly rains came and played havoc with the lives of the people. And that year too a cyclone hit East Godavari. As the Godavari River began to swell, so too did the hearts of the devotees with prayer. But God had given them His word and assured them that He will be there. And they had belief in that.

Swami says: “There may be people who suffer because they do not have Faith, but there is no one who will be let down if he has Faith.” Based on this assurance, they made ready to receive Bhagavan in East Godavari.

With all this going on, unmindful of what transpired between God and His devotees, Nature continued to pour down relentlessly on East Godavari. The only connection East Godavari had with the rest of the world was the old bridge at Rajahmundry. For obvious reasons, the district officials closed the bridge and no transportation was now possible across the river.

But Bhagavan had said He would go. And so, on the due date, He set forth with a few dignitaries to East Godavari. When they approached the river it was in full spate. The district officials tried to dissuade the party from attempting to cross the bridge.

They insisted that Swami had to give a declaration that He is taking the journey at His own risk. Consider the irony of the situation where God had to assure them of what He does.

“Nothing Will Happen To Anyone Who Is With Me!”

Bhagavan wrote there: **“Nothing will happen to anyone who is with Me!”** Who can give this assurance except the Lord of the Universe? And so, a small boat was arranged to ferry Bhagavan across to the other side. And it was in such a position that it had to go under the bridge to reach the far shore.

The devotees gathered on either side of the river to see what would happen. By now the water level had risen so high that when the boat reached the bridge it was lashing the roof and there was absolutely no space for the boat to pass beneath it. The people waited eagerly and anxiously wondering what would happen.

Bhagavan instructed the people in the boat, “Close your eyes. Do not watch what will happen.” Then, in a fraction of a second, the boat suddenly disappeared and appeared on the other side!

Imagine the roar of the devotees on both sides drowning out the roar of the river. The joy that surged through their hearts was greater even than the flood arising from the Godavari River. And as promised, Bhagavan reached the home at exactly 9:00 a.m. During a public meeting He said, **“When I came as Rama, the ocean gave way; it had to give! When I came as Krishna , Yamuna gave way! When I came as Sai, what is Godavari?”**

This Lord of Puttaparthi will never give you up – He will never forsake you. This ocean of mercy will take you by His hand and guide you across. You will never be abandoned. Bhagavan speaks of Faith as a fire. Small fires are easily put out by the slightest wind; so are small Faiths by the slightest winds of doubt. Our Faith should be like that of a forest fire. Oh Lord, let this Faith that You instill in us light the lamps of Love in our hearts so that it dispels darkness, ignorance and slothfulness.

**Lead kindly Light amidst the encircling gloom.
Lead Thou me on; the night is dark and I am far from home.
The distant scene, I do not ask to see. One step enough for me.
Lead Thou me on!**

Sai Ram!

– Heart2Heart Team

SWAMI – MOTHER DIVINE

By Dr. T Ravi Kumar

This is the transcription of the talk delivered in the Divine Presence of Bhagawan Baba during Dasara celebrations on the 18th of October 2004 by Dr. T Ravi Kumar, a lecturer in the Brindavan Campus of Swami's institute.

Prayerful Pranaams at Bhagavan's Lotus Feet. Most Beloved Bhagavan, respected elders, brothers and sisters.

If one were to go into the lexicon of every language that the human tongue knows, the sweetest word that one would find would be the word "mother". It is the first word that the human child learns, or tries to articulate. It is in honour of the Mother that the *Navaratri* festival is celebrated in Indian culture.

Every land, every clime, every race, every religion has its own celebration of Mother's day. The ancient Indians, the great elders, who had come face to face with the Mother, realized that one day would not be enough for this grand purpose. Therefore, they set apart nine full days in the calendar that we may worship, that we may adore the Mother. It is with great significance that in Prashanti Nilayam, during the festival of the Mother, the *Veda Purusha Saptaha Jnana Yagnam* is celebrated. The *Yagnam* is a symbol of sacrifice. And what else is a Mother? **"Mother" is a synonym for sacrifice.** Having been with Bhagavan for the past few years, I have had an opportunity to see at close quarters what sacrifice truly means.

The Necessary Hall Ticket

I will narrate to you a couple of incidents which have touched me. It was at the time when I was a student in Brindavan. It was in the 1970s that there were a number of students who had finished their undergraduate studies at the Sri Sathya Sai College, which was then affiliated to the Bangalore University.

After having tasted the nectar of proximity to Bhagavan, the students did not feel like going back to their home towns. So they prayed to Bhagavan and Swami yielded and allowed them to do their postgraduate studies in Bangalore University while staying in Brindavan (His ashram in Bangalore). There was one boy who was doing his Masters in the Bangalore University who used to suffer from a respiratory disorder. And as Bangalore was wet most of the year, he used to have a lot of problems because he would be exposed to traveling about 25 kms everyday.

So he missed his classes during the year on a number of days. It was time for the annual examinations and all the other students who were studying with him were able to get their hall ticket. When this boy went to the office he was told, "Sorry, you will have to write your exam next year because you have a shortfall of attendance - you will not be able to write the exam."

This boy was crestfallen and returned to Brindavan. The next morning was his exam. All the others were praying to Bhagavan for *Padanamaskar*. He was waiting with them. And all the others had their hall tickets blessed by Bhagavan. When it was this boy's turn, he tried to tell Swami that he did not have a hall ticket, but how often we forget that we need not inform the all knowing! And Swami just brushed aside his attempt and said, "Do *Namaskaar!*" So he did *Namaskaar* but was crestfallen that he could not even explain his predicament to Swami.

That evening, as the warden was going upstairs to Swami's room, this boy went to the warden and explained his plight. "Sir please explain this to Swami." When the warden went up and mentioned this to Swami, Swami said, "I know, I know. Tell him to finish his breakfast in the morning, go to the exam hall and write the exam." No words that Swami utters are in vain.

So this boy also did exactly as he was told by Bhagavan. In the morning he had his breakfast and went to the city, following Swami's instructions.

That afternoon, as Swami was coming out for Darshan, He was searching for someone. He looked around and spotted this boy amidst the group of students standing at a distance, called him and said, "What about your exam?" The boy said, "Ah, Swami, I wrote my exam." We were all surprised - how did he write the exam when he did not have a hall ticket. We could see the glow of relief on his face.

Swami put up a very inquisitive face and asked: **"You wrote the exam? Who gave you the hall ticket?"**

Then the boy said, "Swami, I went to the University in the morning. I was sitting there in front of the examination hall. Swami had said 'Write the exam' so I knew somehow I would write the exam. And suddenly there was this person who called out my name and gave me the hall ticket."

Swami asked, "Who was it?" We were all impatient to know who it was. And the boy said, "Swami, it was the University peon who I don't know personally. In fact I was so excited I forgot to even pay him something and when I remembered this lapse and tried to make amends he was no longer there."

Swami said **“It was not any University peon. It was Me, the Universal Lord Who came to give you the hall ticket. Everyone else had written you off. But I shall always stand by you.”**

We were all moved to tears.

Oh Sai Maa! For our sake, what roles you take. For our welfare, what sacrifices you make. Everyday, every moment at Swami’s Feet, is a lesson in sacrifice.

The Lord’s Night Time Vigil

There was another occasion when I had an experience of what it is to know the sacrifices that a Mother makes. It was in June 1986 and we were returning from Kodaikanal. On the way we were to go to Ooty and come back to Bangalore . It so happened that the bus in which we were traveling developed some mechanical trouble on the Coimbatore Road . We had started earlier and visited the Palani temple. Suddenly the bus stopped and the driver said, “We can’t proceed even an inch.”

We thought of Swami, and just at that moment behind us was Swami’s car - even though Bhagavan had started three hours later than us. This is the quality of a mother. Mother is beside you whenever you need her.

Swami stopped the car and asked us, “What’s the problem?”

“Swami there is some mechanical trouble and therefore the bus has stopped.” Swami said, “Okay, get the bus repaired - (He sent an elderly devotee with us who knew the place) - come to Coimbatore and then come to Ooty.”

When we went to Coimbatore it was already 7:30 p.m. and Swami had arranged dinner for us and proceeded to Ooty. But Swami is so concerned that by the time we reached Coimbatore itself, there had been three phone calls asking whether we had reached Coimbatore . From Coimbatore we traveled to Ooty. But again, on the way there was some problem in the car, and so we reached Ooty at 12:00 midnight .

We had our dinner and slowly went to our rooms upstairs. **And whom do we find waiting there? Swami had kept awake till 12:45 in the night to ask us why we came late, to make us comfortable and to make sure that we got the necessary rest! 12:45 at night.**

These are just a couple of instances that I have mentioned but there are any numbers of instances which I am sure you will remember in your own life when Swami has intervened.

‘Please Stay One More Day’

I will just conclude my speech with one incident which is very personal but which shows the amount of Love that Swami has for each one of us. A few years back it was my birthday and I had prayed for Bhagavan’s permission to come to Prashanti Nilayam (from Brindavan) to have Swami’s Blessings. The exams were on, so I came here and took Swami’s Blessings on my birthday.

The next day, even though it was a Sunday, there were exams, and so I thought it would be right for me to return back to the campus and be present there. In the afternoon I sent word praying for Bhagavan’s permission. Bhagavan sent word that I should sit in the front. As Bhagavan came He called me and said, “Tomorrow is Sunday, isn’t it? Why don’t you stay for one more day and go?”

This was Swami’s Love. I was so moved. I said, “I also badly want to stay.” Swami said, “Yes, yes, I know...that is why I am telling you - stay for one more day and go.” This is the Love of the Mother.

In Swami we have The Divine Mother, the Supreme Mother and the Physical Mother, who nourishes and cares for each one of us.

On this *Navaratri* day, what else can I do but pray to this Mother that our devotion should flow in the fullness to His Lotus Feet forever. May we be worthy of the Love, Grace, and Compassion that Swami has been showering on us and the sacrifice that Swami has been making every moment of His Life for each and every one of us.

Brothers and Sisters, I am sure I am only echoing the prayer that is in each of our hearts.

Jai Sai Ram!

- Heart2Heart Team

I AM A SAI DEVOTEE

By Sai Sandesh

This poem was sent to us from one of our readers.

I am not born for lesser things.
I cannot compare myself with anyone else.
My life is mine. My Swami is mine.
I am a Sai devotee.

Passing joys do not titillate me.
Waning shadows do not amuse me.
Fading bodies, flickering minds do not entice me.
I am not here for lesser pleasures.
I am a Sai devotee.

I am not here for composing an incomplete poem,
Not for executing an unaccomplished mission.
I want it in full – the bliss.
I am going to finish it – once and for all.
Nothing can pull me to get off my train
At an intermediate station.
I am a Sai devotee.

There is a logic if someone
Who does not believe in God
Complains about his problems.
There is a reason if someone
Who has no guiding star
lags behind with indolence.
But I am not like that.
I have the solution in my hand.
I have my Guru
Not somewhere else on earth,
But seated in my own heart.
I am a Sai devotee.

It does not make sense in my case to spend
Even a single moment in despair.
It is not rational in my case to wait for happiness.
It is not reasonable to behave

Even with the slightest egoism, in my case.
I do His work, He does my work.
I am a Sai devotee.

I am here to give, not to take.
I am here to forgive, not to avenge.
I am here to console, not to complain.
I am a Sai devotee.

I don't ask you for anything.
My Swami will give me.
You can neither harm me nor help me.
It is His will that becomes my life.
I am a Sai devotee.

When I talk sweetly to you,
you might think that I like you.
No, I am talking to my Swami in you.
When I help you, you might think
I am being kind to you.
No, I am serving my Swami in you.
I am a Sai devotee.

On the outset
I may appear like anyone else.
Cause I also have two hands and two ears.
But my hands are always involved
In my Swami's work.
I do everything in His name,
Even a cough or a sneeze,
A walk or a talk.
My ears always hear His Voice,
His Name and His Message.
I am a Sai devotee.

On the surface,
My life might appear like that of anyone else.
Since I also work and earn,
Eat and feed, sleep and dream.
But my thoughts are always in Him and for Him.
I have no misgivings, no bothers.
No fears, no complaints.
I am a Sai devotee.

I will be a success.
It is a fact, not a hope.
I am everything.
It is my experience, not a quote.
I am a Sai devotee.

I do, but I am not the doer.
I dream, but I am not the dreamer.
I walk in His footsteps.
I fly on His wings.
I am a Sai devotee.

Joy is my nature not my dream.
Light is what I radiate, not what I search for.
Love is what I am, not what I yearn for.
I am a Sai devotee.

For you, Dussera might be today.
For me, it is everyday, every moment.
I am a Sai devotee.

This poem was written by the author during the festival of Dasara.

– Heart2Heart Team

H2H SPECIAL

UNFORGETTABLE MOMENTS WITH SAI

RECOLLECTIONS OF CHIDAMBARAM KRISHAN, PART 3

We continue with our presentation of the wonderful recollections of Mr. Chidambaram Krishnan, a long-time devotee of Bhagavan Baba who came to the Lord under somewhat unusual circumstances. In the last installment we broke off at a point where Swami had taken a group to the beach in Quilon, Kerala, and wanted to know whether there were any refreshments they could partake of. There were none, and the nearest shop was four kilometres from the beach. It was clearly not possible to trek that distance and buy snacks; that would take too much time. On the other hand, Swami could see that everyone was hungry. So what was to be done? Devotees did the only thing they could – look to Bhagavan. And what did Swami do? To find out, read on.

Plate of Grace

Just then, Swami's glance fell on a plate that had been brought for use while offering *Aarathi*. He said, "Give Me that plate." The plate was given. He covered the plate with His handkerchief and then removed it. Lo and behold, the plate was full of hot *Mysore paks* (sweets), and they tasted delicious – so sweet! Swami distributed the sweets and when all of them were given out, He again covered the plate with His handkerchief.

When He removed it, this time there were hot, crisp, *karaboondhi*, a tasty savoury. Those too were distributed, much to the delight of everyone present. Swami then said, "What about coffee?" Of course, there was no coffee.

Coffee Creation

In those days, whenever Swami went out, He would carry two flasks full of hot water, some Nescafe packets, and a tin of Nestle's milk powder. When the time came, Swami Himself would mix the coffee and serve it to all. This time, the arrangements were made by the Governor's establishment, which had not made any allowance for the sudden changes of plans that Swami is famous for.

Swami then asked, "Have any of you got a flask?" I had a flask and someone else had a flask too. We gave both these flasks to Swami, who gently tapped on the side. He then opened the flasks and they were full of steaming coffee,

smelling so good. That is how Swami gave us divine tiffin and divine coffee on the beach that evening.

Surprise Trip to Madras

On that occasion, Swami produced coffee with gentle taps. I am reminded of another occasion which occurred around 1961-1962, when gentle divine taps produced petrol instead of coffee. Let me digress and narrate that incident. It so happened I was once driving Swami to Madras (now Chennai) from Puttaparthi. In those days, whenever Swami wanted to make a long distance trip by car, He would send me advanced information.

There were standard instructions: "Fill the tank with petrol and also carry some extra petrol in a few cans." I have driven Swami to many places like Hyderabad, Madras and so forth. On this occasion there was no advanced intimation sent to me before I left for Puttaparthi, so I did not bother about a full tank, etc. I had come prepared for a long stay of several months and told myself that when I returned I would fill the tank in Penukonda.

Things worked out differently. As soon as I reached Puttaparthi Swami suddenly announced, "We are going to Madras," and got in the car. Even as He did so, He asked me, "Have you got the tank filled?" I replied, "Swami, when I asked You earlier, You told me You had no plans for long distance travel and that I could stay here from Dasara to Birthday. So I did not fill the tank. But now You have changed Your mind and are announcing a long distance trip. What am I to do?" Swami brushed this aside and replied, "Forget all that. Just tell Me how far the car can go with the petrol inside." I said, "Swami, we possibly could go up to Chickballapur, but maybe we could fill the tank in Penukonda on the way or even in Bagepalli."

Swami got into the car and I started driving. The moment we left, Swami started ticking me off. He said, "You have made a big mistake. You should have filled the tank earlier. **Don't you know that in life there could be a sudden change of plans? You must know how to anticipate. Events will not always happen with earlier announcements,**" and so on. A non-stop barrage of criticism! With all these complaints I was of course feeling very uncomfortable. And all the time I was dreading that something very unpleasant was going to happen.

The Petrol Stations are Dry!

To get on with the story, we reached Penukonda but the bunk there had no petrol. We drove on and reached Bagepalli; no luck there. With great trepidation, I then drove on to Chickballapur, and to my great horror, both the

bunks there were dry! In those days traffic was quite light and bunks filled up only once in a while.

Journeys Across The Wilderness

I must also tell you that access to Puttaparthi was very difficult in those days. If you came by car you can be certain that during the trip at least three or four parts would get damaged. On the way we had to cross about twenty or so small streams; there were no bridges or even causeways.

Often these streams were dry and there would be big stones scattered all over the place. If one was not very careful, one of these stones might strike the under chassis, leaving the traveller stranded midstream. During the rainy season there could be dangerous flash floods that could wash away the vehicles. In a very good car we could drive from Bangalore to Puttaparthi in about six hours. If the car was old, it was a full day's journey. For coming from Madras to Puttaparthi, one could take one of three routes.

One of these was via Penukonda but this was not often favoured because of a big stream one had to cross. There was another route via Gorantla, but this route was littered with big boulders that made driving very difficult. The third road was via Muddi Gubba and that was the route I often took.

In the 60s, one could drive to Puttaparthi, but prior to that, in the 40s and 50s, one could only go up to Karnatakanagepalli, opposite Puttaparthi on the other side of the Chitravathi River. In those days Swami had a green Dodge car. That car would then be towed by bullock cart across the river from Karnatakanagepalli to Puttaparthi.

Swami's Example

Those were truly difficult days. You know what Swami went through to build the Mandir here? Today, we all sit comfortably in the Mandir and sing Bhajans. Swami could have instantly created the Mandir using His Divine powers but He did not want to do it that way. In every Mission of His, Swami has struggled and toiled exactly as we would if we had undertaken that job. This was His way of setting an example in determination and tenacity. He never ever used His Divine powers that would have made things so very simple. Do you know what a hassle it was to bring those huge steel girders to the Mandir site?

Swami Slipped and Fell

Once during construction, Swami was up above giving instructions when He slipped and fell. This incident is not recorded in any book, but it is a fact that Swami fell and suffered an injury on the head. Swami immediately commanded, "Take Me to My room," and that was done. Swami then asked everyone to leave the room and close the door. Half an hour later, Swami opened the door and came out. There was no trace of any injury except a scar that looked six-months old.

Wrong Turn

Let me get back to the petrol story. As I said earlier, in Chickballapur we also drew a blank – no petrol in the two bunks there. Swami then asked, "What route are you going to take? And how long do you think you can manage with the petrol you have?" I replied, "Swami, I think with careful managing we may be able to reach Kolar, where we can surely fill the tank." **Swami pondered that for a minute and then said, "You think so? In that case, go ahead but make sure you do not leave Me stranded in the middle of the road."** I said OK but then I was under such stress that I took a wrong turn and entered the road leading to Chintamani instead of to Kolar. I did not realize this when I made the turn. It was only after driving for sometime that I saw a milestone that showed the distance to Chintamani.

My head started spinning. Here I was on the wrong road and there was no bunk in Chintamani. How do I break this bad news to Swami? Soon the car would come to a halt and then I would get it from Swami left and right.

The Car Grinds To A Halt

And exactly as I had feared, after some time the car did come to a stop. Swami asked, "What is the matter?" I knew the answer but stalling for time a bit, I replied, "Swami, let me see what the problem is." A moment or two later, I meekly said, "Swami, the petrol is exhausted." Swami responded by asking, **"What? No petrol? Does that mean I am stuck here in this car in the middle of nowhere? What are you going to do now?"** Hesitantly I replied, "Swami that precisely is what I am trying to figure out!"

One possibility was for me to wait till a petrol tanker passed by and try to buy some from them. But in those days petrol tankers plied very infrequently. Meanwhile, I saw a bus approaching. I got out with the idea of riding that bus to some nearby place to see if I could somehow get some petrol from somewhere. When I got out of the car, Swami also got out. He then said to me, "Open the tank." I said in reply, "Swami, the fuel gauge shows the tank is

empty. I can of course open the tank, but it is not easy to see inside.” To that Swami said, “Does not matter; you just open the tank; I want to see for Myself.”

"Maybe You Did Not Read The Gauge Properly"

I removed the cap and opened the tank, after which Swami peered inside. His hands were on the car and He was gently tapping even as He looked deep inside. He then said, “No petrol inside, and also no prospects for getting petrol now, right?” Meekly I responded, “That’s how it looks, Swami.” Swami then said, “Doesn’t matter. You get in and just turn on the switch and look at the meter again. Maybe you did not read the gauge properly.”

I obeyed and got into the car and turned on the switch. I saw the meter and it showed the tank was full. I was puzzled and said, “Swami, I think something is wrong with this meter.” Swami rejected my analysis and said, “How can that be? This is a new car. I think the meter is right. You just turn the key and see what happens.” I did that, and wonder of wonders, the car started! **Meanwhile, Swami started laughing, and that was when I realized that by tapping the tank from the outside, in a flash He had actually filled the tank. Swami then said, “Let this not happen again. Always be prepared and be ready for all eventualities.”** Back in Quilon, Divine taps produced coffee and now they produced petrol. I digressed somewhat mainly to narrate this incident.

(To Be Continued)...

– Heart2Heart Team

GET INSPIRED

500 RUPEES AN HOUR

Sometimes the demands of our working lives becomes overbearing and makes us forget what truly matters. Isn't it? Just read this story to find out.

An office worker named Ramesh came home from his demanding job at a late hour, feeling very tired. All he wanted to do is rest from the grueling day; but on going inside the home he finds his 7-year-old son, Gopal, waiting for him. Ramesh sees the look in Gopal's eyes and knows that his son wants his attention – but just does not have the energy.

Gopal says to his father "Daddy, may I ask you a question." Ramesh parries this as he is feeling very thirsty after a long journey home, "Hold on, I want to get a drink" but his son ignores this and asks "Dad, how much money do you make in an hour?"

Ramesh feels rather put out at this strange question and answers gruffly, "That's none of your business. Why do you ask such a thing?" But Gopal is not to be put off and continues "I just want to know. Please tell me, how much do you make an hour?"

Ramesh manages a quick answer between gulping down some water, "I make Rs. 500 an hour."

"Oh", the little boy replies, with his head down. Looking up, he says, "Dad, may I please borrow Rs. 300?"

Ramesh becomes irritated at this untimely request when all he wants to do is put his feet up and watch TV, "I told you so many times that we are not going to have a dog and 500 rupees is far too less to buy one anyway – now get to bed! Why are you being so selfish? Do you think I have time to walk a dog when I am working so hard to keep everything going?" Gopal is a little shaken at his father's outburst and so goes to his room and has a little cry.

Ramesh sits down, relaxes and watches TV and gradually gets into a better mood. After about an hour or so, he feels calmer and a little guilty as he turns to thinking about his son "Maybe there was something he really needed to buy with that Rs. 300 - and he really does not ask for money very often!"

So he goes to the door of the boy's room and asks "Are you asleep Gopal?" "No Daddy, I'm awake." He goes in and says,

"Hey look, I was feeling so tired from work and I should not have shouted at you. What do you need that 300 rupees for?"

Gopal sits up from bed and smiles at his father "Oh thank you dad!" Then, reaching under his pillow he pulls out some crumpled up notes. "Why do you want money if you already have some?" the father grumbles wondering what this is all about and wanting to go back to his TV.

The son slowly counts out his money and then, looks up at his father "Because I didn't have enough, but now I do. Daddy, I now have Rs. 500. Can I buy an hour of your time? Please come home early tomorrow because I want to have dinner with you."

Ramesh feels a stab in his heart and tears come to his eyes. He thinks of all the time he gives to his work – but how much to his little boy - and when was the last time they had a family meal.

"Gopal" he says feeling moved, "Tomorrow, when I come home we will have dinner together, me, your Mother and you. And yes, we can talk about getting that dog as well."

This story is just a short reminder to all of us working so hard in life. We should not let time slip through our fingers without having spent some quality time with those who really matter to us, those close to our hearts. If we die tomorrow, the company that we are working for could easily replace us in a matter of days. But the family and friends that we leave behind will feel the loss for the rest of their lives.

Swami tells us,

"Parents must learn how to love their children. Whenever they go astray parents should immediately correct their faults. Parents today lavish too much affection on their children. Affection alone is not enough. There should be control over the children as well. There should be both love and law; only then will the love prove beneficial. The obligations of parents do not end with providing food, schooling and the knowledge of worldly matters. The children should also be provided with right values." (*Gems of Wisdom, p. 215*)

"The father must encourage the son more by example than by precept."
(*Gems of Wisdom*, p. 213)

- Heart2Heart Team

WE WILL SEE

Once upon a time there was a farmer in a central region of China.

He didn't have much money, and instead of a tractor he used an old horse to plow his field.

One afternoon, while working in the field, the horse dropped dead.

Everyone in the village said, "Oh, what a horrible thing to happen." The farmer said simply, "We'll see."

He was so at peace and so calm that everyone in the village got together, and, admiring his attitude, gave him a new horse as a gift.

Everyone's reaction now was, "What a lucky man." But the farmer said, "We'll see."

A couple of days later, the new horse jumped a fence and ran away. Everyone in the village shook their heads and said, "What a poor fellow."

The farmer smiled and said, "We'll see."

Eventually, the horse found his way home, and everyone again said, "What a fortunate man."

Again, the farmer said, "We'll see."

Later in the year, the farmer's young boy went out riding on the horse and fell and broke his leg. Everyone in the village said, "What a shame for the poor boy."

The farmer said, "We'll see."

Two days later, the army came into the village to draft new recruits. When they saw that the farmer's son had a broken leg, they decided not to take him.

Everyone said, "What a fortunate young man."

The farmer smiled again and said, "We'll see."

There's no use in over reacting to the events and circumstances of our everyday lives. Many times what looks like a setback may actually be a gift in disguise. And when our hearts are in the right place all events and circumstances are gifts that we can learn valuable lessons from.

As Swami tells us:

Joy and sorrow are like two pots carried by a man on a pole. They are inseparable. No one can tell what the future has in store for any individual.

And let us also remember that "the most precious ornaments arise from the fiercest of fires."

Courtesy: Moolyasudha, Sep 2005.

– Heart2Heart Team

WHAT IS YOUR VALUE?

A well known speaker started off his seminar by holding up a \$20 bill. In the packed room of 200 people, he asked, "Who would like this \$20 bill?"

Hands started going up and people started smiling, a little amused at this strange offer.

Looking very serious the speaker said, "I am going to give this \$20 to one of you – but first, let me do this." He proceeded to crumple the dollar bill up.

He then asked the bemused audience, "Who still wants it?"

The hands were still up in the air.

"Well," he continued, "What if I do this?" And he dropped it on the ground and started to grind it into the floor with his shoe.

He picked it up, all crumpled and dirty. "Now who still wants it?" Still the hands were in the air.

Now he delivered his message. "My friends, you have all learned a very valuable lesson. No matter what I did to the money, you still wanted it because it did not decrease in value. It is still worth \$20.

"Many times in our lives, we are dropped, crumpled, and ground into the dirt by the decisions we make and the circumstances that come our way.

"At those times we may feel as though we are worthless. But no matter what has happened or what will happen, you will never lose your value. You are special – don't ever forget it!"

When negative thoughts come into our mind it is important not to believe them, but hold onto our spiritual reality, which, through the ages, the saints and sages have contemplated on and exhorted us to discover.

"For the crop of life," Swami says, "courage and confidence are the best manure, and the best insecticides. Be like lions in the spiritual field, rule over the forest of the senses and roam fearlessly with full faith in victory. Be heroes, not zeroes."

Let's have faith in ourselves and be full of self-confidence, for every single being is born with a purpose and there is something beautiful God wants to do through each one of us. We just have to trust Him and trust ourselves.

– Heart2Heart Team

TEST YOUR SPIRITUAL QUOTIENT

MULTI-FAITH SPIRITUAL QUIZ

1. In Islam what does the word Hadith refer to?

- A. A verse from the Quran.
- B. The period of lamenting for the dead.
- C. A verified statement or saying of the Prophet Muhammad.
- D. The place where demons dwell.

2. What did Rama have to accomplish in order to win the hand of Sita in marriage? Lord Rama had to:

- A. Lift and break the Bow of Shiva.
- B. Lift and string the Bow of Shiva.
- C. Shoot an arrow from the Bow of Shiva.
- D. Find the Bow of Shiva.

3. What does the Jewish holiday of the Passover commemorate?

- A. The Israelites' escape from Egypt.
- B. The Jewish new year.
- C. The autumn harvest.
- D. The end of the Jewish fasting period.

4. Dharma is the first word and mama the last word of which Hindu scripture?

- A. The Mahabharatha.
- B. The Ramayana.
- C. The Bhagavatham.
- D. The Bhagavad Gita.

5. Complete these words of Jesus "Let the _____ come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of God."

- A. Poor and meek.
- B. Little children.
- C. Righteous.
- D. Peacemakers.

6. Complete the quotation of Swami, "Duty without love is deplorable, duty with love is desirable, _____".

- A. Love is divine, duty is divine.
- B. Love with duty is divine.
- C. Love without duty is divine.
- D. Duty is love, love is divine.

7. Prince Siddhartha, later the Buddha, was shielded from all unpleasant sights by his father and lived his early life exclusively in the palace. One day he left the palace for the first time and saw four people who shocked him and propelled him onto the path of enlightenment. Three of the people were an old man, a sick man and a monk. Who was the fourth?

- A. A soldier.
- B. A dead man.
- C. A man singing to God.
- D. A beggar.

8. In the Bhagavatham the evil King Kamsa tried his best to kill the baby Lord Krishna – what method did he use?

- A. Kamsa sent his army to kill Krishna.
- B. Kamsa did penance to Lord Vishnu to gain the power to kill Krishna.
- C. Kamsa came in the guise of a Brahmin to kill Krishna.
- D. Kamsa sent several demons to kill Krishna.

9. In the Bhagavatham, Duryodhana persuaded the wrathful sage Durvasa to go to the Pandavas with his 10,000 followers and ask for a sumptuous meal, knowing that Durvasa would be left unsatisfied and then curse the Pandavas. Thus the distraught Pandavas prayed to Lord Krishna to save them, as they had already partaken food from their sacred vessel which would not fill up again as it does before every meal. When the Lord arrived He requested the sacred vessel. What happened next?

- A. Lord Krishna created an endless supply of food using the sacred vessel.
- B. Lord Krishna gave the sacred vessel to Durvasa.
- C. Durvasa's hunger was satisfied after Krishna ate a scrap of leftover leaf from the vessel.
- D. Lord Krishna persuaded Durvasa to leave with a promise of His Grace.

10. Can you complete this sentence from Swami?

“Though my heart is soft as butter, it melts only when there is some _____ in your prayer.”

- A. Effort.
- B. Intelligence.
- C. Purpose.
- D. Warmth.

ANSWERS

1: C. A verified statement or saying of the Prophet Muhammad.

Hadith means sayings of the Prophet. Islamic tradition divides the *hadith* into two types: the *hadith nabawi*, which are sayings that Muhammad made on his own, and the *hadith qudsi*, which are sayings that Muhammad made through divine inspiration.

2 : B. Lift and string the Bow of Shiva.

In *Ramakatha Rasavahini* Swami recounts the incident thus: "Janaka also announced that he would give Sita in marriage to whosoever lifted the bow and strung it, for he had vowed that Sita will be wedded only to such a one. Viswamitra approved that procedure too... Rama raised, with no concern or exertion, the Bow from its box! Holding the Bow erect he looked around, while amazement was on every face! The thousands who witnessed the wonder—citizens, kings and princes, sages and elders—raised such an applause that the sky echoed the exultation! Soon Rama strung the magnificent Bow! With delightful ease he fixed an arrow! And he drew the string back up to the ear, in order to release it. But the Bow snapped!" (*Ramakatha Rasavahini part 1 p,167,169*)

3 : A. The Israelites' escape from Egypt.

The Passover remembers the time when the Israelites were enslaved by the Egyptians. The Israelite leader, Moses, heard God ordering him to tell all the Israelites to place a red mark of goat's blood on all their front doors. God then 'passed over' their homes and killed only the first-born sons of the Egyptians. Because of this, the Egyptians released the Jews from captivity. See the Book of Exodus in the Bible (Ch12 v 1-30) for the full account.

4 : D. The Bhagavad Gita.

Swami uses these two words to illustrate a beautiful truth: "*Dharmakshetre kurukshetre....*" So runs the first verse of the *Gita*. The first word of the first line is *Dharma*. The last word of the last verse of the *Gita* is *mama* (*Yatra Yogeshwarah Krishna....Dhruva nitir matir mama*). The fusion of *mama* and *dharma* is *mama dharma*, which means one's own *dharma* or *swadharma*. Thus, the *Bhagavad Gita* teaches each individual the principles of his own *dharma*. (*Summer Showers In Brindavan 1979 p,226-7*)

5 : B. Little children.

The context of this saying is as follows:

"Then little children were brought to him, that he should lay his hands on them

and pray; and the disciples rebuked them. But Jesus said, 'Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of God'. He laid his hands on them, and departed from there." (*The Bible, book of Matthew Ch 19 v13-15*)

In addition, Swami tells us that

"You will be welcomed by the Divine, only when, as Jesus said, you become a child. 'Allow the children to come to me', he said."

(*Divine Discourse 23.5.67*)

6 : C. Love without duty is divine.

The answer is Love without Duty is Divine which often Swami has quoted. Love becomes Divine when it is totally selfless and pure. When love exists for love's sake alone without any obligation to love (be it familial attachment or otherwise), it is truly Divine. Swami's Love which is unconditional and spontaneous is just like this

7 : B. A dead man.

Swami tells us that,

"Buddha left his home in quest of the secret of *ananda*. In his wanderings, he saw a dead body, an old man, and a sick person. These painful sights made him enquire deeply. He realised that death could not be avoided. Old age also is inescapable, being the natural culmination of childhood, youth, and middle age. Such changes form part and parcel of the physical world, which itself is ephemeral. These changes are natural, and one must not be perturbed or agitated by them. Buddha asked himself, 'What is the cause of death? Why do old age and sickness come upon humans?' After much pondering, Buddha concluded that the body is just like a water bubble, while the sickness of the body has its origin in the mind."-(*Divine Discourse 21 May 2000*)

8 : D. Kamsa sent several demons to kill Krishna.

There were many demons sent by Kamsa to kill lord Krishna. Putana was one of them. Swami describes the fate of Putana as follows: "Then came Putana, an ogress. She took the form of a beautiful lady and approached Yasoda, 'Sister, I heard that you gave birth to a son after many years. I am surprised and delighted. May I see him?' There was nothing untoward in this request. In fact, people often came in this manner. Yasoda took Putana inside unsuspectingly, since Putana had assumed the form of one of her friends. Then Putana insisted that she be allowed to nurse the baby. An argument ensued between the two of them, at which time Krishna began drinking Putana's milk. Not just her milk, but her life-force was also

sucked out. Putana fell down dead. Everyone in Gokula was astounded at the infant's superhuman powers.”-(*Summer Showers in Brindavan 1995 p, 47*)

9 : C. Durvasa's hunger was satisfied after Krishna ate a scrap of leftover leaf from the vessel.

Swami beautifully relates this story in *Bhagavatha Vahini*,

“Gopala said, ‘Well, bring here the Vessel. Even if I get from it a particle of some eatable, I shall be content.’ So, she went in and brought the Vessel and placed it in the hands of Krishna. Gopala passed His fingers carefully inside the Vessel, seeking some particle that might have escaped the scraping and washing. He found in the ‘neck’ of the Vessel the fraction of a cooked leaf. So, He asked ‘Draupadi! You seem to have had a leafy dish for lunch today!’...‘I got this from your Vessel. This thing is enough to appease, not only My hunger, but the hunger of all beings in the Universe.’ Then He put it on His tongue with the end of His finger and swallowing, exclaimed, ‘Ah! How nice! My hunger is gone!’ “At that very moment, Durvasa on the river bank and his ten thousand disciples felt their stomachs overfull with food. Their hunger too was gone; they experienced supreme happiness, free from the pangs of hunger they suffered a minute previously.”(*Bhagavatha Vahini p,169-170*) Thus satisfied, Durvasa left with all his followers.

10 : D. Warmth.

The complete passage is as follows:

“Though my heart is soft as butter, it melts only when there is some warmth in your prayer. Unless you make some disciplined effort, Grace can not descend on you. The yearning, the agony of unfulfilled aim, that is the warmth that melts My heart. This is the anguish that wins Grace.”- (*Source of quote 'The Inward Path Lit Up by Swami'*)

THE HEALING TOUCH

GODFREY AND AGNES FIND GOD AND ANGELS IN SWAMI'S HOSPITAL

This is a moving story of a journey from despondency to delight for the couple, Godfrey and Agnes, who traveled all the way from Uganda in search of a solution to their seemingly insurmountable problem and finally found hope, light and love in Swami's Hospital at Bangalore.

The relief in his eyes is there for all to see, and her gentle smile says it all. Their intense struggle of six long years, culminating in their visit to Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Medical Sciences, Bangalore, has finally paid off. Agnes Muwanga (yes, she is from Africa) is now ready to tell how Swami's Hospital has helped her obtain a new life.

Nakagiri Agnes Muwanga is a devout Christian from the remote village of Kismula in the Rakai district of Uganda in East Africa. Agnes completed her studies through the 7th grade despite suffering from ill health and bearing the yoke of poverty during her childhood.

Agnes's Health...An Unsolved Mystery

Her husband of fifteen years, Godfrey Muwanga, is a farmer. They own a piece of land where Godfrey toils single handedly to cultivate maize, banana, cassava, groundnuts, sweet potato, and coffee.

Godfrey married Agnes when she was twenty years old. They were happy but tragedy befell them when she lost their first child during her pregnancy.

Their second child, a boy, is now eight years old, but misfortune struck again when their third child was born dead. These deaths seemed to have some connection with Agnes's health, but they remained an unsolved mystery.

No Light at the End of the Tunnel?

Being a humble farmer with only an acre of land and an income dependent on the seasonal vagaries of nature, Godfrey was not a well-to-do man. He worked alone in the field with his two bare hands and without any mechanization. Nevertheless, he left no stone unturned to ensure Agnes received the best treatment available.

He took her to the biggest hospital in Uganda , Mulago Hospital in Kampala, where Agnes was diagnosed as suffering from rheumatic heart disease, a condition affecting the normal functioning of the heart valves, the orifices which regulate blood flow. (Please see the *Fact File* inset.) The medical treatment for her condition requires replacing the natural heart valves with artificial ones through open-heart surgery.

However, the Mulago Hospital did not have facilities for performing this type of cardiac surgery, so Godfrey was forced to look beyond Uganda for Agnes's treatment.

They were referred to a hospital in Chennai and were told the operation would cost USD 13,000. Godfrey and Agnes were very dejected as it seemed impossible they would ever be able to collect such a large sum of money. They sought help anywhere they could but none was forthcoming...or so it seemed.

Agnes possesses a helpful nature and always strove to alleviate the suffering of those around her, in particular by supporting other women to become economically independent.

She was also active in Aids Relief activities. So it seemed sadly ironic that no one had stepped forward to help her in her time of need.

Fact File: Heart Valves & Rheumatic Heart Disease

Heart valves keep blood flowing in one direction through the heart. They open to let blood flow through and then close to prevent blood from flowing back the way it came. There are four valves in the heart. They are the pulmonary, tricuspid, aortic and the mitral valves.

Rheumatic Heart Disease (RHD) is a condition in which permanent damage to heart valves is caused by rheumatic fever. When affected, these valves can become narrow, leak or have a combined problem of narrowing and leaking. Other valves can also deteriorate over time. Valves that do not open and close correctly make it difficult for blood to flow properly through the heart causing the heart to pump harder in order to circulate enough blood through the body. Eventually this over exertion can weaken the heart.

It is the aortic and mitral valves which are predominantly damaged from RHD.

Overcrowding, poverty, malnutrition, illiteracy, improper diagnosis of upper respiratory illnesses, inadequate treatment with Penicillin are some of the reasons why rheumatic heart disease is still widely prevalent in the developing

world. Because of antibiotics, rheumatic fever is now rare in the developed countries, though in recent years it has begun to make a comeback in the United States among children in poor innercity neighborhoods. However, with proper prevention and treatment, it is a disease which can be reduced to a very low incidence and even be eradicated from the world.

The treatment of RHD is to replace the damaged heart valves with either natural or artificial ones.

Message from Hon. Maria Mutagamba

MP Elect, Rakai District , Uganda & Minister of State for Water and President of African Ministers Council on Water (AMCOW)

“I am sincerely grateful to Sai Baba for His unfailing Love for all mankind in spite of creed, race or nationality. From what I see, His one trip to Uganda in 1968 endears Him to this country and when I met Him His wish was that Uganda becomes a haven of peace and tranquility.

In order to celebrate His 80th birthday with us, Sai Baba donated 80 boreholes to the water stressed areas of Uganda and as I speak now construction is on-going. Ugandans are grateful.

I also wish to express my appreciation to the Heart Valve Bank, UK for the support extended to Agnes and her family. Looking at the File Facts, and the many incidences of diseases especially in children, I pray that the kindness of Sai Baba will continue opening more doors of support to our vulnerables. I thank Mr. Kalyan Ray of UN-Habitat for having introduced me to Swami.”

- Mary Mutagamba

Sai's Saving Grace Through Maria Mautagamba

It has been said that it is darkest before the dawn. Agnes and Godfrey made one last attempt and approached their local minister in Kampala, the capital of Uganda. As it turned out, the Hon. Maria Mutagamba, Minister of State for Water, proved to be their saving grace.

She introduced them to a "friend" she knew in India: Sathya Sai Baba. She told them about His Hospital in Bangalore , which she explained shone through the darkness like a ray of hope for those with nowhere left to turn.

She had visited the Hospital and described its imposing and temple-like architecture and promised them she would look into whether Sai Baba's Hospital could help them. Hope rose in their hearts.

In due course, thanks to the efforts of the Hon. Maria Mutagamba and the Heart Valve Bank, UK, which sponsored their air tickets, Godfrey and Agnes were on a plane to India.

They arrived at the outpatient department of Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Medical Sciences, Whitefield, Bangalore, in March of 2006. Agnes was put through a battery of tests which confirmed that her aortic and mitral valves were damaged. (See *Fact File* inset.) Within a few days, Agnes was admitted and operated on.

“A Great Miracle In Itself” – Dr. Anil Kumar Mulpur

This is what Dr. Anil Kumar Mulpur, HOD, Cardiac Surgery, who operated on Agnes, had to say regarding her successful surgery and post-operative recovery: “Agnes had a very narrow aortic root on the preoperative investigation and the operation was a challenging one. With Swami's grace and thanks to all the members of the cardiothoracic surgery team for their effort, Agnes Nakagiri made a smooth postoperative recovery. Personally, I feel it is a great miracle in itself for a remote African farmer's wife to come this far for the treatment. I feel greatly indebted to Swami for the chance given to us to operate on this lady.”

“It came up from my interaction with her that she is the chairperson in AIDS prevention in her own community. She is going to work more for her community after she returns to her place. It is gratifying to see these patients go back to community, lead a productive life of good quality and bring some more happiness to their own families and the communities. There is a spiritual reawakening apart from better health for these patients,” he added.

After her successful surgery and an uneventful stay in the intensive care unit, Agnes was moved to the postoperative ward where Godfrey and Agnes related their long and trying tale. When they come to the turning point in their account when Swami entered the picture, they heaved a sigh of relief and explained that Sai Baba will forever remain an integral part of their lives.

“I Am So Overwhelmed By The Love And Care....” – Agnes

“In Uganda we ran from pillar to post in the hope of finding treatment. In our own homeland people are so self-centered and help was so difficult to obtain.

We are so thankful to the doctors and all the staff here who have been so nice to us,” said Godfrey.

“I am so overwhelmed by the love, care and treatment I received here. I feel it is my faith and belief in Jesus Christ which made it possible for me to be treated here. We are very keen to have Sai Baba’s darshan before we leave for Uganda.

Once I return home I want to spread the message of the loving care I received here and talk about what Baba has made possible for humanity,” added Agnes, looking up from the book *Sai Baba: Man of Miracles*, she was reading. The calmness and poise in Agnes’s demeanor were quite striking and visible proof of her deeply rooted faith.

“If blessed with the opportunity, I would like to sing in Baba’s presence,” prayed musically gifted Agnes, who leads the church choir and teaches people to sing, as well as also playing drums. When told that Baba had been in Uganda in 1968, they both exclaimed, “Oh, how we wish we were born earlier!”

Sai’s Hospital is For All

Bhagavan's hospitals have always stood for providing state-of-the-art medical care, totally free of cost, breaking all barriers of caste, creed, race, religion and nationality. Agnes’s treatment is yet another example demonstrating that Baba’s hospitals do not function on a "Restricted Entry" concept. No matter who you are or where you hail from, the doors of Sri Sathya Sai's hospitals are open to all who need their help.

– Heart2Heart team

HOSPITAL STATISTICS

BANGALORE SUPER SPECIALITY HOSPITAL

Cumulative Statistics from 19th Jan 2001 to 28th Feb 2006.

Cardiac Surgeries: 6,244

Cardiac Catheterisation: 12, 681

Neuro Surgeries: 5,562

CT Scans: 17,746

MRI Exams: 20,341

PUTTAPARTHI SUPER SPECIALITY HOSPITAL

Cumulative Statistics from 22nd Nov 1991 to 31st Mar 2006.

Cardiac Surgeries: 15, 428

Cath Procedures: 16,600

Urology Surgeries: 28,680

Ophthalmology Surgeries: 28,136

Echo Cardiography: 4,03,386