

HEART 2 HEART

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BETWEEN YOU AND US

It was one evening, centuries ago, when Jesus along with his disciples, entered a boat and said, "Let's go over to the other side." And as they sailed, He fell asleep. A furious storm came down the waters and the craft was nearly swamped. The disciples, distressed and clueless, woke up the Master and pleaded for their lives. Jesus, then arose, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, "Quiet! Be still!" The next moment, the wind had lost its speed and the water was completely calm. *[Mark 4:35]*

Another day, when a huge crowd followed Jesus and His disciples to an isolated town called Bethsaida, and Jesus did not want to send the masses away hungry, the perturbed disciples said, "Master, how can we get so many loaves in a deserted place as to satisfy so great a multitude?" Jesus then enquired, "How many loaves do you have?" "Seven, and a few small fish," came the reply. He then commanded the crowd to sit down, took the seven loaves and the fish, thanked the heavens, broke the bread and gave it to the disciples to serve everyone gathered there. An unbelievable four thousand men, women and children ate to their fill, and at the end there were still seven baskets of broken pieces left over! *[Mathew 15:32]* And what to talk of the incredible instance when He went into the house of Jairus, the ruler of a synagogue, hearing that his twelve year old daughter was dead, and taking the hand of the dead body said, "Child, arise!" And the next minute, with shock and disbelief the parents watched their little girl sit up! *[Mark 5:22]*

Now, fast forward two thousand years and what do we see? In July 1967, a huge concourse had gathered to listen to Baba's discourse in Dharmakshetra, Mumbai. The scheduled time for the meeting was 6pm, but at 5:15, the sky was overcast. It was the monsoon month and rains could lash anytime. The organizers requested Baba to put forward the meeting by half an hour, but all Bhagavan said was, "Why?" And then took Sri Indulal Shah by His hand to the window of the lotus-shaped Mandir, and as they watched people below opening their umbrellas and covering their heads to save themselves from the drizzle, Swami gently raised His hand through the glass, and the next moment Sri Indulal was stunned to see the downpour cease instantaneously! The clouds dispersed as if in a hurry. The storm had become still.

Nearly a decade and a half earlier to this, after the inauguration of the Prasanthi Nilayam Mandir in 1950, one night Swami said to the small group of devotees present, "Do not cook anything today. We will cook on the banks of River Chitravathi and eat." The ecstatic troupe loaded all the provisions, vessels, etc. onto a cart and in glee followed Sai. But on reaching there, they wondered how is their Hero going to cook? There was no firewood or stove. But what Swami did that night was completely out of a fairy tale. He just took a piece of wood in His Hand and gently tapped the lids of the vessels mumbling the dish names, "Rice", "Sambhar", "Payasam," and so on. And lo! Immediately were heard spluttering sounds of food being cooked inside! The supremely delicious feast the privileged few had that day, served personally by Bhagavan, was not of this world. The Master had fed His chosen ones to the full. And we all know how more than half a century ago, when Swami

softly called out “Subbamma”, “Subbamma”, the pious lady, who had been declared dead for three days, opened her eyes, grasped His palm, and breathed her last as the holy waters of the Ganga flowed into her mouth from the Divine Fingers, and slaked the thirst of her soul. If it was a Lazarus or Jairus’ daughter then, there are hundreds of Subbammams and Walter Cowans now, about many of whom we have no clue.

How fascinatingly identical are the Manifestations, Life and Messages of The Divine! If Jesus’ birth was due to Immaculate Conception, Swami too was born when a blue ball of light entered the womb of Mother Eswaramma. If Christ was persecuted and tortured for declaring the Truth, Baba too was served poison; His eyes stuffed with acid, scalp shaved, cut and badly bruised at the hands of a black magician, till His body shook in pain and His family could no longer bear the sight of the ‘treatment’ to get rid of the ‘spirit’ lurking in Him. [And even to this day, there are elements which are out to vilify Him].

And look at their Message: If Jesus said, “Love thy enemies, do good unto those who hate thee, bless those who curse thee and pray for those who ill-treat thee.” [Luke 6:27] Baba says, “There is no greatness in doing good to those who do you good. The superior being is one who returns good for evil...the weapon of love alone can disarm every opponent.” And just like Jesus who said, “Do not ye think, that I came to undo the law of Moses, or the teachings of the prophets; I came not to undo the law, but to fulfill them” [Mathew 5:17]; Swami says, “I have not come to disturb or destroy any faith, but to confirm each in his own faith. So that the Christian becomes a better Christian, a Muslim a better Muslim...”

When the Reality is so obvious, why is that thousands are still so impervious to it? When the Message delivered two thousand years ago was so simple and direct, why is it that today we have Christian divisions of all hues and affiliations from Catholicism to Eastern Orthodoxy, Protestants to Anglicans, Eastern Churches, Western Churches and so on. Why is it that in spite of nearly one out of every three people in this world today professing allegiance to this “Prince of Love”, what we see today is only ‘Poverty of Love’ and appalling intolerance? Have we understood who Jesus really is? Do we know what He means when He says, “I am the way, the Truth and the Life. No one can come to the Father except through Me.” [John 14: 6] If Jesus was God, the All Powerful, then why did He suffer so much? And what is the concrete connection between Jesus and Sai? It is to put all these issues in the proper perspective that we have “The Divine Reality Revealed...” as our cover story this month. When you read this enlightening conversation with Father Charles Ogada, you will know how, for centuries, the powers that be, have convoluted the word of Christ to fit into their constricted perceptions, and in the process converted what was free Gold into a cheap alloy to be marketed for their mean ends. The true message of the Messenger of God has been lost to the masses for hundreds of years.

Christmas, the majority thinks, is a festival for Christians as they celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ. But is this really true? Very few know that December 25 was not the accepted date for Christmas until nearly the middle of the fourth

century AD. In fact, finding it impossible to determine the date of the birth of Jesus, the Christian Church, in AD 337 chose this date, as it was on this day that the Sun God reincarnated every year, which was, of course, related to the rebirth of the Sun in the northern hemisphere. It was only appropriate to celebrate the birth of the Son of God on the day when the physical sun was new-born, so to say. Moreover it was also the day, since past ages, when the Celtic people as well as the Romans rejoiced feasting and lighting bonfires in thanksgiving to Bael and Bacchu, their respective ancient light-bringers. Therefore, the significance of December 25 goes back to the dawn of time. It is the day which embraces the birth of the Spiritual Light and this could include all the incarnations of God we know of and many we are not even aware.

Christmas is a day of experiencing Divinity, through Unity and Purity. And that is why every year you find people of all races, religions, colours and creeds celebrate this day with enthusiasm and ecstasy in the Divine Presence of Baba in Prasanthi Nilayam. In His Christmas Discourse in 1984, Swami said, "As messengers of God, you have to demonstrate to the world the Purity, the Truth and the Love that the Divine symbolizes."

And how are we to do that? Only when we live up to His dictum: "Love thy neighbour as ye love thyself." [Mathew 22:39] When you read the story of how the Sai Youth of Andhra reached out, rescued and rehabilitated a tribe which was lost for centuries in dense and dangerous jungles, you will know how this divine command has been put into practice and what true service is all about.

Swami very often says, "Always live in JOY – that is, first Love Jesus (God), then **O**thers and finally **Y**ourself." The Kingdom of God that is within us will glow splendorously the day we install Him there, Love Him passionately and forget ourselves completely in His service. Let us live in this Joy, for Jesus, with Jesus, and in Jesus.

Wishing you a Happy, Holy and Merry Christmas!

Loving regards,
H2H Team.

SPIRITUAL BLOSSOMS

SATHYA SAI SPEAKS

The Key Message Of Jesus

The root cause of all difficulties experienced by man is forgetting his spiritual reality and identifying himself with his body. The body is only the vesture of the Indwelling Spirit. By immersing himself in body-consciousness, man develops egoism and possessiveness, which result in promoting many bad qualities. He forgets his inherent divinity and fails to use the senses and organs he is endowed with for the purposes of the Divine.

Two different characteristics are to be found among men. One characteristic, which is rather common, is for one to delude himself that he is a good man, with many virtues, intelligence and talents. The other quality, which is rare, is recognition of the good quality in others, their merits, abilities and good deeds, and appreciate their ideals. Jesus belonged to the second category. He saw the good qualities in others, rejoiced over their virtues and shared his joy with others.

In his twelfth year, Jesus and his parents, Joseph and Mary, happened to go to a Jewish festival in Jerusalem. In the jostling crowds Jesus lost his parents. After a frantic search, Mary found him in a temple listening to a speech of the High Priest. When Mary told Jesus about the anxiety that they felt when they missed him, Jesus replied: "Why should you worry about me? When I am with God, who is my Father, why should you have any fear on my account?" Jesus thus revealed that He regarded Himself as the Son of God.

Jesus Prayed to God for Three Things

Jesus grew up at Nazareth till He reached thirty. After Joseph's passing, Jesus sought His mother's permission to embark on His Divine mission. He got baptised by John, the Baptist, and spent forty days in penance in a forest. During the penance, He prayed to God for three things: One, He should be blessed with the quality of loving equally everyone; Two, He should have the strength and forbearance to suffer patiently any indignity or persecution that He might be subjected to by anyone; Three, He should be enabled to use his God-given body wholly in the service of God.

After forty days, Jesus emerged from His penance with the faith that His prayers had been granted. Jesus encountered the fishermen, at Galilee, who became His first disciples. He told them that He had come to establish the reign of love on earth and they would be His helpers in His mission. He spoke to them about the preciousness of human birth and urged them to seek the Kingdom of God within themselves.

By the way of illustration, Christ told them the following parable: In a river,

when the water is flowing in a swift current, the tiny fish are able to swim in it and move about merrily. But a huge elephant is caught in the rapids and is likely to get washed away or drowned in spite of its enormous size. Whatever be the speed of the current, the small fish are able to swim freely in the river and enjoy themselves. But an elephant is unable to survive in it. The reason is: What you need for survival in a river is not bulk but the ability to swim. Likewise man who is caught up in the ocean of worldly existence (*Samsara*) needs, not so much metaphysics, scholarship or detachment, as the grace of Divine love.

Without Faith, No Bliss

Without any knowledge of *Vedanta* (scriptural scholarship), if one is blessed with God's love, he can surmount all problems of life. Without faith in God, all scholarship, wealth, name and fame are of no avail. He cannot experience bliss. Christ also taught that the body should be used for recognising the Indwelling Spirit and not to protect itself. It is the mark of ignorance to pamper the body and ignore the Spirit within.

If a tiny sugar crystal is mixed in a heap of sand, even the most intelligent person will not be able to separate the sugar from the sand and recover it. But without any extraordinary intelligence, an ant is able to make its way to the particle of sugar in the sand heap and relish its sweetness. The ant is aware of the sweetness of sugar and is able to get at the sugar even in a heap of sand. Likewise, man should seek to distinguish between the permanent and the transient, and realise what is everlasting. Man is endowed with the capacity to discriminate between the permanent and the evanescent, but unfortunately instead of using this capacity he is caught up in the delusions of the phenomenal world and is wasting his life.

"You must adhere to truth and not succumb to falsehood or unrighteousness. You must face with courage the vicissitudes of life. You must love even your enemies. Universal love transcends all other virtues. Love is the supreme virtue," declared Jesus.

Only Love of God is Real Love

Jesus taught that God is Love. Instead of recognising this basic truth, men are allowing hatred, envy and other evil qualities to pollute their love. Man is gifted with the quality of love not to express it for selfish purposes but to direct it towards God. Jesus declared that there was nothing great about returning good for good. They should do good even to those who harm them...

Love is the means of developing devotion and achieving liberation, apart from other things. Only the love of God is real love. It is the royal road for man to realise the divinity in him and in everyone.

- Divine Discourse on Christmas Day, 1988

CONVERSATIONS WITH SAI – Part 39

(Continued from the last issue)

The Spiritual Direction of the Sai Organisation

H (Hislop): Ten years ago when Swami formed the American Sai Organization, He gave what He said was the single most important rule for American Sathya Sai Baba Centers. For the next ten years, what is the single most important rule for our Centers?

SAI: What is your idea?

H: Swami's first rule - have as little as possible to do with money - it seems to me, it must continue.

SAI: Yes, that is correct. The rule cannot be changed. It must continue unchanged through the next ten years.

H: Then what shall be the particular emphasis for American devotees for the next ten years?

SAI: The emphasis must be on the *Sadhana* of Purity and Sacrifice. Purity is Divinity. Through sacrifice there is purity of mind and heart. By purity, Divinity is realized. Sacrifice is an offering, a giving up to the Lord, a dedication to the Lord. What is to be sacrificed to the Lord is the sense of ego, of "mine". Once all sense of ego is sacrificed to the Lord, given up to the Lord, heart and mind are purified of ego-attributes and Divinity can then be realized.

H: During the course of the next ten years is the American Sai Organization to remain a Spiritual Organization, or is it to change its mode of life so as to become primarily a Seva Organization?

SAI: The Organization is to continue to be a Spiritual Organization with some changes, but not major changes. Devotion to God: the purifying of mind and heart, by sacrificing to God all ego tendencies, is to be the purpose and the practice of the Sai devotees in the American Sai Organization.

H: Swami, for the past several years my neck has been painful and doctors can do nothing. What should I do for it?

SAI: *(rubbing the neck with His hand)* Don't do anything. Swami will take care of it.

H: I have some questions I do not know how to answer. About living in the moment, what is meant?

SAI: Those are general questions. Ask Kasturi to be here tomorrow morning and I will answer those questions.

H: Baba, may I make a donation to the Whitefield Hospital?

SAI: Why?

H: Well, my operation was there.

SAI: No. Not necessary. It is our Hospital, all is ours.

Human Freewill

H: Swami, as I travel the nation, I am asked questions. I do not know the answers to some of them. One question which always comes up is free will. One has the free will to choose God or the world. But on the other hand, Baba in one glance sees past, present, and future. So how can there be free will?

SAI: From that viewpoint, from the Divine, there is no free will, for all is God. But from the ego viewpoint of the individual, there is free will. There is general law, and then the individual and society. The individual acts in society according to his free will, but all conform to the general law. The individual must act, and his action is a function of his mind. There are thoughts. Thoughts are seeds. They sprout and become actions. The actions then appear to be free will to the concerned individual. Everyone has been given skills and talents such as intelligence, reason, energy; and they must be put to use in life through action.

(After discussing the interview with Mr. Kasturi the next day, it seems to me that for the individual person it boils down to this: The individual acts according to his talents and capacity at any particular moment. If he is ignorant of Vedanta and has never listened to Baba, the individual feels he or she is acting freely according to his inclinations and his will. On the contrary, if the individual has reached a conviction that everything is absent except God, the individual then feels that everything he is doing is being prompted by God, and thus the question of free will does not bother him).

Living in the Moment

H: Swami, perhaps I will be able to understand it and explain it. Swami said that the mind would fix itself, if one would live in the moment. What does Swami mean by living in the moment? How does one live in the moment?

SAI: Past is gone, future is not here, there is only the moment. Live fully now without worry about the future.

H: But, Swami, one has to look forward to judge the consequences of the action.

SAI: Why? Live now. Act according to your best feelings and thoughts and do not worry.

H: But Swami said that Krishna chose Arjuna because Arjuna had foresight and looked ahead to the consequences.

SAI: Don't think about Arjuna. He was worried about his relatives.

H: But Swami, when I make some move in respect to the American Council, I have to consider what the consequences will be before I go ahead. That does not square with living in the moment.

SAI: But that is duty. In duty you must look into the future and weigh the consequences.

Who is the Doer?

H: Oh! That is what is meant. Now I understand it. Another question which arises is: do actions come about because of Baba, or by Baba? That is, action takes place because of the sunlight but the sun is not regarded as the doer, whereas it is said that Swami is the doer in respect to our actions.

SAI: The Sun gives light - but the Sun also does work. It makes changes in plant life, for example.

H: Does that mean that Swami is the actor, the actual doer in our lives?

SAI: Consider that you are an instrument and Sai acts by using you as His instrument for action.

H: That implies that it is foolish to think that we act, for the fact is that the action is the result of a prompting by God?

SAI: Yes, the action is prompted by God.

H: But Swami, it is not clear in practice. I forgot to bring the check I wanted to donate to the hospital. Then, after reaching the veranda here, I remembered it and felt I should go back to the room and get it. That action of returning to our room had to be a prompting by Baba. But then, after Baba prompted me to get the check, Baba refused to accept the check! The principle in practice is not clear.

SAI: Only in that way was there an occasion to teach you how Swami regards such matters. Had you given the check from love, perhaps Swami could have accepted. But you were giving in return for the operation. But you are family and there is no payment in family. For work outside the family, there may be some employment and some payment.

H: But it was Swami prompting me that sent me for the check?

SAI: Yes, it was Swami prompting you.

H: Swami, the lesson of the check is learned. It is a very clear case of payment for services instead of the family feeling! Now I take it to be the case that whatever is done by me is being prompted by Baba.

SAI: That is the correct attitude. That is the correct way.

H: But could not a person then say that he had no volition and therefore would sit and do nothing unless Swami moved him? Can a man choose to be lazy?

SAI: Yes, he could be lazy.

H: By the prompting of Sai?

SAI: Yes

H: Is it the waking 'I' who dreams, or does the dream state create its own 'I'?

SAI: It is one 'I' only in waking, dreaming, and deep sleep states.

All Life Flows Towards God

H: For life in this world, Swami, the goal is reunion with God. What is the purpose of life in the rest of this vast universe?

SAI: All life may flow toward God; even frogs in a pond and insects.

H: But Swami, that is life in this world. I mean life elsewhere in the universe.

SAI: In this world, there is duality and therefore striving. But, even here, insects and small creatures may live in a pond feeling everything is all right and feeling happiness. The question about life in the universe arises because you project your own particular circumstances. You feel that other ways of life would be intolerable because such ways would be intolerable for you. In the hot blazing Sun, for instance, beings are living. This life exists in circumstances considered to be intolerable by you. Elsewhere in the universe, life feels it is Divinity, is one with Divinity, and is quite happy, and feeling all is right.

H: Then this world is a very peculiar place!

SAI: Yes, this small planet Earth is very special. It is unique in the universe. This is a very important topic. It is of very great significance. One who can understand the mystery of the Earth is great indeed. He is infinite.

H: Is the Earth mystery unveiled in Baba's divine teachings?

SAI: Swami can reveal this mystery. *(In talking with Mr. Kasturi next day, he believes the mystery of planet Earth, which Swami refers to, is the extraordinary configurations of the five elements - Space, Air, Fire, Water, Earth - which makes the Earth unique throughout the vast cosmos. Next time, I will try for a chance to ask Swami to elaborate on what he means by the mystery of planet Earth).*

Going Beyond the mind

H: Everybody is self-conscious; conscious that he is, conscious of his being. Is this consciousness the base, or is there something prior to this?

SAI: That consciousness is second. First is God-consciousness. God-consciousness is the base.

H: A source of confusion is about everything being a creation of the mind. Creation of whose mind?

SAI: Yes, it is the mind.

H: But Swami, how could that be? Is my mind creating war and all its horrors? I do not find such actions in myself.

SAI: When you think of the world, it exists for you. When you do not think of it, for you it does not exist.

H: When I do not think of the world it is not in my consciousness! Does the war exist only according to my consciousness of it? But there was a beginning to the war. How could that beginning be due only to my mind?

SAI: At your stage it will not be possible for you to grasp this. As long as the mind exists, it is not possible to comprehend the mind and its activity clearly. When thought ceases,

there will be no mind. Mind is a bundle of thoughts. Do not follow the thoughts. Then the world will not develop for you. Now your thoughts have gone to America, to problems there. But these are just thoughts. If you now follow these thoughts and go to America, they will bring about the world for you.

H: Does Swami mean that one should just be a witness to the thoughts going through one's mind and not do anything about them?

SAI: Exactly. When the mind is destroyed, then the coming into being of the world will be clear to you. There is only God, God only. Hold onto Him. Hold closely to Him and the matter of the mind will be resolved.

H: Swami! I do hold to God! My thought is always on Swami. I am always regarding Swami as being in my heart, not someplace else. But my mind is not destroyed.

SAI: It will come. To have that strong confidence is important.

H: I have no trouble seeing that my mind creates my personal world - that is, Mr. Kasturi and Swami are known to me only because of the senses relaying messages to the mind, which then forms concepts and externalizes Mr. Kasturi and Swami. But the creation of something big outside, like the war, I cannot comprehend.

SAI: When the mind is destroyed and the world goes, God also has no existence.

(Now the evening Bhajans start and the interview is over, with many questions still unasked. Hopefully, Swami will grant some time again at the next visit).

(To be continued)

CHINNA KATHA

The Greatest Sin

In this short story from Baba, we learn about the terrible folly of our human nature which so easily turns away from the nurturing Divine Hand. So often, we forget the acts of His Grace which have saved us from the consequences of our own actions - and return once again to our old habits. It is a wonder that the Lord has so much patience! In this story, Baba has portrayed real life and hitherto unknown examples from Jesus' life to educate us in self-awareness; let us use this Chinna Katha to examine our own faults and resolve not to squander the Grace that Baba continually pours upon us!

Once Jesus was walking along the streets of a city. It was a slum area. He saw a young man rolling in dirt, dead drunk. He went to him, sat by his side and woke him up.

The young man opened his eyes and saw Jesus. Jesus asked him:

"Son! Why are you wasting your precious youth in drinking?"

The young man replied: "Master! I was a leper. You cured me of my leprosy. What else can I do?" Jesus heaved a sigh and walked away.

In another street he saw a man madly pursuing a beautiful woman. Jesus caught hold of him and asked him: "Son! Why do you desecrate your body by indulging in such a sinful act?"

The man replied: "Master! I was really blind. You gave me vision. What else can I do?"

Jesus trudged along another street. He saw an old man crying bitterly. Jesus approached him and gently touched him. The old man wiped his tears and looked at Jesus.

Jesus questioned him: "Why are you weeping old man?" The old man said: "Master! I was nearly dead. You granted me life. What else can I do except weep in this old age?"

In times of difficulty and distress, we cry out for God's help. But when God, out of His boundless love and compassion, responds to our prayer, we ignore Him and fall back into our self-centered life. One must guard oneself against this greatest sin of ingratitude towards God.

- Baba

COVER STORY

THE DIVINE REALITY REVEALED...

THE TRUTH OF THE FATHER AND THE SON

"If we do not understand the reality of Jesus it will be impossible to understand the reality of Sai Baba. And how can we understand the reality of Jesus? We can only understand the reality of Jesus when we understand our own very reality. This is because we are one with God," says Rev. Father Charles Francis Ogada CSSP (from the order of the Holy Ghost Fathers and Brothers), in a question asked by Juan Carlos Ponce de Leon, an ardent Sai devotee from Peru, during a riveting and revealing interview in January 2007. In this engaging and enlightening conversation you will find the learned Father clarifying concepts and verses, ideas and idiosyncracies that have convoluted the Christian mindset for centuries. As we celebrate the Advent of the Apostle of Love this month, it is only apt that we understand and appreciate in the right light the immortal message of the Messenger of God.

Juan: *I didn't know that a Father like you was going to speak at Christmas in the Divine Presence. When I heard it my heart felt very happy. Your speech was like a birthday gift to me. Swami also mentioned you a number of times in His discourse.*

Father Charles: Yes. He said that I had been devoted to Him right from childhood.

You didn't know that?

No. That was a revelation for me. When He said that I remembered all that happened to me during my childhood – my spiritual experiences as a child became alive to me. He was the One who was drawing me, preparing me, and bringing me closer to Himself. And when the right time comes, everything happens according to His Plan.

Tell us how you came to know about Swami.

Many people think that they have come to Swami out of their own effort. But this is not the case. It is Swami who has drawn us to Himself. Jesus also said it: "No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him" This is my experience.

I have told you what happened to me when I was seventeen years old... how the Voice said to me, "What would you want to do with this life?" That Voice filled my Soul and Heart with so much Love. I replied: "What else Father, but to give this life to You." From that very moment the external world became meaningless to me. When you taste the bliss of the Spirit, every other thing will become insipid to you. I started thinking how to give this life to the Father.

Prior to this encounter, I was preparing to enter the University to read medicine. I changed my mind because I thought that the best way to give this life to God was by joining a religious order. I then joined the congregation of the Holy Ghost Fathers and Brothers, the *Spiritans*.

Who founded that order?

There are two founders: Claude Pourlat de Place and Francis Paul Liberman. They founded this international missionary order of men who dedicate their entire life for the service of the poor.

I joined this order at the age of eighteen. Initially everything was beautiful. God filled me with so much spiritual favour and sweetness. But along the way, after nine years of searching hard for God, I could not find Him. The world was already dead to me, and then it was as if God hid Himself from me. Everything was like dead to me. I was passing through the dark night of the soul. I wanted to leave the seminary. Then my Dad got very sick.

Was your Dad old then?

He was fifty eight years old. I went home to see him because he had sent word that I should come. He had cancer of the bone marrow. The pains were very excruciating. My journey with him in his suffering and death was like an awakening to me. It was a strong push that pulled me to seek the deeper realities of life. That which is seen is not real. That which is not seen is the true reality. Beyond the logic of reason, suffering pulls us to that void of surrender where we are untouched by suffering. My father passed through this transformative power of suffering.

The first stage is the level of rejection. When something befalls us, like cancer, we ask: "Why me?" We try to reject it. At the garden of Gethsemane, Jesus prayed to the father; "Abba Father, everything is possible with Thee. Remove this cup of suffering from me." This is our natural experience. But we must go beyond this level. Jesus taught us to go beyond the level of rejection when He prayed; "But not my will, Your Will must be done." This is the level of acceptance. Acceptance leads to transformation and transformation then transports the soul to that sublime height of surrender. At the gibbet of the cross, the symbol of the final dissolution of the ego, Jesus prayed: "Father, into your Hands I surrender my Spirit" and He merged with the principle of Divinity.

My Dad's sufferings brought him in contact with his inner Self. And in that mystical union, although there was pain, there was no suffering.

That was close to his death?

Yes. About three months to his death. It was like he had discovered the secrets of death. There was light and joy in his eyes and the constant chanting of the sweetness of God's Names anointed his lips. Once he called me to his bed side and told me he was on his way to *Calvary*. *Calvary* is the

Christian symbol of total surrender and mergence of the soul in the Oversoul. He asked me to book a *Novena Mass* (a Christian religious service of nine days) for him praying for strength and courage to reach *Calvary*. **After that he said to me, "I am offering these sufferings of mine for the joy of the world". By then, I never knew that one can be so selfless in prayers. He offered himself not for anything, not even to go to heaven, but for the happiness of the world.** *Loka Samasta, Sukhino Bhavanthu* (Let the people of all the world be happy).

It is unusual and very rare for one to know the hour of one's death. Three days before his death, my dad called us to his bed side (my mother, my immediate younger brother and myself) and told us he will leave his body on Wednesday. This was on Monday, August 25, 1997. He asked us to be ready and prepare for what was going to happen on that day, that is Wednesday, the 27th. Of course we did not take him seriously because we didn't want to believe that he was leaving us. He told us many things which he wanted us to write down. On that Wednesday, about 3:45 pm, he called three of us by his bed side again and said, "It is time." He gave me his hand and instructed me to start chanting the Names of God. We started chanting the litany of the sacred Heart of Jesus. It was while we were chanting these Holy names of God that he left his body like one who had fallen asleep.

His death was like an awakening to me. One of the things he said to me before his death was: "Don't leave your calling to the priesthood. Many will come to you."

In the beginning he was not happy that you were going to be a priest?

Yes, at the beginning. After my experience with the Voice he wanted me to test its genuineness by first going to the University. But somehow the Power of the Voice prevailed. Before his death he knew I was having some doubts. That was why he said "Don't leave the priesthood". Because of him I went back to the seminary. It was then that beloved Swami came to me.

How did He come?

First there was this priest. His name is Rev. Father Raymond Arazu. He was to teach us a course in comparative religion. During one of his lectures he mentioned the name, Sai Baba.

Did he mention the name in a good way?

Yes, in a good way. He is also a devotee.

There are many priests who are secret devotees.

Yes, many! They worship and adore Swami in secret. Like Nicodemus in the Bible who goes to Jesus in the night. But this priest, Father Arazu is no longer a secret devotee. Otherwise, I would not have mentioned his name. In fact he now conducts Satsangs in his residence where people

come to learn about Sai Baba and the universality of religion. Once he told me that he has won his freedom because the Church does not know what to do with him. They just let him be.

Do you think that the Vatican and the Church's Hierarchy know that many priests are becoming devotees of Sai Baba?

Yes, of course. The point is that as long as you do not come public in any form to express your faith and devotion in Swami, the Church can do little or nothing to you. For example, look at the case of Father Don Mario Mazzoleni who was excommunicated. Until Mario wrote his book, 'The Catholic Priest meets Sai Baba' he was safe. Actually, it was the book that got him into "trouble". The book became as it were, evidence against him in the Church's Court that he had gone against the faith of the Church. There are so many priests who come to Puttaparthi here secretly - and after having Swami's darshan, they return.

So the Church allows priests to be devoted to Swami but not come out in the open?

It is not really allowed. It is not official. However, faith is something inside. It is beyond the reach of anyone. As long as that faith remains within, you are safe from the hands of the Church's Hierarchy. But when you begin to write and preach it openly, then they have evidence to hold on you for excommunication or other punitive measures.

Were you afraid to make the speech on Christmas day 2006, before thousands of devotees gathered round the Lotus Feet of Swami?

No. It was His Grace. It was Swami's Love. If as a result of that Grace one gets into trouble, then it is a good trouble.

Everybody is going to read about you because of Sai Baba and in the course of His discourse He mentioned you a couple of times. Do you think that the Hierarchy will know about such a discourse?

The Church's tentacles are very strong. They will surely come to know.

You are certain that when you get back they are going to call you and talk to you?

What Swami wills, will happen.

But you are not afraid?

Afraid of what? When we really realize the reality of Swami, then we know that there can never be any scope for fear in our lives. Nothing escapes Him. What He wills, will happen and His will is good for us because He Loves us. His will is love for us. **So if He wills that I go through some sufferings on account of this... actually His will cannot be called suffering. Suffering is**

experienced when there is no love. Where there is love, the pangs of suffering are transformed into the joys of offering.

There are certain things you do for your loved ones. Although they are hard and painful, you enjoy doing it because you are doing it with love. For example, the mother that is giving birth to her child: it is suffering, yet it is not suffering. The pain of labour dissolves in the ecstasy and joy of the vision of the new born babe, clothed in beauty and beatitude. This is the power of Love; motherly love, Divine love. **When we do things for Swami, we are ready to shed the body because we are doing it for love of Him. It is He who loved us first. His love fills us with that spirit of sacrifice. There is no love without sacrifice and that sacrifice gives joy!** See all that the disciples of Jesus had to go through for the sake of His love! But they were happy. St. Paul went through a lot of difficulties to spread the message of Jesus. He was happy going through those troubles because he loved Jesus. In fact he would want to do it over and over again because of his love for Jesus.

Swami willed that I speak. Without Him I could not have spoken. So He willed and I spoke. Then it is His business what He does with the speaking. When I have surrendered to Him, mine is to enjoy His play.

If somebody has given his life to Swami and he is not enjoying His play, what do you think about that situation?

The person has not given. Although he claims to have given, in truth, he has not given completely. The person still thinks: "This is my life or at least part of it still belongs to me." In this case, he dictates to God the 'how', 'when', 'where', 'what', 'who' and 'why' of his life. When you dictate these circumstances, although you say you have surrendered to God, you actually want God to surrender to you. You want God to adjust to your requests. And when He does not, you get agitated, dejected and disappointed. In this situation there are still two wills: your will and God's Will. In surrender, when you have really given your life to God, there is only one will, the Will of God. It is no longer you who lives, as St. Paul puts it, but God living in you. There is no ego, no 'I', no 'me', no 'mine'. It is all God, God, and God.

So what happened after the priest mentioned the name of Sai Baba?

Swami came in my dream. He came in my dream and hugged me. That was my most thrilling encounter with Him. That was when I was still a seminarian training to be a priest. He came as pure energy... pure light... pure love... robed in radiant red... resplendent in Glory! He waved His Hand in a circular motion. I never knew He had that mannerism of waving His Hands to materialize things. This wave did not create any particular object but pure energy. That wave of energy drew me to Himself and like salt (you know when you put salt into water how it dissolves?) I dissolved in Him. There was no separate me. I was just one with Him. His Love was like the ocean that overflowed the river of my heart. At that moment, I knew that He was the Voice that said to me nine

years back, “What would you want to do with this life?” I knew it. It was not an intellectual knowledge. It was a spiritual awareness transcending the logic of reason.

It is knowledge from the Heart.

Yes. Knowledge from the Heart: That intuitive feeling that tells the child: “This is my mother”. How do you know your mother is your mother? It is knowledge from the Heart.

Sai - the Same Isa

Do you feel that Jesus’ teachings have a different dimension for you since you came in touch with Sai Baba’s message?

When I met Swami I found Jesus. It was revelation upon revelation. Jesus’ teachings and Swami’s message are one. They cannot contradict because the Father and the Son are One. Jesus said nothing but what He has heard from the Father. He did nothing but what He has seen the Father do (John 5:19; 8:28)

Let us take a few instances. One day, a scribe, an expert in religious law asked Jesus the most important commandment in the Torah. This Scribe was asking Jesus to give the very essence of the Bible; that which when grasped, everything is known and without which all knowledge is a waste. Jesus replied: **“Listen, Oh Israel, the Lord, your God is One. And you shall love the Lord, your God with all your heart, with all your mind and with all your strength... and your neighbour as yourself”. There is no commandment greater than this.** (Mark 12: 29-31)

This commandment begins with a call to Silence: “Listen, oh Israel, the Lord, Your God is One.” It is in silence that we experience the Truth of God. We have to learn the art of listening. To listen means to calm the agitations of the mind. It means mental stillness. In another verse the Bible says: “Be Still and know that I am God” (Psalm 46:10) It is in Stillness that we experience the Reality of God as the One without a second, the All-pervading, Omnipresent, Omniscient, Omnipotent, Absolute, Infinite, Eternal One. God is One! There is no other. When you think that you are different from God, you create the illusion that seeks to separate that which is inseparable.

All of us are in God as His Limbs, His body. In God we live and move and have our being, says St. Paul. God and His creation are inseparable like the Sun and its rays; the ocean and its waters; the tree and its branches. Jesus said: “I am the Vine, you are the branches.” Can the vine exist without its branches or the branches apart from the vine? Here we come to the very essence of Swami’s message, the very core of the Vedas and the gem of all the scriptures: God is One, there is no other. All is Brahman.

The next sentence of the commandment is this ancient clarion call to love. **“And thou shall love the Lord, thy God with all your heart, with all your mind, and with all your strength.” Love! Love is the current, the energy,**

the strength, the source, the sustainer. To love God with all your heart is the path of *Bhakthi* yoga; that is union with God through pure devotion. To love God with all your mind is the path of Jnana Yoga; that is union with God through the light of wisdom. To love God with all your strength is the path of Karma Yoga; that is union with God through selfless service.

These three-fold paths are not separate from one another. The string that unites them is love. Love is the current. When it comes to the heart it overflows in the bliss and ecstasy of devotion. When it comes to the mind it shines as the eternal light of wisdom. When it flows through the hands (strength) it lifts and upholds one and all in selfless service. Without Love, the rituals of devotion, the rigours of intellectualism and the labours of our hands are all in vain! St. Paul says it all: **“If I possess everything and I have no love, then I am nothing.”**

Can't we see that the message is one? These three-fold paths of devotion, wisdom and selfless service form the very core of the Bhagavad Gita as taught by Lord Krishna to Arjuna in the field of Kurushektra. This is the message of Sai Baba: Love, Love, Love! He addresses us as “Embodiments of Love”. He pins down these ancient teachings in simple catching phrases: “Love All, Serve All”, “Help Ever, Hurt Never”, “God is Love, Live in Love”. Everyday, we see His Life as a perfect example of His message.

Jesus said, “Love your enemies.” This teaching is one of the greatest spiritual revolutions in the history of mankind. Love your enemies and do good to those who hate you. This is the primary teaching of Sai Baba: Love all serve all. Swami has not said; Love some, or only those with the same religious affiliation, or members of the family or those who love you. This is restricted love. Swami says: Love is expansion. Expand your heart to embrace all. Love All! Not only human beings but all creation, mountains, oceans, birds, animals, trees, stars... all creation is a manifestation of Divinity. Love them as such and let your service emanate from the roots of that divine love.

The Christians must understand the reality of Jesus. If we do not understand the reality of Jesus it will be impossible to understand the reality of Sai Baba. And how can we understand the reality of Jesus? We can only understand the reality of Jesus when we understand our own very reality. This is because we are one with God.

It is like a chain.

Yes, and we must find the source of that chain. It is within. For example, people often ask the question: “Who is Sai Baba?” But this question is not right. First you have to find out who is the one asking the question: “Who is Sai Baba?” Who are you? When the questioner does not know his own reality, how can he grasp the solution to the question he has posed? **First find out the reality of the questioner. When you find that out, then automatically you will know the reality of Sai Baba. This is because Sai Baba is one with you. The prompter of the question is the solution to the**

question. Know yourself then you will know that the Self in you is Sai Baba. Without this Self Knowledge it is a waste of time trying to grasp the reality of God.

Why did the Jewish religious Hierarchy and aristocracy do away with Jesus? Why did they kill him? Because they never understood who Jesus really is! And we are no better than them. After 2000 years, we have still not understood the reality of Jesus. That is the very reason for all the divisions and fights not only within the Christian churches, but also between different religious faiths.

For example, Jesus once said: **“I am the Way, the Truth and the Life. No one can come to the Father except through Me”** (John 14: 6) Now that has caused a lot of confusion in the Christian forum.

Yes. So many of my Christians friends come to me and tell me: “Jesus is the Only Lord. Why follow Sai Baba when Jesus said He is the Only Way to the Father?”

But who is Jesus? Who is that Way? Who is that Truth? Who is that Life? Is Jesus referring to His physical body or to the name “Jesus”? When Jesus said, “I am” what exactly does He mean? Now say, “I am”.

I am

“I am” is also talking to you now. Who is that “I am”? It is God. Jesus does not see Himself as the body. Jesus does not see Himself as the Name. God has so many names. **God is beyond name. Jesus identifies Himself as the “I AM” principle. Jesus is pure existence – Satchitananda, the “I AM THAT I AM”. Everything that says “I AM” is Jesus.** That chair you are sitting on is saying “I am” otherwise you cannot sit on it.

In the Gospel according to St. John, Jesus told some Jews that Abraham (Aham Bhrama in Sanskrit means “I am God”) longed to see His day and that he saw it and was glad. They retorted to Jesus: Now we know that you are demon possessed. You are not up to 50 years old and you claim that Abraham who lived thousands of years ago saw your day and was glad! Who do you think you are? Something must be wrong with you. You are out of your senses!

Jesus replied: “Before Abraham ever was, I am.” Now note Jesus’ choice of words: ‘Before Abraham ever was I AM’. Sure, Jesus’ body is not up to 50 years. But the reality that has taken the name “Jesus” existed before the body. That reality is eternal, without birth and without death; beyond the dimensions of time and the specifications of space; transcending the limitations of name and the confinement of form. **Jesus is the Divine Essence, the “I AM THAT I AM”. In Exodus, chapter three, God revealed His Name to Moses in the experience of the burning bush as “I AM THAT I AM” (Exodus 3: 14)** We often miss this point. We limit Jesus to the form, son of Joseph, son of Mary, born in time, confined to Israel’s culture. We limit

Jesus to the name “Jesus”. But the truth is that Jesus is beyond the name “Jesus”. **Jesus is not only for Christians. Jesus is not only for those who call Him “Jesus”. Jesus is the “I am” principle. This “I am” is the Life in all, the existence in all, the Truth in all. Everything which breaths “I am” is calling the name “Jesus”.**

When you were born you have no name. But you have the awareness of being. That awareness is the “I am” in you. That “I am” is the Life in you. That Life is Jesus. Later on the label “Juan” was stamped on you for the sake of social identification and convenience. To confuse the label with the reality is a sign of ignorance.

Once, Swami’s students were gathered around His Lotus Feet. Suddenly Swami threw a question to them: “Who do you say I am?” From every corner of the room came thunderous responses: “Swami, You are God!” And Swami said, “No, no”. “Swami, You are Shiva-Shakti!” And Swami said “No, no”. “Swami You are Atmaswarupa!” And Swami said “No, no”. **When the students had exhausted all their wits, they innocently gazed at Swami to supply the correct answer. And Swami said to them: “I AM I”.**

This is very important. This “I” is in everything as the first manifestation of Being. When you wake up from deep sleep, the first awareness is the “I” consciousness. Without that awareness, there is no activity. So when Jesus said, “I am the Way, the Truth and the Life ...” what does He mean? He means that “God is the Way, the Truth and the Life. No one comes to God except through God.” In other words, God is the Goal and He is also the Way to the Goal. We can only reach God through God. We can only see the Sun through its rays. So what Jesus said is by no means exclusive to the Christians or to those who call God by the name “Jesus”.

So if we don’t understand our own inner Self, this “I” which Jesus refers to, we can neither understand the reality of Jesus nor that of Sai Baba. Swami has said: “Do not waste time in attempting to know Me. Do not waste time, because nobody can know Me. Therefore trying to know something which is not possible is mere waste of time. You will also be wasting your energy. ***It is possible to realize me only on the day you realize who you are.***”

So you are saying in essence that if we have problems with Jesus, we are bound to have problems with Sai Baba.

Absolutely. If we believe in Jesus we will naturally believe in Sai Baba. ***To believe*** in Jesus is ***to be-alive*** in Jesus. To be-alive in Jesus is to live no longer for ourselves but the very life of Jesus. When we become one with Jesus, we discover not only that the Father and the Son are One but that we are One with everything.

When you read in context the Gospel verses where Jesus made the statement, “I am the Way...” you will understand this truth. In that occasion, Jesus was telling His disciples that He was going to the Father and that they know where He was going and how to get there.

Thomas protested: "No, we don't know, Lord. We haven't any idea where you are going. So how can we know the way?"

Then Jesus said: "I am the Way, the Truth and the Life. No one can come to the Father except through Me. ***If you have known who I am then you would have known who my Father is.*** From now on you know Him and have seen Him.

Philip said, "Lord, show us the Father and we will be satisfied." Jesus replied, ***"Philip, don't you even yet know who I am,*** even after all the time I have been with you? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father! So why are you asking to see Him? Don't you believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in Me? The words I say are not My own, but My Father who lives in Me does His work through Me." (John; 14: 1- 10)

From the above dialogue it is evident that the disciples of Jesus did not know who Jesus really is although they have seen His physical body and they all know His name as 'Jesus'. **But Jesus is beyond the name 'Jesus'. This we must understand. Sai Baba is also beyond name and form. And so are all of us. You cannot say you know Sai Baba because you know His Name and had gone to Puttaparthi to see His form. The day we realize the One behind the multiplicity of name and form, is the very day we know who Jesus really is. On that day we realize that Sai Baba and Jesus are one and the same reality.** Until that day dawns, we must approach the throne of God with faith and a seeking spirit that is open to Truth.

Swami is the yeast that brings out the essence of the Bible. He is the seal of our faith in Jesus because He confirms us in our belief in Jesus. All that Jesus said and did, Swami is reaffirming, repeating and reconsolidating. Jesus is real! Jesus is alive! Jesus is God!

Do you think that most of the Catholics who become devotees of Sai Baba are going to leave the Church and start going only to Sai Baba centers? Do you see the Catholic Church empty in the future and Sai Baba centers crowded with people?

I don't. First we must understand that the Sai Baba Avatar has not come to start any new religion. Instead He has come to raise all religions to the same pedestal of glory and treat them as a single religion: the religion of Love. This has been prophesied by Prophet Mohamed (peace be upon him) in *Ocean of Light*. Sai Baba Himself has confirmed this many times in His Discourses. Swami encourages us not to change the religion in which we are born into. Instead, Swami has said: "Each should practice his own religion sincerely. A Christian should be a good Christian. A Hindu should be a good Hindu. A Muslim should be a good Muslim. Let each one be a true practitioner of his religion. No one should criticize or hate another's religion... 'All are one. Be alike to everyone,' declared Jesus. The one God is common to all."

The Sai Baba Avathar has come to restore the foundations of Eternal Righteousness (Sanathana Dharma) in all religions. Swami has not taken form in favour of any particular religion. He has come as the World Teacher; (Jagad Guru). When the Christian Church comes to the awareness of this Truth – God walking the face of the earth today – it is going to be her very rebirth. She is going to shine in her full splendour and glory. **Sai Baba has come to lead mankind to the “Complete Truth”. Jesus once said to His disciples, “I have so many things to tell you. But you cannot bear them now. When the Spirit of Truth comes, he will lead you to the complete Truth.” That Spirit of Truth, Sathya Narayana, is here with us today.**

The Church needs strong courage and deep humility to delve into this mind boggling event of our time. Swami is eighty one years now. In fifteen years he will leave this physical form. How can we miss this chance? When Jesus walked the earth 2000 years ago we did not take Him seriously. The religious authority rejected Him. History repeats itself when we don't learn from its wisdom. It is time for the Church to take a leap of faith, a dare into the unknown. Without the fences of defense, she must approach the reality of Sai Baba with an open disposition that seeks to know the Truth. The church today needs the spirit and courage of Pope John XXIII who convened the Second Vatican Council and opened the windows of the Church to a lot of radical changes and rebirth.

I acknowledge that changes in the church will be difficult because of the strong emphasis on the infallibility of tradition. The Church treasures the past declarations of her ancestors to be beyond the margins of error. This is why we are praying for the grace of Sai Baba. The Church is her bride. Only He can break her barriers of fear and restore her to that original splendour of Truth. This was our prayer on Christmas day and during that Holy Mass which we conducted in the Ashram with Swami's Blessings.

When this happens, when the Church accepts Swami, the consequent spiritual rejuvenation will draw all souls to her consoling breast. Instead of dying, she will be born anew.

People who are Swami's devotees often criticize members of the Catholic Church because of their antagonism towards them.

They shouldn't. Jesus is our example. On the Cross He prayed for the forgiveness of His executioners: “Father, forgive them for they do not know.” You see, one cannot do wrong in knowledge. It is because they do not know that they act in that fashion. When you criticize those who act in ignorance, it means you too are ignorant. Instead we must pray for all to come to that Divine Knowledge; that dawn of the golden age which Prophet Jeremiah foretold of old: “Brother will not need to tell another: ‘Seek God’, because all will know God. (Jeremiah 31: 34)

This must be our attitude. When we have come to Swami, and accepted the Truth of Swami, and experienced the taste of His Universal Love, then we must spread this Love that knows no criticism, no hatred and no

condemnation. The Love of Swami is like the Love of a million mothers. It is a love that overlooks the faults in the child, a love that uplifts what is good in the child, a love that knows no rejection even when the child has been abandoned by all. This must be our attitude.

Even Divine personalities are not immune from such antagonism. Jesus received the fullness of it. They called Him all sorts of names. They said He casts out devils by the power of Devil. And how could that be, Jesus asked them. How can the devil do good? It is a contradiction. The very nature of the devil is evil. The very nature of God is goodness, Supreme Goodness. Out of devil comes evil. Out of God, comes goodness.

It is like what some people are saying about Swami today.

Yes. But see the goodness, the heavenly fragrance, the pure sweet love, the soul thrilling bliss, the Divine opulence, the radiation of supreme peace that is Swami! Who can impute a single sin on Swami? Those who have not tasted His Love, who have not experienced His touch, who watch from afar and relish from hearsay, talk from ignorance. How can you use the ruler to measure the depth of the ocean? How can the fly tell the size of the elephant? Can a child describe the genius of the professor in atomic physics? Only the Spirit can comprehend the Spirit. (1 Corinthians 2:14) Why pay attention to critics who are self ignorant? If you must inquire, seek the Self Realized. Only they who have merged with the principle of God can give you a glimpse about the Truth of Sai Baba.

Jesus said to His critics; "Believe in what I have done, even if you don't believe me. Then you will realize that the Father is in me, and I am in the Father." (John 10:38) Here Jesus Himself pointed to the authority of example as the indubitable test of what comes from God. Look at the example of Sai Baba whose life is His message. Who on earth has done just an iota of the services that Swami has rendered to Humanity – both on the physical, mental and spiritual dimensions of existence? We do not need to believe in Swami. It is enough if we believe in the works that Swami does. That alone will lead us to the realization of the Truth of Sai Baba.

You know about the Priest, Mario Mazzoleni and how he was forced out of the Church. Do you fear sometimes that something like that could happen to you?

There is absolutely no fear. In fact I am ready to shed this body if that will make my Christian brothers and sisters come to the Truth of Sai Baba. When we look through the annals of history we discover how much suffering and persecution many great souls had to go through in the hands of their contemporaries in order to enshrine the message of Truth and Love in the heart of humanity. People did not understand them during their time. But later they were made saints. There are so many examples like Joan of Arc, John of the Cross, and Thomas Aquinas. They suffered so much for their brothers and sisters to wake up. When someone is lost in the oblivion of sleep, he needs a big shake to wake up. He needs a shake and a shout: Come on wake up! Wake up! Wake up man! See! God is here! Our Father, Sai Baba, has come.

Wake up! If in this process of awakening this body suffers, then it is a good suffering.

In brief, could you tell us what Sai Baba and Jesus Christ mean to you.

They are One. There is no Jesus separate from Sai Baba. They are one. I do not see the name or the form. I see the reality. “The Father and I are One,” says Jesus. He told Philip; “To have seen Me is to have seen the Father, for I am in the Father and the Father is in Me.” You see, when you see two where there is only one, then you have got an ‘I’ problem. You are seeing double. When this ‘I’ problem is corrected, then naturally you will see only one because there has always been one not two. God is One.

For example, this is water. What do you call it in Peruvian language?

Agua

It is called “water” in English. In my language we call it “mmiri”. In Latin it is called “aqua”. The French refer to it as “eau” and the Germans by a different name. Do these different names change the reality of H₂O? No. Whatever name or shape - liquid, solid or gas - that water may assume, it does not change its reality. Water is one, but it has so many names and forms. In the same way, God is One. We call Him Jesus, Allah, Krishna, Buddha, Baba. This one and unchanging God takes different forms (bodies) from age to age, with appropriate superhuman powers, according to the circumstances of the time, to teach man how to see the One behind the many.

So if you see names and forms, you see differences and you begin to fight. But when you see the reality, the question of how to reconcile Jesus and Sai Baba does not arise. It is like asking how you reconcile “agua” and “water”. Do you understand? We have to cultivate the vision of Unity by going beyond name and form. It is only when we see Unity that we can experience Divinity. But when we see diversity then we experience hatred and fighting and all sorts of religious fanaticism.

The final elixir is Self knowledge; that is getting in touch with our own Divinity. When we penetrate that core of our Being, we discover also that it is the center of everything. The Divinity within is the same divinity in all, above all, below all, within all, around all, with all. Everything is Divine. This is the Kingdom of God that Jesus talked about.

A little story: once there was a little fish that lived in the mighty ocean. This fish was apparently disturbed. All her life she has been seeking to see the ocean. She has travelled far and wide in this search. She has read volumes and volumes of literature about this thing called “Ocean”. She has also consulted many learned experts on this subject but no one could solve her dilemma. Finally, one day, she came to the whale and posed the question to the Whale. She said: “Please brother whale hasten to the prayers of my heart. All my life I have heard about this thing called the “Ocean”. So many people have preached about it and written about it. But I would want to see it, touch it and feel it myself. Please could you show me where I could find this “Ocean”?

The big whale laughed to himself and said to the little fish: "Sister fish, look! This thing you are in now is the Ocean. This thing you are touching, swimming in, living in, is the Ocean. It is above you, below you, around you, within you, all over you. In fact, you cannot live a minute without it. It is your very life principle." The little fish could not believe the whale. She said: "But what is touching me is water, ordinary water. I want to see the ocean". And she went away sad.

You see, we are like the little fish in the ocean looking for the ocean. **We are in God, above God, below God, around God, within God, as our very existence. Yet we are all the time looking for God. When we understand that we are one with God, it becomes very easy to understand every other thing.** But when we miss this point, nothing else can hold together.

Can you give a final message to Sai Baba devotees?

Be happy! Everything has been done. Swami is the Totality, the sum and the substratum. There is nothing to add or to subtract. You are part and parcel of that Totality. Be Happy! To be is to allow Being to happen. **The result is the bliss of happiness, that is, union with God. Be a flute in His Hands and enjoy the flow of his Divine melody in and through you. Be a child in Her bosom and experience the thrill of riding in the Divine wings. She alone will take you to the goal of life. Everything gets done in Being. Do not dictate to God. When we want it this way and not that way, we block the natural and spontaneous flow of Being. Being is a disposition where we empty ourselves so that God may fill us. Be Happy!**

Being does not mean non-action. "Oh, everything is done in Being, so I better sleep all day." This attitude is negative action. When you do not want to do, you are doing. It is repulsive action. When you want to do, you are also doing. It is compulsive action. Neither wanting nor not wanting, just be! Then God will act. That bubbling of Divine energy will rise from within you and propel you to the need of the moment. You become an instrument. For example, you have that recorder there. Before now you have not used it because the right circumstances have not arisen. The recorder does not dictate to you when, where and how to use it. It is just being. To be is to be an instrument in His Hands and then the infinite potentiality of Being will unlock Itself within you.

I often hear people say, "I am doing Swami's work!" Does Swami need any work? This is ego. Let go of this sense of doership. God is the Doer, yet He pretends not to do. Man does nothing, yet he pretends to be the doer. This is ignorance. Swami is doing His work through you. Allow Him. Be happy. God's Love is the only reason for our happiness, for our very existence. Be happy, ever happy, and then you will sing His praises all the time. Sai Ram!

(Father Charles is a Roman Catholic priest of the order of the Holy Ghost fathers and brothers.)

FEATURE ARTICLES

QUEST FOR INFINITY – PART 11

By Prof. G.Venkataraman

Loving Sai Ram and greetings from Prashanti Nilayam. Ready for another heady day out in quest of Infinity? Perhaps you are still overwhelmed by the “hangover” from the last outing we had! Or may be you are dizzy wondering whether we are going into the future or diving into the past or, doing both at the same time! Well, if you are feeling that way, let me assure we are on the right track because as we go along, it would get more and more amazing as well as astonishing. Whichever way you feel, I can assure you of one thing; when it is all over [and you might well wonder whether it ever would!], no one who has done this trip would ever have any ego left! That is the Tour Operator’s promise! Money back if no satisfaction!!

Hope all that small talk has awakened you for the “Space and Time Walk” for today – makes us all feel like astronauts in the Space Station, does it not, being awakened every day to Earth Time by beings on Earth! Becoming serious, let me remind you about where we have reached after months and months of exploration. We have arrived at a critical juncture where the present is helping us to try to conjecture about the past, so that we can forecast the future! No kidding!

Some years ago, after wondering for a while whether the presently expanding Universe would ever start reversing its track and begin to contract, eventually shrinking to a point, people shook their heads and said: “No chance! It looks like it would expand forever.” Actually there has been something like a fashion cycle in this business of forecasting the future. At first people said the universe would be born, then dissolved, then born again, and so on it would go, cycle after cycle; all that was in ancient times. Then in the early part of the 20th century, Einstein said, as did many Cosmologists of that early twentieth century, “What nonsense!” Then came some young turks who argued, “Why not?” Later came the ‘wise men and women’ of the last part of 20th Century who muttered, “You know something? You can wait till the cows come home if you wish to but the fact of the matter is that the Universe is not only expanding but doing so faster and faster every day! So where is the question of the Universe ever shrinking?”

While all this betting game was going on, those who worry about “small things” said, “Eureka, its not particles but little strings, so small you can never see it.” After this the “String Doctors” went to work, spinning one fascinating tale after another and luring most of the smart young ones to their camp like the good old piper did, even as the “elders” shook their heads in despair and murmured, “These brats, will they never learn to get serious?” The bellyache of the “elders” was that the String Theorists were hardly bothered about making contact with the real world [read, making forecasts and checking theory against prediction and so forth].

It all sounds so much like real life, does it not with young people setting their own fashions, breaking away from the “straight guys” and doing daring things, not caring two hoots about what the old fuddy duddies say, and so forth? Just shows that in what ever we humans do, be it art or music or architecture or even science, sometimes new ground is broken only by the young who choose to dare and be different. And yet, at the end to the day, somehow, those who defy and those who disapprove do find meeting ground, at least of some sort. How that happened in our story is what I shall start with in this instalment, and then take it from there.

If you recall, in the last instalment, I made, towards the end an intriguing statement that I repeat now. I said,

The story does not end with what I have described thus far. Remember I said the graviton would escape from the 2-D world into the third dimension? In terms of the Universe we live in, it means that gravitons that rule gravity here can escape from our Universe [of 3+1 dimensions] into “another Universe” [!] that is so near yet so far!

To make things easier, let me recall that bit of my narration in slightly greater detail so that you do not feel disoriented. I first introduced you to the “String Dogma” that Nature’s Story must be told in many dimensions even though we seem to feel we live in a world that has three plus one dimension [three of Space and one of Time]. So the question arises, “Whatever happens to those dimensions that are in excess of four?” The String Magicians said, “No problem! Those ‘extra’ dimensions as you call them are ‘compactified.’” We don’t want to appear stupid and so we nod our heads and tell these magicians, ‘that’s great!’

The String Doctors then say, “Wait a minute; the story ain’t over yet! Things can escape from our ‘world’ into the compact dimensions, and as a result many weird things can happen!!” We feel this is too much but these String Doctors really want to convert us and now they spin yet another story! They say, “You know while the electron and other such particles are prisoners in their own world because they are string with their ends tied down, the graviton being a loop can escape.” I tried to help you out with an analogy and for your benefit I repeat that figure below:

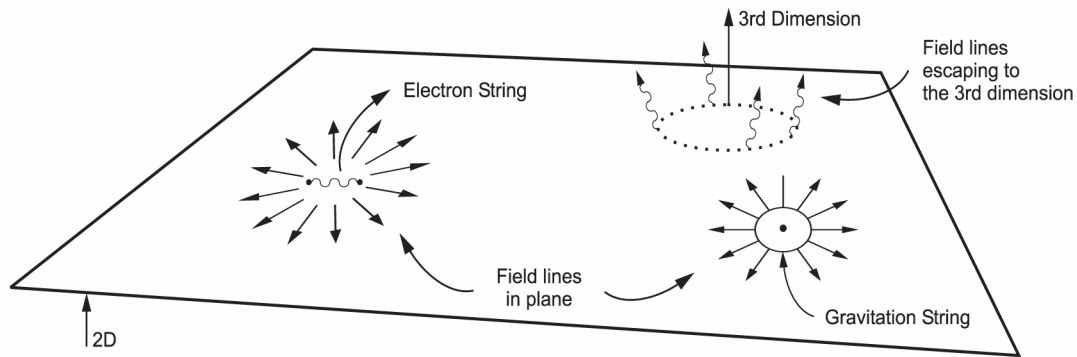


Figure 1

FIGURE 1: This figure is meant to illustrate the difference in behaviour of the forces associated with particles like the electron which are represented by loops with their ends anchored, and the graviton which is a closed loop. While the forces due to the former are confined to the final 3+1 dimensional world, those associated with the graviton can escape into the dimensions that have been compactified.

You may think this is all a kind of hocus pocus. Not if you think about it a bit, and to assure you that there is a real life analogue to this, I present the figure below.

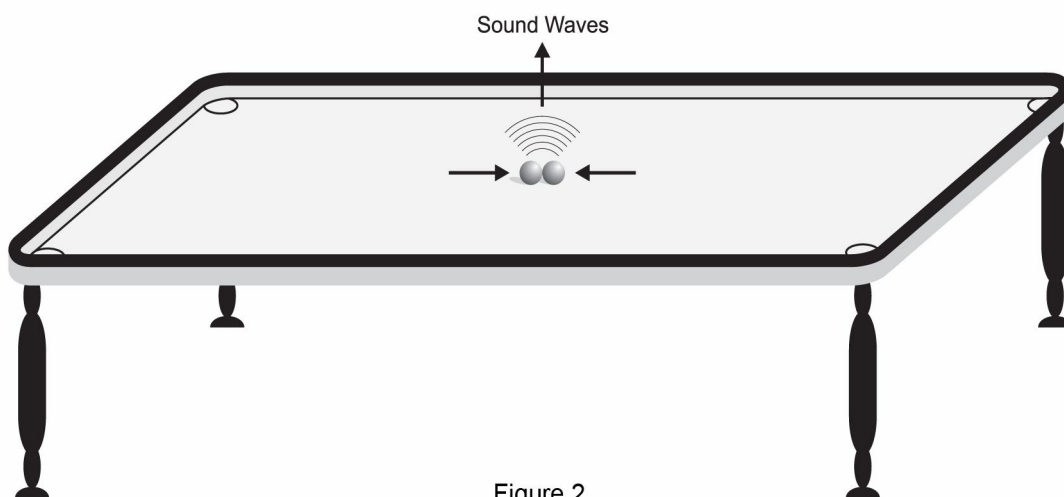


Figure 2

FIGURE 5 This figure offers a simple analogy to illustrate how while the graviton can escape out of the plane, the electron must remain confined to it. What you see here is a billiard table with two colliding billiard balls. Clearly, the balls must move on the table; however, the sound produced by the collision is not confined to the table and can escape into the room; indeed that is how we hear the sound of balls colliding when we watch a billiards game in progress. Now the interesting thing is that whether or not such things happen in particle physics might even be tested soon in Geneva with the world's biggest particle machine, the LHC getting ready at CERN the European Laboratory for High Energy Physics. Here they would be shooting

protons and anti-protons at each other, with these particles not only travelling at nearly the speed of light but also packing an incredible amount of energy. During such collisions, physicists expect the production of mini black holes! And such experiments might indeed reveal whether all this fancy scenario has any basis!

You are far from convinced and say, “Oh come on! Don’t give me that spin,” and the String Doctors reply, “Honestly this is really true,” and then begin the next chapter in their spin! To grasp what they say, first take a look at the figure below.

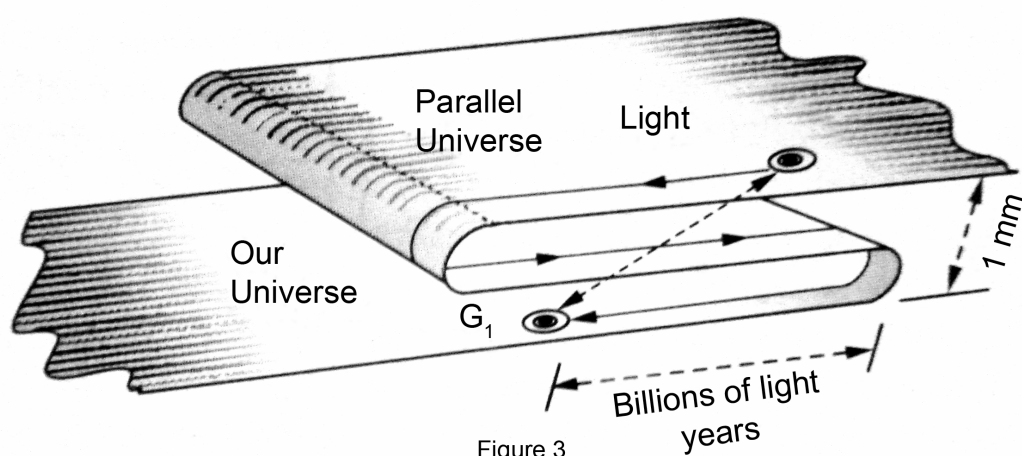


Figure 3

FIGURE 3 This figure is meant to highlight the implications of the previous figure. It shows an infinite Universe that is folded over and over; in the schematic above, only two folds are shown. We are supposed to be in the fold at the bottom, and the Strong, the Weak and the Electromagnetic forces we are familiar with act strictly in the plane. Gravity too operates in the same manner but is not exclusively confined to our fold or “our Universe”. The other folds above represent “parallel Universes,” each with its own galaxies and God knows what else! These other folds are separated from us by the so-called extra dimensions. A funny thing; this parallel fold may be just one “mm” away but in another sense it is far away because it is a “parallel Universe”!

What it means is that light leaving a galaxy G_2 say in a “parallel Universe” would have to travel a very long distance [along the folds] before reaching ours; and when it does, its signal would be too weak to detect. So that galaxy, even if it shines in its own “Universe” would be “dark” for us; as result, if we depend on the light emitted, we would never know that such galaxy exists. However, since gravitons can take the short cuts between the parallel Universes, we here in our Universe, can experience the pull of other galaxies

elsewhere. However, the pull would not follow the usual Newton law; as explained in the earlier issue [QFI - 10], it would follow a different law. Thus, the curious gravity law I told you about last time has deep and unbelievable consequences! Yes, truth is indeed stranger than fiction!!

I am sure you are feeling dizzy after studying the above figure, wondering what on earth it means. Let me try and explain it the following manner. The so-called parallel Universe is not really different from our own but a piece of our Universe that is folded in such a way that it produces unusual and even astonishing effects. Let us try and absorb that slowly. First of all let us take light and its propagation. Since only the graviton can actually leave the fold, light must travel along the along the “sheet” to reach elsewhere. Keep this in mind.

Look again at the puzzling figure. There is a galaxy G_1 in the lowest fold, and let us say we belong to that galaxy. Now look at the fold just “above”. In terms of distance as the “crow flies” it is just one mm away. What kind of crow is that can fly in this manner? Not the crow we are familiar with but the graviton. This is where Figure 1 is helpful. OK, the graviton can fly as crows do in the world we know about; only, the crow is the graviton. Thus the graviton can take a short cut from the galaxy G_2 to galaxy G_1 in which say we are.

Alright, what about light? That is a different ball game. Why? Because the quantum of light namely, the photon simply cannot fly like gravitons can. So how does one expect the photon to travel? The hard way; which means? It means that the photon has to chug along the length of the fold. Now consider a photon leaving the galaxy in the upper fold. Let us say that very instant, a graviton also leaves the galaxy G_2 in the upper fold. The photon “carries” the electro magnetic force while the galaxy is “transporting” the gravitational field. OK, but where is the difference? Well, the graviton can fly like the “crow” meaning it has to travel just a small distance as Fig. 3 shows. What about the photon? It has to do it the hard way, travelling along the entire length of the fold and that is a long distance.

In short, when we look at the other galaxy from ours, in terms of the distance travelled by light, it is an enormous distance away; but look at it in terms of the distance travelled by the graviton. Thanks to its ability to jump across compactified dimensions, the graviton can do a short hop and be here in no time at all while poor photon has to do it the hard way. I don't know how many of you know the story often narrated on the occasion of Vinayaka Chaturthi, describing how Vinayaka and His younger brother Subrahmanya went round the Universe, using different strategies! I am very much reminded of that, when I describe this incredible hypothesis of a Universe that has a peculiar geometry on account of compactification!

I guess I have taxed you enough with this kind of stuff and now let me turn to inflation for a change and bring to your notice how attempts have been made

to go beyond the original model crafted by Alan Guth [see QFI – 08]. These attempts have led to another astonishing scenario, which I shall now attempt to explain. As a prelude, I must recall something I said about phase transitions in an earlier issue [see QFI – 09]. For a start, let me invite your attention to Fig. 4 below:

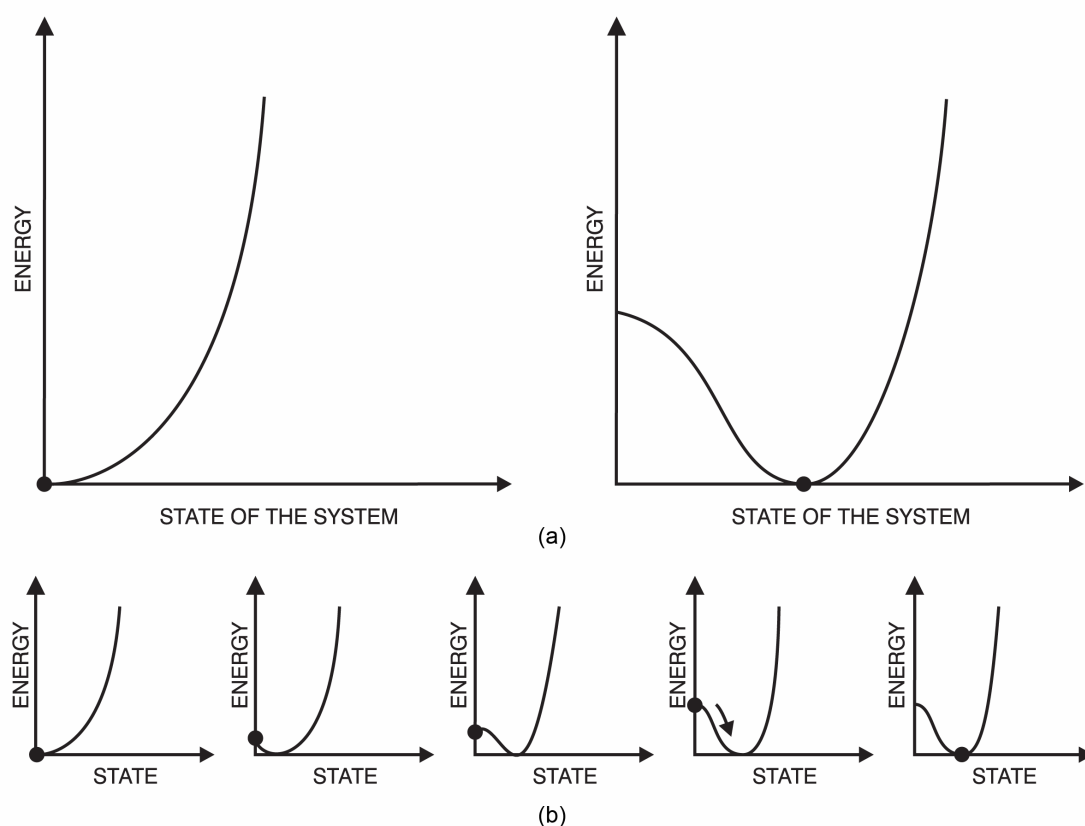


Figure 4

FIGURE 4: This figure has two parts; in (a) are shown curves you have seen before. They basically show how the energy of a “hot system” varies with the state of the system. As I told you before, the state preferred is always that which corresponds to the minimum energy. Above T_c the transition temperature associated with a change of physical state [e.g., water to ice], there is one kind of minimum energy state [the state with “disorder” but “high symmetry” – all this has been explained before]. Below T_c , the state of minimum energy is different. The sketches in (b) take us through the details of how things change over near the critical temperature T_c . Hopefully, this would give you some idea of how the change over takes place. The black dot is to help you visualise, step-by-step the cross over from the high temperature state to the low temperature state. These considerations would become important in what follows.

The figures like the ones presented above are what solid state physicists regularly use while discussing say the change of the magnetic state of iron, for example. [See QFI – 09]. I am calling attention to these type of curves because they are relevant in the context of the early Universe also. Wonder why? Just look at Fig. 5 below, which is a reproduction of what you have seen earlier [in QFI – 09].

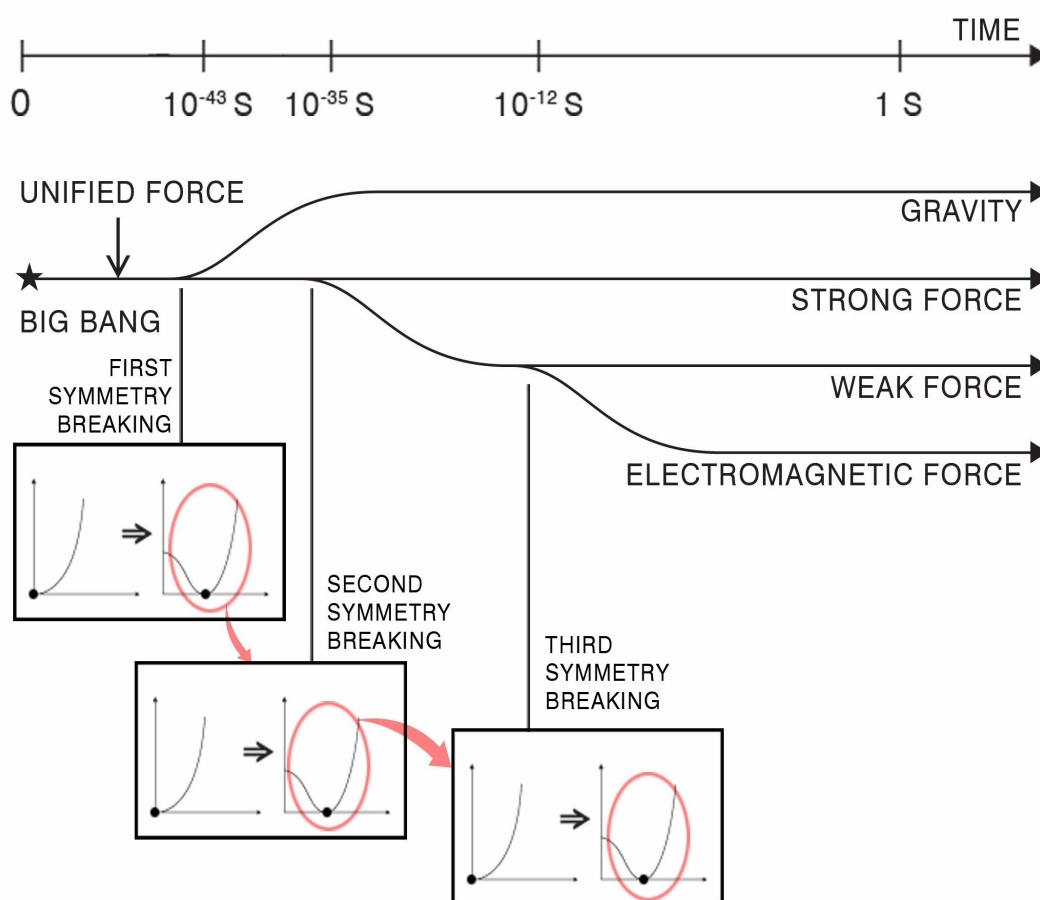


Figure 5

FIGURE 5. Just to remind you, what is shown here is the time line for the splitting of the original Cosmic Unified Force into the four distinct basic forces as we know them today. Every splitting can be visualised like a symmetry breaking process [see QFI – 09], which means we can lean on ideas borrowed from the realm of conventional phase transitions [ice to water etc]. All this is recalled because we are going to need some of this basic knowledge while asking now the question: “In what way can quantum fluctuations influence inflation of the early universe, if at all they can?”

I have perhaps used the word quantum fluctuations many times before and I need to explain it now because it is crucial in influencing the fate of the Baby Universe. Fluctuations are not all that unusual; they are very much a part of

every day life. What we usually mean by that word is that the value of something we have in mind is changing with time, and may be also with place.

Let me make myself a bit clearer with some common garden examples. If we take a stock exchange for example – it could be Tokyo, Hong Kong, Singapore, Mumbai, Frankfurt, London or New York – in every exchange, the share values keep constantly changing. In fact, these changes, hour to hour and sometimes even minute to minute are followed with keen interest by those whose fortunes are tied up shares and things like that. These would be the so-called market fluctuations [when they become steep and sudden, they become big news also!]

Next let us take a big city, like Mumbai for example. If we monitor the temperature at various points, we would find they are slightly different. When the weather man gives the temperature for Mumbai over the radio or TV, he quotes what might be called the average temperature. In fact, even this average temperature keeps on varying throughout the day, which is why the met office always gives the maximum and minimum temperatures for everyday.

And so on it goes; prices can fluctuate, crop yields can fluctuate, job opportunities can fluctuate and so on. In the world of physics, fluctuations are closely connected to the restless motion of atoms [in water, for example], and in fact, in the latter part of the 19th century, great advances were made when the theory of heat could be linked to the microscopic motion of atoms – this is the so-called kinetic theory of heat.

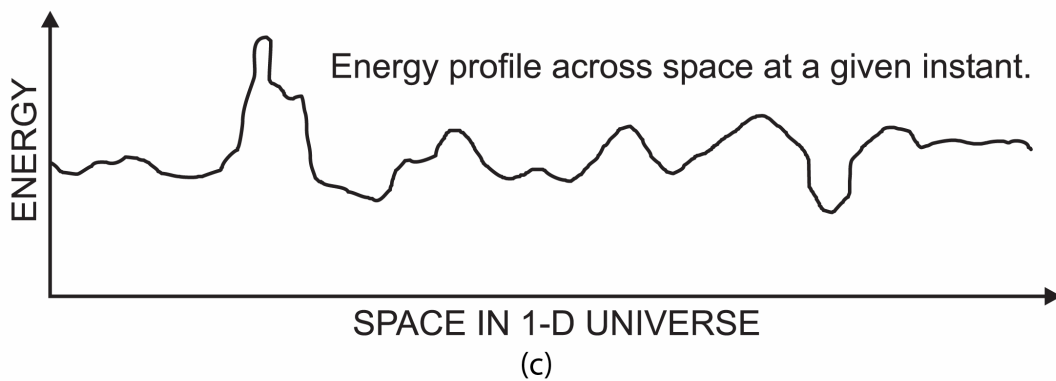
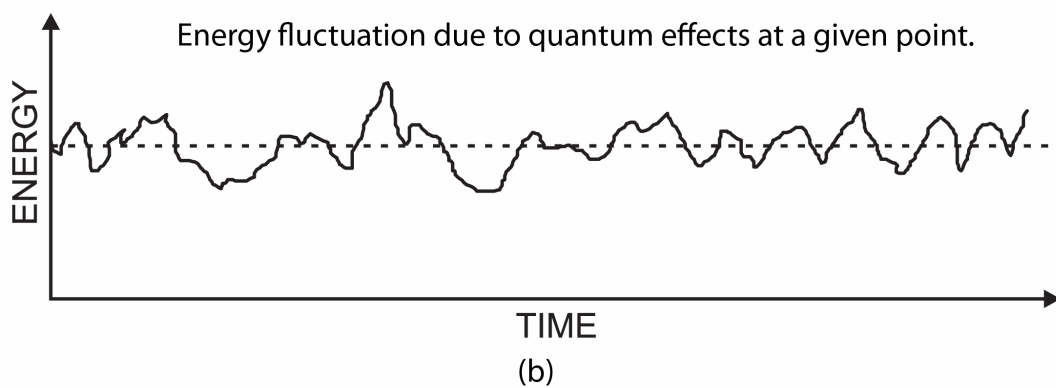
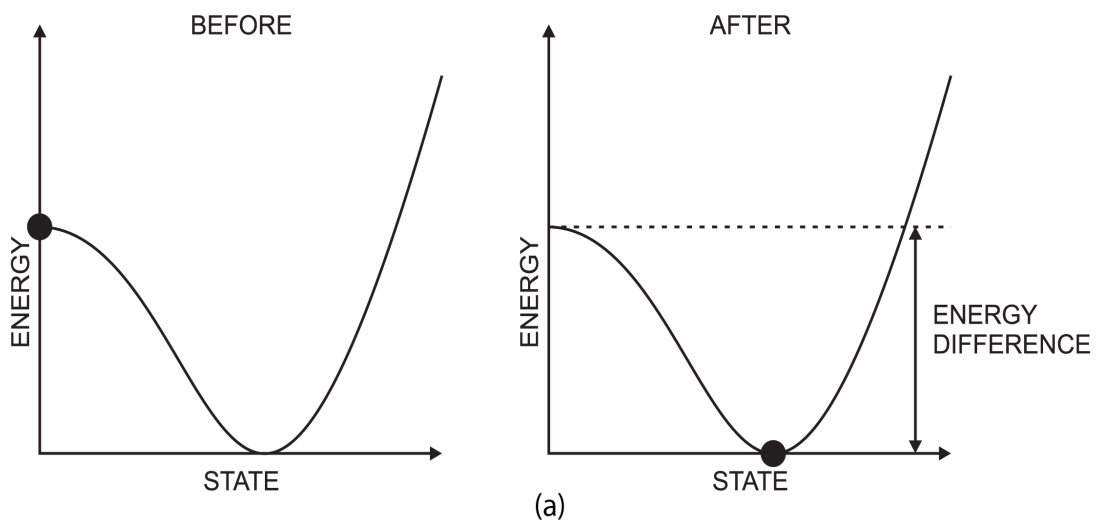
Fine. A totally new element entered into this business of fluctuations with the advent of quantum mechanics. Quantum fluctuations are rather difficult to explain and I shall do my best. Actually, there are two broad stages in our understanding of this quantum fluctuations. In the first stage, people said, “Listen; everything takes place within the framework of space and time. Space-time, as we know, is Prof. Einstein’s territory; out of respect for him [he dislikes quantum theory!] we shall say there is no such thing as quantum fluctuation where space-time is concerned! But in everything else, we had better not ignore this quantum jumpiness, uncertainty, call it what you will!” Everything else thus meant processes involving the strong interactions, the weak interactions and electromagnetic interactions. That meant everything from solid-state physics to elementary particle physics [at not too small distances], cosmology excluded.

With that preamble, let me now try and explain what quantum fluctuations mean. Using rather simplified language, it means the following: Remember the four forces [see QFI – 06, where these were introduced]? I have made a reference to them just a little above [see Fig. 5]. Let us say there is an electron at some point A. All around the electron there would be an electric field - this I am sure you would understand, considering all that has been said before. OK, since the Universe is full of all kinds of particles, we have fields of the three basic types existing all over place.

Let us now focus on one point in space and somehow monitor the strength of the field, say electromagnetic field at that point. It would be no surprise if we find the value of that field to be changing from instant to instant. After all, if we monitor say the air temperature at some point in the atmosphere, we do expect to keep on fluctuating and even changing, don't we? Well, these changes happen in the normal course of events because things are never steady – I mean the sun is moving, the wind is blowing, factories are emitting heat and so forth, and it is no big deal if the temperature at the observation point keeps fluctuating and even changing.

OK, suppose now everything is made **absolutely** still; this is just a proposition, and so let us not bogged with the question, "How are you going to do that?" Suppose this situation does obtain. Quantum mechanics now springs a big surprise; it says, "Folks, in the mysterious quantum world ordained by God Almighty, there is a perpetual restlessness that has nothing to do with the kind of fluctuations you have known before. Even if all of these cease totally, this quantum restlessness can never be stopped; no power on earth, and no machine of man can do it. The Universe comes with it and you had better get used to it!"

In the scientific world they use the word quantum fluctuations instead of quantum restlessness, because physicists want to sound respectable! These quantum fluctuations have **incredible** consequences in the world of the small and how they impact inflation is what we are going to examine now. Let us start with the figure below; please study it carefully and after that I shall continue.



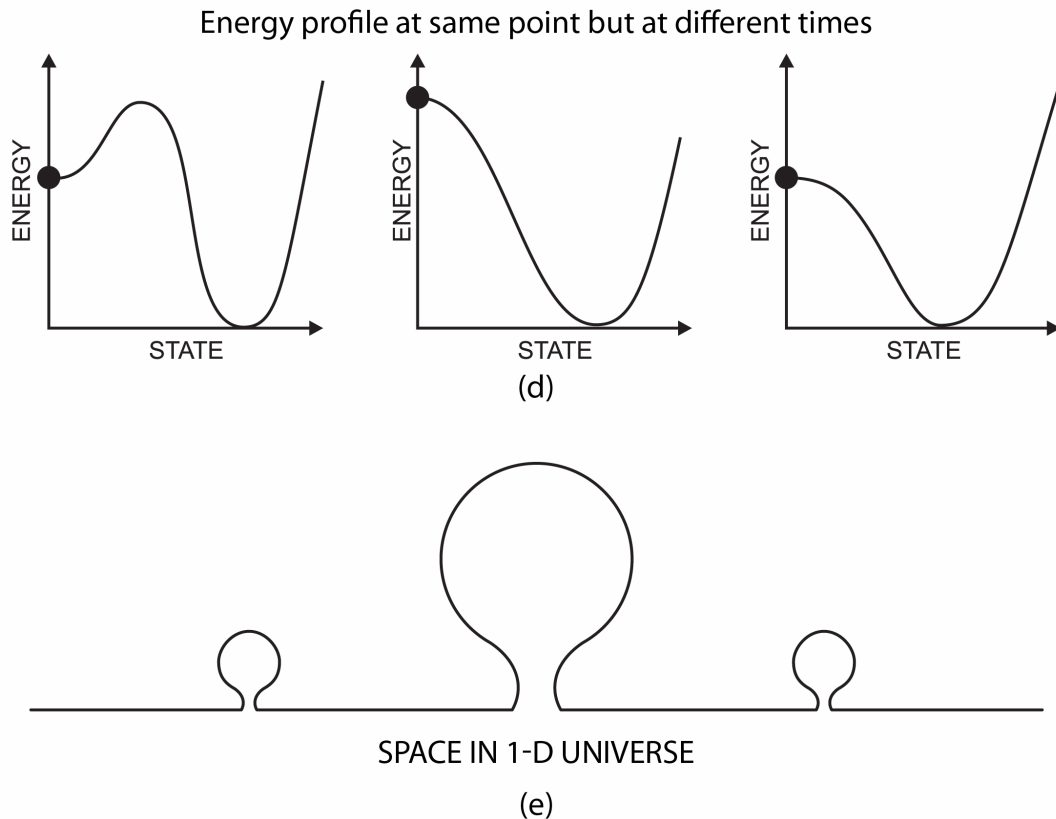


FIGURE 6. In this figure, we explore the implications of quantum fluctuations vis-à-vis inflation in a one-dimensional universe. Suppose there were no quantum fluctuations; then what happens in this universe would be uniform across the whole of space [here 1-D]. The occurrence of inflation in this scenario can be described via a single figure as in (a). Here we see a “ball” in two positions, one before inflation and the other after inflation. Clearly, the state of energy associated with the position of the ball is different in the two cases, and the difference in energies between the two scenarios is what leads to inflation.

Now bring in quantum fluctuations. Let us examine the BEFORE inflation situation at a given point and see how the “energy meter” reading might vary with time; it might be as in (b). At a given time, the variation across the 1-D universe might be as in (c). Different points have different values of energy because of fluctuations; these happen simply because of the dictates of quantum mechanics. If now we consider three representative points A, B, C in this 1-D universe, the energy scenarios corresponding to these three could be as in (d). The net result of such factors is that (i) inflation might occur at some favourable points and not at all in others, and (ii) the extent of the inflation itself might vary at the different points where it occurs. The outcome of such a scenario is sketched in (e). This is a spectacularly different result from what we had before. Basically, in this case, one “mother gives birth to three babies”! In other words, “baby Universes” are born where conditions are favourable.

I hope you have taken a good look at the figure above and reflected on it for a while. The following points emerge:

1. Earlier, there was only one scenario; now there are many, and this has deep implications.
2. Earlier, there was only one Universe that mattered, which presumably came from some unknown “Mother”. Now, one Mother brings forth many Baby Universes!
3. In more physical language, in the starting “parent Universe,” inflation occurs in some places but does not in others; this is directly due to quantum fluctuations, which make conditions for inflation favourable in some spots and not in others.

Figure 7 shows the “mother and child” scenario when the “mother” is a 2-D space to start with while Figure 8 repeats this exercise for a “3-D mom”!

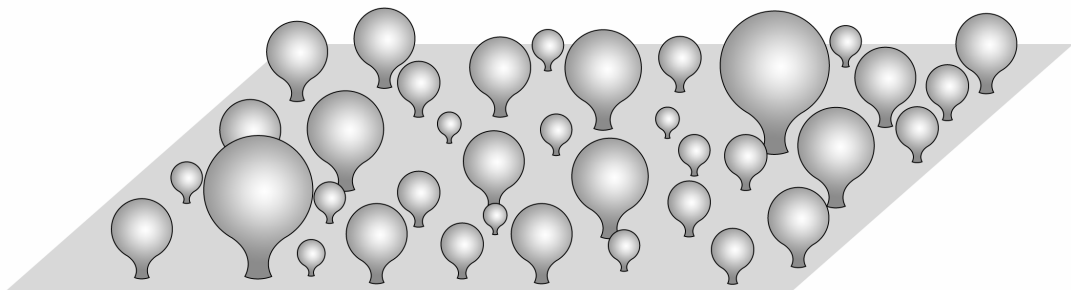


Figure 7

FIGURE 7: This shows a “mother” Universe that is 2-D from which are born several Baby Universes that inflate to different extents.

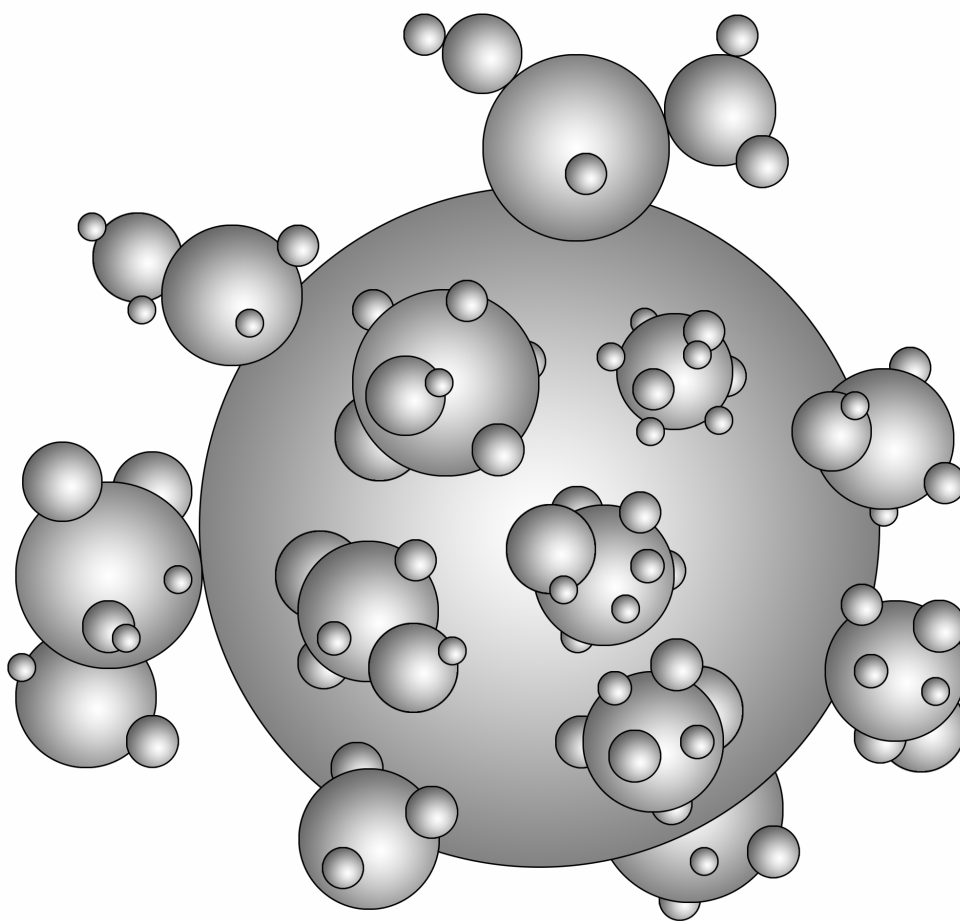


Figure 8

FIGURE 8: This figure extends the concept of the previous figure to the 3-D case. The complex bubble decoration pattern depicts a “mother Universe” having “daughters, grand daughters” and so on.

In brief, what the above illustrations show is the following:

1. We have a complex mosaic, with many Universes, each bubble representing a Universe!
2. This raises a basic question: “When we talked earlier of the Big Bang, evolution of the Universe etc., which of these Universes were we talking about?”
3. Is it that one of these many bubbles is “Our Universe”? If so, what is the case with the other “Universes”?
4. How come we are able to know about our Universe? Are we in a position to know anything about the other Universes?
5. If indeed Cosmos is a collection of Universes, with us humans belonging to just one particular bubble in this vast family, how did this thing get started in the first place? To put it differently, where did the “Mother” come from?!

Lots of puzzles there, wouldn't you say? One thing we can say perhaps: If we are in one particular bubble, then our bubble was born from one that pre-existed ours; in that sense, our Universe had a "mother"! Maybe, it was the "mother" that gave the energy deposit that was needed to kick off the creation of our Universe. In fact, there are whole families with not only mothers but also grand mothers, great grand mothers and so on.

Another thing that comes out in this scenario is that it seems as if Universes are being born and expanding; no talk of contraction and collapse of the Universe, unless there is some "infant mortality" [about which I am not at all sure].

By the way, for the record, I should mention that this above picture which is sometimes referred to as the ***Chaotic inflation model*** is the outcome of some pioneering ideas due to Linde. I should also mention that in the above discussion on quantum fluctuations I did not mention an extra-ordinary possibility, which is that when we are considering the state of the Universe immediately after birth, by which I mean something like 10^{-50} seconds or so, then even quantum fluctuations in space-time would become important! No one knows anything about such fluctuations at present but everyone is agreed that such fluctuations must exist and must be playing their own important role. Possibly they might not affect inflation which occurs later perhaps. On the whole, while quantum fluctuations might not affect our daily lives, in Nature, they make an impact in many situations, often subtle but quite important. Yes, subtle is the Lord, as Einstein once famously said.

I am sure your head must be spinning; the amazing thing is that fifty years ago, no one knew that there were so many complications and amazing possibilities. Maybe I should do a bit of recap and offer a summary.

- In this instalment, I started by considering the consequences of higher dimensions, their compactification, and what it all meant for the nature of the Universe.
- I pointed out then that one implication is that the graviton can move about in ways not possible for the electrons and other such particles. Whereas particles that owed their origin to the strong, weak and electromagnetic interactions were not allowed to move around as the crow flies, the graviton could do so. This could mean that the Universe might be like a long folded sheet with we humans being in say in one fold and distant galaxies being in other folds.
- In such a case, while graviton could take shortcuts making distant galaxies appear to be nearby, when we try to actually see the galaxy with the help of the light emitted by that galaxy, the same galaxy would appear to be very distant.
- Some of this I discussed in the last issue [QFI – 10], and one way of checking whether such a scenario actually played out would be to measure how the gravitational force varies with distance in the world of small distances. If all the above is true, then the force law would be

substantially different from the familiar inverse square law bequeathed to us by Newton.

As I write this, I am simply wonderstruck and often feel at a loss for words. I am sure many of you must be aware of the great buzz that went around when Swami was supposed to give the Cosmic Darshan. Later, there was a huge industry churning out pictures of Swami appearing on the Moon, pictures that any kid with some computer training and Photoshop can create in a few minutes. Many of these were in fact sent to us and we had an amusing time identifying these pictures with those in our huge library.

As far as I am concerned, it would not come as a surprise if Swami chose to appear on the Moon; is it a big deal for Him? What is a big deal for all of us is that He is choosing to spend time here, giving Darshan everyday, sitting through Bhajans and thereby inducing us to purify ourselves a little bit.

What we should all realise – and it is time we did – He is not just what He appears to be. Arjuna made that huge mistake but that was corrected by Krishna on the battle field. I hope Sai devotees would not clamour for a repeat of that demo. There is no need to. Just look at the sky above and recall what we have been trying to draw attention to. Recall also the Bhajan that starts with the words “**Brahmanda Nayaka.....**” in adoration of the Cosmic Swami.

We should not also forget what Swami often tells us: “I am in you,” What that means is that it is the Divine Power **within** man that has enabled man to unravel so many mysteries of the Cosmos as I have been trying to describe. It should be a humbling experience for all of us to be given the role of being custodians of Divine Love and Power. I do hope that while admiring the amazing manifestations of God as revealed all across the Physical Universe, we also spare a moment to reflect on the fact that we have HUGE responsibility to use the Infinite Power deposited in us for **useful** purposes, instead of frittering them away in ways that are not only meaningless but sometimes even dangerous.

Think it all over please! See you again one month from now. God bless, Jai Sai Ram.

SPELLBINDING SAI - II

By Prof. N Kasturi

This is second part of the transcript of a talk delivered by late Prof. Kasturi many years ago. The first part appeared in the November issue. This is being brought to you from our archives and we regret that we do not have the exact date of this talk, but we can say with reasonable surety that it was in the year 1987.

That is what He declared in His 21st year. "The *Vishwam* or Universe is My Mansion." *Vishwam* is cosmos. It means that into which He has entered: *Pravesha*. So God created this universe, and He entered into it. He is found in every cell and in every atom of it. So it is called *Vishwa*; that into which He has entered. And therefore He says:

The Divine - Beyond Distinctions

"I move all around the cosmos. I am found everywhere." And that is why we have stories how Baba is all over the world. One method of Baba showing His presence in any place is - what you call 'signs and wonders' - of Vibhuti or any other thing falling from His pictures; not only His pictures but other pictures too.

Whatever name you call Him, Jesus Christ it may be, or it may be Rama, Krishna or whatever it is, it doesn't make any distinction. And in order to show that it doesn't make any distinction, you get this *vibhuti* or a number of articles falling from His pictures - a thing that has never been recorded of any Divine phenomenon so far in human history.

I have got with me photographs of pictures in a shrine in Perth, Australia; three photographs that this lady sent me. In one, you've got *kumkum* (vermillion) in the shape of a big Om. Baba is standing and there is a big Om encircling His frame. And in another, you've got yellow around His head; and in the third, a Shiva picture - they got in pink! They call it 'pink vibhuti' all over the head arranged in a beautiful form! He is found everywhere. His presence is felt. He appears in dreams; He moves about. People have actually seen Him and been touched by Him. He is a great Phenomenon.

For those of you who are in Bangalore, when you go next, to go to Mysore, I would advise you to go to a place near the second bridge of Kaveri - the bridge nearer to Mysore - there you have a shrine of Baba and a great phenomenon is happening there for the last eight years. There's a man there who was a labourer, a wage earner, in a sugar factory. He had come to Mysore and he purchased a ring that was eight *annas* (paise) worth; and it had an enamel portrait of Baba which fell off. And later he kept it in a container and you get from that container - from that enamel portrait - something sweet, fragrant and sticky; something like honey which we call *amrita* - a strange fragrance, a strange taste. And it has been oozing out of that enamel portrait for the last eight years, night and day! At least three

quarters of a litre every day! And when he puts it on your palm, you can see the trickle - gradually the nectar coming, trickling and falling. Richard Bock of America, has taken a film of that years ago, and it is still happening.

'It is for Me that I am giving!' - Baba

The signs of His presence are all over the world. There is no place which is too far for Him. There is one Norwegian, Tidemann, a marine engineer who has got a few patents. The grain ships when they come, they have to take out the grain by some vacuum arrangement or some such thing, by pipelines. He has got patents of such contraptions. And he was in Bombay for many years and used to go to Shirdi with some Parsi friends. He found that Shirdi Sai Baba had taken avatar again. So he came to Baba and used to visit off and on. When Pakistan bombed the harbors of East Pakistan, Chittagong had to be repaired. And this marine engineer got a contract and before going there he came to Puttaparthi, and Baba gave him a ring.

Sometimes we say, "I will give you a ring, I promise" and what we do is we call them over the phone! Baba actually gave him a ring, but some people say, "No Swami, I don't wear a ring usually, no jewelry, etc." But Baba says, **"No! It is not for you! It is for Me that I am giving! So that I may have some contact with you; so I may know what happens to you!" So it is a kind of a contact that He wants to keep with the people whom He wants to Grace.** So this chap also said: "No, no ring for me, Swami." But Baba said: "No, it is for My sake" and He gave him a ring.

After about six months, he came one day to Whitefield. Bhajans were going on. Baba was sitting on His chair and along with Dr. Bhagavantham and few Americans, I was to His left. And he suddenly barged in at the door. He is a huge person; Norwegian, tall and fair. There's a sudden shadow on the door and Tidemann appeared. And he found that people were engaged in bhajans, so he slowly slid and sat by my side and Baba turned towards him and asked: "Where is the ring?" Because the ring was gone; it was not on his finger. He said, "Gone, Swami." "Where?" "In Chittagong River. I was climbing on the side of a ship with a rope, and then it fell into that river."

Baba just waved His Hand and there was a ring. Of course everyone was tempted to ask: "Is it the same ring?" That question came right up to my throat also but it was Dr. Bhagavantham who asked. He said: "Is that the same thing?" Of course his was a scientific curiosity. Swami turned to him and said: "After having experienced me all these years you are still doubting?" He got it. I would have got it too if I had come out with that question. Luckily I had swallowed that question!

Swami said, "It fell into my hands. I was in that river." Now this is: "I move; I am everywhere." Tidemann's ring fell into Chittagong River on a certain January 20th or so, and he came in February. You can't believe how all this is possible!

Of course, in the Gita, in the scriptures, we have got it. And we believe it, honor it, listen to it and appreciate people who explain it. In *Gita Yagnam* (worship dedicated to The Gita) they go on expounding it saying 'God's hands are everywhere, God's feet are everywhere'. We appreciate it and recite it. But here you have got a person who says, "It fell into My hands!"

Of course, Tidemann came and did *namaskaar*, and before He gave it to him, He said: "Look here! I have told you not to do certain things when you are in Bangladesh. And you are doing it! Now promise that you won't do it again." Then he promised and shed some tears. Then, He gave it to him and cautioned him again. So He is everywhere.

A Blessed Cat

Or, let me give you one more instance. At the government hospital in Guwahati, Assam, a matron lived inside the hospital premises. And she was a devotee of Baba. She had His pictures all over the place. I have been to their house; they have one in the kitchen, one in the drawing room, one in the sitting room, one in the shrine room, one on the table, and one right in front of the entrance door - 16 big pictures of Baba - and also other Gods and Divinities.

She was having bhajans in her house. Her sister, a young girl of 13 who was going to school, one day found a cat caught in the rain and brought that little creature home. Her sister had an allergy for cats - something like Lord Kitchener who had an allergy for cats, it seems, he could fight a battle but not with a cat.

She was always blaming the sister for bringing a cat into the family. But the sister used it as a pet. One day, when she was preparing some dish out of fish or something for lunch, this cat jumped at that piece of fish and ran out of the house. And the sister's pent up anger came against the younger one. And she caught hold of the cat and began to beat the little being with a stick. When she came to Whitefield later, I asked the sister what was the length of the stick? And she showed me and I thought: "What? To beat a cat with something like that?"

Yes! She did that. And the cat was beaten. And as the cat was being beaten, all the pictures of Baba on the walls fell down - kitchen, dining room, drawing room, and table. They thought it was an earthquake; because in Assam there are frequent earthquakes. And all the guests ran out on the road. But she found that only Baba's picture fell.

The sister said, "Stop killing that cat!" And then, placed the cat on the table. The cat shook her body because it was suffering terribly from pain. And all over the table fell vibhuti that had been applied to the cat by some unseen hand. Vibhuti! On the cat! That's God!

Six months later, there was a special railway coach that was engaged by the devotees of Guwahati. They came for Swami's birthday and Swami asked

them all to sit in a line. He talked to them and give them vibhuti packets - you know, He hands out packets of vibhuti to be taken home. I was carrying the basket from which He was taking out handfuls and giving it to people. And I followed Him and the girl was there, Laxmi, the younger sister who beat the cat, and I didn't know her. I got the story later, after this incident. And I was surprised and said, "I have seen Him giving packets of vibhuti to the cat!"

I marked that particular girl and when she came out, I asked: "Who is this cat to whom He is giving vibhuti?" And then she told me the whole story: "There's a cat blessed by Him; He had put vibhuti on her." Then I went to the place and got a photograph of the cat and I fondled that cat because it is such a blessed cat that Baba has put vibhuti on the cat. Call Him and He answers. Even a cat!

The Unseen Passenger

In the second line of the Telugu poem about Himself, Baba says, "I am available to devotees". This is His second characteristic which He mentioned. Here, it does not necessarily refer to this form or name, because, as He says, "I have no name. Any name is enough for Me. If you are devoted, dedicated, and on the God-ward path; if you are pure, true, genuine and sincere, that is enough."

After my retirement, which happened years ago, I went to Benares. Baba said, "You go on a pilgrimage. Your mother is very anxious. You take her on a spiritual journey to holy places." So I, my wife and my mother, went to Him and wanted His blessings for the journey. And then He said, "Four people are journeying, purchase three tickets". So we were four passengers with three tickets. He is the stowaway in all planes and streamers and really a ticketless passenger all through. **At times, some people ask Him, "Swami, give me leave, I want to go to Hyderabad or some other place." He'll say, "Why do you ask leave of somebody who is coming with you?" He is coming with us, He is always with us.**

And sometimes Mr. Bala Krishna, Dr. Bhagavantham's son, also does that. He's rather heavy and therefore rather nervous of going on planes. So whenever he has got to make a plane journey, He asks Baba's blessings. And Baba says, "I will be with you, go." And invariably it has been found, which is Mr. Bala Krishna's experience and also others, if you take His blessings and go on a plane, invariably, the seat on your left will be empty. That was Bala Krishna's experience. And when I was telling this to some audience in Madras, immediately a lady got up! She belonged to the World Health Organization. She said, "That has been my experience too!"

The daughter of Dr. Chandru, a dentist in Malaysia, had to go to Vancouver and he asked Swami's blessings saying, "I am sending my daughter to Vancouver." Swami said, "Alright, why are you worrying? I will take her to Vancouver." And she writes from there that in all the planes which she got into on her way to Vancouver, the left seat was vacant! So He is that ticketless passenger who occupies a seat always.

Awakened by 'Ash'

There was one Mr. Patterson, a geophysicist who belongs to an organization in the United Nations. And he had come to India for the first time, to Hyderabad where there is a Geophysics Institute. And because Mr. Bala Krishna was also a deputy director of that institution, he took him home and there he found Baba's portrait in that shrine room. He asked who He was and he was told something about Him and he got rather curious and said, "Give me some memento."

Bala Krishna gave him a packet of vibhuti. And he opened it and found: "Ash?" "Yes, Ash." "Ash?" He couldn't evaluate vibhuti and he was rather surprised that what Bala Krishna was giving him was a little bit of ash. And Bala Krishna said, "No! If anyone gives me that packet, I would consider it as most precious and I would keep it! You keep it."

He said, "All right", just for good manners and put it in his pocket, and then thought, "What shall I do with it?" And when Bala Krishna told him to put it into his mouth, he was shocked even more! Eating ash is not a very pleasant thing to do. He said, "Whenever you encounter any difficulty which you cannot overcome by yourself, put a little in your mouth and pray to Baba." He gave him a photograph too.

It is absolutely unbelievable what happened later. He went home. He had to go to New York and he writes a letter from London airport. "I got into a jumbo jet in Delhi and I got the last seat, and I was surrounded by women." Of course that's not a calamity for many people but he didn't quite welcome it – quite a misanthrope, I believe! He says there were women and children; probably it was the nuisance these children created. 14 hours he had to travel surrounded by women and children. And I think that many of these children must have got up on his shoulder and taken his glasses out and tried to find out whether his nose was fixed on his face nicely.

He felt absolutely miserable and he wanted to change his seat. He says, "I got down at the London airport. As I was walking around the airport, I remembered the powder which he had given me. And I wanted to test its efficacy." And he put a little in his own mouth and thought of the picture that he had got.

He writes, "Immediately, my name was called over the loud speaker. I was asked to go to the query office. I was informed that I was to continue the journey in the first class! I was ushered into the first class. And when I offered to pay the extra, they said it had been paid!" The extra amount had been paid! And therefore the next sentence is justifiable. The next sentence is: "That powder is some powerful stuff!" And that Patterson came again! Of course, how could he keep back after this experience? So he came here.

The other day, we had the Ramanavami Day celebration here. And I was here until 12 noon and then I hurried to Puttaparthi where Baba was. When I went

there, since Baba had already started His discourse, I couldn't get in. I was in the veranda. After the discourse was over, people trooped out, and Bala Krishna too came out and behind him was Mr. Patterson. He introduced me to him, "This is Mr. Patterson of the airport fame, of the powder and its significance."

I said, "You are Patterson? I have been talking about you all over the country and I am glad I saw you now." And he had to leave early morning. Baba was interviewing some others. So I said, "Are you waiting to see Baba?" He said, "No, I don't want to bother Him. For one and a half hours I was sitting in the front line today. Baba was standing right in front of me. He was speaking in Telegu; but that doesn't matter. I heard His voice; I listened to Him singing bhajans, two of them! I could see Him; fill my eyes with Him for one and a half hours! That is enough. I am going." That is Patterson. London airport gets upset on account of this man putting a little vibhuti in his mouth! That is the kind of power that this Phenomenon is.

The Power that Pacified The Pacific

Dr. John Hislop said that he once bought a house overlooking the Pacific Ocean. Then they found the hill was seeping; it wasn't geologically a safe place. So the houses were getting down and one of the houses had, in fact, collapsed and gone into the waves. And the geologists of Mexico came and measured with a tape and said, "This month it has come three cms, four cms, etc." So it was inevitable that his house must go in the Pacific Ocean. And they didn't know what to do. **So Hislop put up a big photograph of Baba facing the Pacific Ocean and prayed, "Stop the waves! Stop this hill from sliding!" And he said the geologists were not able to discover any further sliding of the house down the hill. For devotees who are dedicated to Him, He will stop the earth from sliding or the sea from inviting houses into itself!**

Now, the third line of the poem is very important. Hitherto what we have read of incarnations is that God says, "I will protect and guard the devotees." But Baba says, "I will give devotion and save." All of us have come because He has given devotion to us. He has caught hold of us and given us love for Him. He has put us on the right path and trained us.

(To be continued...)

HARNESSING THE HEART - PART 2

...LIVING UP TO THE CHALLENGE OF CONSCIENCE IN DAILY LIFE

Dear reader, in the November issue of H2H, we started this new series promising to offer you every month one real life story from present times of a 'brave-heart', so to say, who had the courage to follow their conscience when confronted with difficult dilemmas or challenging circumstances in their daily life. In the previous issue, we had the story of how Mrs. Priya Davis, a former student of Bhagavan's University, did not give in to the unjust demands on her boss, followed her Heart and at the end found herself vindicated in every respect. In this issue, we have the story of Mr. Dev Taneja, a Sai devotee from Canada. Dev's dilemma was: Whether to take the final year certified accounting exam in Canada to strengthen his folk's financial position, or miss it to organize an important family wedding back in India? What did he do?

A Conflict of Duties

*By Mr. Dev Taneja,
Toronto, Canada*

An ardent of Bhagavan Baba who came into the Sai fold in 1996, Mr Dev Taneja currently works as a Senior Tax Auditor with the Ministry of Revenue, Ontario, Canada. Additionally he has been a volunteer Yoga teacher for Hath Yoga and Pranaya Yoga for the last five years. An inspiring personality, he is also a team member of trained volunteers for Dynamic Value Parenting program and has conducted numerous workshops on this subject.

Sometimes it is difficult to make a choice between one's material progress and our duty or *dharma*. I am the eldest son in a family of 6 children. My father passed away when I was 31 year old, but I undertook the full responsibility of my father's duties and tried my very best to help and assist my mother in the upbringing of my brothers and sisters in New Delhi, India.

In my endeavour to help the family, I immigrated to the UK and finally to Canada and pursued the career of Certified Accounting. In 1988, I was in the final year of my accounting designation of Certified Management Accountant (CMA) program, at which time I received the news from India that my younger brother was getting married around the same time as the final examination I was required to take in order to complete my CMA degree. For various reasons my family in India had no option to change the date. The schedule conflict seemed inevitable. I had the dilemma of either attending the wedding and shouldering my responsibilities as an older brother in the absence of our late father, or pursuing my career goal. If I missed the final examination I would have to take four more courses to finish my degree as the Society of Management Accountants changed their rules and restructured the program

after that year. I appealed to the Director of the Education Department of the Society to make an exception, but my appeal was denied.

Meanwhile, my family depended on me to attend this wedding to fulfill the role of a father. I was caught up in a *dharmic* dilemma. I had to prioritize.

Prioritizing Life Effectively

With the grace of God who guided me, I followed my *dharma* and decided to attend the wedding at the cost of my career goal. My wife, two young children and I took a flight from Toronto to Delhi to fulfill this responsibility and my mother felt so relieved and happy to have us beside her on this very important occasion in her life. Everyone in the family in India was overjoyed. Obviously, I never got a CMA designation.

Although my career has suffered due to the professional sacrifice I made, today, in retrospect, I have no regrets as I feel absolutely gratified to have fulfilled my *dharma*. It is my conviction that because I did the right thing, Swami has helped me in numerous ways to grow and succeed in my career despite the fact that I missed my professional goal by just one paper. With His grace, I currently hold the position of a Senior Field Auditor with the Ontario Government's Ministry of Revenue. Had I continued my career goal, I could probably have climbed the ladder more swiftly and would be holding a more Senior Managerial position but I would have lost my peace of mind and my family would have had to suffer due to the longer hours of work. Swami has kept my life in balance – physically, spiritually, and financially. He has given me inner-peace, has provided me with numerous opportunities to engage in acts of service whereby I have been His instrument to inspire and help others. He has brought numerous special people closer to me who have helped me stay focused on the ultimate goal of life. With Swami's grace I have a loving family. Hence, ultimately, what Swami has given me is more important and valuable to me than anything else.

As Bhagavan says, everything happens for the good. In my case, the scheduling conflict between my duties to my family and my dream of a professional designation gave me the opportunity to prioritize and choose what I thought was right for my conscience, even if not for my career goals or ambitions. The fact that I sacrificed self-interest over the larger good of the family proved to be the best move I have ever made.

Righteousness Protects the Right

Perhaps due to the blessings of my mother and God, today, I continue to pursue my Sai activities with a passion, taking the universal message of the five human values into the larger community where I facilitate Dynamic Value Parenting Workshops for various schools and temples in the Greater Toronto Area. I am also able to devote my time and energy to many wonderful and gratifying activities within our Sai centre and the community. The joy of living a purpose-driven life, in sync with Bhagavan's teachings is the ultimate dream that I thoroughly live, enjoy and am grateful for. I can vouch the validity of the

Vedic dictum *Dharmo Rakshate Rakshataha*. I adhered to *dharma* and *dharma* protected me too many times to even enumerate.

Although there are many incidents where *dharma* or righteousness has safeguarded me, one of them, in particular, stands out more. A few years ago, we were involved in a litigation case for a period of seven years. Sustaining a legal battle for such a long duration of time was a financial drain. Given the circumstance, it was obvious to us that we had no chance of winning the court case. The odds were against us. Losing the case would also mean losing everything we had, including our house. This is where the umbrella of divine protection came in to shield us.

In the year 2006, I visited Bhagavan Baba in Whitefield, Bangalore. That was my first visit to Him, and I had joined the Sri Sathya Sai Organization of Canada only two months earlier. During this visit I was more of a curious George than a devotee. However, on my return to Toronto, within 30 days of my arrival I received a good news letter that the court case had been withdrawn, and in addition, we would be reimbursed \$7,500! As you can imagine, our joy knew no bounds. We heaved a huge sigh of relief.

In my view that miracle was an affirmation of all my efforts in life to stick to doing what was right and good over what was more attractive and appealing. For attempting to adhere to righteousness, I had earned its protection in return. Can I ever forget this? Never!

Every word that Bhagavan utters is the gospel truth. If only we adhere to it, we can enjoy ultimate freedom from worries and anxiety. Thank you Swami for guiding me to follow my *dharma*.

Dear reader, we are sure, you too might have been through similar situations in your life and been faced with dilemmas which made you take rather tough but morally right decisions, which later filled you with a great sense of satisfaction and inner contentment. Please do share such inspiring anecdotes with us at h2h@radiosai.org. This will not only help build an amazing collection of 'triumph of the conscience' stories but also will embolden others to take to this path with greater determination.

SERIAL ARTICLES

SHIRDI SAI PARTHI SAI

Part - 36

(Continued from the previous issue)

ACT XI - SCENE 4

Sathya goes to the well to fetch water. There He sees an old man struggling to draw water. There are many people already there but no one is making any effort to help the old man.

SATHYA *[to a lady near the well]*: That poor old man is struggling to draw water. Could you not help?

LADY: If You are so full of concern, why don't You draw for that man?

SECOND LADY: Leave that boy alone and pour water into this vessel.

SATHYA: Grandpa, you step aside.....Move over, and I'll draw.

Sathya draws water for the old man.

OLD MAN: May You live long and be happy!

A LADY: My dear boy, can You give me also some water?

SATHYA: Certainly mother.

Draws water for the lady.

LADY: May You enjoy a long and happy life!

SATHYA: The strong must always help the weak; only then will God help you.

SCENE 5

The scene is again the Uravakonda High School. Raju has been made the class leader on account of His exemplary conduct. He is now in the class, cleaning the blackboard in advance of the commencement of the class.

A BOY: Raju, why are You cleaning the board?

SATHYA: I want to show how a class leader must set an example thorough his behaviour and actions. That is why I come ahead of everyone else to clean. For students, the classroom is the temple. Only if it is clean will our minds and thoughts be sacred, and the Goddess of Learning bless us.

Soon, more boys come into the class. Sathya is wearing a white cap. One of the boys seizes the cap, and it gets passed around as Sathya tries to get it back. Despite Sathya's repeated requests, the cap keeps getting passed around.

SATHYA: Gaffar Khan, give back my cap....givehere....Hey, give it back.....give.....Shyam, return My cap...give, I say!... Gopal, give back the cap.....Khan, My cap please!

KHAN: What will You do if I do not return?

SATHYA: I won't do anything. Khan, what will you do with My cap? You can only tease Me for a while and amuse yourself, isn't that so?

KHAN: Raju, don't You ever get angry?

SATHYA: No, Gaffar Khan. Anger is man's enemy number one. Anger promotes the spirit of vengeance, leading in turn to conflict, and evil deeds. Slowly, man becomes submerged in emotional turbulence. Mental agitation is like an invisible fire; it will slowly but surely consume man. That is why I keep far away from anger.Khan, if having My cap makes you happy, keep it.

KHAN: Raju, You are just a student like me; yet, how nobly You speak! Here's Your cap.....I have a request!

SATHYA: What is it?

KHAN: We have had our fill of sugar candy and such other sweets that You give us. Right now I feel like eating Mysore Pak! Will You give me some?

SATHYA: O yes!

Sathya materialises Mysore Pak.

KHAN: Mysore Pak, Mysore Pak!!

BOY: Raju, will You give me a guava?

SATHYA: Certainly!

Sathya materialises a guava.

A BOY: Wow, a guava!

ANOTHER BOY: Raju, You gave him a guava; how about an orange for me?

SATHYA: Definitely!

Sathya materialises an orange.

BOY: Look! Orange! Orange!!

Boys surround Sathya and clamour for all sorts of things. At this stage, the Teacher enters.

TEACHER: Silence, SILENCE! What's all this noise? Is this a market place? Why are all of you crowding around Sathyam?

BOY: Sir, Raju is materialising sugar candy from thin air!

TEACHER: *[sarcastically]* Oh, sugar candy is it? Not tender coconut? Creating from thin air? What kind of a joke is this?

BOY: Sir, I'm not making this up; it really is true!

TEACHER: True is it?.....Sathyam, come here..... It seems You are creating things out of thin air! Let's see, how about creating a fruit for me?

Sathya creates a fruit. The Teacher is stunned.

TEACHER: No, no! Not this..... I want a custard apple, custard apple!

Sathya creates a custard apple; the teacher is stunned even more.

SCENE 6

Seshama Raju's house . Seshama walks in and is greeted by his wife Suseela.

SESHAMA: Sathyam.....Hey Sathyam! Where is He? I can't see Him.

SUSEELA: He said that He is going to meet His friends. It's an hour since He went. He'll be back soon.....

Sathya enters.

SUSEELA: Look! He is here!

SESHAMA: Sathyam, examinations are approaching; what's the meaning of all these games? If You don't stay at home and study hard, You will not pass in the English examination. Remember, You are now in a High School and not in the Puttaparthi Elementary School. Study hard!

SATHYA: I already know all the lessons. Without any further study, I can answer well.

SESHAMA: This is not like materialising things with magic and Mantras! Study! Only if You study hard can You really grasp.

SATHYA: I am not creating things. For Creation, God is the cause. Goddess Saraswati has showered Her Grace on Me. So, words will automatically flow from My pen.

SESHAMA: Is that so? Tomorrow when You write the exams, we will know how much Goddess Saraswati has favoured You! Increasingly, Your speech lacks meaning. You seem to think that You Yourself are God! You must listen to what elders say and not argue.

SATHYA: I am not arguing. I am just expressing My faith and belief.

SESHAMA: Your faith is Yours, and my anguish is mine!

SCENE 7

It is the day of the examination. Sathya comes to School and finds two of His classmates sitting under a tree. These two boys share the same desk with Him, and sit on either side. One of them is Ramesh and the other is Mahesh.

SATHYA: What's this? Why are you both still sitting here? Are you not going to the examination hall?

RAMESH: Raju, we are not going to write the examination! We are going home!!

MAHESH: No matter how much we study, we cannot remember anything!

RAMESH: If we do not answer properly in the examination, the teachers will have a poor opinion of us.

MAHESH: Raju, we are going home!

SATHYA: Listen, staying away from the exams after coming to School is not correct. Answer the questions for which you know the answer and leave the rest to Me. Listen to Me. Trust Me, and I will take care of everything.

BOYS: Alright Raju.

SCENE 8

The scene is the examination hall; the room is the classroom but the seating order is different. Sathya is well separated from Ramesh and Mahesh. The examination has commenced; the question paper has been distributed to the candidates.

TEACHER: First read all the questions carefully and then write proper answers. If any of you tries to copy, I'll skin you alive! If you know the answer, write; otherwise, sit quietly in your place. No one is allowed to get out till the final closure bell rings. Now start writing!

Teacher moves around, and watches the boys writing.

TEACHER: [to a boy looking at the teacher] What are you staring at my face for?!... Look at the paper!! ..Hm, continue!

Sathya embarks on a Divine drama! He is about to help His friends. Meanwhile, those two boys are completely stumped; they are unable to answer the questions. But they have the faith that Sathya would somehow come to their rescue. Sathya starts writing but quickly folds up the sheets. The teacher thinks Sathya is unable to answer the questions and is going to submit a blank answer sheet.

TEACHER [thinks]: What's this? It is only five minutes since the exams started, and instead of answering the questions, Raju has written His name, folded the paper and kept it under the pad!... Why bother?!

The final bell rings; boys have to hand over the answer papers to the teacher and go out. Everyone does so. Sathya too hands over the answer book and goes out. He has given three answer books, not one! The other two are those supposed to be those of Ramesh and Mahesh. The answers in those books are in the handwriting of those two students! The teacher sees Sathya going out. He instinctively feels that something strange is going on but does not know what it is.

People may wonder: "Is what Sathya did correct?" This question looks at the matter in a purely worldly sense. Where God is concerned, such an analysis is meaningless. God will shower His Grace on anyone, at any time, and in any manner He wants. He is not bothered about worldly yardsticks. He is concerned only about the faith the devotee has in Him and the Love that the devotee has for Him. If faith and love are present, God is ready to anything. This is the important lesson that Sathya communicated to the world through this most unusual episode.

GITA FOR CHILDREN - Part 38
(Continued from the previous issue)

Chapter 18

1. Arjuna says to Krishna, 'Lord, You have been very kind to tell me many things. As I understand it, I have to act, I have to be detached, and I also have to sacrifice. But I am still a bit confused. Somehow, all these requirements appear to me to be mutually contradictory. For example, if I plunge into action, I become fully involved, emotionally. How then can you expect me to be detached?'
2. Krishna laughs and says, 'Arjuna, you are just like most of the devotees. They barely listen and that too with just one ear. So they hardly remember anything of what I say, and also understand very little. Looks like you need one more revision. But note this is the very last time. Everyone is itching to fight, and we can't postpone war too long.'
3. 'You must make a clear distinction between attitude and form. You seem to think that only a *Sannyasi* wearing ochre robes and all that can be detached. Detachment is an attitude and ochre robe is part of a particular appearance. Attitude and appearances need not always go together.'
4. 'There may be a person who is dressed like a *Sannyasi* but does that mean he is detached internally? Mental detachment – that is the important factor. Why do you think a *Sannyasi* alone can be detached mentally? Why can't you, a soldier, be detached likewise?'
5. Arjuna protests and says, 'Krishna, how is that possible? I have a wife and children. Are you asking me to abandon them all?'
6. Krishna counters, 'Did I ask you to? When did I say that you must abandon your duty to your family? When did I ask you not to love the members of your family?'
7. Arjuna continues to argue and says, "Krishna, that precisely is my point! In one breath You are asking for detachment, and in the very next You say love your family! Are these not contradictory instructions?'
8. Krishna sighs and replies, 'OK, I see your problem. You are getting mixed up because you are interpreting My advice in a purely worldly manner. You have to analyse at a much higher level than you are doing at present.'
9. 'To start with, you should not imagine that a man who has renounced is like a hard rock or a dry twig. He can be detached and yet be full of Love and Compassion.'
10. Arjuna is surprised and asks, 'How is that possible?'

11. Krishna replies, 'Hold on! I am coming precisely to that point! Now, have you not heard Me say, "All are One. Be alike to everyone?" In the case of the person who suffers from attachment, he certainly loves his family, though perhaps in a worldly sort of way. But what about others? Does he love them like he does the members of his own family? Never!'

12. Arjuna interjects, 'Krishna! Be reasonable, how is that ever possible?'

13. Krishna replies, 'Why not? Just look at Me. Don't I Love all? Am I not the same to everyone? Don't dismiss this by saying, "Oh, You are different," etc. Everyone, yourself included, can emulate Me in loving all and being alike to all. No question about that; just that most people don't want to. They say, "What's there in it for me?" This is the bane of humanity! Selfishness, utter selfishness!'

14. 'So you see Arjuna, you can do your duty, you can love all, and you can also serve all. Do all this without fear or favour. Regard everyone as just yourself. When you are thirsty, you have a drink. When you see someone else thirsty, imagine that you are thirsty yourself and give that person some water. See how happy that person becomes. Feel that happiness and become happy yourself. It is not at all difficult. See Me in all and help all. People don't try this simple method and on top of it give all sorts of lame excuses for not trying!'

15. 'This brings Me to the subject of action and the various ways in which it can be performed. You see Arjuna, in the end, it all boils down to action. What one must take care is to engage in proper action, all the time. That is what living life properly is all about.'

16. 'Thinking is a kind of action – it is action at the mental level. Speech is another kind of action – it is action at the verbal level. Obviously, one cannot think one thing and say quite the opposite; you understand that of course. And finally there is physical action carried out using the body.'

17. 'Associated with each type just mentioned, are five factors. They are: 1) The overall personality of the doer, 2) the doer's body, 3) the doer's senses, 4) the physical effort put in by the doer, and 5) Destiny. Yes, in the ultimate analysis, it is Destiny that decides who will do what, when, where and why.'

18. 'It is common to recognise and accept the role of the first four of the above, but not everyone concedes the role of Destiny. When they are successful, such people take all the credit, but when failure haunts them, they blame it on God! It is all due to attachment to one's body, also called body-consciousness or ego. True renunciation is giving up this attachment and body-consciousness.'

19. 'A short while ago, you said that you did not want to fight. Why? You argued that fighting meant that you would have to kill your cousin, your grandfather and so on. Your cousin is your cousin on account of your body. Similarly Bhishma is your grandfather on account of a bodily relationship. True, these relationships exist and must be respected, but only up to a point.'

When that limit is crossed, you must no longer allow such relationships to come in the way of the duty you are required to perform.'

20. 'The duty dictated to you by the *Atma* overrides every other consideration. In other words, God must always be priority number one. If father comes in between you and God, God must be followed and not the father. This precisely is the lesson that the story of Prahalada and Hiranyakashipu teaches. So it is in every case.'

21. Arjuna pleads, 'Krishna, please make it simple! Tell me in simple language; how a person without body-consciousness as You call it, and faced with the problem I am having, would act?'

22. Krishna replies, 'Well, such person would say, "I am a soldier because Destiny has willed it be so. That very same Destiny has brought me here to fight on the side of *Dharma*. True, over there I see my *Guru*, grandfather, cousins, etc. But all those relationships are connected with the body. *Dharma* is God and God is *Dharma*. Therefore, my duty to *Dharma* overrides all other considerations. If I have to fight all my relatives for the sake of *Dharma*, then so be it. Destiny has decided this to be my role, and I cannot back out.'"

23. 'Arjuna, it all comes back to knowing clearly what your duty is and then performing it to the best of your ability, without any other consideration, including of success, appreciation, reward and so forth.'

(To be continued)

WINDOW TO SAI SEVA

FROM 'GOD-FORSAKEN' TO GOD – BLESSED

The story of how the Sai youth of Andhra rescued a forgotten clan lost for centuries in the dense and dangerous woodlands of West Godavari District.

They did not cook cereals and pulses to sustain themselves; instead they filled their bellies with roots and shoots, flowers and fruits, supplemented with the fauna they hunted with their indigenously developed tools and equipments: bows and arrows, spears and shafts. They moved deep into the jungles, traversed mountain terrains, tamed animals and built shelters made of bamboos and branches. Completely in sync with nature, they became active when the sun rose and when it was dark, lay down on leaves and twigs. They knew no light other than the Sun, no music than of the birds and the breeze, no water than what flowed in the nearby stream and no clothes other than tattered rags. They lived in their own world - a little patch of land cleared and smeared where they built their flimsy huts and hung on with their kids, pets and meager belongings. Their every breath was in harmony with Mother Nature.

Did you think we are describing primitive man who lived in caves and forests centuries ago? What if we tell you, this is actually the scene of a hamlet just 20 kilometres away from a 21st century town swamped with TVs, mobile phones and what not. Are you shocked? Well, that was the case with the Sai Youth of Andhra Pradesh too. When they first heard of this hamlet that existed on a hill, cloistered in the middle of forests, that no man would dare plan to visit, they could not believe it could be true. But, when they finally reached the place, surmounting a multitude of challenges, of course, they were only stunned and shaken by the life of these people and their plight.

This is the story of Thanegudem, an obscure and 'God-forsaken' hamlet which few knew about, let alone wanted to help. But did God really forsake them? As you read along, you will know how His love reaches to even the remotest corners through mysterious ways and brings out transformations at all levels which are unimaginable.

A Lost Tribe is Found

It all began in April 2005 when the Sevalal volunteers of the West Godavari District of Andhra Pradesh conducted a mega medical camp in the Mothugudem forest area. As they served this community and struck a chord in their hearts with their selfless love, the villagers revealed some startling facts.

"Twenty kilometers from here," they said, "there exists a hamlet which is like an island, cut off from the rest of humanity. The tribals there do not converse with any strangers and live with bows and arrows, just like the early man on earth."

This was interesting news for the Sai Youth. They wanted to know more. "This place, called Thanegudem, comes under the 'Primitive Tribal Group' categorization," said the Tribal Project Officer present in the village.

The youth now wanted to visit this area at any cost because they knew the need for support and sustenance of the tribals, living in subhuman conditions with animals in the jungle, would be far greater than anybody else's. Bhagavan had always emphasized on serving the needy and they were more eager than ever to undertake this journey, however Herculean it may be.

The settlement, which was locked inside a deep forest, was palpably inaccessible by road and one had to walk through hills and boulders, wade through waters and rivulets, and trek through undulating terrains for a minimum of 20 kms to reach this obscure place on earth. There was no water on the way to quench the thirst or boards posted to say how far one was from the destination - even to say if one was on the right track! And the Youth knew that if they did not return well before sunset the same day, there was every chance of being trapped in the dense forest for the whole night. But emboldened by their faith in the Lord and raring to serve the most neglected, they embarked on this adventure.

Recalling their maiden trip, Sri Vasudeva Rao, a Sevalal, says, "The route through the dense forest, strewn with leaves and branches, was most difficult. It was almost impossible to keep track of the way. And taking one wrong direction meant getting lost in the thick jungle." After four hours of trekking through the rough terrain, which tested their tenacity to the hilt, they finally reached their destination - 'Thanegudem'. And what did they notice once they stepped in there? The inhabitants of the tiny hamlet of nine houses immediately hid behind the delicate doors of their huts! They looked confused about the 'alien' intrusion into their place of abode!

Living Precariously with Mother Nature

Only after the Sai Youth started talking to them lovingly and the tribal welfare officer, who accompanied the volunteers, explained clearly the purpose of their visit did the head of the tribe become reassured enough to speak to them. As the conversation ensued, the Youth discovered that they belonged to the 'Kondareddy' tribe and have been living in the forest for generations. It would be grossly fallacious to call their huts 'shelters' as it protected them from neither Sun nor rain, and in the night, they could, with ease, see the celestial spectacle of the stars while still remaining 'indoors'.

"We are 42 people living in 9 houses in this tribe," revealed the head of the tribe. They collected forest produce like honey, tamarind, *shikakai*, and bamboo products to carry on with their life; and whenever there was an opportunity hunted too and sought their food. It was Stone Age living next door to Software Age!

As the Youth began probing into their living conditions and problems, it was an agonizing experience. What struck them most was the menace of

poisonous insects of the forests which have, at times, taken the life of many members of the tribe. The innocent folk knew of no healthcare. Mention to them about doctors, and they look confused, having never heard the term before.

“There is no medical facility here for any injuries, medical problems or even deliveries. They rely on a midwife who is an elderly experienced lady in their group; and there have been many infant deaths due to lack of proper medical help,” says the Tribal Project Officer.

The Tribe Had No Knowledge of Cooking!

The hearts of Sai Youth sank seeing the pitiable condition of these ‘children of God’ living in the lap of Mother Nature. That people in such a destitute state still existed in Andhra Pradesh and they did not know about it, let alone better their living conditions, hurt them the most. “The first time we visited them, they did not have proper food and clothing, and wore only a loin cloth,” recalls Sri Ramesh, another Sevalal. **“We decided to give them food and groceries, but when we gave them rice, we were shocked. They just started eating the raw grains! They had no idea what cooking is all about!** It was absolutely astounding to see such people in the district of West Godavari, which is considered as one of the developed regions of the State.”

Dr. Bhaskar Rao, the District President of Sri Sathya Sai Organization, West Godavari District, says, “When we saw this area and the heart rending living conditions of its tiny populace, we felt this was a great opportunity bestowed on us by Bhagavan. He has been always instructing us to undertake sustainable development in the rural areas and we knew this is where Swami wants us to work.”

Rushing to Save an Emergency Case

Right from the time the team entered the hamlet, a nauseating stench, which seemed to pervade the whole place, made it difficult for them to breathe. When they enquired about this sickening smell, the only response from the tribals was silence. Determined to locate its source, the Youth moved in the direction of the origin of the odour, and finally when they reached the spot, the scene there made their stomachs churn. It was grotesque, to say the least.

A young boy sat helplessly in a corner of their colony, with bones exposed from below his knees, in the lower half of his legs. The worms, the puss and the infection breeding in his legs were the cause of the terrible reek.

“Due to an epileptic attack, this youngster had accidentally fallen into a fire from a tree and both his legs were afflicted with third degree burns,” said a member of the tribe on enquiry. Apparently, this had happened many months ago, but with absolutely no treatment given, his leg was now affected with gangrene at 4 or 5 places. And it was appalling to see hundreds of worms callously eating away his leg.

Immediately, the Youth sprung into action. To save this youngster, they decided, would be their first project in the hamlet. They pulled out the worms, cleaned his legs and provided first aid. And from the next day onwards, there were Youth trekking up and down the challenging 20 kms every day to nurse this young patient. "Each day I would remove hundreds of worms from his leg with the help of Sevadals," says the medical assistant who accompanied the Sai Youth. "Now, there are no more worms and his condition is definitely improving," he said a few weeks into this exercise. "But amputation of his limbs seemed to be the only way out to save him then," he continued. "And once it was done, it would mean a vegetable existence for him. He would have to depend on others for the rest of his life. Therefore, we determined to try our best to save his legs."

With fervent prayers for the young tribal and hope in their hearts, the Sevadals continued to provide first aid for many months. And by Divine Grace, the improvement in the youngster's condition was remarkable. In fact, it improved to such a stage that later, the Youth brought the youngster to Jangareddygudem, the nearest town, for a free skin grafting surgery. Now, the youngster, who was a sore in their group, smiles and walks like every other folk of his tribe, and does not know how to express his gratitude and joy to the Sai Volunteers. The Youth, in their hearts, were convinced beyond doubt, it was not them but Bhagavan's love which reached out to this neglected lad and performed the incredible healing.

Providing Complete Shelter

As they studied the plight of the tribals and understood the traumas and tragedies of their life, the Youth brainstormed and decided that the next course of action would be to provide proper shelters to these men of the jungle, which could protect them from venomous worms and toxic creatures, apart from saving them from the onslaught of the scorching sun and hard-hitting rain. They prayed to Bhagavan to guide them through the whole endeavour.

Later, once the plans were ready, they carried the proposal with them and went to the presence of Bhagavan, who was then in Brindavan, Bangalore. **Swami's response on seeing the pictures of the tribals and the idea of the project, was overwhelming, to say the least. The Lord would eagerly and inquisitively ask about the location of the forest many times during their stay and would even go to the extent of excitedly saying, "Give Me the opportunity to do this project."** For the Youth, it was yet another manifestation of the infinite and overflowing concern of the Lord for the forlorn and the forgotten. From Bhagavan, they learnt how eager and zestful they should be and march to serve with confidence and compassion.

Having secured His blessings, for the Youth, now there was now no-stopping them. They were assured that 'Thanegudem' will soon be transformed into 'Tana gudem' (His village)!

A Pathway of Selfless Service

With right earnest they began to execute the plan for constructing the houses. But to their utter dismay, there arose another grave obstacle. The construction of houses would need bricks, cement, sand, asbestos, etc. to be dropped at this remote hamlet. But how on earth were they going to transport these materials when trekking to this hamlet itself was a Herculean ordeal? Therefore, they decided to convince the tribals to relocate to the foot of the hill where it would be easier to build the houses. But when they went to the tribal folk with this proposal, the answer they received blew them over. It was truly an eye-opener.

“This land is our mother,” the tribal head said. “We have been living here for generations and will never give up this sacred earth at any cost. If you wish to construct houses for us, you can do so here. Otherwise, we do not need them.” Saying so, the elder man knelt down, bowed his head and reverentially kissed the ground.

It was a defining incident which demonstrated how great the values of these simple folk of the forest were, which is often missing in the ‘highly civilised’ men of the modern society. The youth touched, by their devotion to their Motherland, decided to construct the houses in Thanegudem itself, come what may. There was no way to go about it except first laying a 20 km road to the hamlet, which could enable jeeps and lorries to reach the difficult location.

“It was such a challenge to construct the road,” recalls Dr. Bhaskar Rao. “The rains made it even more difficult. The half constructed road was washed away when it poured. But we reconstructed it and in a few days it was ready for vehicles to commute. Though it was a mud road, it enabled construction material to reach the settlement.”

Citing one challenging instance while construction, Dr. Bhaskar Rao, says, **“The cost of the fly-ash bricks was Rs. 6 each. But the transportation cost for each brick to reach the destination was Rs. 8! The impediments were immense, but the dedicated work of 25 Sevadals from Jangareddygudem and Polavaram, who visited this site daily ensured that the construction proceeded at a fast pace.”**

Their First Homes - Gifts from the Lord

By His grace, in a matter of few weeks, the houses were ready and on June 7, 2007, the *Gruha Pravesam* (house warming) ceremony for all these families was celebrated with great joy and fervor. All the houses were painted lovingly by the Youth of West Godavari district. They also provided the tribals with provisions which would suffice for a month. In order to ensure that they have drinking water next to their homes, a bore well was dug and a hand pump was installed. Four big solar lamps would now dispel the darkness in the hamlet.

The ITDA PO visited the village after this function and said, **“Neither the government nor any other voluntary organization has ever attempted an activity like this in such a remote area. It is only the Sai Organization**

which has not just attempted but also achieved such a phenomenal task.”

Who Was Serving Whom? – Insightful Reflections

Congratulate the Youth on this commendable job and they say, “Bhagavan uses us as His instruments to accomplish such tasks. Just like He advises us to sit in a calm place after every Darshan and reflect on the uplifting experience, every Seva activity too, when contemplated upon reveals many profound insights and deepens our understanding of life and our role in His Mission.

“Why does Bhagavan make us undertake such tasks in such a remote hamlet? Was it to provide better homes for the tribals or to bring about a transformation in them? Or, is it just an awakening spiritual exercise for those of us who think we have alleviated the suffering of the poor?

“These tribals had been surviving in such pitiable conditions for many generations. **True, now they have houses. But who has been taking care of them for all these years? Who has protected them and stood by their side in the face of calamities? If His unseen Hand is their only succor, then what great difference have we made in their lives?**

“Moreover, on seeing their way of life, one wonders if modern man is actually enslaved by the modern gadgets and comforts. Do we really need all this opulence to lead a happy life? Perhaps, in the pursuit of comforts, we have only multiplied our woes.”

The reflections of the Youth were as profound as their selfless seva offered to the tribals. They say, “It seems as though Bhagavan manifested Thanegudem only to broaden our perspective of life and make us realize the transient nature of the modern day comforts and fleeting pleasures. The episode of the youngster who suffered from third degree burns also taught us valuable lessons. The Lord used him as an instrument to lessen our attachment to the body which is ephemeral. In the end it is difficult to decipher who was serving whom? Did we help the youngster or did he serve us by opening our eyes to a new understanding of the Truth of life.”

Every act of the Lord, every activity inspired by Him, has always significances and subtleties which unravel when we think deeper and look within more closely. Swami has any number of times said that the purpose of Seva is not to alleviate the suffering of the deprived, but more importantly to annihilate the ugly head of the ego that pops up at every available opportunity within us. And the only way to completely decimate this ego is to serve more, with greater sincerity and more selflessness. What the Andhra Sai Youth have done is truly a great demonstration of how this can be done.

PRASHANTI DIARY

29 November, 2007: Nizamabad Musical Dance - 'Deva Devuni Deenajana Seva'

Swami had permitted the devotees from the Nizamabad district of Andhra Pradesh to put up a cultural programme as part of their Parthi Yatra on November 29. Swami came out at about 4:40 pm and completed the darshan rounds. Then alighting near the interview room, He went in. At about 5:25 pm, there was a lot of hustle and bustle as it became evident that Swami was coming out to sit for the programme. The district president presented Swami with the programme schedule and Swami studied it with all interest. The customary lamps and flowers were brought to Him and patiently as ever Swami blessed the more than fifteen or so people who came to Him. A white marble Shivalingam was also brought to Him and very sweetly Swami placed the bunch of flowers on the lingam! It was then that another charming incident took place.

A little girl, barely 3 feet in height, came forward with a bunch of roses. She stretched herself to her full "fingertips to toes" height to offer Him the roses. Swami flashed a beautiful smile in appreciation of her efforts. Finally, identical twins came up to make offerings to Swami to mark the beginning of the programme. Swami treated them with "identical" love and showered holy grains on them. The programme that began was entitled, "Deva Devuni Deenajana Seva."

There was an opening dance which was followed by a scene where the compere of the programme, a school teacher, was introduced. She narrates to the children of her class how the Lord came in different ages of time to serve people. In the Treta age, it was in the form of Rama as He redeemed Ahalya and Sabari. Then it was Lord Krishna who demonstrated that 'once His friend, always His friend', as He washed the feet of His dear Sudama. Shirdi Baba too always insisted on service to the poor and needy. It concluded on a note of wonder and appreciation at what Swami has been doing. The whole programme was interspersed with dances and at the end there was a beautiful formation.

Swami said that He would go down and pose for a photograph with the children. The innermost desire of every human being gets expressed in the act of a group photograph. To stand close to the Lord - near and dear to Him - and freeze that moment for eternity should be the goal of every being. Swami got up and slowly descended the steps to go to the group. He stood and smiled as group photos were taken. He then slowly came back on stage. He congratulated the actors. All of them kept falling at His feet. Then He permitted them to sing out a few songs. After that, He received Aarthi and left.

5 November, 2007 – Orissa Sai Youth Pilgrimage, Day One

The first week of November will always remain ingrained in the heart and memory lanes of 1400 youth from the length and breadth of the state of Orissa, in North East India, who had gathered in Prasanthi Nilayam. It was a feast of nectarine flow of Divine Love. Their pilgrimage, they said, “starts from our hearts and ends too in our hearts – a journey from I to We to He”. They celebrated it with glimpses of cultural excellences from different regions of Orissa, in the immediate Divine Presence. Accompanying the youth were many cabinet ministers and senior bureaucrats from the state Government of Orissa.

A lot of preparation and hard work preceded this glorious event. The Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organization, Orissa, had organized several youth programmes for the youth at various places in cities, towns and villages of the state.

On the morning of November 5, thousands of youth, with hope in their hearts and prayers on their lips, sat in the Sai Kulwant Hall awaiting the Lord. When the chants of the Vedic hymns rented the air and His car glided by, the Benevolent Lord looked at the youth from the window of the car and beckoned them. Among the youth were also a few former students of Bhagavan’s University and with excitement and joy, they showed a card to Swami seeking His blessings for commencing the programs. The card was a portrait of Bhagavan with the program under leaf. As He was looking at His portrait, Swami asked, “How many of you have come?” They replied, “Swami, we are 1400 youth on this pilgrimage to You.” The Lord replied, “*Chala santhosham*” (Very happy). Then the State President of Sathya Sai Organizations, Orissa, Prof. Harekrushna Das along with the State youth co-ordinator, Sri Ashok Hota showed the program details to Swami which He accepted and blessed. The youth also took the opportunity to present to Swami a souvenir “Sai Katha” made specially for the occasion. Swami gracefully blessed this too and saw through the pages with a smile on His beatific face.

Orissa is famous for its famed Rath Yatra (Chariot Festival) that happens every year in the pilgrim town of Puri when the statues of Lord Jagannath along with those of His elder brother Balarama and younger sister Subhadra are taken out in a grand procession to enable thousands of devotees to see the Lord to their heart’s content at least once a year. “But in Prashanti,” the devotees from Orissa, say, “Every day is a Rath Yatra with the Lord of Lords, our Sai Jagannath, coming out in His ‘Car Chariot’ to grant His Divine Darshan to every soul.”

As the Orissa Youth basked on that beautiful Darshan, a few former students of Bhagavan’s Educational Institutions from the state of Orissa, also presented to Him the details of a small initiative they have undertaken called “Sai Anandam” (Sai’s Bliss). It’s a home for the destitute and orphans started four months ago having 8 little boys near the capital city of Bhubaneswar. Swami enquired eagerly about this work and seemed very pleased. He, then, blessed them lovingly to go ahead with zeal in this endeavour.

In the evening of November 5, nearly 5000 devotees from Orissa had filled up a large part of the Kulwant Hall and the stage had been set for their cultural presentation. After completing His Darshan rounds, Swami took in some of the people involved in the Convocation drama (performed by His students on November 22 every year) for an interview. He came out at 5:10 pm and everyone was eagerly awaiting Him. Swami, ever gracious that He is, smilingly came out and took position at the centre of the stage and asked for the proceedings to begin. At first there was a theme song that expressed the spontaneous feelings of love and reverence oozing in the hearts of the Orissa youth towards Swami.

After the initial song, the Drama that began was entitled – “The Secret of Happiness” depicting the eternal pursuit of happiness by mankind. It brought to light the Truth that permanent joy as an end can never be achieved through means of pursuing happiness that are temporary and ephemeral.

The story revolved around a family where the patriarch, who is the grandfather of the child hero, is an aspiring politician nursing the ambition of winning a seat in the next election. Both his sons are readying themselves for lucrative and limelight-capturing careers, one in athletics and the other in research, which, they feel, will make them the happiest persons on earth. Soon they all achieve their goals but sadly find that happiness and contentment are totally absent in their lives. But the grandson, in spite of any hardship or difficulty, seems to have a permanent smile plastered on his face – the smile of a contented soul. He enlightens the elders of the fact that bliss lies in God alone who is the indweller of all beings. Service is the sure shot way to tap this source of bliss that lies within. And the inspired family begins its journey along these lines. The scenes were interspersed with beautiful songs and dances. One of the striking songs had the line “Khusiyan! Khusiyan! - aye kaisi hoti hai?” meaning “Happiness? Or what is happiness and where does one find it?” It beautifully summarized the essence of the drama.

Swami, who was so pleased with the performance of the Youth, came down the stage, spoke to a few of them and then blessed all the participants with the coveted group photograph. But the programme for the evening was not over yet. After Swami returned to the stage, began another scintillating performance, with His divine permission.

It was an amazing dance performance called “Gotipua dance”. “Gotipua” is an Oriya etymon, meaning, “a single boy”. This dance form, which is a recast of Odissi Dance (the famous dance form of Orissa), is performed by boys who dress themselves as dancing girls.

Patronised by King Rama Chandra in the 17th century, since then this dance form has become an integral part of the temple culture of Lord Sri Jagannath at Puri, Orissa. Performed by 6-10 young boys, the themes of this dance generally revolve around the Divine love of Lord Krishna.

After the dancers took their positions in the centre of Sai Kulwant Hall, Swami gently nodded and then the sound of *Mrudanga*, cymbals, harmonium, flute and the voice of the accompanying singer reverberated to the anklet sounds from the feet of the dancers. The dancers demonstrated great feats of acrobatics constructing multi-shaped and multi-storied human pyramids which were so seamlessly and gracefully weaved into the dance. The audience was left spellbound and the applause never seemed to die down. Every next minute it was an ever louder approbation as the dancers so effortlessly created another remarkable formation or feat. It was truly a sight to behold, a feast for the soul, a festival of colours and sounds, drums and costumes, dances and choruses that was the reflection of the rich culture and tradition of Orissa. For the onlooker it looked so physically exhausting and seemed to push the children's strength, flexibility, endurance and awareness to the limit, yet on the children's faces were spontaneous smiles and they were performing as if it were as easy as breathing! You could see they were ecstatic! Until now they had performed in front of the Lord's idol but now He was sitting in flesh and blood in front of them.

The dancers concluded their performance to a thunderous applause. There was no soul that did not join his/her hands to applaud the young artists. But for the children, the greatest moment arrived when Bhagavan called them near and with a bright smile on His face started gifting them saris! But the mysterious and unique ways He blesses His children is what makes His love so special. The all-knowing Lord, next asked for white safari suits and again blessed every boy with the second gift from His Hand. So, one gift was for their roles and the other was a token of love from the lord to his children. But Swami did not stop with this that evening. He was at His love-showering best and called all the performers to sit near Him for a group picture. The dancer's performance was stirring enough to even win a group photograph for the drama actors too! The Lord was all the while speaking to the young actors lovingly, patting their cheeks.

And then He gave the teachers and the instrumentalists another kind of prize and appreciation. He beckoned them forward and asked the young singer to sing bhajans. "Jaya Jaya Ganapathi Deva..." filled the air and as the bhajan reached a crescendo, Bhagavan's eyes, radiating so much compassion and love, were fixed on this boy. It was a look suffused with a million mothers' love. Only the Divine knows the destiny of every soul. This young singer, a 14-year old boy, was actually a destitute orphan who used to survive by singing and begging inside Indian trains. It was during such routine begging round in one such train that the Gotipua dance teacher heard him and recognized his latent talent. Inspired from a voice within, the teacher not only brought him home but also adopted him as his son. From that day, the orphan had a family and a music teacher too. The Lord, for whom every life is an open-book, was perhaps too happy and showering His choicest blessings through those endearing looks to the talented youngster. And the singer, was of course, overjoyed singing in front of His Maker, Master and Redeemer.

This is just one tale and when you saw the eyes of every performer there, you knew each one had a moving tale and in front of Swami, their hearts were all

laid bare. The compassionate Lord blessed them all again, asked for prasadam to be distributed, accepted *arathi* and finally retired for the day.

6 and 7 November, 2007 – Orissa Sai Youth Pilgrimage, Day Two and Three

On the evening of November 6, the Sai Kulwant Hall looked like the Sanctum Sanctorum of Lord Jagannath of Puri. The very name “Jagannath” signifies ‘The Lord of the Universe’. A beautiful shrine with the idols of Lord Jagannath, His elder brother Lord Balabhadra and sister Goddess Subhadra was created for the drama “Bhakti Dasia” to be staged by the Bal Vikas children of Orissa.

The programme started after Swami came onto the stage after spending a few minutes in the interview room. The story of Bhakta Dasia has inspired the people of Orissa for generations to shape their lives on the twin bed rocks of Fatherhood of God and Brotherhood of Man.

Dasia Bauri, a poor man born in a low caste with no knowledge of scriptures was one such devotee of Lord Jagannath, who could win His Grace by incessantly chanting the Divine Name. Scorned and ridiculed by society, he suffered untold misery and yet remained steadfast in his devotion to the Lord. His pure love and intense longing at last melted the Lord’s heart and He accepted his *Naivedya* (offering) of a coconut fruit directly from the hands of the village priest who disdainfully had offered the same to the Lord given to him by Dasia standing outside the Temple.

From the dualistic state of Lord and the devotee, Dasia reached the non-dualistic state of Oneness with the Lord through his devotion. He saw the Lord pervade the entire universe, even in the good served to him by his wife. When his devotion to Lord Jagannath reaches its sublime heights, the Lord out of His infinite compassion vouchsafes to him His much coveted *Darshan*, clears all his doubts and invites him to visit the pilgrim town Puri to witness His festival.

The realistic portrayal of the story by the children moved Swami as well as the audience. And as the curtain drew over the drama, another drama unfolded. But now, it was no show. This was a love story happening then and there between Lord Sai and His children. As the actors of the drama sat in final formation after their performance, Swami called the little girl who played the role of little Krishna in the “Bhakti Dasia” drama. And then, with a wave of His hand, created a golden necklace with a locket which had “Om” inscribed on it. The child was so perplexed that she took back steps as Swami beckoned her. She couldn’t believe Swami was calling her! When she finally went near Swami, she innocently asked “Swami, why are u giving this to me?”. The loving Lord, the Indeweller of every heart, looked into her eyes, smiled and said, “My dear, I am giving you my life.”

And then He walked down the steps to bless the children with group photographs. The Bal Vikas children could not believe their good fortune; their

tiny hearts overflowed with emotion and you could see tears streaming down from every cheek. The Lord was very touched and spoke lovingly to each of them and cheered them up with His warm love. He blessed them saying, "Be Happy, Be Happy." But, the innocents with their unsullied love couldn't hold back their flood of tears. And now you could see moist eyes in the audience too. The love that suffused that evening was extraordinary.

The enormous amount of work and preparation that had gone into the drama was evident in the sets, music, costumes, dialogue, recording, and every aspect of the presentation. It was a united effort and every one, which included a Muslim sound recordist, had worked feeling the cosmic rhythm of His love swelling in their hearts.

After this drama was a tribal folk dance called 'Ghumura'. The folklore of rural life occupies a vivacious and scintillating stand in the annals of India's rich cultural tapestry. The simple inhabitants lead a rustic life of eternal communion with the nature and glorify their guardian God and Goddesses with dance. 'Ghumura' dance is a centuries old tradition of extolling the Mother Goddess in the form of dance and songs.

The youth in exotic costumes that reflected their association with nature had small drums tied onto their waists. They broke into a ritual that was a celebration of the Avatars from times immemorial. Through their songs, expressions, postures and formations they exhibited the ten incarnations of Lord Vishnu. And then when they depicted the Avatar of the Kali age, Bhagwan Sri Satya Sai Baba, the devotees ruptured into claps.

The rhythmic drum beats with the vigorous dance movements reverberated in the entire Sai Kulwant Hall. After the program Swami distributed safari suits to all the dancers like the ever bountiful Mother Goddess. After blessing all, Bhagavan took arathi and the curtain drew for that day.

On the evening of November 7, the youth took His blessings for presenting the 'Sai Symphony' program. It was a musical offering to the Lord composed of songs which exalts the Lord and proves that there is no greater joy than singing His glory. Their theme song was a spontaneous feeling of Love and reverence oozing out from the hearts of Sai Youths of Orissa.

Apart from the programs being conducted in the divine presence of Swami in the Sai Kulwant Hall, the Youth also had morning and evening sessions conducted in the Human Values building at Prashanti Nilayam campus where distinguished elders like Sri G.V. Sathyanarayana (former All India President of Sai Organisations), Sri B. N. Narasimha Murthy, Sri Sanjay Sahni and Sri Rangarajan of the Sri Sathya Sai University shared their experiences and inspired the youth. Many of the youth also undertook seva activities inside the ashram, Super Speciality Hospital Campus and the International Centre for Sports for five days.

On the evening of November 8, as all the youth sat for His Darshan, they had a beautiful and huge ornate card which said, "Thank You, Sai Maa." When

Swami came, He looked at it and smiled. The youth said, "Swami, how can we thank you for showering on the youth of Orissa so much of love and grace. We all are very happy." Then Swami too said, "I am also very happy."

In the same night, an amazing incident occurred. As the programme for the youth that night ended a little late, some could not partake dinner as the canteen was closed by then. So they went to bed on empty stomach. But around 10 pm an unknown person reached the shed with steaming hot rice, dal, etc. Handing over the food to one co-coordinator, he said, "Some youths have not taken dinner and are hungry. Swami cannot sleep if they are hungry. Please, distribute this among them." About 12 to 15 youths shared the meal with all joy and thanked the Lord for taking care of their smallest of needs. Even astounding fact is this: One youth amongst this group, as a practice used to fast on Thursdays and eat only fruits in the night. As he was wondering if he should also be eating the rice-dal, to his utter surprise and delight the packet handed over to him also had two fruits! Indeed the ways of the Lord are absolutely unfathomable.

As the youth pilgrimage came to a close in Prasanthi, the Youth knew that a new pilgrimage has to begin now when they return - a pilgrimage of service and love to the homes and hearts of many who are deprived in their towns and villages.

9 November 2007: Diwali Celebrations

The Kulwant Hall was bursting at its seams on November 9. People seemed to have flocked from everywhere to celebrate the festival of Lights with their beloved Swami. November 10 also happened to be the Gujarati New Year day and so discernibly there was a Gujarati bias in the crowd. Bhajans began at 9:00 am and it appeared as though Swami may not come out to grant darshan at all. But at 9:15 am, there was a tremendous wave of excitement as Swami came out and slowly moved through the people in the Porte. There were smiles everywhere and they blossomed like sunflowers do with the rising of the sun. The beautiful property of these sunflowers is that, they start the day facing the sun and keep moving along with the sun throughout the day and at the end of the day, they are still looking at him. Watching the devotees look at their beloved Swami, one cannot but help thinking of the beautiful, bright and budding sunflowers!

Swami completed the rounds and then descended near the interview room. He was about to go inside, but then He suddenly paused. Diwali morning must be lit up and what a better way to do that than grant more darshan! On the wheelchair sofa, Swami came slowly down the portico. He was beaming and smiling. Now the progression of the "sunflower blossoms" was very evident for one and all to see. From the portico, Swami went for another darshan round in the direction opposite to the standard one. He was collecting letters and looking at people on both the sides. The East Prashanti balconies began to swell with ladies, mostly those too old to sit long hours on the floor. They were having an aerial view of Swami's divine darshan! The thrill was obvious on their faces. Swami moved through the gents side and then, cutting

through the students, He moved on to the ladies side too. He granted darshan from close quarters and after going through the whole path, returned to the bhajan hall for the bhajans which concluded with Aarthi after a while.

The schedule for the evening was a programme by the youth and Bal Vikas students from the state of Gujarat. Swami came out at about 4:30 pm. He completed the darshan rounds and as soon as He got down near the interview room, He enquired from the Brindavan campus warden about the preparation for the Convocation Drama to be staged by His students on November 22. He then took him and a few other boys to the interview room to guide them on the drama. At 5:35 pm, Swami came out and asked for the programme to begin. The formalities (actually great chances in disguise) of the flowers and card offerings were completed. A cake was also brought up to Swami which He kindly cut and then the programme started, first with a song by the youth. This was followed by a dance on the glory of Bharat which was a colourful and grand spectacle.

The final presentation was a combo effort by the Bal Vikas and the youth. It was a drama depicting the right way to do service, and more importantly, brought out the true meaning of independence. India has become free in the political sense. But everybody is still a slave to the six vices of desire, anger, greed, attachment, pride and envy. True freedom can only be achieved when these are overcome. The drama portrayed how an NGO plans to shift its focus of activities from the village to the city in order to get more visibility. But when a flood destroys the village, the plight of the villagers moves the concerned officials. Further, the inspiration from the Sai workers to do service opens their eyes to the true meaning of Seva. Service needs no visibility and when done in the true sense, it escapes nobody's attention.

The drama was filled with many popular songs and well-choreographed dances. The final song and dance drew appreciative applause from the audience and the grand appreciation came from Swami when He materialized a gold chain for the actor playing the role of "Man". Swami then very graciously walked down to pose for group photographs with the Gujarat youth and the Bal Vikas children. After the pictures were taken, Swami blessed prasadam to be given to all present and finally granted His benediction in the form of Abhayahasta (raised Hands in blessing). After that, He received Aarthi and retired.

10-11 November 2007: Global Akhanda Bhajans

There was a lot of devotional fervour in the air in anticipation of the 24 hour Akhanda Bhajan that was scheduled to begin on Saturday, November 10, evening. Prashanti Nilayam in a few minutes would be transformed into the nucleus of a global *sadhana* in *namasmarana* which would continue through all the parts of the day and night. When Swami came out, it was very evident that the event would be a very special one. He was looking so beautiful and each of His smiles was so radiant. Swami completed His darshan rounds and then for a short while went into the interview room.

He came into the bhajan hall well in advance. He went around the bhajan hall suffusing everyone gathered with enthusiasm to participate in the bhajans about to begin. As the clock struck six, Swami lit the beautiful and big lamp set in the centre of the altar to mark the beginning of the global Akhanda bhajan. The Ganesha bhajan began with great gusto. A few bhajans later, Swami wanted to go out for granting darshan to the singing masses! Every path that existed in Kulwant Hall was traversed upon and every being that was present there was immersed in joy divine. Swami had said long ago, "This sugar mountain will not travel to feed the ants; the ants themselves can come here." Seeing Him that evening each one could feel that the compassion for the tiny ant had dissolved that resolution of the merciful Divine!

After the round, He came back into the bhajan hall. He sat, not in the traditional corner on the gents side, but right in the middle, next to the *Jyoti* (lamp) He had lit minutes ago. Litres of oil had been poured into the lamp for its night long vigil and it shone brilliantly. And beside the lamp was Swami - the ocean of Love in His Heart reflected in His beaming and bright face. As the bhajans progressed, the fervour doubled. Swami struck a divine pose and hearts surged with joy. If He would keep rhythm with His hands for the bhajans, the beat would echo in the clapping of the enthusiastic devotees. The bhajans continued alternating between the men's side and the ladies' side. At about 7:10 pm, Swami returned to Yajur Mandir.

With Swami's departure, people rose to leave. But many stayed on, digesting the joy of the multiple close darshans that had been so graciously conferred. *Shraddha* (Faith) and *Saburi* (Perseverance) are the only offerings that the Lord asks for. Those who offered these to Him tonight, He granted them a special blessing. At 8:15 pm, a time when everyone expects Swami to have retired, He showed that the Lord never rests. "*Mad Bhakta yatra Gaayanthi, thatra tishtaami Naarada*" (Oh Narada! I install Myself wherever my devotees sing my glory) the Lord had revealed to the great sage Narada. On His second visit in the evening, Swami suddenly came into the Kulwant Hall in the wheelchair sofa! Audible gasps and thrilled exclamations made their rounds as Swami went about granting all with the bounty of His darshan, slowly and calmly.

He, then, came into the bhajan hall and all the singers, especially, were ecstatic. As He sat for bhajans, He exchanged loving comments with some of the singers. After a very long time, one could see Swami out so late in the night. Swami sat till almost 9:00 pm before retiring. But as He went out, He promised, "I will be coming again."

Swami was there again in the next morning at 9:45 am. But those words inspired everyone to stay awake in anticipation of further blessings. The Lord's benediction is such that every endeavour with Him as the goal always finds fruition. However we seem to forget that and so He resorts to words of encouragement and allows everyone to experience the joy of making efforts. The night long vigil might have tired the bodies but the recharge the spirits got

is something that must be felt and cannot be adequately captured in words. Swami came in the wheelchair sofa once again and suddenly the bhajan singing became louder! The devotees thirst for their Lord. But if we just pause and ponder, the reality of how the Lord too hungers for His devotees will strike us. As He says, "Your bliss is my food."

It is so fascinating to see Swami seeing His devotees. He seems to look deep into them, sampling their thirst and purity. Once he tastes these qualities, He cannot resist. He moves towards them and both the Lord and the devotees drink deep the ambrosia of bliss. Swami came into the bhajan hall and sat; but only for a few bhajans. He began to move again amidst everyone seated in the bhajan hall and then went out too. He not only traversed all available paths but also exhausted the different possible directions of moving along them! It would hardly be an exaggeration to say that after a while, the students and devotees alike ran out of letters and prayers to offer Him! The gushing flood of Love and benediction was so immense that they just sat and saw Him. Swami must have completed at least three rounds on the wheel sofa on November 11 morning. He even went around the portico and bhajan hall a few times. He sat listening to the bhajans till almost 11:15 am and then He retired.

In the evening, the crowds had swelled and the hall was packed for the grand finale of the Akhand bhajan. Swami came out at about 4:40 pm. For the third time in a row, the car had been dispensed with. So dear are His devotees for Him and that dearness seemed to translate even into nearness. Years ago, fears had been expressed that Swami, in times to come would become physically inaccessible and very distant. Swami had replied, "For those who hold me close to their heart, I will never be far." Well, the veracity of that statement was there for all to see, as Swami satiated everyone to their hearts content. He came into the bhajan hall and as He started tapping His hands on the arms of the chair, the bhajans picked up speed moving towards a glorious climax. Swami then continued His traveling spree as He went out again. It is really not possible to describe each of His trips around the devotees for they were so many in number and so enriching in experience.

Nostalgic memories came flooding as Swami in His inimitable style stopped near a block of boys and told them to make a path between them so that He could move over to the other side. He then went all the way to behind the main gate where all the vessels containing prasadam were kept. He blessed them and spoke to the people in charge as to how the distribution must be done. Then He came back to the bhajan hall. The final part of the bhajan session was filled with deafening clapping, vociferous singing and ever increasing tempo. To one lady singer who enthralled everyone, and more importantly, Swami with her bhajan, Swami immediately materialised a beautiful necklace in gold! He gifted it to her and continued smiling. As Swami concluded the bhajans with "Namah Parvati", the Aarthi was lit. What followed next was a rare scene as Swami sat for the complete Aarthi song. During its last stanza, the priest waved the camphor at the altar by the sheer force of habit and Swami seemed to look at Him and smile!

As the aarthi concluded, Swami took up the role of the host ensuring that the sweetened rice (*chakra ponga*) and tamarind rice were distributed to all. He personally supervised the manner in which leaves should be distributed and the food served. Once the serving had been fairly accomplished, the food prayer, *Bhramaarpanam*, began. Swami too joined in chanting the prayer! At the end of it, He said, "Now all eat nicely." He kept smiling and telling everyone to eat well. Finally at 6:35 pm Swami left bhajan hall and moved to the Yajur Mandir.

13 November, 2007 – Divine Discourse on Namasmarana

Something very unique happened on November 13, a day after the conclusion of Akhanda Bhajan. Swami came out to grant darshan at about 5:05 pm as the Bhajans were on. He went into the bhajan hall and after the fourth bhajan, He called Prof. Venkataraman and told him to speak on the significance of the Akhanda bhajans. After he had spoken for a while, Swami asked for the singers' mike and began delivering His divine discourse seated in the bhajan hall itself! He said:

Understand the significance of Akhanda bhajan. There is a difference between Akhanda and Khanda. The latter is to think of God momentarily alone. Akhanda bhajan is to think of Him always, every time and at all places - in all three levels of consciousness. There are three needles to tell the time. If one moves, all others also move. One round of first makes the second move one unit and so on. The hour hand is given most importance. So also, the longer variant of the bhajan – in the morning, afternoon, evening and night is more important.

Every name of God has power. But that power should be utilized properly. Each name has a power. Once upon a time, a king told his parrot to go and chant the name of Rama to the crow and make it too repeat the name. The parrot dutifully went to the crow and said, "You may be black, oh crow! But listen and chant Rama's name. It will make you bright." Doing so, the crow fell down dead. The parrot felt very sad at this and reported to the king as to what happened. But the king told the parrot to do the same task to the peacock this time. "Oh peacock! You are beautiful and grand. Chant Rama's name and your glory will grow," said the parrot. The same thing repeated there too. The parrot was now worried. Both birds had died. But now the king told the parrot to tell the same to a new born calf. "Oh King! Let me not get an additional sin now. I will not kill a baby," pleaded the parrot but to no avail. With trepidation, the parrot requested the calf to chant Rama's name. Doing so, the calf too breathed its last. Finally, it came to be known that the prince was born. What was the reason for the human form that the prince had. The Lord's name liberated the soul from different bodies, of the crow, the peacock and the calf to finally gift it a human birth. This news spread all over the kingdom. Rama's name made the crow a beautiful peacock. The peacock evolved into the calf and the calf in turn got a human birth.

Everything is divine. God is in every creature. But God specially takes a human form and so the human body is very special. It is God's grace that

results in human form. But inspite of repeating the Lord's name, there is no transformation in man. This is because there is no understanding, faith and Love. Faith is love. That love is needed. Man is not uttering the name with Love. He is on the lookout if the tune, beat, etc. are all fine. The mind is wavering. Thus we see no transformation. The mind should be kept steady on the name. When a song is being sung, the others (especially the singers) are planning for next song. Thus, man remains man and does not evolve. Change can come about within with thinking of God alone. The sacredness that one attains by chanting and thinking of the name is not noticed by others but the individual knows it.

It is not possible to attain totality by uttering the name once. Do your job but keep in mind that it is God's work. Thus think of Him always. When women cook, they add pulses, salt, spice, etc. While doing so, if they say, "This is for God", then it gets sanctified. Don't degrade it by offering it to members of family, cook, guests, etc. At every step, think of God. God is in every cell and atom. But man does not realize this and feels that he is moving forward. All progress is worldly if one is unaware of the inherent divinity. Consider all your actions, words and thoughts as that of God. The feeling behind the chanting is most important. If you say whole heartedly once, that's enough. It is equal to hours of chanting. The feeling makes it like the hour hand of the clock. It has value. Otherwise you can keep chanting like the seconds hand of the clock, which goes on moving but with little value. The feeling is like the hour hand which is most important. Don't bother about what people say. Nowadays none say His name from the bottom of the heart. People say that they cannot sing His name because of cold, cough and voice not being fine, etc. Atleast sing within yourself. That will give strength. God's name is matchless. It can bring back the dead to life.

Savitri was sad when the husband was gone. But Satyavan came back to life. It is only in Bharat that resurrections have occurred by Lord's name. Bharat is very special. No place is like this. A pure mind is important. Meerabai also finally said, "Oh Lord! From the depths of the ocean, I have collected the pearl. Let me not drop this back into the ocean." If you need liberation, God's name is needed. You are all sparks of Divine. And so you must all be like how I am. The same purity of Love of God must be in you too.

The whole creation is reaction, reflection and resound. So realize that you are Divine. Never forget this. If this is remembered, it amounts to reading Bhagavat Gita fully. Be Godly. "Mamaivamsho Jeeva Loke, Jeeva Bhoota Sanatanaha." I am you and you are me in qualities and righteousness. Dharma arose from feeling which came of Faith. Faith is Truth. Truth, Dharma, Faith and Love are all God. Live in Love. You may have many difficulties. Don't waver and change mind due to them. All these will pass easily. Waves keep coming but water is still. Have the steady waters of Faith. Thoughts are waves like the passing clouds. They are not permanent.

Develop Love and nothing will remain that you cannot attain. Earth and sky can be transformed into one another. That Divine power is in you. Never neglect God's name. The power in it is known to all those who have

experienced. All that glitters is not diamond. Die - mind is diamond. Do not chase temporary pleasures. You will be cheated if you chase them. Once you have decided to hold on to the Lord, hold on to His feet firmly. They will be with you always, everywhere. Install the Lord's name in your heart permanently. Your life, then, will be sanctified. That is your shakti, bhakti and mukti. Never catch passing clouds and pass out. To teach this we have the Akhanda bhajan - to sing for 24 hours. In between if you keep going and coming, that is Khanda bhajan. It is tough to connect the pieces. Even if you go home or for food, keep singing His glory. God never said to give up everything. Just think of God as you do your activity. Krishna said, "Oh Arjuna! Fight thinking of me. Then that is true war." War is not shooting, killing and bombing. There is nothing great in it. Doing your work and think of Lord, you will survive and live smilingly. A smiling face is needed. Do not have a castor oil face. True happiness lies in union with God. When you get some worrying thoughts, do not kill yourself. Especially those that think of marriage, this thought disturbs. Even if it comes, tell yourself, "It is not marriage but 'my-rise'!"

Singing the name is liberating. You needn't worry about tune and beat. The beat and tune of the heart is one - So Ham - "I am that". Keep that tune, its enough. It is a great fortune to do namasmarana. We have bhajans here everyday. That is a great fortune. Do not miss and spoil that fortune granted to you. It will lead to fulfillment of your lives.

After that, Swami asked the boys to sing. It was nearly 7 o'clock when He received Aarthi and retired.

14 November, 2007 -

All over India, everyone observes November 14 as Children's day. It appeared as though Swami had also decided to spend the evening, if not the whole day, with His children! The students who were part of the Convocation drama were practising in the Institute auditorium. At about 4:05 pm, Swami started moving towards the Institute. Much to the glee of the students in the auditorium, they realized that Swami was coming to see their practise. The Vice Chancellor, Principal, Controller of Exams and other senior members of the Institute were also present.

Swami came into the auditorium to the warm welcome of the students. He sat in the centre and asked for the practise to begin. The drama which began with a dance was a beautiful blend of emotion, suspense and devotion. Look for the story of the Drama in the November 22 update. Swami sat for the entire practise session and was correcting a few scenes here and there. He became quite emotional in some of the places especially when He heard the devotee cry out to the Lord for help. As the drama progressed one could see tears even in the eyes of many of the elders too who had come along with Swami. At one point when a song started and gained momentum, Swami identified the singer and exclaimed, "That is Ravi!" He kept enquiring about the different boys in various roles. He said that a few more lines of a song could be added and also advised on the placing of a few sets and the costumes. He even

made few rearrangements in the final formation after the drama.

At the end of the drama, Swami told all the actors that it was good. He spoke to the costume boys too, especially about a turban that was to be used. Then He made enquiries about the music boys and the set boys. He expressed immense satisfaction and joy at the fact that everything had been done by the boys themselves. As He went out of the auditorium, He took letters from many boys and spoke to a few of them. The brass band of the Institute had assembled outside and they played a beautiful piece as Swami got into the car and left for the Mandir.

19 November, 2007 – Ladies Day Celebrations

The Ladies Day in 2007 was different from the past few years. The morning programme was to be the "Godaan" ceremony where cows would be distributed to the needy and deserving. The cow has been considered as a sign of prestige and more importantly prosperity from times immemorial in India. The ancients would shower their grace on the needy by gifting them with a cow. The gift of a cow meant a gift of food, water and hence prosperity. The cow has also been accorded the place of a mother in Indian scriptures. Deserving ladies had been identified and everything was ready for the arrival of Swami.

Swami came out at about 9:15 am after the traditional *Rahu Kalam*. He was heralded into the Kulwant hall by a procession that was headed by the Vedic chants with the *Poorna Kumbham*. The bands from the Primary School and the Anantapur Campus followed. After which was the beautiful smiling Lord who had decided to come in the wheel sofa. Swami came till the marble blocks and halted. He said that the cow distribution should start and that He would supervise it from there itself. Carpets had been laid out for the dual purpose - to give respect to the cows, the queens of prosperity, and also to ensure that the floor affords grip to their hooves. As Swami sat, the cows came in from His right while the ladies recipients came in from His left. It was not a cow alone but a mother cow, with her newly delivered calf that was being gifted. Swami blessed all the ladies and many of the recipients took *Padanamaaskar*.

18 November, 2007 – Rathotsavam Celebrations

From years, the Rathotsavam has been a very important event held during the Birthday week. The bhajan Mandir wore a very austere and holy look as it seemed to prepare for the impending procession. The beautiful idols of Lord Rama, Lakshmana, Mother Sita and Hanuman, and the idol of Lord Krishna were ready in decorated palanquins. The floral decorations adorning them were also so immaculate and pleasing to the eye. Swami came to the bhajan hall after completing His darshan rounds in Kulwant Hall.

Swami had the camphor waved at the idols in His presence. He watched intently as the priest performed Aarthi in the ceremonious manner. After that

He directed the Seva Dal volunteers privileged to have been selected for the task to carry the palanquins and begin the procession. It included students vociferously vocalising the Vedas and the bhajan group of students singing songs in synchronisation. It was led by the elephant calf, Krishna Geeta, who seemed to be strutting around like a little child that had been told to head the Republic Day parade! The entire procession headed through the Kulwant Hall main gate out of the Gopuram gate. There stood the empty chariot, fully decked with flowers, waiting to receive the Lord. The previous year, the chariot had been unexpectedly blessed by the presence of a Lord it did not expect - Swami! But this year, along with the chariot stood throngs of devotees with the fervent hope that Swami would re-confer the blessing of the previous year. Every building in sight seemed to be painted with humans! Balconies were bursting at their seams and every possible vantage point had been over occupied by people in a devotional zeal.

Swami did not disappoint anyone. After a few minutes, one could see the sweet form clad in Orange, held dear by all hearts making way towards the Gopuram gate. Swami came out and blessed the coconuts to be broken in front of the chariot. He saw the statues being placed into position and blessed all the hundreds who had assembled very expectantly with His darshan. Then receiving Aarthi He slowly made His way back to the Mandir. He went into the bhajan hall and sat waiting for the procession to return. He spoke to a few boys there and took letters from many. Then He went into the bhajan hall to continue His wait. Later, receiving Aarthi, He retired to Yajur Mandir.

21 November, 2007 – Convocation Drama Rehearsal

On November 21, the day before the Convocation, Swami arrived for darshan at 9:00 am as the bhajans began. The students involved in the Convocation drama, to be staged the next day, had all assembled in the Poornachandra Auditorium and Swami had agreed to see the final dress rehearsal. The bhajans concluded at about 10:10 am and Swami went into the Yajur Mandir directly. However at about 12:00 pm, Swami came in the wheel sofa to Poornachandra auditorium to see the drama as He had promised.

All the sets boys were present in black, they were the 'men in black' so to say! Everyone associated with the drama were present - the actors, sets boys, music group, the recording team, costume boys and the maintenance crew. As Swami came, a path, flanked by boys on both sides, was created from the stage till the place in the 'D' from where He would see the drama. Swami sat and then told that the drama could begin. The drama looked so much more colourful in the costumes. It was also now being viewed in 'new light'! As the characters came alive on stage, Swami was fully immersed in the drama. He too went through the ups and downs of the emotions and feelings of the actors on stage.

When Swami watches a drama, especially the Convocation drama, there is more drama and message in watching Him than the drama on stage. Well, one may say that is the case anytime, but it becomes physically more evident in case of the Convocation drama. As He sees the pains of Ramadas, He

seems to feel for His devotees. When the hero is in a crisis, Swami too seems apprehensive as to what will happen and when He reassures himself and his father that God will be there for them, Swami too relaxes. It is a beautiful example of how the Lord is a pure mirror, reflecting to each one whatever faith and feeling they possess. The practise session is something that goes on daily and so sometimes it cannot be helped if the actors just go through the motions, but Swami seems to go through the emotions each and every time He sees the drama. He knows the plot, the story and every other aspect of the drama. And yet, He is involved - a glimpse of the way the Divine Director conducts the human drama too! And one other important observation here is this.

There is a poem in Sanskrit that compares Lord Shiva and Goddess Parvati to be united like the word and its meaning. It also refers to the fact that for the Lord, either the word or its feeling and meaning is the same. That was very evident from seeing Swami's reactions during the rehearsal on November 14 as well as on Nov 21. The drama now had a lot of background music. So emotions were more powerfully evoked in all. But for Swami, His reactions were almost like the way He had reacted on the 14th. He needs no special effects, lights, costumes and background music to "evoke" emotions. He seems to spontaneously identify with the words and feelings of the actors - even if they are in whites and are just speaking out their dialogues. One was reminded of how Swami had almost shed tears a few years ago when the actors selected to play the role of Pandavas had just read out their dialogues in front of Him. It was the day the scripts had been just handed over to them and yet Swami's reactions were like that of a person who would react to that piteous condition of the Pandavas when viewed only on the final day with all the add ons and effects!

A video presentation that would be a part of the drama was also played and Swami expressed His appreciation at the way it had been made. On the whole, Swami was very happy with the drama. He expressed His happiness in absolute silence. It is said that when the heart is full, words are few. Then what to say when there are no words at all! It was almost 1:15 pm as Swami returned to Yajur Mandir.

For the evening, there was a concert scheduled by Sri T. M. Krishna. Swami came out after 4:30 pm. He came onstage after His darshan rounds in the chair, sat there for ten minutes listening to the Vedam chanting and then moved to the interview room. He emerged a few minutes later and came onstage once again, and the programme commenced at five minutes to five. The singer began his exploration of the ragas and the scales of Classical Carnatic music. As the concert went on, Swami briefly moved into the interview room. The singer noticed Bhagawan's absence and started singing Carnatic songs with lyrics like "When will we have the darshan of the Lord of Chidambaram", "Mother, will you not listen to my call and talk to me?" and so on. There was a loud applause as Swami returned onstage, called for the singer and his accompanists and showered a lot of Love on them. He gave rings to three of them, placed shawls in their hands, gave them prasadam and took photographs with them, talking to them for more than ten minutes. It was

a wonderful sight to see the Divine romance between the Lord and His devotee.

It was then that Swami called a few of His singer-students on stage and asked them to sing. Being a bit taken aback, the student asked Swami whether he could sit down along with the bhajan group and sing instead of sitting onstage! Swami smiled and agreed. The students began their renderings one by each. Each one seemed to better the other. The final one was a real classical masterpiece. As they sang, the artistes on stage were whole heartedly nodding their approval and Swami seemed so very pleased. Swami, the proud mother always, did not let go of the opportunity to 'sing the praises' of His dear boys to the artistes. After the songs there was a bhajan as Swami instructed. Prasadam was served to all and Prof. Anil Kumar announced that the 26th Convocation of the Sathya Sai University would be held the next day. Swami then received Aarti and retired at about 7:15 pm.

After the 'Godaan' ceremony, Swami moved to the stage. He first lit the lamp that had been placed in front of a tastefully decorated portrait of Mother Eashwaramma. After that there were bhajans which continued for about half an hour. Later there was prasadam distribution and Swami received Aarthi and retired.

The decorations for the evening programme were very grand. The lighting especially was a notch above the regular standards. Swami arrived and went around for the darshan rounds. He then came and took His position on the stage. The first part of the evening programme was speeches by two distinguished ladies – Dr (Mrs) Hyma Reddy and Mrs. Sowcar Janaki, a renowned thespian. Swami appreciated both these short talks with claps at the end of their presentations.

The second programme of the day was a concert by Ms. Nityashree Mahadevan. She bowed to Swami and then taking her place on stage next to the Lord, began the show. It was more of an outpouring of a devotee's feelings for God than a concert. She thrilled Swami and the audience who enjoyed journeying up and down the scale along the highways of many a grand *Raaga* with her voice. It was a touching performance which went on for 25 small minutes.

After the concert came the highlight of the evening, literally and otherwise too - the dance by the girls of the Primary school. It was an effort of bewitching beauty, gliding grace, sublime synchronization and co-coordinated control. The special focus lights and soft lights created an ambience like that of the heavens. The costumes caught everyone's eyes and were a class apart by themselves. The theme of the dance was on the *leelas* and *mahimas* of Swami in His childhood. They were depicted with such elan that the dances themselves seem to sing out. The songs going on however lifted the overall atmosphere of grandeur and grace. There were girls of all ages and sizes - from the second to twelfth class, from the one and a half footers to the six feet ones! The *Vishwa Roopa Darshanam* was very symbolically yet powerfully demonstrated. The myriad colours moving around to the beautiful rhythms of

the soulful strains was really something that has to be seen live to be experienced.

They say that while humans respond to the results, God responds to the efforts that have gone in. The performance was such that, humans and God alike would have been very pleased and that was evident in the way the Lord and the audience reacted when the dance concluded. The applause seemed never ending and so were Swami's smiles. He rose from the chair and slowly walked down. Seeing this, the little "Sathya" of the dance drama rushed up the stage and in keeping with the nature of her role requested Swami, "Be where you are. We will come to you." Swami was pleased with this noble intention but how can anyone have the capacity to be nobler than the sweet Lord. That statement made is His from eternity till eternity. He replied patting the little one's cheeks, "Be where you are. When you have called, I will come." (This carries a lot of profundity, isn't it?)

He walked down and posed for photos groupwise! Each and every child had the lovely opportunity to get a close photograph with Him and also take the coveted *Paadanamaskar*. After showering all the children profusely with all His love, Swami came up the stage and blessed the prasadam to be distributed. Then receiving Aarthi, He retired for the day.

22 November, 2007 – XVI Convocation of SSSU

On the morning of November 22, Bhagavan came to the Sai Kulwant Hall as the Bhajans went on after 9.30 am. After sitting in the Bhajan Hall for nearly half an hour, He accepted Arati and returned to His residence. At 1.45 pm, Bhagavan once again came to the Sai Kulwant Hall in His chair to check the preparations made for the Sri Sathya Sai University's 26th Convocation. After fine-tuning the arrangements, He returned to His residence and emerged later for the convocation.

The Convocation procession was led by the University Brass band into the Sai Kulwant Hall at 3.30 pm. Bhagavan was resplendent in a white robe for the occasion. Sharing the stage with Bhagavan and the University governing body members and deans was Justice Bhagawati, former Chief Justice of India. The Vice-Chancellor delivered his welcome address, Bhagavan stood to say, softly and sweetly, "I declare the Convocation open", and the graduates of the year were administered the Convocation Oath. The gold medal winners and Ph D recipients came up to Bhagavan to receive His benediction and their medals. Bhagavan stood up to deliver His Convocation Address at 4.15 pm. Here are the highlights of the discourse:

"From the time one gets up from the bed till he goes to bed again, why should one waste all his time in earning money?

Embodiments of Love!

It is not good to waste one's time and energy in vain pursuits without attending to one's ordained duties. Time is sacred and valuable. Time waste is life waste. You are all students who have to lead others in future. Every individual has some desires. But, students especially have to control their desires. This is their duty... The word 'Vidya' (education) has its root in the word 'Vid', meaning light. It means that education illumines our path to progress.

Dear students!

You must stand as an ideal to everyone. It is only with this hope that we are bringing you up with great love. You all know that the educational institutions in the outside world charge money for everything. But, we are not collecting any money from our students towards fees. On the other hand, we ourselves are incurring huge expenditure on students' education. Also, we are helping a number of destitute children in so many ways by providing them material support, free education, financial help, etc. You must realise this truth. Education is your property. Education is not merely to help make a living in the world. There is a higher purpose to education - providing an inner life based upon the five human values, viz., Truth, Righteousness, Peace, Love and Non-violence. These human values provide a secure, real and meaningful life to us. Sathya (truth) is the basis for everything in the Universe.

*The creation emerges from truth and merges into truth,
Is there a place in the cosmos where truth does not exist?
Visualise this pure and unsullied truth. (Telugu poem)*

God is the creator of all living beings right from a tiny ant to a mighty elephant. Nothing in this universe will move without His Divine Will. Even tiny ants that you see are born out of God's will. The same truth has been explained in Saint Thyagaraja's famous Kirtan "Cheemalo Brahmalo Siva Kesavaadulalo Prema Meera Velasi Unde Birudhu Vahinchina Rama Nannu Brovara" (Oh Rama! In Your pure and unsullied form of love, You indwell all beings from an ant to Brahma as also in Siva and Kesava. Please be my protector too). No doubt we are aware of it, but once an ant bites us, we immediately kill it. On the other hand, when Lord Brahma appears before us we offer our pranams to Him with folded hands. Though the names and forms are different, the same Atma permeates all living beings. One who develops faith in this Truth will not hasten to cause any harm to any living being.

Every individual develops desires to satisfy himself. He always chants 'self, self, self'. Every individual repeats 'this is my body; this is my mind; this is my head', etc. But who is 'my'? When you say 'this is my body', perhaps it may be true for today or tomorrow. But, where is your body day after tomorrow? What happens to it then? You are nourishing this body with great love and care. But, this body is not yours. It is a gift of God. In fact, everything in this universe is God's gift. For instance, this is a handkerchief. From where did it come? Has it fallen from the sky? No! It has come from cotton. From cotton came the thread and the thread is woven into a cloth. Hence, there can be no thread without cotton and no cloth without thread. Thus, everything in this

universe has a basis and a source. Unfortunately today we are forgetting this fundamental principle. That is the reason why we are experiencing several difficulties. When you hear the word 'God' repeatedly, you are tempted to enquire 'where is God?' "God is with you, in you, around you, behind you."

In fact, "you are God!" Develop that firm faith. The same God as Atma Thatwa permeates all the millions of human beings in this world; nay every living being in the world. We are witnessing millions of living beings with different names and different forms in this Universe. Though the names and forms are different, the *Atma Thatwa* (indwelling spirit) in them is only one. *Ekam Sath Viprah Bahudha Vadanthi* (Truth is one; the wise say it in different ways). Gold is one, the jewels are many. When the different ornaments are melted, what remains ultimately is only gold!

Hence, oh Embodiments of Love! You try to realise the source and sustenance for all objects in this universe. You consider you are different from your father and mother. Again, you treat your mother as different from your father. No; this is not correct. Both father and mother are one. You are part of them. Hence, the question of difference does not arise. A man with dual mind is half blind. You should not have a dual mind. All the education you pursue is not for you only. It is for helping your fellow human being; fellow living beings like birds, animals and insects. Then only the education you have acquired becomes meaningful. Whenever you encounter a person whom you consider as your enemy, say "hello". You love everyone. Never hate anybody.

You might have noticed that no one hates Swami and all people love Him. You may ask Me whether there are people who really do not deserve Swami's love. I wish to emphasise that all people deserve Swami's love. I love everyone. I do not hate anybody. I do not cause trouble to anyone. I do not offend anyone. Since the feeling of *Ekatma bhava* (one Atma permeating all living beings) is so strong in Me, so many people love Me. The whole world loves Me and I love all. My word, My song and My divine *leelas* are all dedicated to your welfare. You must therefore try to understand My real nature. You develop faith in the *Atma Thatwa*. From faith comes love. When faith and love go together thus, your desires will be fulfilled. Both faith and love are most important for a human being. All others are like passing clouds which just come and go in between. You should not attach much importance to them.

In fact, faith is the reflection of love. And love is the very form of God. Hence, *Love is God, Live in Love*. Truth is truth for all times - past, present and future. It will never change. That is why it is said "Truth is God". We should not think that God is present somewhere in a distant place. God is not separate from us. The entire universe is an embodiment of Divinity. You should therefore constantly contemplate on that Divinity who is none other than Unity.

Dear Students!

You read several books. However, all those books have been written with the help of only 26 letters. There are a number of lawyers. They carry books

which are very bulky in size. But, all those books contain only letters ultimately. Health, wealth, happiness and bliss - the source and sustenance for all these things is only God. Good or bad, everything is God. You cannot find bad anywhere separately. Wherever you see, it is only good. But, you are not able to realise that good. You are confused. The bad, if any is only a manifestation due to the difference of time. Today we partake a variety of tasty dishes. But, the next day they are transformed into excreta. Today's phala (fruit) is transformed into *mala* (excreta) tomorrow.

Divinity is present in all things - both good and bad. There is no place or object in this world where God is not present. No one can say with any authority that God is "nowhere or only here". Several names and forms are ascribed to that Divinity and a lot of confusion is created thereby. The reason for this confusion is based on how one relates himself to God at the individual level. We should therefore try to set aside this individual relationship at least to a certain extent. It is only for this purpose that we are pursuing many types of education. The moment the individual relationship merges into a feeling of oneness with God, what remains is only Divinity everywhere.

Religions are many but goal is one.

Clothes are many but yarn is one.

Beings are many but breath is one.

(Telugu poem)

You must preserve this truth that "Truth is One" in your heart safely and securely. You consider someone as your enemy. No, no; this is not true. It is only a change in your attitude and love towards him that made him your enemy. There is no change in him at all. Everything in this world is reaction, reflection and resound. However, reality is only one. If you develop such an attitude, you can experience any amount of happiness. You think: "Swami is always cheerful and smiling. How is it possible?" Yes, I am always smiling! The reason being I treat all people as one. The happiness of all of you is My food. Hence, you also develop that attitude.

The other day, the children put up a play. I felt very happy on witnessing that play. The children put up the show unitedly. We use the words 'I' and 'We'. From where did the word 'we' come? It has come from 'I'. Without 'I', there can be no 'we'. Thus, 'I' is the one and only one entity. It is like a vertical wooden pillar. When another piece of wood is nailed across in the middle horizontally, it becomes a cross. It means that when 'I' (ego) is broken, it becomes a cross. We must always endeavour to keep 'I' as only one. You consider all people as your brothers and sisters. All are one. If you thus make an enquiry, everything in this universe represents only the principle of oneness. If you establish this truth firmly in your heart, the same feeling will reflect everywhere.

Suppose you love a girl. Who is that girl anyway? Yourself only. It means you loved yourself! The girl is not separate from you. When you treat her as separate, you refer to her as 'wife'. On the other hand, when you treat her as one with you, you become one. You realise this unity. What could be the

reason for such great diversity in the living beings in the world? They are a manifestation of the same divine principle.

Embodiments of Love! Dear students!

You must all become ideal men and women. It is only when you lead an ideal life, the whole society will become ideal. Do not entertain any differences. "All are one; be alike to everyone". This, you must remember always. Then only can you become ideal students. Otherwise, you remain merely as educated people. Who is an educated person in the real sense? One who has realised that all are one. Education implies only learning. On the other hand, Vidya is one that symbolises oneness. Vidya spreads the light of oneness with God. If you lose this enlightenment, you have to live in darkness.

Embodiments of Love!

Let your love be diverted towards God and it will confer bliss upon you. If you direct it towards worldly objects and persons, it is likely to change every now and then. Whomsoever you come across, develop the feeling that they are all your brothers and sisters.

I am quite well. No one needs to worry about My health; not only My body, everything is alright. My mind does not waver. I have a steady and ever alert mind. The body may undergo some changes; but I am always My own Divine Self. People enquire, "Swami! You are always smiling! Did you not ever encounter sorrow?" No. Not at all! Sorrow is nowhere near Me. Whatever has to happen will happen. If you go on worrying about it, will it be warded off? That will lead to much more worry. Hence, one should not give scope for worry at all. Once your mind starts worrying, it will never end. You worry, "Examinations are nearing; Oh! God! How do I prepare myself!" What is all this worry about? Why do you fear to write answers for those questions which you already know? Surely you will fare well in the examinations. Do not develop any fear of examinations.

No one can measure the distance of the sky from the earth. That is the reason why it is said that the sky is blue. Similarly, none can describe the form of Divinity. In order to portray God, artists started using the colour of blue. In fact, God has no colour at all! If God were to be born with a blue colour, He would have been put in an exhibition as an object of wonder! Divinity cannot be changed. You may change; but your Atma will never undergo any change.

You earn a name for yourselves as good boys. Bring honour to your parents. Also, let the society be proud of you. If the society is to be transferred into a good society, it can happen only through the students. Today wherever our students be, people say they are very good. I am getting the news. You try to live up to that name. I don't aspire for anything else. I will give you whatever you want. In fact, I gave Myself to you. May you all be happy! Do not quarrel with anybody. Do not abuse anyone. May you all live like brothers and sisters! That is the fruit of education. That is real education. First and foremost, make your parents happy. If you cannot make your parents who brought you up

happy, how can you make Me happy? Hence, you all go to your homes and live happily with your parents. Then, I will also be happy. When people praise you that so and so is a student of Sri Sathya Sai University, it is a matter of pride to you as well as to the Institution.

The University Grants Commission in New Delhi did not recognise several educational institutions in the country for a long time, whereas the Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning was conferred the status of a Deemed University within the second year of its inception. Dr. Madhuri Shah was the Chairman of the University Grants Commission then. She visited Puttaparthi then and put forward a proposal to make our Institute into a Deemed University. Several objections were raised to her proposal on the ground that it was still a nascent Institute in its second year and it would not be proper to confer the status of a University on it in such a short time. Dr. Bhagavantham was with us at that time translating My speech. He confidently said, "This is impossible; impossible". I told him very emphatically that it is possible.

The U.G.C. committee visited our Institution thereafter in the second year itself and unanimously recommended to confer the status of a Deemed University on Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning. As per the committee's own admission, "This is the first college" to be conferred a Deemed University status within the second year of its starting. Later Dr. Madhuri Shah came here to formally open the Deemed University. She openly said in a meeting, "Dr. Bhagavantham! You said it is impossible to make it into a University in such a short time. How had it been possible now?" The Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning, a Deemed University has since been made into a full-fledged University with the combined efforts of all people.

All our students are men of noble character. They are well behaved and well educated. You may not perhaps know how famous is our Sri Sathya Sai University all over the world, especially in the United States of America. There are about 180 past students now working in America in different fields. Recently, they all came here in a group. They prayed to Swami, "Swami! We do not wish to go to our homes here. We will go back direct to America from here, after this visit." Such was their love and dedication to Swami and Sri Sathya Sai University. “

(Bhagavan then called Dr. Michael Goldstein, Chairman and Director, Sri Sathya Sai World Foundation and asked him to speak for a few minutes about the former students now working in America.)

After that, the Vice Chancellor announced that the Convocation had ended and that a drama would be held shortly in the auditorium. The academic council members all left the stage when Swami got up again and spoke! He praised Justice Bhagawati for his devotion and dedication.

"I told Bhagawati that he should be ready to leave to Delhi. Soon the orders came and he came to know that he had been appointed as the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court. He is very dear to Swami and Swami is very dear to him."

Then Justice Bhagawati expressed his deepest sense of gratitude to Swami. It was after that Swami blessed him and made His way to Yajur Mandir. Soon after that, Swami came into the auditorium. He took a complete round before taking His place in the centre of the 'D' to watch the drama. Here is the complete story of the drama:

Sudheer is a student of Vidya Mandir Junior College. For the past 12 years he has been traveling a distance one hour daily to this school from his village – Anandgram. The drama opens as the farewell programme instituted by the twelfth class boys is being presented which has a dance highlighting values such as patriotism, sense of responsibility, etc. After its over, the junior college principal Mr. Vishwanath Verma speaks to the students highlighting the need the dream big and noble. He has been the iconic figure of the school ever since he took the position of principal 7 years ago. The school has seen many feathers being added to its cap under his leadership. Sudheer has been adjudged the best student of the school and is being felicitated. During the felicitation ceremony, Sudheer is asked to speak. After paying gratitude to his teachers and the principal in particular, he unfolds his vision of becoming a doctor. His father, Mr. Purushottam is a proud man as he watches his son receive accolades. Mr. Purushottam, a postman, has toiled his entire life to see that his motherless child gets the best that he can give.

Back home, Sudheer is excited about his joining a good medical college to pursue his dream. But his father alone knows the truth about their predicament. He tries to persuade his son to choose another line. Purushottam could hardly afford to pay Sudheer's school fees for the past few years and today he is expected to fund Sudheer's medical degree. Moreover there is a secret which Purushottam has kept from Sudheer. Sudheer has been suffering from a hole in his heart since childhood. Even as Purushottam is dissuading his son, he blurts out this fact and tells him the whole truth. Sudheer is at first shocked but he is boy of character and passion. He consoles his father by assuring him that the Lord will take care, as he has been, for all these years. He recounts the story of Bhadrachala Ramdas. The story brings out the episode of the unjust punishment meted out Ramdas and Shri Rama, Himself, paying the debts to Tanesha. Even as he narrates the story, the father is so proud of his son and prays intensely to the Lord to save them from this predicament.

The faint strains of the bhajan 'Rama Anarada Mari Okka Sari Rama Anarada...' are heard. Soon they see men clad in white, singing bhajans enthusiastically passing in front of their house. They wonder who they are. The Sai Students (old students) have come to serve the village. They hand over Swami's prasadam to Purushottam and Sudheer. Purushottam realises that God has sent help. The one packet of food is really a reminder that He Knows, He Cares, He Supports and will never forsake. This prasadam itself gives his great assurance.

They reveal their objective of serving the people. Even as they talk about the medical camp that they have organised, Purushottam reveals to them that his

son needs medical attention. They immediately decide to bring Sudheer to Sathya Sai Super Speciality Hospital.

Sudheer is admitted into the Sri Sathya Sai Super Specialty Hospital. A song here narrates the unending saga of love which has touched and healed the lives of thousands. Sudheer has successfully undergone surgery and is on the path to leading a normal life. The visual here is a wonderfully made video which depicts Sudheer's journey from illness to health through the SSSIHMS. As the song finishes, a team from Radio Sai walks in to interview Sudheer about his experience in Baba's hospital. He tells them that if given a chance to become a doctor, he would come to serve many more like him. That was his dream. But he understands that reality bites. Deep in his heart the desire to become a doctor persists. He prays in front of Swami's photo.

The scene shifts to America where the friend of a doctor Ashutosh tells him that he was leaving everything and going back to his hometown to stay and serve his parents. Ashutosh is shocked at the suddenness of the decision and becomes nostalgic about his own father and mother. His father had always advised him to stay back and serve his fellowmen. Contrary to his father's wishes he had deserted his parents for all for greener pastures. He had conveniently forgotten his life here until today when he hears The Voice – Bhagavan Baba's Voice over the radio via Radio Sai Global Harmony. His life then changes for ever.

A gentleman walks into the home of Purushottam revealing his identity as Mr. Ashutosh from America. He had heard Sudheer's story on Radio Sai and had determined to help Sudheer become a doctor. He had come to sponsor his entire medical education. Sudheer and his father have seen miracles work but this is something unimaginable. Who can ever fathom the network of God? Where is Anandgram and where is America? One more miracle has been orchestrated to perfection by the lord.

Ashutosh confesses the reason for his benevolence. Even as he continued to hear Radio Sai, he heard the story of Sudheer and felt the inner compulsion to take up this act. Ashutosh wishes that his father was there to know that he loved him and the wonderful childhood days at Shripuram haunted him nostalgically. At that moment, Purushottam recollects a very curious incident that had taken place in the Mandir when he had been for Darshan during his stay. Swami had thrust a letter into his hands, and said, "Aye Postman, yeh letter Shripuram doctor ko deliver karo"(Postman, deliver this letter to the Shripuram doctor). Purushottam did not know what to do with it since it had no address until this moment. When he brings the letter and hands it over, Ashutosh is now shell-shocked. He opens in utter amazement and finds that the letter was written by his father to Swami. The letter contains the pangs of a father's heart praying Swami to guide his son onto the right path. Father had written that he would continue to love his son despite the happenings.

Even as Ashutosh's eyes are brimming with tears, Vishwanath Verma the principal walks in to enquire about Sudheer's health. Vishwanath Verma is

none other than Ashutosh's father. There is joy all around and everyone cannot but help marvelling at the master play of the Divine scriptwriter.

After the drama, Swami went on stage. On the way there were many in the 'D' with tears in their eyes. Swami asked almost everyone whom He saw, "How was the drama?" He posed for pictures on stage and then blessing everybody, retired for the day.

November 23, 2007 – 82nd Birth Anniversary of the Avathar

The day finally dawned! It was the glorious occasion for which thousands had waited with anticipation and joy for days and weeks. From the previous night 11:00 pm itself, serpentine lines of devotees had begun to form outside the Nilayam amidst heavy security. The fact that there were not too many high profile guests did not make security any lesser from the previous birthdays. We came to know that the Anointing ceremony which used to be the highlight of birthday celebrations of the yore would be revived this year! It filled us with ecstasy and we could not wait for Swami to arrive!

Swami emerged at about 9:00 am. And it was a grand and gorgeous procession! The Primary school band led the way, and it was followed by the Anantapur band, the Institute brass band, Veda chanting 'tiny tots' pundits followed by the stalwarts of the Institute. And then it was of course the charismatic little beloved of the Lord, Krishna Geetha. And after that was the Charming Sai, that too in the wheel sofa filling every heart with delight! Like the sunflowers which celebrate the sunrise, the assembly of devotees celebrated His arrival with loud applause. To see God on the day He decided to take up a human frame to redeem all and confer joy is indeed a privilege which is most unique.

Swami's face lights up as He sees the devotees. He appears very touched. He makes everyone feel that the privilege is His to see all on this special day. But then that is the way the Lord always looks at His devotees. As He mentioned in the discourse the previous day, His entire life and being is only for the devotees.

Swami slowly moved through the ladies side. Towards the end of the ladies side were ladies from His family who had brought all the items considered auspicious to be placed near Swami during the anointment ceremony. Swami went on to the gents side. A Mexican wave ran through the crowd as they rose to various heights so that they could fill their eyes with His Lovely Frame on this day. One could see the uplifting influence of the Lord as people rose wherever He went. A plethora of cards had been made by the students from KG to PG to wish Him on His birthday and the whole portico was filled with cakes of varied colours, shapes and sizes. Swami went into the portico and then began a massive exercise in cake cutting. With great patience, Swami went around to each of the cakes that had been so lovingly made and made His 'mark' on them after 'lighting' them up. Then He went into the interview room.

Meanwhile the stage was being set for the ceremonies to follow. The celebrated Carnatic vocalists, Sri Rama Prasad and Sri Ravi Kumar, known as Malladi Brothers, took their positions on stage. The oil to be used for the anointment was brought in a special silver bowl and placed on a highly decorated pedestal. Swami came out of the interview room and took position in the centre of the stage. The devotees burst into an applause seeing their Lord again after a brief pause. Swami asked the Malladi brothers to begin their concert and they brothers, who sat facing Him, began on a wonderful note with the joyous celebration of His birthday. The songs were actually the poetic compositions of Karunasri Paapayya Shastri who was a great devotee of Swami. They comprehensively captured the beauty and divinity of Swami. Swami was deeply touched as He heard every song. After glorifying the Sai Avatar, they made scintillating comparisons between Swami, Lord Rama and Krishna. Another musical composition was filled with puns on the word "Putta" of Puttaparthi (as "Puttu", in Telugu, means birth). It was so poetic to the musicians' ears and so musical to the poets' ears! The Lord was enjoying it and it was so wonderful to see Swami so happy on His 'special' day.

In the middle of the concert, Swami called Prof. Anil Kumar and asked him to make the announcements. It was then that the entire Birthday assembly came to know of the Anointment Ceremony. The Professor introduced the ceremony in its true grandeur making allusions to the birthday of Lord Sri Rama when Kausalya and the sages with their wives would perform the anointment, applying sacred oil to the Divine Locks. The first couple to get the privilege was that of Sri Ratnakar and his wife. They came up the stage and after prostrating to Swami, applied turmeric and *kumkum* to His feet. Then, they took a marigold flower, dipped it gently in the bowl of oil, and placed the flower on His Hair. The most benevolent Lord sweetly bent His head. The next couple was justice Bhagawati and his wife. Swami was all smiles as He gently bowed to accept the oil that was being applied. Mr. Indulal Shah and his wife were on stage next and Prof. Anil Kumar introduced him as the "Bheeshmacharya" of the Sai Mission and Swami asked Prof. Anil Kumar to repeat for all to hear again. Three more couples followed, Mr and Mrs Shourie, Mr and Mrs Gangadhar Shetty and finally Mr and Mrs Margabandhu. All of them were well above 80 years of age.

Swami's feet were so wonderfully decorated with flowers and turmeric. When one looked at them, it reminded of the Sadguru's redeeming Feet. After the ceremony, Swami permitted the Malladi brothers to resume their concert. They sang beautiful songs apt for the occasion. The concert went on and Swami sat relishing every word and tune of their soulful music. After a while, Swami asked for the prasadam to be distributed to all and at about 11 am, Swami indicated them that it was lunch time and that the devotees would be hungry! He told the brothers that He would give them a chance to perform in the evening again. Receiving Aarthi, He retired at about 11:15 am. More than two hours in this blissful morning passed like two seconds!

23 November 2007- 82nd Birthday Evening

In the evening there was an air of excitement about the concert by Mr. Hariharan, a popular vocalist, especially among the younger generation. Swami came out at about 5:15 pm in the wheel sofa. He went around gently granting beautiful Darshan, and as soon as He came on stage, He beckoned the Malladi brothers to do an encore. Taking from where they had left off in the morning, the brothers' duo, accompanied with their father, continued their soulful performance picking perfect tunes and tones matching the occasion. They sang the glory of Rama Avatar and then described how that same grandeur was being reflected in the Sathya Sai Avatar. Swami was truly 'lost' listening to their rendering so filled with love, and whenever He opened His eyes, conferred immeasurable blessings on the father and the sons with beatific smiles, encouraging nods and elevating blessings.

As the concert proceeded, Swami suddenly decided to go down the stage and blessed the six elderly ladies on whom he had conferred the privilege of anointing Him in the morning. He had with Him magnificent sarees, rich in colours and design. Like one honours eminent people by draping shawls on them, Swami lovingly placed on each of them beautiful sarees! As each one received and bent down to touch His feet, the Lord blessed them profusely. And after He returned to the stage, He posed with them for a group photograph and filled their hearts with joy. All the while the concert was in progress and after nearly an hour, Swami called the extremely talented singers and blessed their father, who is also their teacher, with a chain. The father was now smiling from ear to ear. After this they sang a song or two, and then concluded their performance.

The light had faded and it was nearly seven now. But Swami's face was brilliant! He next asked for the famous Ghazal singer, Hariharan, to begin his presentation. He prostrated to Swami, offered a tiny bouquet and took his place on the stage. He sang such a wide repertoire of songs that the sheer variety itself thrilled the audience. There was light music, Hindustani, Carnatic and ghazals. As He sang, Swami was conversing off and on with the Malladi brothers whom He had asked to be seated by His side. You could see Swami was cheerful, smiling and joking with them. As Hariharan went on regaling the audience, it was a joy to see Swami in such a lighter mood. After he completed his concert, Swami told him that the boys seem to enjoy his songs a lot!

Then He asked him to sing something that all could follow too. And Hariharan sang the bhajan "Janani Maa" which everyone present in the hall followed with a lot of gusto. The Lord sat encouraging the boys to sing louder and faster! At the end of the bhajan, with a wave of His hand, He gifted the singer with a ring and also blessed the entire troupe with a group photograph. It was 8 pm by the time the Lord received arathi and retired. It was an elaborate and extended blessing of Divine Darshan by the Lord on this very special day. No one present in the gathering could have asked for more.

SWAMI AND ME

SERVE MAN UNTIL...YOU SEE GOD IN ALL MEN

By Bjørn Ribers, Denmark

Bjørn is a social worker at the Red Cross. He qualified with an M.A. in Psychology and Communication Studies. A member of the Sai Youth Group, he was involved in the Centre's Project for Homeless People and also visits homes for the elderly and disabled. His wife Henriette Emilie is an artist and has portrayed Baba in her paintings.

I first heard about Sri Sathya Sai Baba in 1986, when I was 14 years of age. I come from a Christian background, and it was a few months after my confirmation. My Godmother had recently been to Prasanthi Nilayam, and when she returned to Denmark she showed us pictures from the Ashram. A specific photo made a particular impression on me. It portrayed the big statue in front of Swami's temple, with the lotus flower and the five world religions, unifying spirituality and science. "Baba's message," she told us, "is that all religions are aspects of the same Truth, the same God, although they may call Him by different names." At this moment I experienced contact with a voice deep within me saying, "Yes, this is the Truth, this is what I have always felt myself." The words were accompanied by a sense of peace.

A few years later, my mother went to Prasanthi Nilayam and brought back vibuthi, literature on Baba and pictures of Him – as well as many beautiful experiences, which she captured in the paintings "Darshan" and "Morning Prayer".

In the family we often spoke about Baba, His teachings and other spiritual issues. I had the life of an average Danish young man, went to college, engaged in sports activities and spent time with my friends and family, but the longing for a more spiritual life increased over the years. I prayed to the omnipresent God without name and form to show me the spiritual guide that I was destined to follow. The following night Baba appeared to me in a dream and spoke to me in English, giving me advice about several aspects of my life. These dreams have been part of my inner life and contact with Him since then.

In 1994, I was in Prasanthi Nilayam with a group of Danish Sai devotees for Christmas. I did not travel to India to find out who Baba was. For some unknown reason it already seemed clear to me that He was the reincarnation of Lord Krishna, the Creator of this Universe. Nor did I come for healing, to be convinced about Baba's ability to materialise, or to test His Divine powers. I went there because I had a deep longing to see Him and feel His presence.

Eyes of Endless Depth

One day during Darshan, He was standing right in front of me. He did not speak to me, but He looked into my eyes and smiled. His face was so beautiful. An old saying states, "The eyes are the mirror of the soul" and I often felt that when I looked into the eyes of a person I would see a reflection of their soul's uniqueness. But with Swami, there seemed to be no individual soul. No beginning. No end. Looking into His eyes was a view into Eternity, into the Absolute Infinite Beingness – God. I was plunged into the unfathomable, overwhelmed and deeply touched. He left me awestruck, with tears in my eyes.

A few days later, on Christmas day, an Indian Sai devotee shared with me the following quote by Baba: **"No matter where you go, always know that I will be there, inside you, guiding you every step of the way. In the years to come, you will experience Me in My different manifestations of My form. You are My very own, dearer than dear to Me. I will protect you like the eyelids that protect the eyes."** Little did I know at that time, how significant these words would be to me in the years to come!

Aspirations of the Heart

When I returned to Denmark my life changed completely. If ever I were to be worthy of looking into His eyes again I would have to put His teachings into practice. What had He told me? That I should see Him in His different manifestations of His form, and that only through love and service to mankind could I serve God and attain God's grace. On a spring day in 1995 the following poem flowed easily into my mind.

*Beloved One, Beloved One,
Let me be your sacred son.
I am Yours and You are mine
We are all in Love Divine.*

*Take my life and make me You;
Make me just as loving too.
You are God and I am too,
Let me work in love for you.*

*Lead me on the journey through
All the way back Home to You.
I am Yours and You are mine;
We are all in Love Divine.*

*Oh, My Lord I pray to Thee,
Make me humble on my knee.
I will serve the best I can;
See You Lord, in every man.*

We are One;

*Father, Son.
Please make me Yours,
Beloved One.*

Vision of Sai

I titled it *Beloved One* and the words defined the way I strived to live my life. Yet, words alone are not sufficient; they must be followed by practice. So I volunteered to become a visiting friend at the nearest old people's home. Several days a week I would go and spend time with the elders, talk to them, listen to their life stories and learn about the difficulties they are grappling with in the last days of their lives. I realised, that when they viewed their lives in retrospect, the most valuable experience had been the love of their families. These moments of service were indeed rewarding for me. However, I often longed for India, for Swami and for the nearness of my Father, the Poorna Avathar.

It was on one such day, when I was on my way to visit an elderly man at the old people's home that I was longing for India and Swami. When I entered the room where the old man lived, I saw him lying on his bed. And as I went near and we started speaking, my thoughts went back to India and for a few seconds I didn't focus on the person in front of me, whom I had promised to serve. **When I looked up again it was no longer the old man lying on the bed. It was Sri Sathya Sai Baba, in His orange robe, with a crown of black hair! Not like a vision or a dream, but in His physical form. I was so awestruck that I almost fell on my knees. But the moment I moved, the scene changed. Again it was the old man lying in front of me.**

"Serve man until you see God in all men," Baba tells us. I spent the rest of the day with my friend, reflecting upon Baba's words. As humble as I would be towards Swami, I should be to this man. As respectful as I would be to Swami, I should be towards this man. All the love I would have for Swami, I should have for this man. "In the years to come, you will see Me in My different manifestations of My form." Baba had indeed kept His promise. For five years I served several different people at the old people's home and I spent almost every evening there. I didn't see Swami in His familiar divine form again, but I learned to see and experience His omnipresence and His Love in His multiplicity of forms.

THE WONDER YEARS

By Ms Bhavani Munshi

Bhavani Munshi is a Grade 12 student currently enrolled in the International Baccalaureate program at St. Robert Catholic High School in Thornhill, Ontario, Canada. She was fortunate to live and study at the Sri Sathya Sai Higher Secondary School, Prashanthi Nilayam, for 5 years from 1996-2001 where she attended Grades 1-5.

For the past eight decades, Swami has enveloped us in His divine aura and given us memories of His omnipresence, omnipotence, and omniscience to cherish for the rest of our lives. He has bestowed on us His energy that has helped us make it through the most difficult of situations. Personally, Swami has helped me through millions of circumstances, whether I've been aware of His help or not, and this is just one that I think has truly had an impact on who I am, and who I will become.

I have known Baba my entire life. In my childish understanding, He was God and that summed just about everything up. I assumed He was something like Superman, raised to the power of ten. I can't say I knew who God was, or that I ever had the time to be bothered with such philosophical questions, but until I turned five, I believed in Him because everyone around me did. As I got older, however, I wanted proof that He was God, and I got it.

Gift of a Lifetime

It was the December of 1995. I would turn five on December 18th, and like any other kid I was very excited. To add to my excitement, I was in Puttaparthi, India, the birthplace and ashram of our beloved Baba. It was my first visit ever.

On the morning of my birthday, my parents surprised me with a slate and a piece of chalk. They explained to me that the chalk and the slate were for Baba to write the symbol *Aum* on. So that morning, I went for *Darshan* with my new gifts tucked under my arm. After some time, Swami came out and started walking in my direction. Since I was too shy to ask Swami to write on my slate, my mom had to call out to Him. I vividly remember Him turning towards us, and smiling. He came near me, and quite anticlimactically, I have no recollection of what He did after that. My mom said that He blessed me by sprinkling *akshat* or sacred rice on me, and drew the sacred symbol of *Aum* on my slate, to mark my initiation into learning inner wisdom. The only thing I remember feeling was His divine presence, just reaching out to me, and I felt an emotion that probably hasn't been named yet – It could have been bliss, but not having anything to compare it to, I'm not sure. It was at that moment that I decided to study at the Sri Sathya Sai Primary School of Puttaparthi.

I don't know how I got my dad to agree to even let me try to go there, but I can tell you that it wasn't easy. Luckily, Mom's an ex-student of Swami's college

and was therefore not too hard to convince. When Dad finally let me try, he said that I would have to work really hard to get in because of the difference in standards. In Canada, my kindergarten experience was centered on arts and crafts, colouring, puzzles, show and tell, and lunch time. But in India, children usually know how to add, subtract, read, and sometimes even multiply at that age. I was way behind, but that didn't dampen my confidence. In my five-year old mind, it was clear that I belonged in Swami's school. I was eager to get in there, and was determined to do whatever it would take, even if it meant giving up Barney for multiplication tables. Finally, in May 1996, my mom, my 10 year old cousin, and I were off to India for admission. There, my mom asked Swami in the *Darshan* line if my cousin and I would get in, and He said, "Yes". After that, I had no doubt about our acceptance at His school.

After writing our entrance exams in Puttaparthi, we went to Whitefield because the list of those admitted would be posted there, as Swami was in Whitefield and so were most of the devotees. Just as Swami had said, I had gotten in, and soon the news that my cousin had gotten in arrived. My joy was boundless, until I realized that the situation was not as perfect as I thought it would be.

Culture Shock

Despite the initial euphoria, it suddenly dawned upon me that I would now have to live away from my home in Canada, leaving my parents for ten months at a stretch. There was definitely no way I could have done that. I had endured maybe a one-night sleepover at a friend's house, but I knew that I wouldn't survive without my parents. Leaving them, my home and everything that I was familiar with, seemed like some form of torture to me. I realized that my dad wouldn't be there to give me 'bear hugs' every day after school. My mom wouldn't be there to read me my favourite fairy tales. They would be thousands of miles away, in Canada, and I was pretty sure that even their flying kisses would take a long time to reach me. A strange sense of fear and uncertainty gripped me. I was five years and a few months old and had so far adamantly asked my parents for this gift of Sathya Sai Education. Now that I had it, I was scared and nervous. That's when I decided to write to Swami, every day, and ask Him to give me the strength to survive without my parents.

In my crooked, backwards writing, I asked Swami for courage to be able to live without my parents around. Every letter I wrote was completely heartfelt and a truthful call to God to help me. He was the only one who could do that. I didn't know any better then, and still don't.

Response to a Pining Heart

Everyday, I wrote small letters to Swami saying things like, 'Baba, I love you 100%', and 'Please give me the strength to live without my mom and dad'. Every letter was always accompanied by little stick figure pictures of Baba, my parents, myself and my cousin or sometimes flowers. Swami always went out of His way to reach me and take my letters. These letters have also taught me a lesson. Swami doesn't care about how long a letter is, or the level of your

vocabulary or grammar. All He wants is that every letter is written with devotion.

One fine day, I was sitting in the second row, waiting for Swami's *darshan*. As usual, I had my letter placed neatly in my lap, waiting to be received by Swami. Swami then arrived and started walking towards me. As He neared me, He turned towards me and just stared. He looked with such a powerful intensity, with His loving, deep, dark eyes, touching my heart profoundly. It was a very potent exchange of glances that it moved me from within and I started to cry. I didn't know why I was crying, but the tears just rolled out of my eyes. Hearing me sob, my mom turned around and asked me what was wrong, but I couldn't answer. I tried to hold back the tears, but I had no control over them. After a couple of minutes, I stopped crying, and I realized what had transpired. During this time, He had also taken my letter although I have no recollection of it, so immersed was I in receiving His kind grace. I realized it later when my Mom pointed it out.

In that single moment, Swami had read my concern and responded to my prayers by giving me the courage and the strength to live without my worldly mother. He had approved my prayer to live with my Divine Mother Sai, the one that watches over us every moment of our lives, no matter where we are, or what we are doing. I knew then, and I know now, that I couldn't have stayed the five years I did at the Sri Sathya Sai School, Prasanthi Nilayam if it wasn't for Swami answering my prayer, by giving me the inner strength.

Upon joining His school, I realized that the food, clothes and just about everything else was different and difficult to get used to. But after some time, I forgot all the differences, thanks to my welcoming peers and the love that blows in the breeze of Puttaparthi. I had no time to think of my parents, busy as I was with my studies and other activities. Soon I lost track of time and my first year in Parthi was over.

One memory that I have of my first year there, was of my cousin falling sick. Since my cousin and I had become very close over the past few months, I ended up spending a lot of time with her in the 'Sick Room', and naturally, I too fell sick. Both of us were running high fevers. Then, one day, Swami visited the school. By then, His visits were becoming scarce, so this one came as a pleasant surprise. Unexpectedly, Swami came to the dormitory, and when He saw us, He raised His hand in blessing. After He left, we went back to sleep, and the next day, we woke up feeling perfectly well. The memory of Him blessing us with His divine hand raised and its curative effect upon us is a memory my cousin and I will always treasure.

God Showers Health and Happiness

Just before I joined His school in Parthi, I was diagnosed with a minor heart condition known as 'mitral valve prolapse'. Although it was insignificant to me, my parents were very worried about it mostly because it required me to take medication (antibiotics) before any procedure involving a loss of blood. Simple dental work had to be preceded by this medication and my parents were

worried for my safety on the playground all the time. But, on January 11 1998, I once more experienced healing at Swami's hands during the grand finale of our Sports Day performance. He walked to where I was sitting and asked me, "Where are you from?" I replied that I was from Canada, because in the excitement of the moment, I could not come up with a more spiritually correct answer like, "From you, Swami!" Swami then smiled and patted my cheek. That summer, when I returned home to Canada for my holidays in the months of April and May, I went for my annual check-up with the cardiologist. To everyone's astonishment, my heart appeared perfectly normal and my body had apparently overcome the mitral valve prolapse. My doctor didn't have an explanation for it, but I knew it was the effect of Swami's touch.

After completing each school year, I reached Canada safely and two months later, I was back to Puttaparthi for the next academic year. The cycle continued and I began to enjoy it till I completed Grade 5 and my Dad ran out of patience for my annual appeals for one more year's extension to study in Parthi. Finally, in 2001, I returned to Canada for good and resumed my schooling here from Grade 6 onwards.

Indelible Impact

Yet the memories of my divine adventure in Puttaparthi live within me. Everything I learned there has become a part of me. I've become more independent due to these experiences and as a person I've grown in too many ways to describe. My adventure proves that you are never too old or too young to listen to your heart and follow your dream!

Today, I am a Grade 12 student, attending a Catholic High School in a Toronto suburb, who knows that apart from book knowledge, self-awareness and inner growth are extremely important. And I would never have known so, if it wasn't for Swami's presence in my life. My life has been molded around this fundamental, and will remain so. As a teenager, I deal with many issues and choices that I need to make in all spheres of my life. I am grateful to Swami that I have enough self-confidence to know how to choose wisely and carefully. This love of virtue and fear of sin is Swami's gift to each of us, His daughters and sons, who have been blessed to live in His physical proximity. It was one amazing experience for me to live with God as my neighbour in Parthi for five memorable years. The impact of His company is indelible. No matter where I go, or what I do, I know He will guide me, because He is God, and He loves me, as I love Him and nothing can ever change that.

BEING A STAR IN HIS SKY...

By Mr Amey Deshpande

This is the transcript of a talk delivered by Mr Amey Deshpande, a research scholar in Bhagavan's University, on the occasion of the 21st anniversary of the School of Business Management, Accounting and Finance, Prasanthi Nilayam, on August 21, 2007 in the divine presence of Bhagavan Baba.

“Where do I begin to tell the story of how great a love can be?
The sweet Love Story...that is older than the sea;
The simple truth about the Love He brings to me.
Where do I... start?
Where do we...start?”

I offer our most loving and humble salutations at the Divine Lotus Feet of our most beloved Bhagavan. Revered elders, dear brothers and sisters, Sai Ram to all of you.

Even as we stand on the threshold of another milestone, another anniversary (*it was the 21st Anniversary of the MBA programme of Sri Sathya Sai University*), I cannot but wonder in utter awe, admiration and a deep sense of gratitude for what Bhagavan has done for all of us.

In 1963, when one of the foreign devotees had come for the first time to Puttaparthi, he described Puttaparthi as a stone's throw from the Stone-age. And today, what we see is that the whole world has come to Puttaparthi! How can we count our blessings? How fortunate are we? Let me just share with you this interesting thought that I have:

Scientists say that the universe is about 13.5 billion years old, which is an incredibly long time, and the average life span of a man on the earth is about 100 years. Imagine our great good fortune that we happen to be on this earth, at the very same time, in the entire span of 14 billion years! We happen to be just at the time when God, the Creator of this Universe is also present on this earth!

Puppets in His Plan

More importantly, how fortunate are we that we have been chosen by Him, that we have been called by Him that He has given us an opportunity to sit on the ring-side and watch His Divine Master Plan unfold! Giving us this opportunity to play our little roles in this Divine Master Plan. My Mother had taught me a very beautiful Hindi song. It goes something like this:

*“Ye dhuniya banana our banake phir chalana,
Bus usi ka kaam hai,
Bada zordhaar uska inthajam hai
Bada zarbardast uska inthajam hai*

*Surya chandra tare apne dharma se na tal sake
Insaan ki majal kya vo uska kram badal sake?"*

which means, this entire world is a manifestation of His Master Plan. When even the Moon and the Stars cannot change His Master plan, where is man in this whole scheme of things? It is but a puppet. And we are so lucky to be puppets in His hand.

To be Bhagavan's student, especially a Management Student, has been the only exhilarating experience of my life. What have I learnt from this experience? I wish to share some of my thoughts on what I have gained from Swami as a Management Student, taking the aid of a small stanza which runs as follows:

(A song in Hindi)
*"Hey Aankh voh jo Shyam ka darshan kiya kare?
Hey sheesh jo Prabhu charan me vandan kiya kare?
Bekar voh mookh hai, jo rahe vyarth bathon mey
Mookh voh hai jo, Sai naam ka sumiran kiya kare..
Hire Mothi se nahi, shobha hai hath ki
Hey hath jo Bhagavan ka poojan kiya kare
Markar bhi amar nam hai us jeev ka jag me
Prabhu prem mey, Sai prem mey, balidan jo
Jeevan kiya kare.."*

[Of what use are the eyes, if they cannot have Darshan of Shyam (the Lord)? Of what use are the hands if they cannot worship the Lord? Foolish is the mouth that rambles aimlessly. Blessed is the tongue that chants the Name of Sai. The hands are beautiful not by holding precious pearls, but by worshipping the Lord. The one who lives, even if he is dead, is the one who offers his life at the Feet of the Lord.]"

The Ultimate Lesson

"Hey Aankh voh jo Shyam ka darshan kiya kare?

Those are the true eyes that see the Lord everywhere.

How does this apply to us, Management Students? The corporate life can be a pretty tricky one. Bhagavan says, "See God in everyone." One of the Devotees of Bhagavan, who is stationed in Delhi, heads a very large organization. And He used to hear Bhagavan often saying, "See God in everyone." He used to wonder, "Swami, how do I do it?"

And he had a special difficulty with one particular subordinate of his. This person was not only a misfit to the Organization, but more importantly, he had an attitude problem. And whatever he did was just not tolerated by this Sai devotee. On one occasion, he had committed such a big blunder that in a fit of rage, this devotee slapped him and told him, "Get out of here".

That night as he slept, Bhagavan came in his dream. He saw Bhagavan standing outside the window, but what really horrified him was that Bhagavan's cheeks were red. And Swami was rubbing his cheeks.

As soon as he saw this, he immediately got up and began to cry and sob. He said, "Swami, now I know what is the meaning of seeing God in every being is!"

Let us all believe that every person who walks into our life, every individual who comes in contact with us, is His Form.

He Writes the Programme

The next line in the song is *"Hey sheesh jo prabhu charan mey vandan kiya kare."*

Meaning, what use is the human body if it does not bow to the Lord with love and humility.

I am reminded here of another very beautiful story. Swami says that a fruit laden branch always bows down. Because, it has humility, it wants to serve the other. And so also should be a knowledgeable mind. But unfortunately, when we gather all this data and information, we start to float. And Swami says that this knowledge is actually the air which makes us float, which is truly nothing.

One of our students, armed with an MBA degree from this Institute, had passed out and had always this feeling that it is he who can do everything. This took him far and wide, to so many places and ultimately he joined a large multi national corporation in the United States.

Just to give a background of this organization, they manufactured a certain electronic component almost a hundred per minute, and a part of the process was that as this item was manufactured, it had to be labelled and then it would be loaded on to the trucks. This labelling process was done manually and that was the bottleneck of this process.

This brother, a senior brother of ours, had risen to the position of the Chief Technology Officer, and so he proposed to the management if we could automate this entire process of labelling. The management agreed to the proposal and gave him this responsibility, invested a sufficient amount of money and told him that within 6 months he had to come up with the project.

He worked day and night and came up with a wonderful program that executes this entire process electronically. He tested this whole process more than 1000 times and every time it was a success. The day of this program going live arrived, and five minutes into this process, he started to get calls into his office – "This program is not working, what have you done?", "We have invested so much in this, and is this what we get?" and so on. Very

soon, within the next 15 minutes the entire management team was in his cabin, questioning him.

He was under intense pressure. At this stage, he just said, "Please leave me alone for 5 minutes. Let me try and rectify the situation. I will think peacefully over a cup of coffee and get back."

As soon as these people left, he didn't go for coffee. He just bowed his head down and said, "Swami, I am a big zero. I am nothing. This is my prayer to you: Please bail me out of this trouble!"

Just as he closed his eyes, he heard a voice say, "Kumar!" It was exactly the way Bhagavan used to call him, when he was here as part of his MBA Program. "Kumar, emi ra Kumar?" (What happened, Kumar?) And he opened his eyes and he didn't know where this voice was coming from. It was very clearly Bhagavan's voice.

And then, he says, for the next 10 minutes what he didn't know what he did. He just mechanically followed Bhagavan's instructions. Swami asked him to open a particular window and change all the parameters there. A minute after the whole thing was over, the first phone call comes with the message: "Kumar, the process is successful, the labelling has started."

Only when we bow down our head in humility and dedication, can we see His Power work through us!

Photographic Shock

*"Bekhar voh mukh hai jo rahe vyarth bathon me.
Mukh vo hai jo prabhu naam ka sumiran kiya Kare?"*

*Wasted is the mouth that chatters. What is the use of the tongue,
if it does not chant the Name of the Lord?*

Let us look at this third statement now. A saying goes that 'power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely.' And when such a power corrupts, it affects our very fundamental thinking process.

One gentleman from Malaysia had a very similar problem. At the very young age of 35, he had romped all the corridors of power and travelled across the world at least a dozen times. He thought, "Yes I am the greatest. I don't need any God, because God is meant only for the weaklings. I have achieved everything, I don't require God." He used to tell everybody that only through self-effort can you achieve in this world. God is not required, unless you are weak minded.

One day, one of his aunts spoke about Bhagavan to this gentleman. And this gentleman said, "First of all, I don't even believe in the existence of God and

here you are trying to tell me that God can come in a human form? This is still a greater figment of your imagination.”

When he went to her house one day, he saw beautiful pictures of Bhagavan all over the place and started an argument with his aunt. As he recalls, “We all do *bhajans* only for 30 minutes or one hour, but that day for 3 hours non-stop, I kept attacking Swami. I was doing this sub-conscious, unconscious ‘*Namasmarana*’ of Swami. **I kept challenging Swami and at the height of my arrogance while arguing, I, once, pointed at a photo of Bhagavan and said, ‘If He is who you say He is, let me see His presence, right now!’” And exactly at that moment, *Vibhuti* started to materialize from that photograph, and he was absolutely bowled over.**

He knew for the first time that there exists a power greater than himself, a Source that is not some static entity. It is dynamic and it responds to your call.

Passing a Test

Then, the fourth line of the song:

*“Heere mothi se nahi shobha hai hath ki,
hey hath jo Bhagavan ka poojan kiya kare..”*

*The hands that worship the Lord are precious,
not the ones adorned with valuable pearls.*

Bhagavan says, “We have to see God in everyone.” How do we do this? Let me narrate a very beautiful incident that happened about 5 years ago.

It was those cold wintry months of December and January. And one of our students was armed with a letter as he came to Mandir one morning. That was his chance to sit in the first row and he wanted to give Swami a letter which he was trying for many days. He knew that if he missed the chance that particular morning, it would be weeks before he gets a similar opportunity. So he started from the hostel very early in the morning. As he was proceeding towards the Mandir, he saw a lady seated on the footpath shivering in that bitter chill morning. He couldn’t just pass by her. He thought, “Don’t I have a responsibility. But then, what is going to happen to my chance?” So thinking, he said to himself, “Swami, I know I have to help this lady more than anything else.”

So he ran back to the hostel, picked up a small shawl and a bed sheet, returned to this lady and put it around her. But by that time it was too late. When he reached Mandir, he had to be happy with a seat somewhere in the 5th row. And Bhagavan came out as usual, came straight to him, stretched out His hand and asked for his letter. That day, the boy learnt if we extend our hand in the service of society, God Himself will stretch His hand to take care of all our troubles.

Diving into the Depths of Devotion

And the last line of the song is:

*“Mar kar be amar naam hai us jeev ka jag mey,
Prabhu prem mey, balidan jo, jeevan kiya kare”*

*Lucky is the One who lives even after death,
the One who offers Himself with Love at the Feet of the Divine.*

It was one of those birthday functions where lakhs of devotees had come to Prashanthi Nilayam, and Puttaparthi was beginning to face the brunt of the resource crunch. It wasn't as ready then as it is these days and problems with water and sewage were beginning to erupt. On one occasion, it so happened that the entire sewage system gave up. There was a major block and all the sewage water began to overflow from a particular drain and everybody knew that the only way that this problem could be solved is by someone going down and clearing the muck that was there in the drainage system. But who will do that? How can one jump into that drain?

One *Sevadal* volunteer from Orissa, without a second thought, removed his shirt and dived straight in! He removed the muck successfully and came out, went straight for a bath, put on his dress and returned to his duty.

The birthday function was over and Bhagavan was giving *Padanamaskar* (the chance to touch His feet) to all the *sevadal* members. And nobody had physically informed Swami about this, but He came straight to this man and openly declared in front of everybody: “This man will not have another birth for what he has done.”

When we do something out of our love for God, then Bhagavan Himself will come and bestow upon us the highest of rewards!

*“Prabhu prem mey jo apne jeevan detha hai,
Prabhu usko sub kuch dethey hai”*

The same few lines are echoed in this Telugu song which is very dear to Bhagavan:

*“Ninne dhyaninchaleni, Deha melano?
Ninne Poojinchaleni, Karamulelano?
Kanuvindhula ninu choodani Kannulelano?
Ninne Marachi, Ninthalanchani, Janmamelano?
Ninu thalavani ninu pilavani, jeeva mela jihva mela?”*

*What is the purpose of this life, if it does not think of You, my beloved Lord?
What is the purpose of the hands, other than to worship you? What is the use
for my eyes, if they do not see Your Form? What is this Life for, without
thinking of you? What is this mouth for, without singing to You, calling your
sweet Name?*

Sai is Sacrifice in a Shape

We see so much of Bhagavan's Love pouring forth. But how do we bring this love into our lives? **When we look at Bhagavan's Life, we see that His Life is one of sacrifice. "This is not sacrifice" He tells us. He doesn't feel that sacrifice Himself! When we look at Him, we see that He is sacrificing. For Him, it is an automatic expression of His love. And He says, just look around at everyone, at all the things that we see in the world. Everything is, in fact, sacrificing for us.**

*Parapokaarartham, phalanthi vrukshaha
Parapokaarartham dhuhanthi gavaha
Parapokaarartham vahanthi nadhyaha*

The trees bear fruits for us, they sacrifice. The rivers flow, and the cows give milk, for us. This whole world functions only for us. Then what is our role? We also have to sacrifice. To conclude, I am reminded of this very beautiful song, which echoes these same sentiments.

*(A song in Hindi)
Madhuban kushbhoo detha hai
Sagar saavan detha hai
Jeena uska jeena hai
Jo auron ko jeevan detha hai..
Madhuban kushbhoo detha hai..
Suraj Na ban paye tho ban ke deepak jaltha chal..
Phool gire ya angare sach ki raah pe chaltha chal
Sach ki raah pe chaltha chal.
Dil voh dil hai jo auron ko..
Apni dhadkhan detha hai..
Madhubhan Khushboo detha hai..*

The garden offers its sweet fragrance to all,
And the ocean makes the rains for others
Life is worth living when lived for others' sake

If you cannot be like the Sun, be at least a lamp,
burning away for others with glee;
Whatever be the challenges - bouquets or brickbats,
Walk the path of righteousness with a spirit that is free;
That is a true heart which lends its own beats to others.
The garden offers its sweet fragrance to all...

Oh Bhagavan, let us also learn the spirit of love and sacrifice from you. Make us like those flowers in your garden, that emit fragrance to who all come in its midst. Make us shine like that star in your firmament. Oh Lord, make us the flute which is hollow from within, on which you can play your divine melodies. Jai Sai Ram!

H2H SPECIAL

A PSYCHIATRIST'S TRYST WITH SAI – PART 1

Conversation with Dr. Michael W Congleton

This is the transcript of the conversation between Dr. Michael Congleton, MD, Ph. D, President of the South Pacific Region of the Sathya Sai Organisation, USA and Prof. G Venkataraman, eminent Physicist and former Vice Chancellor of Sri Sathya Sai University.

Prof. Venkataraman (GV): I will begin by extending you a welcome to our Studio. I am going to start by asking you to introduce yourself. So, tell us about your profession, where you come from, etc.

Michael Congleton (MC): My name is Mike Congleton, I am originally from Texas, and I got my initial education in physics, a Ph.D. in that subject.

GV: Welcome to the club; I am also a physicist.

MC: It's a favourite subject of mine. I got a National Science Foundation Scholarship in physics, and completed my Ph.D. in plasma physics. I tried to get a job at the National Labs to do some things that I was interested in, but at that time, there seemed to be an abundance of physicists.

GV: Which year or period was that?

MC: In 1972. Failing to get a job, I applied for and was accepted to attend a large medical school.

GV: You were not scared of studies all over?

MC: No. I was interested in learning how things worked.

GV: That's all right. But you know, when you go to school you have to write exams. I was having nightmares about exams for many years!

MC: It didn't discourage me at all; I actually wanted to go to medical school! When I finished my under-graduate degree, I got a National Science Foundation Scholarship in Physics to continue on in physics. So it seemed like I really liked physics, and I just continued on and put off the medical training. But with not being able to get a job in a National Lab that I was so interested in, I applied to medical school and got accepted to the 5th largest Medical Center in the United States – a 1,200 bed Hospital.

GV: In Texas?

MC: Yes, University of Texas in Galveston. After I completed medical school, I got interested in surgery. But, then suddenly I had to try to treat some psychiatric patients who were surgical patients too, and I got very keen about

psychiatry. So I specialized in psychiatry! I finished my residency in psychiatry and then wanted to continue on with some research.

GV: In which subject?

MC: In medicine, that might involve physics. I had done studies in microwave spectroscopy in plasma physics, and I thought by using a microwave resonant cavities and analysis sorts of methods, we could apply that to the study of nerves or neurological disorders. So, that was in the back of my mind. I talked with the Navy and they were interested, and offered me a commission, which I accepted, as the Commander in the Navy Medical Corps.

GV: Did you sail or were you on ground always?

MC: Well, I was stationed in a laboratory; it was a Naval Health Research Center, but I did travel a lot.

GV: On the ships?

MC: I was on ships, doing studies, and more research.

GV: Did you do research on ships?

MC: Well, I researched, for instance, to establish the effects of long working hours on fatigue, performance and those sorts of things, and trying to enhance the working environment so that people could do better jobs, and not to be too over-taxed. But while I was finishing my psychiatry residency, Carol, my wife and I got interested in Yoga.

GV: Which year was that?

MC: It was around '78.

GV: Any particular reason why you got interested in Yoga?

MC: Yes, while we had been taking some Yoga courses, Carol was keen on Yoga and I went along with her, and read some books on this.

GV: Did it have anything to do with your interest in psychiatry?

MC: Yes, I used to read books on psychiatry and there was one Yogi named Swami Rama, who had written a book 'Yoga in Psychotherapy.' He is from the Himalayas and wrote several other books one of which was 'Living with the Himalayan Masters'. I had the good fortune of meeting Swami Rama and he had established an Institute back in Honesdale, Pennsylvania called the 'Himalayan Institute'. So, being interested in this, we would go to Houston which was right up the road from Galveston on the weekends and buy books on Yoga, Chinese philosophy, etc.

In 1978, I was in one of the rooms at a book store, looking at the books, and a gentleman asked me: "Have you ever heard of Sathya Sai Baba?" I said, "No, I have never heard of Sathya Sai Baba." He said, "Well, I just got back from India; He is a man of miracles."

GV: He was one of the customers in the book store?

MC: Yes, he was a customer in the book store, apparently and said, "You need to buy a book about Sai Baba." So I went over to that part of the book store where it had books about Swami. And I looked, and it was on the very top shelf. I was a chief resident in psychiatry, so can you guess what book I was attracted to?

GV: Sandweiss' book!

MC: That's right! I picked up 'Sai Baba: The Holy Man and the Psychiatrist'.

GV: No prizes for guessing that, because, most doctors come to Swami via Sandweiss. He should get a commission, I suppose!

MC: Yes! He should be getting a payback on that! I picked the book off the shelf, and I saw a picture of Swami – a good-looking, handsome Swami, and I thought He looked very Western to me!

GV: Who? Swami?

MC: Yes, Swami! If you could believe it, I thought, "He looks like a Westerner to me!" I said, "Thank you" and put the book on the stack of books that I had and went around picking some more. Carol came up after a while and said, "Okay, it's time to go back to Galveston." And then she looked at the stack of books I had and said, "You are not going to buy all those books, are you?" So I glanced at the books, looked at Carol and saw the books again, and said, "No, maybe I could put some of them back."

So I went through the books and looked at the ones that I was least interested in, and when I came to Swami's book – Sandweiss' 'The Holy Man and the Psychiatrist' – I thought, "Well, I don't really need this book." So I put it up on the top shelf and turned around, and then, the book just flew off the shelf and hit me on the head! And Carol said, "You better buy that book!" So we bought the book and as fate would have it, and Swami would wish it, I ended up in San Diego working at the Naval Health Research Center, right around the corner from Sam Sandweiss' home.

GV: When did you meet him first?

MC: I met him first when I was working at the Navy, doing this research and traveling back and forth to Washington.

GV: You knew he was there, I suppose?

MC: No!

GV: You didn't know that?

MC: No. But we were interested in going to India, because of our interest in Yoga, and I wanted to go to Rishikesh, or up to the Northern part of India where the Yogis live. We also brought, 'Autobiography of a Yogi.' And it just stimulated our interest even more. We had our home still in Galveston and a hurricane came through in there and damaged the home. There was five feet of water in the house. After we had it repaired with the insurance money, there was enough money left over to take a trip to India!

So, Carol planned out the itinerary that we were going to start in Bombay, go up north, across to Agra, Delhi, then over to Kathmandu, then back down to Kolkata and then I thought, "Wait a minute! There's a holy man in India that the book we had bought in Houston talked about. Let's see if we can find out where He is." So I looked in the book and the author was Sam Sandweiss in San Diego – that's where I was living! So I called the operator, got the number to Sam's home and called him. He said, "Tomorrow night is our first open house, you come over, and I will tell you how to get there."

GV: You mean, you used him as your tour guide!

MC: That's exactly right! So I got there, and he couldn't be more helpful! He told us how to go to see Swami. And in fact, that night, I think it was Elsie Cowan at his home as the guest speaker. Hearing her story (of the resurrection of Walter Cowan, her husband, by Baba) was also very interesting to me; she was there as Walter had already passed on. In any case, going and seeing Swami was the last and the greatest part of our trip to India.

GV: Surely, you must have discussed Swami with Sandweiss?

MC: A little bit, yes.

GV: Not much?

MC: Not in depth.

GV: You wanted to find out yourself, directly?

MC: Yes.

GV: Was that in the early eighties?

MC: 1984.

GV: So you saw Swami first in 1984?

MC: Yes.

GV: Where was that? Here (in Prasanthi) or Bangalore?

MC: It was here. After visiting Kathmandu when we got to Kolkatta, we discovered that India had been on a general strike for the last four weeks while we were traveling around in Nepal. And Andhra Pradesh was the State that had instituted the strike; the Governor of Andhra Pradesh had been ousted from the Parliament and everyone was upset about it. And so the ashram had been closed for four weeks when we got to Kolkatta. But we were desperate to come and see Swami. The attraction was so strong and we just felt like crying because it didn't look like it was going to happen.

Suddenly, we were able to catch a plane to Bangalore and got into the Hotel there. When we checked in and we were told all buses had stopped running to Puttaparthi for one month! There was no chance to get there!

We put our clothes in our room, came down and talked to the concierge. She said, "I just heard the buses had started running to Puttaparthi." So we rented a car and went over to the bus station, and sure enough they were running! But, there were thousands of people wanting to get on the buses, as they had been closed for four weeks.

So the taxi driver said, "My brother can take you, maybe he will drive you up there." So we drove around and found his brother, but this gentleman looked at his watch, then looked at us and said, "Okay, I will take you, but we have to go right now!" I looked at my family, and they were, obviously, a little puzzled! The car was an old Ambassador which had thread-bare tires, and I said, "Okay, we need to stop by the hotel so we can get some clothes first." But he said, "No. If we don't go now, we don't go." So I looked at the family, stared at him and said, "Okay, we are going!"

We got into the car, headed towards Puttaparthi, and about 5 minutes into the trip, he ran out of gas! It was right in the middle of a busy street, and of course, Carol was shaking her head as if saying, 'What have we gotten into!'

My son and I got out of the car, and pushed the cab over to a gas station, gassed up, and headed to Puttaparthi. When we got along the way there were road blocks around where the villagers were stopping traffic, because of the strike. They said, "You are not going to travel in a car while the strike is going on."

But like I said, the strike had just ended. So when we got to the road-blocks, our driver would stop, and I would get out, run around, pull the rocks out of the way, and then, villagers would come out, wave at us and smile, and we just carried on and finally reached Puttaparthi. I think we were the first people around after it had been closed for a month, and we were thrilled to be here.

So we checked in and went into a shed; I think there were four other couples in the shed. Of course, Carol's idea of camping out is staying in a four star hotel! So you can imagine us going into a shed and I thought, 'What are we

going to do?’ So we went outside to a tailor, had some clothes made, got a mattress, and came back in, got comfortable and settled in.

GV: You really roughed it out!

MC: Well, yes, I guess we did, in a way. It was a new experience.

GV: Were you mentally prepared for all that?

MC: I was probably prepared for it, but I don’t think Carol was prepared for it. But my goal was to see Swami.

GV: So, when did you see Him? In Darshan, the next day?

MC: Yes, the next morning we saw Swami in Darshan. There must have been maybe 30 or 40 people in all.

GV: What!

MC: Yes, it had been closed for a month.

GV: So, you must have got to see Him almost at point-blank range?

MC: Yes, almost.

GV: So, how was it?

MC: You know, my son John was 11 years old at that time. We never talked about Swami. We just saw Swami and you know what his comment was?

GV: What was that?

MC: He is God!

GV: Is that right? At first look?

MC: First look! He just knew! In the innocence of childhood, he just knew! And I was so impressed with that. Swami just seemed to glide across the ground and He seemed to be transparent. You just see Swami through the buildings and everything; it was a mystical experience. We had to get back to work, so after the Darshan, we headed back to the Hotel.

But on the way, the driver said, “I know of a place. There’s a devotee, he has a little orphanage. Swami gave him a couple of medallions and they are miraculously producing *amrita* (nectar)!”

GV: Oh! That’s near Mysore!

MC: Yes. It was on the way back; I guess it wasn't too far out of the way. So I said, "Sure! Let's go there!" And at that time, this little man – his name is Halagappa?

GV: Yes, I think his name is Halagappa.

MC: This is back in 1984 and he had a small metal building.

GV: Yes, next to the Kaveri River.

MC: There's a temple in it and all the pictures that had Swami in it were covered with vibhuti!

GV: Yes! I have been there.

MC: And he showed us these little medallions, one of them was Shirdi Baba and the other was of Sathya Sai Baba. It is a copper-clad, kind of enameled picture of Swami – Sathya Sai and Shirdi Sai – and they were exuding this liquid! And I am a physicist by training, dealing with pure science. And in my book, my basic approach to life was - if I couldn't replicate it in a laboratory, then don't talk to me about it. I don't want to know any mystical stuff. If people believe in telepathy, they need to see somebody about it!

But I saw these medals flowing with this *amrita* and I just started timing how fast the liquid was forming. He put it in my palm and I could see that the liquid was flowing down into the center of my palm about 1 drop every 10 or 15 seconds! It was amazing to me! No tubes attached. It was just coming out of nowhere! It was like energy being transferred to matter!

GV: You want to hear my first experience of a miracle?

MC: Yes, I do!

GV: It's very interesting. I had heard of Sai Baba long time ago, and in fact, I had seen Him when He came in Bombay in 1968. But the time was not right for me to come into His fold in full measure. I had to go through a couple of rather nasty jolts, including a rather traumatic experience. And then, I came. But I did not realize that He was an Incarnation of Divinity.

So I said, 'Yes, He is a good man, a holy man, a saint; but I don't buy the miracles!' And I had this argument with my uncle in Bangalore, and he said, "Oh! Don't think too much of yourself. There are scientists much bigger than you, more famous than you who have acknowledged!" I said, "Look, it's against all laws that I know, and these laws have been established by great people like Einstein." I did a lot of name dropping, shall I say. He was not impressed with me! So I couldn't convince him.

And then it so happened that I came here; that's a long story but I won't tax you with that because you have to be the one who is doing the speaking, but to cut a long story short, I came here to a Summer Course to give a talk. The

former Vice Chancellor, Professor Sampat - whom I knew very well - invited me and I was supposed to give the talk the day I arrived, but the previous night, Mr. Rajiv Gandhi, the Prime Minister of India then, had been assassinated. So the whole proceedings were stopped because the whole country was burning! But Swami said, "We will have a private talk by you; you speak in the College Hostel dining room." So, it was a private affair and He told Professor Sampat, "You tell the boys that I will be there otherwise they will all *bandh* the lecture."

So he put a chair there and it was announced that Swami will be there and so the hall was packed! During that time this Hospital was getting built, so Swami was tied up with the Doctors and He didn't show up. He told Sampat, "I won't be coming; but you carry on." So Sampat introduced me to the students and then he looked at me and said, "Dr. Venkataraman, that is Swami's chair; don't think it is empty, He is there, He is listening to every word."

I just took it politely; didn't say anything. I gave my talk and it was time to go. I wasn't sure how I was going to return to Hyderabad, because the whole country was in turmoil. So he said, "Come with me, I will take you for Darshan." And we went to the next building, the Trayee Brindavan (Swami's residence). He took us inside, and then Swami talked to me and was discussing how I would return and things like that. And finally He told Prof. Sampat, "You put him in your car and have him dropped at the airport." In those days, the roads were empty; you could easily travel. It was a lonely road – not yet stricken by trouble.

He was standing in the door-step and I was there. He blessed me and then He materialized vibhuti and I was knocked out! It was as if I was left in a hook! So I silently received it and put it in a paper. And then the driver took me to the airport. I said, "My mother lives there. I want to go there." He said, "Are you kidding! I can't go inside that town!" I said, "No! You have to do this for me, it will take just five minutes?"

I went there and gave my mother a bit of the Vibhuti and told my uncle all about this, and he gave me a rather mean look! He said, "You were the guy who denied all these things! I will talk to you later!" And that was it! Of course, since then I have seen a lot of those – not the real spectacular ones like He did in the fifties; between the forties and the fifties, there were really amazing things! But, I have had more than my shares of miracles.

And then, I realized after studying a lot of Vedanta, that He has the power to directly convert consciousness energy into matter, whereas, physical energy which we normally convert into matter through the $E=MC^2$ is a lower form of consciousness energy. And even the Big Bang originated with a sort of derivative of Pure Consciousness and since He is Pure Consciousness Embodied, He can directly convert that into matter. That's how I rationalized it but that came much later.

But it was a huge 10,000 volt shock to see that thing, first time!

MC: Oh, I can imagine; it was the same affect with me!

GV: Yes.

MC: But we made it back to San Diego and I went back to work and started going to the San Diego Center with Dr. Sandweiss and reading more about Swami.

GV: Did it make any change in your life in any way?

MC: Oh yes! I started thinking that there is more to life than material pursuits. And that the spiritual element of our life was very important – which I pretty much neglected. Although I have always been a strong believer in God, I was mainly focused on intellectual pursuits, up until that point.

GV: Pardon me for interrupting; did you look at Yoga merely as a physical exercise or as something to calm the mind?

MC: Oh, initially it was the physical *asanas*, the Hatha Yoga. But as I studied it more, I discovered that there was something called Raja Yoga which covered a lot more than just the *asanas*. Of course, I was studying that in the Yoga for many years. I was trying to understand it and it had led me to other pursuits too in trying to see how the spiritual exists within us.

GV: At any point, did you come into contact with Bhagavad Gita?

MC: Yes.

GV: Was that before you came to Swami or after?

MC: After we came to Swami. I also discovered that Einstein had a copy of the Bhagavad Gita too.

GV: Is that right?

MC: Yes, and he read it.

GV: Do you know that Copenhagen read it in original Sanskrit; he took Sanskrit lessons in Berkeley!

MC: I don't know how anybody can read Sanskrit; I tried to learn it myself, but it would be a miraculous experience if Swami could make me understand it. But, I went back to work and I started going to the Sai Centers and as fate would have it, the State Department asked me if I could go to Bombay (now Mumbai), India, and see if there was a way that there could be some medical technology transfer between the two countries, and I gladly accepted the task and went to Bombay.

GV: We are now into '85 -'86?

MC: Well, '87. So I went to Bombay and worked with the Municipal Corporation and interfaced with the Hospitals there; I am trying to remember their names - King Edward Memorial Hospital and others there.

GV: Yes, KEM Hospital.

MC: Yes. I finished my meetings and the studies. I needed to write a report for the State Department and in the back of my mind, I thought: 'I am taking two weeks vacation; I am going to see Swami.' So at the end of the two weeks I came down to Bangalore, and they said, "Swami was in Kodaikanal, and He would be coming back to Whitefield in two days." So I found a place that was local to Whitefield, right across from the main gate and waited.

When Swami returned, it was a small group of devotees – only 50 with Him. I thought it was a large crowd; but it's nothing like today! There was a Darshan tree, and we formed lines.

GV: Yes, I remember, the Sai Ram shed.

MC: Even if you were the last in line to go, you had a great seat anyway! And Swami came around and I felt like I was being totally ignored! And I noticed people had notes that they were writing and giving Swami. We saw a presentation where someone from Africa read poetry that he had written. So I thought: 'I will write a little poem, and I will ask Swami for an interview.' So, He came out, walked around, took my request – the little letter – and said, "Go!" So I went into the compound and had my first interview with Swami in 1987.

Once we got into the interview room, the ladies were sitting on one side and the gents on the other. He walked over to the wall switch, looked up to the ceiling fan, turned on the switch, turned around, held His hand out and said, "Okay, 60 Rupees, service charge!"

Then He walked right over to me and I was sitting more towards the front, right across from a couple of twins – Indian ladies – and He swept His hand through the air once, and right in front of me He fanned out 10,000 U.S dollars in 1,000 dollar bills and held them real close to my face! I was looking at them; they were used notes! I had never seen them in that denomination and I couldn't imagine that somebody was actually using them!

GV: Ten grand!

MC: Yes, U.S \$10,000! He turned His hand upside down and they fell into nothing – they disappeared right in front of me! And He said, "Money means nothing; it comes and goes. Love is the only thing that lasts!"

GV: Isn't that an amazing way of putting that in some kind of a demo!

MC: Yes! He looked at the ladies sitting right across from me and they didn't say a word; He shook His head back and forth and said, "Five minutes of pleasure and 23 hours fifty-five minutes of pain and suffering!" And again, He

swept His hand through the air, and materialized a rosary – a *japamala*! He held the *mala* at the very top and it looped down under His two hands. He pulled a little bit at the top of the *mala*, and it split into two *malas*! It was like peeling a banana. He was splitting it apart, one *mala* was going up, and two *malas* were coming out – and click, click, click – then there were two identical *malas*; one for each twin!

GV: Where were those twins from?

MC: I am not sure.

GV: Were they Indian?

MC: Yes, they were Indian ladies. He also materialized a watch for one of the students there, and I learnt the significance of watch later – W-A-T-C-H meaning, Watch your Words, Actions, Thoughts, Character and Heart.

GV: Yes.

(To be continued...)

GET INSPIRED

IF YOU WANT TO BE PERFECT...

One day little children were brought to Jesus for him to place his hands on them and pray for them. But the disciples rebuked those who brought them. Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these." Then Jesus placed his hands on them and blessed them.

Wow! We may ask: what is this quality that gives the child automatic ticket to the gate of the Kingdom of God? Take some time and watch the little child lost in the fun of life. What do you see? Total selflessness! With no sense of "I" and "mine" the little child is rapt in the bliss of Being. Totally unattached to life, the child lives in the fullness of Life.

Then a certain rich young man came up to Jesus and asked, "Teacher, what good thing must I do to get eternal life?"

"Why do you ask me about what is good?" Jesus replied. "There is only One who is good." Surprising, isn't it? But that is the Truth. Only God is Good! And we can be good only when we realize this Oneness with the One.

Then Jesus said to the young man: "If you want to enter life, obey the commandments."

"Which ones?" the man inquired. Jesus replied, "Do not kill" (*the Vedic law of Ahimsa*) "Do not commit adultery" (*the Vedic command of Brahmacharia*) "Do not steal" (*the Vedic law of aparigraha*) "Do not give false testimony" (*the Vedic command: speak the truth, follow righteousness*) "Honor your father and mother" (*the Vedic admonition: Mother is Divine, Father is Divine*) and "Love your neighbor as yourself" (*the Vedic injunction: Do to others what you would like done unto you*)

"All these I have kept since I was a child" the young man said. "What do I still lack?" Hmnn! Let us wait a minute. How many of us can honestly say this to our Beloved Swami! "I have kept all the Vedic or Bible or Sathya Sai Code of conducts, etc, (they are all the same) from my childhood?" This simply means that this rich young man is no ordinary person. He is indeed a great Soul.

Jesus was deeply pleased with this young man. He looked at him with love and he wished God would bestow on him still greater blessings. And He saw in him one lack. In spite of his great wealth and despite his strict adherence to the path of righteousness, he still had no Peace: that undisturbed stillness of bliss which the world and its objects cannot give.

Jesus then gave him the great invitation: a call to Divinity, a ticket to 'Prashanthi Nilayam', the Abode of Supreme peace. Jesus said to the man, **"If**

you want to be perfect, go, sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me."

My Jesus! The man was shocked. His mind reeled round his bank accounts, his numerous estates and companies, his wife and children, his honor and social status... all the comfort and pleasures... to give up all these and come and follow this wondering homeless recluse? His face bowed down with the burden of decision. His heart was beating fast. It was a moment with momentum – a divine opportunity not different from the critical choices which made the Buddha and St. Francis of Assisi forsake their Kingly Estates in search for perfection.

Meanwhile Jesus stood patiently looking at him...waiting... for his "yes". But he walked away sadly. What a life time opportunity that was missed! How many people today are able to accept these same commands from the Avatar of the age: ***"Go... sell all you have... give them to the poor... come ... follow me."***

When Swami calls us for interview He always says: "Go". What is "go"? To go is to let go! How can we 'go' when we can't 'let go'? This is the first step in the path of self surrender: to let go! When we let go, then we can sell all, then we can give all, then we can come and take refuge at the Divine lotus feet, (*Manasa bajare Guru charanam*), then we can surrender to that lotus feet who will take us across the ocean of *samsara* – circle of birth and death.

When the man had left, Jesus said to his disciples, "I tell you the truth, it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God."

This was another shocker for the disciples. "In that case" they asked, "Who then can be saved?" The Jews looked upon wealth as a blessing from God, a reward for being good, a sign for His special favour. If the rich - those who from the disciple's point of view seemed to be first in the line for salvation - cannot be saved, then who in the world can be saved? **Jesus looked at them intently and said, "From the human point of view, it is impossible. But with God everything is possible."**

In reality, it is not just the rich who have difficulty, for perfection is not possible for any one from a human point of view. But from God's View Point, everything is possible! So perfection is all about the optical medium with which we see Reality. When we see with the human binoculars we see 'I' and 'mine', 'you' and 'him', 'male' and 'female', 'rich' and 'poor', etc. This sense of duality is the illusion that creates the tangles of attachment. Like this rich young man we have lots of attachments. This young man probably did not know that he was deeply attached to his wealth. This is also true of many of our attachments. You cannot tell what you are attached to until it is disturbed. Swami often shakes our attachments in order that we may not only become aware of them, but also to let go of them. But we do not need to wait for this shaking. We must adopt an attitude of mind whereby we are always ready to

let go! What is this attitude? It is the sense of “I” and “mine”. It is this sense that we have to let go.

Some feel that detachment means letting go of material possessions. But this is not detachment. In any case it is not possible to let go of the objects of the world. This is because objects have no independent existence apart from us. Where can we run away from them? Be it in the forest or in the city, they are there. Come to Prashanthi Nilayam and they are there too. Can we go anywhere to escape them? No! What has to be let go are not the objects but this sense of possession, this attitude that things belong to us, this feeling that make things happen for us...

When the clothing of “I” and “Mine” is stripped away, then we will see Perfection because we will see from the Divine View Point: All is One! There is no other, no owner and owned, no you and me! All is One, be alike to everyone! This is salvation.

Jesus is telling us today:

*It is not the doing...
It is the sense “I am the doer”;
Let go the doer-ship.*

*It is not the wealth...
It is the sense “I am the owner”;
Let go the ownership.*

*It is not the objects...
It is the sense “it is mine”;
Let go the “I” and “mine”.*

This is the only way to perfection.

CALLED BACK TO LIFE

All over the world miracles are happening as sure signs of God's Grace. Most of the time we do not get to hear of them. Many times the recipients themselves are not even aware of how God has saved them from serious injury, turned them away from muggers, gained them meaningful employment or planted that brilliant life-enhancing idea in their mind!

But sometimes one cannot avoid the obvious - that a miraculous change for the better has indeed been the result of divine intervention. Such is the case with the true story of US Army Major David Shublak. Married for only six weeks to his wife Linda, they were a very happy couple and he had a successful army career ahead of him. Being a regular jogger he tended to go out every morning for exercise. But this hobby nearly lead him to lose his life in a tragic accident.

Linda adored their new life together and one day as her husband was out exercising, she suddenly heard the wailing sound of sirens and realized that someone had been hurt. Being a devout Christian, she instantly prayed to the Lord for the unfortunate person – little knowing that the victim was her own husband!

A fast moving car had hit David and propelled him 65 feet away from the impact! He had landed on his head on the concrete. It was a gruesome sight. The paramedics rushed to the scene and took him to hospital.

At the hospital, David underwent immediate treatment for severely broken legs and a broken arm. He had facial and skull fractures. Twenty minutes into the surgery, his brain started to swell five times its normal size. At that point the chief neurosurgeon told Linda that David was not expected to live.

It all seemed a hopeless situation, which only spiraled downwards when even worse news came from the doctors: David's brain was not functioning at all.

"It was heart-wrenching the night we were officially told David was clinically brain-dead," says Linda. From then onwards, David's friends and military officers started to plan for his funeral at Arlington National Cemetery. Some suggested Linda should donate several of David's organs. Even the Shublaks' pastor had prepared for the worst, after seeing the readings from David's brain pressure monitor, which showed no brain function compatible to human existence.

However, Linda had not given up. She could not believe that her husband's life could be taken away from her so savagely. She began to pray to the Lord – not for strength to bear it all - but for her husband. The amazing faith that Linda possesses prompted her to ask the Lord for guidance as to how she could help David.

"There was so much pressure," says Linda, "and so much doubt and unbelief in other people that I said, 'Lord, give me some assurance of what I am to do.'"

Amazingly, John 11:25 was highlighted in Linda's Bible. **"I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me, even though he die, yet shall he live."**

"And that was God telling me that even though they were saying David was brain-dead, he was going to live," says Linda, believing in God more than medical science.

Linda continued to read the Bible and pray unceasingly. She spent untold hours by her husband's bedside. There she played Christian music, placed the Bible on David's chest, and pinned Scriptures all over the hospital room. But while her faith grew in anticipation of a miracle, others around her were worried she had lost touch with reality. "It disturbed a lot of people," she says. She was living in another world from those around her: a world of absolute trust in God and His healing power.

Linda ignored the opinions of those who had given up hope and kept praying for David, even though he was still on life support. She did not listen when people tried to offer her condolences at his 'death'; or when they suggested she take rest at home.

And in God's own time, against all the accepted odds, by the sixth day, David began responding to visual light! When Linda, whispering in his ear, encouraged him to show the doctors there was even more life in him, he started moving his legs, astounding everyone.

"It was like an awesome reverence that came over the whole room," says Linda, "Just a glimpse of glory."

David's recovery continued to astonish people in the weeks to come. Slowly, David's memory returned. After two months of intensive rehabilitation, he was able to return home. The neurosurgeons agreed David's recovery qualified as a miracle.

David's willpower seems to match his wife's faith, as he says: "I feel absolutely great," says David. "My goal is to do a marathon." Recently, David returned to active military service.

GOD'S LETTER

Our 14 year old dog, Abbey, died last month. The day after she died, my 4 year old daughter Meredith was crying and talking about how much she missed Abbey. She asked if we could write a letter to God so that when Abbey got to heaven, God would recognize her. I told her that I thought we could so she dictated these words:

Dear God,

Will you please take care of my dog? She died yesterday and is with you in heaven. I miss her very much. I am happy that you let me have her as my dog even though she got sick. I hope you will play with her. She likes to play with balls and to swim. I am sending a picture of her so when you see her you will know that she is my dog. I really miss her.

Love, Meredith.

We put the letter in an envelope with a picture of Abbey and Meredith and addressed it to God in 'Heaven'. We put our return address on it. Then Meredith pasted several stamps on the front of the envelope because she said it would take lots of stamps to get the letter all the way to heaven. That afternoon she dropped it into the letter box at the post office. A few days later, she asked if God had gotten the letter yet. I told her that I thought He had.

Yesterday, there was a package wrapped in gold paper on our front porch addressed, 'To Meredith' in an unfamiliar hand. Meredith opened it. Inside was a book by Mr. Rogers called, 'When a Pet Dies.' Taped to the inside front cover was the letter we had written to God in its opened envelope. On the opposite page was the picture of Abbey and Meredith and this note:

Dear Meredith,

Abbey arrived safely in heaven.

Having the picture was a big help. I recognized Abbey right away.

Abbey isn't sick anymore. Her spirit is here with me just like it stays in your heart. Abbey loved being your dog. Since we don't need our bodies in heaven, I don't have any pockets to keep your picture in, so I am sending it back to you in this little book for you to keep and have something to remember Abbey by.

Thank you for the beautiful letter and thank your mother for helping you write it and sending it to me. What a wonderful mother you have. I picked her especially for you. I send my blessings every day and remember that I love you very much. By the way, I am wherever there is love.

Love, God

TEST YOUR SPIRITUAL QUOTIENT

A QUIZ ON DIVINE CHRISTMAS DISCOURSES

Christmas has been celebrated in the Divine Presence of Bhagavan Baba for nearly four decades, and every year it has been a revealing and riveting experience. For, in His Divine Discourses on this day, Swami has enlightened devotees with rare and profound insights into the divine personality of Jesus and His Gospel. As you try the ten questions below, you will get a few glimpses of these divine revelations.

1. In the 1972 Christmas Discourse, Swami said that Jesus Christ made an announcement about the Advent of Baba by declaring: "He who sent me among you will come again! His Name will be...."

What Name did Jesus prophesize?

- A. Baba [Divine Mother and Father].
- B. Sai [Divine].
- C. Sathya [Truth].
- D. Prema [Love].

2. In His 1978 Christmas Discourse, Swami enlightens us by saying: "Jesus was honoured by the populace as Christ, for they found in his thoughts, words and deeds, no trace of ego. He had no envy or hatred, and was full of love and charity, humility and sympathy. Jesus' original name was...."

What was Jesus' original name?

- A. Isa
- B. Jevoha
- C. Esu
- D. Immanuel

3. In Swami's 1986 Christmas Discourse, He declared the true meaning of Joy.

"Jesus advised one of his foremost disciples, Peter to live in love, for Love is God. Man can experience God only when he becomes the embodiment of Love, which doesn't seek anything or expect even gratitude in return, Love which becomes sacrifice and service, spontaneously. When Peter listened to such exhortations from the Master, he found a new joy welling up within him and a new meaning in the word joy. 'J' meant Jesus and the letter directed him to love Jesus first. 'O' meant others who must be loved, next...."

What significance of 'Y' did Swami give?

- A. Love the Young.
- B. Love Yourself.
- C. Yearn to Love God.
- D. Yield to spiritual desires.

4. In His 1998 Christmas Discourse, Swami enlightened us about some of Jesus' earlier years. "Jesus grew up at Nazareth till he reached thirty. After Joseph's passing, Jesus sought his mother's permission to embark on his Divine mission. He got baptized by John, the Baptist, and spent some days in penance in a forest.

"During the penance, he prayed to God for three things: one - He should be blessed with the quality of loving equally everyone; two - He should have the strength and forbearance to suffer patiently any indignity or persecution that he might be subjected to by anyone; three - He should be enabled to use his God-given body wholly in the service of God."

For how many days was Jesus in penance in the forest?

- A. 10
- B. 20
- C. 30
- D. 40

5. In His 1992 Christmas Discourse, Swami reveals the genesis of the custom of putting up a Christmas tree: "Jesus was crucified on a Friday and He rose from the tomb on a Sunday. That is why Sunday is taken as the day of worship and service in churches. Catholics gave importance to Virgin Mary, the Mother of Christ, while Protestants gave importance to the birth of Christ. Catholics celebrate Christmas by worshipping Mary on the evening of 24th and Protestants celebrate the birth of Christ on the 25th. There is a custom of putting up a Christmas tree on this day and worshipping it."

To which country was this custom of putting up a Christmas tree traced to?

- A. England
- B. Germany
- C. Spain
- D. Israel

6. Just like the three stages of achieving Divinity in Hinduism, Jesus underwent three similar stages before He achieved Oneness with the Divine: "I am the Messenger of God" [Messenger and master, the two are basically separate, and so this stage is one of *dhwaitha* (dualism)]; "I am the Son of

God" [The son and father, though two separate entities, are bound by affection and kindred feelings and attitudes. They are like the whole and the part, the body and the limb. This stage is called *visishta dhwaitha* (qualified nondualism)]; and finally "I and My Father are One" [Son and the Father are One; the stage is of *adhwaitha* (non-dualism)]. In His 1988 Discourse, what realization did Swami tell us that Jesus came to after reaching the final stage?

- A. Our mind is fickle like a mad monkey.
- B. Our body is bound to perish, but the Indweller is permanent.
- C. Our heart is full of desires and we must reduce desires to find happiness.
- D. Our soul's true nature is Bliss.

7. Over the years, Bhagavan has given a lot of insight into the teachings of Christ. He has also spoken about the life of Christ and what Christ stood for. One memorable 1996 Christmas evening, during the course of His discourse, Bhagavan said, "There is a book compiled in Britain around 1530 A.D., containing all the information about Jesus gathered during the preceding centuries which is preserved in a place on the Black Sea Coast...."

Who preserved this small book?

- A. Americans
- B. Germans
- C. Jews
- D. Russians

8. In His 1993 Discourse, Swami explains: "Whatever the God you worship, adore Him with *Thadhaathma bhaava* (a sense of oneness). Bodies may be two, but the heart is one. This is the feeling with which God should be worshipped. Only then you reach the state when you can declare: "You and I are one." How this state is to be realized is illustrated by a biblical episode. Once St. _____, while walking along, saw an angel reading a book. He asked who she was and what she was reading. She replied that she was an angel and that she was reading a book dealing with the doctrine of love. He asked for the book and the angel gave it to him, but said: "You must eat this book. When you are consuming the book, its taste will be bitter. But after you have eaten and digested it, it will become very sweet."

Which one of Jesus' disciples was Swami referring to?

- A. St. John
- B. St. Paul
- C. St. Mathew
- D. St. Luke

9. Christmas means the Mass that is held on the birthday of Christ. It is fundamentally a sacred religious rite. In His 1990 Christmas Discourse, Swami taught us: "The Christmas festival is celebrated in many countries with a lot of fanfare, merriment and riotous festivities. You should note one thing. Nowhere in the world is Christmas celebrated in the manner in which it is done in Prashanti Nilayam. People belonging to different countries, different faiths and different cultures, coming together to adore God and celebrating this festival in such a holy atmosphere cannot be found anywhere else. This should spread to all countries. Christmas is celebrated in America, Germany, Italy and other countries. But in what manner? By sumptuous eating, drinking, dancing and wasting time. Here also you indulge in drink. But what is it you are drinking? You are drinking...."

- A. The nectarine words of Sai.
- B. Pure Divine Love.
- C. The sweet air of Prashanti Nilayam - the Abode of Peace.
- D. The blessed water of Prashanti Ashram

10. In His 1984 Christmas Discourse, Swami teaches us: "As messengers of God, you have to demonstrate to the world the Purity, the Truth and the Love that the Divine symbolizes. When you lead a life of purity and morality, you are entitled to regard yourselves as "Sons of God." God is the Embodiment of Love and you should not do anything which is contrary to the love that God represents. You should develop those good qualities which can make you worthy "Sons of God." In the Bible it is recorded that Jesus washed the feet of His disciples. When they asked Him why He was doing so, Jesus answered: "I am washing your feet as your servant, so that you may....."

- A. Redeem your sins.
- B. Learn to serve the world.
- C. Purify your hearts.
- D. Experience Unity.

ANSWERS:

1C

Swami said: "The statement of Christ is simple: 'He who sent me among you will come again!' and he pointed to a Lamb. The Lamb is merely a symbol, a sign. It stands for the Voice - Ba-Ba; the announcement was the Advent of Baba. 'His Name will be Truth,' Christ declared. *Sathya* means Truth. 'He will wear a robe of red, a blood red robe.' (Here Baba pointed to the robe He was wearing!). 'He will be short, with a crown (of hair). The Lamb is the sign and symbol of Love.'

“Christ did not declare that he will come again. He said, ‘He who made me will come again.’ That Ba-ba is this Baba and Sai, the short, curly-hair-crowned red-robed Baba, is come. He is not only in this Form, but, He is in every one of you, as the dweller in the Heart. He is there; short, with a robe of the colour of the blood that fills it.”

2A

Swami said: “Jesus’ original name was Isa which, when repeated, is Sai. Isa and Sai, both mean *Ishwara* (God), the Eternal Absolute, the *Sath-Chith-Aanandha* (Being-Awareness-Bliss). In the Tibetan manuscript, at the monastery where Isa spent some years, his name is written as Isha, which means the Lord of all living beings.”

3B

Swami teaches us: “‘Y’ meant yourself; who ought to be loved only last. But, look at the human condition today. Man loves himself first, others next and Jesus last!”

4D

Swami mentions: “After forty days, Jesus emerged from his penance with the faith that his prayers had been granted. Jesus encountered the fishermen, at Galilee, who became his first disciples. He told them that he had come to establish the reign of love on earth and that they would be his helpers in his mission. He spoke to them about the preciousness of human birth and urged them to seek the Kingdom of God within themselves.”

5B

Swami tells us: “The genesis of this custom can be traced to Germany. A preacher by name Jensen from England once visited Germany. When he was traveling in Germany on his mission, he noticed some Germans attempting to offer a child's life as sacrifice to propitiate God who, they believed, lived in an oak tree. The priest was worried and questioned them why they were offering an innocent child as sacrifice to a tree. As they asserted that God lived in the tree, he took an axe and cut the tree. To his surprise, he was shaken by an inexplicable vibration from head to foot. He noticed the form of a child between the two portions of the tree that was cut by him.”

6B

Swami explained further:

‘Jesus pointed to three stages. The first one is “I am the Messenger of God.” He wanted to propagate the message of God. The second one is, “I am the Son of God.” The son has a claim to father's property. What is the property of God? Truth, love, forbearance, peace, and righteousness are the properties of God. So, man has to strive to attain these qualities. He has to practice,

experience, and propagate these virtues. Only then does man deserve to be called Son of God. The third one is "I and My Father are One." This stage is attained when the principle of unity is realized. When Jesus reached this stage, He had no suffering at all. He was always blissful and was prepared for anything. Even at the time of crucifixion, he was smiling, because he realized that He was not the body. Body is bound to perish, but the indweller has no birth and death. Truly speaking, the indweller is God Himself. Jesus understood that the body was merely a vesture and He was the indweller."

7D

Swami stated: "The Russians condensed all this material in a small book which they preserved in a place on the Black Sea coast." Swami produced the little book by a circular wave of His hand and held it before the audience, He said: 'This is the book. You can see the cross on the cover page. The book was designed to demonstrate the common features of all religions. What is contained in this book is not to be found even in the Bible. It contains an entirely new account of the life of Jesus.'

8A

Swami enlightened us about this incident by stating:

"'Eating the book' means absorbing the contents of the book, practicing them and experiencing the bliss derived therefrom. While reading and digesting 'the book' the experience was bitter as declared by the angel. But, in due course, there was great transformation in St. John. His speech acquired a unique sweetness. His looks were sweet. Everything about him became sweet. What does this mean? It signifies the truth that you should completely identify yourself with the Divine love, which you seek from God. This love is not a purchasable commodity. Today, devotion is treated as an exercise in shareholding, a kind of business partnership. But this is not right. The devotees should feel: 'Everything is Thine.' It is only when there is such a feeling of total surrender that the nature of Divine love can be comprehended."

9B

Swami continued: "You are drinking Pure Divine Love. It is this Love that you must offer to the world. Don't entertain religious difference of any kind. Put into practice the message you receive here and share the bliss of your experience with others."

10B

Swami said: "Jesus answered: 'I am washing your feet as your servant, so that you may learn to serve the world.' Every man is, to begin with, a messenger of God. When he fulfills his duties as a messenger, he realizes that he is a son of God and then achieves oneness with the Divine."

MULTI-FAITH QUIZ

This quiz concerns festivals celebrated by people of different faiths all around the world in the month of December. It shows how man for generations has exalted Him and His presence on earth in this blessed month in so many beautiful ways and found light, peace, bliss.

1. 'Advent' is the beginning of the Church Year for most Churches in the Western tradition. It begins on the fourth Sunday before Christmas Day, and ends on Christmas Eve, 24th December. This year, it is celebrated on 2nd December. The word Advent means "coming" or "arrival." Advent is marked by a spirit of expectation, anticipation, preparation, and longing for the coming of Lord Jesus Christ. How is this preparation honoured?

- A. By putting up lights.
- B. By setting up a special wreath.
- C. By ringing bells.
- D. By exchanging gifts.

2. 'Hanukkah' (also spelled 'Chanukah') and known as the 'Festival of Lights', is an 8 day annual Jewish festival from December 5 to 12 this year. The festival is observed in Jewish homes by the kindling of lights on each night of the holiday - one on the first night, two on the second, and so on. The number 8 has special significance in Jewish theology.

What does the number 8 represent?

- A. Newness
- B. Longevity
- C. Supremacy
- D. Infinity

3. 'Bodhi Day', traditionally December 8th, is the Buddhist holiday that commemorates the day the historical Buddha, experienced Enlightenment, also known as 'Bodhi' in Sanskrit or Pali. According to tradition, he had undertaken years of extreme ascetic practices and decided to sit under a *Pipul* tree and simply meditate until he found the root of suffering, and how to liberate one's self from it. He made a great vow to Heaven and Earth to find the root of suffering, or die trying. He finally found the answers he sought and became Enlightened, and experienced Nirvana and earned the title Buddha or "Awakened One" - one who has permanently overcome greed, hate, ignorance, and has achieved complete liberation from suffering. Enlightenment is the highest form of happiness.

What was Buddha's name at birth?

- A. Ananda

- B. Rahula
- C. Siddhartha
- D. Nibbana

4. While Christmas is popularly celebrated on December 25 all over the world, in Mexico, Christmas is an important holiday for traditional Christian Latino's who celebrate by re-enacting the search by Joseph for a room at an inn for Mary to give birth to Jesus. One of the most colorful traditions is the **posada** party, celebrated every evening from December 12 to 24.

What does the word '**posada**' mean?

- A. Religious event.
- B. Festive spirit.
- C. Shelter.
- D. The guiding Star.

5. 'Eid ul Adha' is a festival of sacrifice. On December 20 this year, this Islamic festival marks the end of Hajj (the holy pilgrimage to Mecca) and is celebrated by Muslims the world over. The Hajj is one of the pillars of Islam, which every adult Muslim must undertake at least once in their life if they can afford it and are physically able. Hajj is the concluding act of pilgrimage and is observed even when not on pilgrimage.

For how many days does this pilgrimage last?

- A. 2 days
- B. 4-5 days
- C. One week
- D. One month

6. For Jains, December 20 is also marked as a very important day known as 'Mauna Jiyaras'. This day is regarded as the anniversary of the birth of many of the Tirthankaras or Pathfinders. What does the word 'Mauna' mean?

- A. Love
- B. Peace
- C. Unity
- D. Silence

7. For most children in Holland, the most important day during the Christmas Celebrations is St. Nicholas' day. St. Nicholas, called 'Sinter Klaas' in Holland, is where Santa Claus comes from. On the morning of St. Nicholas' Day, Sinter

Klaas travels to Amsterdam in a boat, wearing his red bishop's robes. He travels with his servant called Black Peter. When Sinter Klaas and Black Peter come ashore from the boat, all of the local church bells ring in celebration. Sinter Klaas then leads a procession through Amsterdam, riding a white horse, to meet the Queen of Amsterdam in the Palace.

When is St. Nicholas Eve celebrated in Holland?

- A. November 30
- B. December 1
- C. December 5
- D. December 15

8. Zoroastrianism is an ancient religion. The Founder of Zoroastrianism was the Persian Prophet Zorathustra, meaning "He of the golden light". December 26 is *Zartusht-no-diso* day [one of the three Persian calendars], when Zoroastrians commemorate the death of their Prophet, Zarathustra who was the first Prophet who brought a monotheistic religion and taught that there was one God, Ahura Mazda. Religious services are devoted to his memory and to the spirits of the dead, known as the *fravashis*. Special prayers are recited and Zoroastrians go to the Fire Temple to pray. There aren't any elaborate celebrations on the day since it is a solemn occasion.

What does Ahura Mazda mean?

- A. The Fire God
- B. The Supremely Wise Creator
- C. The Only Protector
- D. The Cosmic Sustainer

9. In Finland, Christmas is not complete without Joulupukki. What does it mean?

- A. Santa Claus
- B. Christmas Tree
- C. Festive lights
- D. Sumptuous meals

10. In Japan, around midnight on December 31, New Year's Eve, all temples ring their large bronze bells 108 times. It is a tradition called "joya-no-kane".

Why 108 times?

- A. To bring on good luck
- B. To get rid of desires
- C. To enthuse new resolutions
- D. To repent mistakes during the past year

ANSWERS:

1B

Advent celebrates a truth about God, the revelation of God in Christ whereby all of creation might be reconciled to God. A very special wreath of the season is the 'Advent wreath'. Four candles are placed around the wreath as a way of preparing for the coming of the Messiah. Each week one more candle is lit. They are called the candles of Hope, of Peace, of Love, and of Joy. At the center of the wreath there stands one more candle, the Christ candle which is lit on Christmas Eve in commemoration of the birth of the Baby of Bethlehem.

The circle of the wreath reminds one of God Himself, His eternity and endless mercy, which has no beginning or end. The green of the wreath speaks of the hope that one has in God, the hope of newness, of renewal, of eternal life. Candles symbolize the light of God coming into the world through the birth of His son. The four outer candles represent the period of waiting during the four Sundays of Advent.

2D

The number eight has special significance in Jewish theology, as representing transcendence and the Jewish People's special role in human history. Seven is the number of days of creation, that is, of completion of the material cosmos, and also of the classical planets. Eight, being one step beyond seven, represents the Infinite.

3C

The prince, Siddhartha Gautama, left his home and family and all his possessions behind at the age of 29 to discover the meaning of life, particularly its hardships. After six years of rigorous discipline and asceticism under the guidance of a number of spiritual teachers, he still hadn't found what he was looking for. While traveling with a small group of fellow seekers, he went off by himself, broke his fast, and sat down under a *pipal* tree [a kind of a mulberry tree] and vowed not to arise until he understood. He sat through the week, day and night, and on the eighth morning came to the realization which became the founding principles of what the modern world calls Buddhism. Siddhartha Gautama's realization and presentation to his fellow seekers of the Four Noble Truths was:

1. All beings are subject to suffering. No one escapes... suffering is universal.
2. The cause of suffering is Ignorance. And Ignorance of oneself is the greatest Ignorance.
3. Ignorance, the cause of suffering, can be overcome, and
4. The way to overcome Ignorance is the Eightfold Path.

From that point forward, he was referred to as the Buddha, the Enlightened One.

4C

These celebrations commemorate Mary and Joseph's cold and difficult journey from Nazareth to Bethlehem in search of shelter. "Posada" in Spanish, simply means lodging or shelter. Nowadays, the posada has evolved into a religious and social celebration, paying a festive homage to the journey. Each one of these nights before Christmas, a party is held in a home in the neighborhood. There is plenty of food and drink, with candies and fruit for the children. At dusk, all the guests gather outside the house. A small child dressed as an angel leads, followed by children carrying figures of Mary and Joseph. Boys and girls dressed in silver and gold robes constitute the procession, followed by the adults and musicians. Everyone sings melodious songs as they walk slowly along, carrying their lit candles. When they reach the house, the group divides in two. One half remains outside and begs for shelter from the other half, which is inside the house. The doors are then opened, the religious part of the celebration ends, and the fun begins. The happy end to each posada has always been the piñata. A piñata is a fragile earthenware jar covered with paper Mache, traditionally made in the shape of a star, to recall the one that so mysteriously guided the Three Kings to the newborn Jesus.

5B

Every year, millions of Muslims from around the world make the journey to Mecca, Saudi Arabia, for the annual pilgrimage (or Hajj) which lasts for 4-5 days. Dressed in the same simple white clothing to represent human equality, the pilgrims gather to perform rites dating back to the time of Abraham. Pilgrims wear special clothes: simple garments which strip away distinctions of class and culture, so that all stand equal before God.

6D

Mauna Jiyaras is a day of fasting, silence and meditation on the five holy beings: monks, teachers, religious leaders, Arihants (Jinas, enlightened masters) and Siddhas (liberated souls). 'Mauna' means silence and 'Jiyaras' means day of fasting.

7C

On St. Nicholas Eve, 5th December, children leave clogs or shoes out to be filled with presents. They also believe that if they leave some hay and carrots in their shoes for Sinter Klaas's horse, they will receive some sweets. Children are told that Black Peter keeps a record of all the things they have done in the past year in a book and that good children will get presents from Sinter Klaas, but bad children will get chased by Black Peter with a stick! Dutch tradition says that he lives in Madrid, Spain and every year he chooses a different harbour to arrive in Holland, so as many children as possible get a chance to see him. Every town in Holland has a few Sinter Klaas helpers, dressed the same as Sinter Klaas who help give the presents out.

8B

Literally translated, 'Ahura' means The Lord Creator and 'Mazda' means Supremely Wise symbolized by a living flame. Contrary to popular belief, members of the faith are not fire-worshippers; rather, the flame found in the temples is simply a symbol of the manifested power of God. Zarathushtra proclaimed that there is only one God, who is the singular creative and sustaining force of the Universe. Some Basic Maxims of Zoroastrianism are: *Humata, Hukhta, Huvarshta*, which mean: Good Thoughts, Good Words, and Good Deeds. There is only one path and that is the path of Truth. Do the right thing because it is the right thing to do, and then all beneficial rewards will also come to you. The sacred scriptures of the faith are known as the *Avesta*.

9A

Joulupukki is the Finnish name for Santa Claus. The name Joulupukki literally means Yule Goat or Christmas Goat. This name is likely to come from an old Finnish tradition, where people dressed in goat hides called nuuttipukkis used to circulate in homes after Christmas eating leftover food.

Today Joulupukki looks and behaves mostly like his American version, but there are differences. Joulupukki's workshop is situated, not in the North Pole or Greenland, but in Korvatunturi, Lapland, Finland. He does not sneak in through the chimney during the night, but knocks on the front door during Christmas eve. When he comes in, his first words usually are: "*Onkos täällä kilttejä lapsia?*" (Are there (any) good children here?)

He usually wears red, warm clothes and often carries a wooden walking stick. He visits people's homes and rides a sleigh pulled by a number of reindeer. Joulupukki has a wife, Joulumuori (*Mother Christmas*), who knows how to make very delicious Christmas porridge, *riisipuuro* (rice porridge).

10B

In Buddhism, it is said that humans have 108 earthly desires that are the source of all sufferings, and each toll of the bell helps people rid themselves of one of these desires. By ringing out the old year and ringing in the new, each earthly desire will be taken away and therefore we can start the New Year with a pure mind. The final toll rings out just after midnight.

QUIZ ON H2H

This quiz tests your recall powers from reading Heart2Heart. This being the month of December, all the questions are based on events from Bhagavan's life that have happened in this month.

1. In our 'Sathya Sai Speaks' section of the Dec 2004 issue, Swami teaches us the very first message of Jesus:

'On December 25th, when Jesus was born, three kings came to His birthplace. These three gave expression to three different views about the newborn babe. One of them, looking at the infant, said: "This child looks like one who will be a lover of God." A second king said: "God will love this child." The third king declared: "Verily, this child is God Himself."

The first one viewed the child from the physical point of view. The second saw the child from the mental viewpoint. The third saw from the point of view.'

- A. Metaphysical
- B. Intellectual
- C. Spiritual
- D. Psychological

2 In our 'H2H Special: He Is My Swami: Conversation with Mrs. Padma Kasturi' of the August 2007 issue, she shared a very rare and remarkable event:

'It was in 1957 – I remember that year because Swami celebrated my father's 60th birthday in the Mandir that year. And because my father was born on Christmas day, it was in December; and Vaikuntha Ekadashi usually falls in the end of December too, Swami took us all to the Chitravati River and said, "We will have moonlight dinner at Chitravati!" - It was very rare but sometimes we would have it. We all prepared food and took it there and Swami did some bhajans. When Swami asked for the silver tumbler, my father thought that Swami wanted some water and so he started to fill the tumbler with water. Swami said, "No, Give Me the empty tumbler!'

What miraculous event then took place?

- A. Swami filled the tumbler with rare gems!
- B. Swami poured out amrita from His mouth!
- C. Swami created identical tumblers for each one present!
- D. Swami turned the tumbler into a golden lingam!

3. In our December 2006 Cover story: 'The Untold Story of Jesus', Father Charles Ogada expressed his thoughts about Christmas as follows:

"Christmas is incomplete without grasping the inner significance of this Divine act. We must be kind to the animals. We must stop killing the animals. Instead, as Bhagavan Baba says, we must sacrifice the animal qualities in us: greed, anger, hatred, jealousy, lust and ego. When these animal qualities are eliminated, we will naturally be kind to the animals: Kind to brother lamb since Jesus is referred to as 'The Lamb of God'; Loving to sister sheep because Jesus called Himself 'The Good Shepherd'; Grateful to mother cow who watched the agony of Mother Mary bring forth her first born child; Merciful to little chicken because Jesus likened the love of God to that of the hen.....

What is the significance of the hen's love?

- A. The hen is always giving.
- B. The hen is very sacrificial.
- C. The hen gathers her chicks under her wings.
- D. The hen shows no discrimination.

4. In our feature "Sai Baba and the Cosmic Christ" from the Dec 2005 issue, Ron Laing shared his perspective on the unity of Swami and Jesus: "Jesus went about loving people and healing the sick. Sai Baba, too, does just that - loving people and healing the sick, serving mankind 24 hours a day. Both interpret the purpose of human life in exactly the same way. The symbolic meaning of the Cross is....."

What did he say according to Baba is the meaning of the Cross?

- A. Crucifixion of mind.
- B. Crucifixion of ego.
- C. Crucifixion of desires.
- D. Never to become cross.

5. In our 'H2H Special' section of the November 2005 issue, we presented an interview of the younger son of the Rajah, VGK Rachandra (VGK) by Prof. G. Venkataraman. In reply to Prof Venkataraman's question: "What did Swami do when He would go to Venkatagiri?" he replied: "Often, He was very playful, 'What do you want?' He would ask. He used to give whatever we wanted. One day we were all sitting together, my cousins, my brother and so on and He said 'What do you want?' I said, 'I want a mango' - it was December and not the mango season. Somebody said 'pear', another person said 'apricot', which is not available in Venkatagiri."

What did Swami do next?

- A. He turned a few flowers into fruits.

- B. He turned some apples into different fruits.
- C. He materialized all different kinds of fruits in a bowl.
- D. He turned an ordinary tree into a fruit tree.

ANSWERS:

1C

Swami says: "The third saw from the Atmic (spiritual) point of view. These three declarations indicate how one can progress from the human to the divine level. What is needed is the destruction of the animal and demonic qualities in man. Today man worships inanimate idols and images, but makes no attempt to love his fellow human beings in flesh and blood. This was the first message of Jesus."

2B

Mrs. Padma Kasturi goes on to tell us:

"Father gave it to Him and Swami held the empty tumbler near His mouth and then we just heard a burbling sound! ... He would take out some things from a silver tumbler or silver container or sometimes He would take out a conch-like thing from the sand and He would pour *amrita* from that container. But this time He took it out from His mouth. And He asked my father: "Have you noticed what is there in My stomach? It is the *amrita-kalasha* (a vault of nectar)!"

3C

Jesus likened the love of God to that of the hen who gathers her chicks under her wings (Luke 13:34). The animal kingdom must be allowed to celebrate Christmas with joy and gladness because they played a vital role in the Divine birth. It is a human tragedy that these creatures suffer so terribly in the hands of man especially during the season of Christmas when billions of animals are slaughtered in order to "celebrate" the birthday of Jesus.

4B

"The symbolic meaning of the Cross is the eradication of the ego - the vertical stroke represents the 'I' with which we are born, and the horizontal stroke the erasure of the ego. Baba's interpretation is identical. "The sole purpose of your incarnation is the crucifixion of the ego on the altar of compassion."

5D

VGK said: "Swami replied: 'You want all of them? There is a small tree in the palace. Go and pick them from that tree.' And we saw that all the different fruits that we wanted were hanging there - and it was not even a fruit-bearing tree! Swami did not even go anywhere near it. I do not think that I have ever tasted a mango like that in my life."

HEALING TOUCH

WHEN THE DIVINE SOUGHT OUT THE DUTIFUL CIVIL SERVANT...

The story of how Sai touched and transformed a well-placed government official and gave him a new lease of life in His Hospital, in Whitefield, Bangalore.

Bhagavan Baba's Super-Speciality Hospitals are generally seen as beacons of hope and succour mainly for the poor and needy, for whom tertiary medical care remains an unachievable dream. While His Super-Speciality Hospitals in Puttaparthi and Whitefield, Bangalore are primarily geared to serve such a clientele, they remain open to everyone at no cost. The system is entirely cost and barrier-free. It discriminates against no one on any grounds, be they economic, religious or cultural.

In the past issues of H2H, we have profiled patients who represent the majority of those treated at Sai Hospitals, namely patients who are financially disadvantaged. Yet, a new trend is emerging where even patients who can afford paid treatment in other private hospitals are switching in favour of the Sri Sathya Sai Super Speciality Hospitals. Why would anyone forego treatment in reputed and branded hospitals in big cities when they can afford it, in favour of a Sai Hospital far from home?

In this issue, we feature a civil servant who could easily access quality tertiary medical care close to home and family but chose the Sai Healthcare system instead.

Fifty six year old Salil Kumar Sarangi hails from the town of Dhenkanal, the district headquarters of Dhenkanal district in the state of Orissa, in north-east India. Born into a farming family, he rose to the position of Deputy Collector of Dhenkanal district in the state government, thanks to his hard-work, sincerity and determination. Today, he holds an impeccable record as a civil servant of 25 years. Baba came into his life almost 30 years ago. **While walking through the bazaars of the city of Kendrapara in search of a picture of God for his daily worship, his eyes fell upon the picture of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba. He felt a strange attraction towards His form and was drawn towards Swami's enigmatic appearance.** He bought the picture and gave it a special place on his altar. After this incident, he came to know about the wondrous life and teachings of Baba, which swiftly became an integral part of his life - and continue to guide him even today, 30 years later. "I can narrate so many incidents, all of which go to show His ever-present grace. Even after 30 years, His picture on my altar is still in good shape, which is in itself His miracle!" he says jubilantly.

Walking the Sai Talk as a Civil Servant

Although he has known Baba for 2 decades by then, he paid his first visit to Puttaparthi in 1997. **The holy vibrations of Swami's glorious darshans had far-reaching effects on him, one of which was that he turned**

vegetarian soon after this trip to Parthi. Soon after, he was selected from amongst many of his colleagues to be promoted to the Orissa State Administrative Services (OAS) Cadre, the state equivalent of the prestigious Indian Administrative Services (IAS).

As a civil servant, Mr. Sarangi tried sincerely to practice Baba's teachings in his everyday life. His commitment and sincerity to the call of his duty, is for instance, amply demonstrated by his leave records. **During his long stint in public service, the first time he took time off as earned leave was to obtain treatment at Baba's Hospital!** He says "I believe in Baba's dictum 'Duty is God' and try to put it into practice in my daily life and work."

Recalling his first encounter with his serious cardiac condition, he says "I was working as a Block Development Officer in Rayagada in March, 2007. When I was busy in the office, my body started trembling. The doctors were quickly summoned, they checked and found that my blood pressure was very high. My diabetes count too was well above the normal range. I was immediately shifted to Berhampur, one of Orissa's big cities, where the doctors confirmed that I had suffered a major heart attack."

Once declared out of danger, Mr. Sarangi applied to the government for a transfer to his home district, where he would be more comfortable. In consideration of his commendable service record, the Chief Minister issued special orders to effect his transfer.

Depending on Sai Alone

When it became clear after further tests that he needed an open-heart surgery, he was informed that he could, as a senior administrator, avail of Rs.5 lakhs financial aid from the Government. **Amazingly, he turned down the offer saying, "I don't need money; I want Baba's blessings."**

While he could have accessed tertiary healthcare with the financial aid available to him, he realized that no amount of money could buy him access to a healthcare system that combined the highest levels of professionalism with divine love and the sacred spirit of selfless care — the most therapeutic environment for someone faced with serious health challenges.

It was sheer grace of God that Mr. Sarangi came to know of the Sai Hospitals and the services they offer at no cost to patient. He has two children, the elder daughter pursuing her Ph. D in Physics in the Jawaharlal Nehru Centre for Advance Research Sciences in Bangalore, and the son doing an electrical engineering course in Orissa. He recalls Baba's ever-present grace on his family and recalls how his daughter obtained admission in the Ph.D programme in Bangalore. "It was in 2004. Baba was in Whitefield. We both had gone to the Brindavan Ashram seeking His blessings. It was an undeniable sign that after she had His darshan and took the exam, she cleared the test effortlessly and obtained a seat in the Ph.D. programme. No doubt she is a bright girl, but I firmly believe that being good at studies is also purely Baba's Grace, is it not?"

It was one former student of Baba's University, studying with his daughter, who informed him about the Sathya Sai Super Speciality Hospitals and after hearing of their vision and mission, he was convinced that only Swami's own doctors and nurses should help him in his time of need. So he came to the Whitefield hospital and was thoroughly impressed by the care given to the patients by the doctors, nurses and support staff. Today, he strongly feels that there is no need for family members to act as patient attendants. Their presence in this loving environment is entirely redundant!

Talking about the way the Hospital is run and managed, he adds, "I am in full praise for the discipline being maintained in the Hospital. It is beyond imagination how the staff of the Hospital perform their duties with such discipline and devotion. Baba's Super-Speciality Hospitals stand out as exceptional Hospitals in the entire world."

"I notice that doctors elsewhere work with a commercial motive, whereas here we can see in front of our eyes the seva bhava or the spirit of selfless service of the doctors serving here. Love is their only motivation. It's really unbelievable."

Driven by such an altruistic vision, Sai Hospitals experience divine interventions regularly, safeguarding the patients' well-being and Mr. Sarangi was no exception: He recalls with a deep sense of gratitude the miraculous event preceding his surgery. He was found to have high blood pressure and a raised glucose count when he was admitted to the pre-operative ward, and because of this the cardiologists and the cardiac surgeons were hesitant to perform surgery on him the following day.

Mr. Sarangi recalls the uncertainty looming that fateful night, "I knew that the surgeons would not operate on me unless my BP and glucose levels returned to normal levels. **Before I slept that night, I fervently prayed to Baba for His blessings and sought His help for a smooth surgery. Wonder of wonders, both the readings turned out absolutely normal on the morning of the surgery!**" The surgery went off as scheduled and his recovery, by Baba's grace was uneventful.

Faith Makes all the Difference

Dr. Anil Kumar Mulpur, the Head of the Department of the CTVS (Cardio Thoracic Vascular Surgery), who operated upon Mr. Sarangi recalls, "Mr. Sarangi was unusual in his presentation. He developed myocardial infarction early this year as a consequence of which he developed a left ventricular transmural infarct, where the whole ventricular wall is damaged. This wall can give way any time and the patient could die all of a sudden. In rare cases, the overlying pericardium contains the damage and over a period enlarges and develops a pseudo aneurysm. Here, there is a false cavity outside the heart and his left ventricle communicates with this false chamber. He also required coronary artery bypass grafting. We needed to combine these two procedures. The operation is not a usual one.

"When I tried explaining the procedure to Mr. Sarangi the previous evening, he cut me short and said, 'I do not want to know any details Sir."

I have full faith in Swami and full faith in you. Please go ahead and do whatever is needed.'

"I was very impressed with his faith and mental make-up. His operation, though complicated, went on smoothly like a song, of course, due to the infinite grace of Bhagavan Baba. There were three rents in the left ventricle communicating with the false cavity. These were covered with autologous pericardium and this was followed by coronary artery bypass grafting. He made exceptionally smooth post-operative recovery due to his unwavering faith and is on his way home.

"Faith makes a lot of difference in any patient and he is one such example. This complicated operation was a team effort and it is very gratifying to see him literally fly through the operation. I am reminded of Swami's saying that God will administer His grace like a dose of morphine, allow you to go through the *karma* and with His infinite Grace, one does not even know that it is all over!

"Another patient with a similar condition commented the previous week that his experience of cardiac surgery in Swami's Hospital was like a picnic for him and his family! They took part in Deepavali celebrations in the Hospital and the couple commented that this is the best Deepavali they ever had in their whole life. Such is the power of Love!"

"It is entirely the mercy of Baba that I've obtained treatment at this exceptional Hospital. This place is beyond imagination," says Salil Kumar Sarangi. "I would like to express my gratitude to Dr. P.K. Dash, Dr. K.C. Choudhury, Dr. Bharat Dubey, Dr. Manoj Kumar and specially to Dr. Anil Kumar - these blessed professionals are doing their duties by the blessings of almighty Baba."

"I want to serve here honourarily" – Mr. Sulil Sarangi

One can't help being touched by the impact the Hospital has made on Mr. Sarangi, who now plans to offer his services at Baba's Institute after his retirement in a couple of years. **"It is my fervent desire and prayer to Baba that I should be allowed to offer my services at this Hospital in an honorary capacity."** Mr. Sarangi's humility clearly comes through when he says, "I am ready for any type of duty. I do not have the feeling that since I have been in Administration, I should be given an office job. No, I want to serve Him, in whatever capacity it may be."

While recuperating in the post-operative ward of the Hospital, Mr. Sarangi has already been playing the role of a Public Relations Officer, educating people about the Hospital! He recounts an incident concerning a patient whom he overheard telling another person that in Baba's Hospital delays in performing procedures were inevitable, as it was an NGO! "I explained to this patient the differences between Baba's Hospitals, which is run on unsolicited donations and NGOs, which receives substantial grants from the Government. The patient regretted his comments and prayed to Baba. Soon afterwards, he found out his surgery had been scheduled shortly and he was completely cured!

While South Asia's poor, illiterate and uncared for masses seek absolutely free tertiary care at Sri Sathya Sai Baba's Super-Speciality Hospitals due to their unfortunate circumstances, the educated, well-to-do patients like the civil servant Mr. Sarangi seek the system in spite of their financial viability. They are fully aware that nowhere in the world can they find this fine balance of the state-of-the-art facilities, world-class medical professionals and the divine energy that fuels the entire system. For the self-aware, educated patients, the draw to the system is the men and women behind the machines who matter more, and most importantly, their selfless inspiration, Sri Sathya Sai Baba, who motivates them to deliver the care with love and humility.

The Sathya Sai Healthcare system proves that money can undoubtedly buy many things but pure and unconditional love, divine protection and genuine warmth are not among them. These life-affirming values flow freely alongside the sacred name of Sri Sathya Sai Baba, the singular, most potent and purest presence on the face of the planet in its history. His healthcare system is one of the many humanitarian projects going on silently around the world that offer compassionate care to millions.

Despite the enormity and the profundity of His mission, the system focusses on delivering holistic care with full focus on the well-being of each patient, thereby transforming one heart at a time. The by-pass happens at various levels. The surgery involved in open-heart procedures being a misnomer and the most superficial of them all! As exemplified by Mr. Sarangi, while the physical heart may start pumping the blood more efficiently after the complicated procedures, but it is the spiritual heart that experiences the gush of love energy, ensuring the cure at a deeper level.

YOUR SAY

- Feedback from our readers on the November issue

Feedback on the Cover Story: *Liberating Love... 'Prema Jyothi' Lights up Chennai Metro*

Truly! The November issue of H2H is one of the best ever, specially the incredibly moving story of the Prema Jyoti exhibit in Chennai and the wonderful interview with Sri Raja Reddy. You have outdone yourself for an all-time best issue of this monthly *Prasad* from Swami! When are you arranging for an exhibit like this in the West, as we badly need it? A video complement of these exhibits would perhaps be of great value outside of India. Thank you again for your service to devotees!

Perry Naik,

Atlanta, USA

Sai Ram, My wife and I (in Australia) just watched and read your presentation on the H2H website - amazing, amazing, amazing! You are all working so hard to spread the good words and work of Baba worldwide. You may not be aware just how far-reaching your work is. Thank you all so much.

In Baba's Love,
John Beales
Australia

Sai Ram, I am a Sri Lankan Sai devotee from Ukraine. My request to you all is that the 'Prema-Jyothi' exhibition must take place in Ukraine and other Russian-speaking countries, because our Ukrainian Sai brothers and sisters are waiting for that.

Sairam,

B. Sathyojahthan.

My most humble pranams on the Lotus Feet of Bhagavan Baba. It is really wonderful. I could not help reading the whole of it, though it was quite lengthy. Whoever visited 'PREM JYOTI' were blessed by His Grace. I bow my head in salutation to all those who organized it and managed it.

Jai Sai Ram,
Bodh Jawa, USA.

The conversational presentation of the exhibition at Chennai was wonderful. My emotions can not be described adequately in words. I was in Chennai as long as I was on the computer. I was experiencing Swami's presence and love here in USA. Thank you all very much.

Love, Viwanath.

I hope that this exhibition "Prema Jyothi" can once be staged in Holland too. It is to say in one word, God! God-Generation, organisation, destruction, but before the last (destruction), please come to Holland!

With kind regards,

Titia de Groot-Boelens.

This is a beautiful article and the style of putting it is even more heart rendering. Relating incidences by people makes one feel so close to the situation - it is as if you can feel the proximity, and there is an automatic union with the supreme Baba. Thanks for putting the same down for all of us.

Geeta

Sai Ram, Koti Pranams to the most compassionate Lord Sai Nath! Your article is most inspiring. Is there an exhibition like this always present in Prasanthi Nilayam? Is it possible that this would be permanently kept in Chennai or Bangalore for the benefit of all? Thanks again for H2H. This is really food for our souls.

With love,
H.G. Krishnan,
Tata Consultancy Services

Dearest Heart to Heart team, I bow to our beloved Father Sathya Sai Baba. I want to thank you for this beautiful, moving, loving, soul touching, inspiring,

elevating account of the Prema Jyothi experience in Chennai. I have no words to express my gratitude to you all and to all the volunteers in Chennai who made the exhibition a grand success and in the process changed several thousand lives.

God Bless,

A Servant of the Lord.

Om Sai Ram, I am thankful to all the beautiful hands and the minds that made this lovely, inspiring and educational exhibition. Though I live in Australia, after going through the pictures and the videos on the website, I thought and felt it would have been a wonderful thing if the videos could be downloadable, so that people could share and be a part of the Sai-inspiration for others. The videos are extremely touching. I could feel all the speakers speaking from their hearts. I would appreciate if these videos could be made as downloadable files.

Sai Ram,

Vidya Mohan,

Australia

Feedback on: *Enthralling Encounters with Eternity: Conversations with Mr. Raja Reddy, Part 2*

Sai Ram,

The talk by Shri Raja Reddy was very informative. I would like to share that when the mike was pulled out of Reddyji's mouth, I was present in the bhajan hall as I was a student of the Institute. Swami had come from the interview room and told one of the boys sitting in front not to give the mike to Mr Raja Reddyji.

It was a shock for all of us that time as we could not understand His ways. I was thinking what he would be feeling for such a humiliation. Here are old devotees with strong faith in Him that whatever He does is good for us. Till today this incident kept lingering in my mind to know Shri Raja Reddy's reaction, because as students we could not muster courage to ask [Him. It](#) was only after reading the interview I felt really happy to know the strong faith which these old devotees have.

Thank you very much, kindly have more experiences from these devotees because he is very introverted and does not talk to anybody. Also he has not

written any books. If not recorded, these beautiful experiences will go away with him!

Sai Ram,
Vikas Mishra

I cannot live without Heart to Heart. I love reading the inner views of people close to Baba. They answer every question that arises in my mind. I often think Baba only speaks to people close to Him. I have had an interview in 1978 when my group with Mr Tan F Tan was called in. Since then He has never spoken to us. Through Mr Raja Reddy, I know that it is not important because I converse with Him every day. God Bless this team, you are doing a wonderful job.

Navena Gopal

Feedback on: *A Unique Experience Of 'Liquid Love': The stirring story of the service at the Blood Bank in SSSIHMS*

Hello H2H team, I am from Bangalore. I am very happy to read this month's healing touch article. I am so excited to see all those pictures, and it is because, last year when I did volunteer service for the first time in my life, it was in this blood bank. It was a unique experience to serve there as a volunteer. There are so many beautiful things I saw and learnt during that period. I was serving refreshments to a boy who had just then donated the blood. He seemed to be very happy and his face was shining with a sense of satisfaction. He told me that his mother was healing from a heart surgery performed in Swami's hospital. There were tears in his eyes and suddenly he was smiling and said that he is expressing his gratitude to Swami by donating blood often. He said, "I am very satisfied if I give my blood to this noble cause." Thank you for the article.

Hema Vathi

Feedback on: *Harnessing The Heart - Part 1: Careful Choices*

Sai Ram. A very moving article. It brings to my memory my own experiences as a senior executive in IDBI, Bombay for 18 long years from 1970 to 1988. Being in a position of patronage, the incentive to go wrong was very powerful, but it is my faith and following of Swami's thoughts of the day, and my family's devotion to Swami that helped me to keep on the right track and earn a good name.

There were many occasions when powerful superiors wanted me to do things which were not right, but again it was my faith in Swami that helped me to stay on ground. I was punished unjustly for refusing to do things which I thought was not right and was placed in a useless department for over two years - a sort of banishment. But then the ways of Swami are mysterious. The boss was called to Delhi and returned sacked. During the two years of banishment, none of my colleagues would take a walk with me and all of them would join the boss. But after he returned from Delhi, all these colleagues abandoned him.

I saw him walking alone and I thought I should join him. He was very moved. Later, he and his wife took all the trouble to attend the marriage of my son, a past student of the Sri Sathya Sai University, all the way from Bombay to Bangalore. There are many such incidents in my working life in the past and I could keep my sanity only because of my faith in Bhagavan. Today, even though I retired more than 19 years ago, my erstwhile junior colleagues in service treat me with the same love and affection.

Swami alone is my companion now and my constant prayer to Him is to allow me to merge with His Lotus feet in a very peaceful exit with His name on my lips and with His form in my heart.

Sai Ram, Saranga Pani.

Feedback on: *In Quest of Infinity – Part 10*

Dear Sai Global Harmony, We are much indebted for your publishing the series 'In Quest of Infinity' by G. Venkataraman, who is doubly-qualified as a Sai devotee and as a scientist, to write that series. At a near future date (if not now already) a large segment of the student population will show their indebtedness to you for this yeoman service.

Best wishes,
Sachith Aanandan, Amritha Sathya Center for Higher Learning,
Sarguneswarapuram

Feedback on: *Spellbinding Sai - Part I*

Sai Ram, All your articles are worth treasuring for a lifetime and more - but this particular one by Kasturiji was very down to earth and beautiful. He has said in the end how Swami walked towards him to correct him and then mentioned about how much older, taller and perhaps more educated he was than Swami. These are the feelings which any ordinary man will have. Then he has shown us how to rise above all this and fall at the feet of the Lord and get His blessings. He was truly blessed to have been able to be with Swami and interact with Him.

Thanks for wonderful article.

Jai Sai Ram,
Akila Nagarajan

Feedback on: *Creating A Land Of Love ...*

Sai Ram! Enjoyed the article, which is so beautifully written and inspiring.
Thank you for enlightening us on this wonderful seva project being performed in Orissa.
Sai Ram!

Gita Umesh.

Sai Ram H2H team, Thank you very much for this moving story of 'Creating a Land of Love.' Thank you also for your beautiful service for us around the world, all about the the Lord of Love.

Sai Ram,
Joop Sturkenboom, Holland.

Feedback on: *In His Comforting Care...*

Swami always gives us exactly what we need when we need it. I am going through a particularly difficult time in my own life, and have been feeling angry with Swami and with the world at the situation I find myself in. This is not the right way, the spiritual way of dealing with matters, I know. It's acceptance that we should strive for, forbearance we should aim for, surrender we should exercise. And yet, it is often very difficult to do so, to trust that Swami knows best, that He is with us at all times, in all circumstances.

Reading the story "In His Comforting Care" brought tears to my eyes. Swami does not guarantee us happiness in life. He only promises us that He is always near, that we may call on Him and He will come, that His love will surround us, guide us, and protect us. Thank you for carrying out His work and helping so many of us feel close to Him always.

SaiRam,

Gauri Patankar,

TX, USA

Feedback on: *Honouring Him the Right Way*

Sai Ram, The energetic Team at Heart to Heart,

This article widely opens our eyes as to what is lacking in us. As the speaker rightly points out, we have to be the Messengers of Sai, in the community, in the workplace, in the high way, in the by-lanes, where ever we are. It is a thought provoking article coming from the heart; a very inspiring article published at the appropriate time. You have made the excellent choice as we are about to celebrate Swami's Birthday. Many thanks for sharing with all,

S. Pathy, Toronto, Canada

Feedback on: *The Bhajan Tutor*

Sai Ram to all at H2H! I express my heart felt gratitude to you for the wonderful bhajans that you have included in this issue. Both the bhajans are so good. They are extremely beautiful and have been rendered really well.

Thanks a ton!

Sai Ram! Roshni.R

Feedback on: *Sai Inspires – the daily inspirational e-mail service*

Today I happened to read a message in Radio Sai. I was really inspired by the same. I really feel Radio Sai is sure to inspire each and everybody who can have access to it. Swami has always been a source of strength and He is closer than anything or anybody in life. Everyday it is very nice to see a beautiful photo and a sweet message from Swami in Radio Sai. We feel we are physically present in Prashanthi Nilayam hearing His discourse. Thank you so much Radio Sai.

Mythili Sankaraman.

Om Sai Ram, thanks so much for bringing these pearls of wisdoms straight from the creator Himself.

Madhu

General Feedback

Om Sai Ram, I am a prosecutor in Durban South Africa. As you will imagine my work is very stressful and I am surrounded by negative energy in my work environment. Despite this I remain focused and positive because of the grace of my loving Lord Sai Baba and this heart to heart on line magazine. I spend whatever free time I get during my day to read this magazine and inspire myself.

I just wanted to say thank you to Swami and all those who have been so fortunate to be His instruments in compiling and sending this magazine out every month. May our Lord continue to keep us in His heart now and forever.

Deshnie Naidoo,

South Africa

Feedback on the Sunday Special: *Anyone Listening?*

Sai Ram dear Brothers and Sisters in Sai! *"The time has come when we have to **seriously** ask ourselves if we really deserve Swami?" What do **you** say? Do please let us know.*

To answer that question: Yes, I do! With every breath I pull. I may stumble, fall, and sometimes gloriously succeed, but I do! Even when I had to go through the deepest of depths, facing all the devils in my own hell, He was the reason why I fought like a lioness to come out of it. I held on to Him for dear life and that is why I am still here on earth to also remind you that, according to BABA, there is one thing very important: feeling of Self worth.

Sometimes I get a little tired of all those pointing fingers of how 'bad' we are. And here, with the same breath so to speak, in the same article, you give us this glorious information on how half a million food packets got distributed as well as tens of thousands of saris and dhotis. And that is only in one day's work. Yesterday you wrote about the medical help in outlandish places. All this is done and paid for by devotees who, I am sure are among the category Baba calls: "Sai within all." This comes straight from my heart. I hope someone will seriously read it and take it to Heart - from Sai Heart 2 Sai Heart.

Constance Eijkman,

The Netherlands

Sai Ram, We need Swami --- He in His own unfathomable way is transforming each one of us according to His divine plan. When we deserve Him --- All activity will come to a standstill, peace will reign supreme and unconditional love will spread its silent fragrance around.

Friction and differences will exist, wherever and whenever there is an exchange of thoughts, ideas, opinions and change.

We need to pray fervently to Him to help us overcome our little, petty, ego and offer our services to Him sans ego and desire.

We need him regardless of whether we deserve him, now more than ever. With His help and grace we may be able to overcome our negative qualities, and foster our positive qualities. It is our duty to strive hard, and take the first step towards Him and feel and experience our need for Him.

Sai Ram, Gita Umesh.

Dear H2H Team, What Prof Anantaraman said was to awaken the spirit within us. Taking into consideration the present condition of the world and its occupants, of course the emergence of the Poornavathar to accomplish His Mission is very much needed. The question raised by Prof Anantaraman is thought provoking. Can't we make a resolve to transform ourself step by step, by identifying our own faults and applying the Divine Advice of our Sai? In fact I have been myself trying to put up a smiling face always and try to express Universal Love to one and all. But it has to be continuous. This is just a small thought. Let us all put in all efforts to prove that we are part of Swami's mission by first implementing at least one of His teachings in life, from now and for ever.

Sai Ram,
Udaya, Indonesia

Dear Heart 2 Heart, Yes, I absolutely agree with Prof. Anantaram statement:
"The time has come when we have to seriously ask ourselves if we really deserve Swami!"

Cell phones, television, computer games are all interruptions in our daily lives and take our precious time away, our thoughts and deeds to help the needy, the sick, the lonely, the hungry! Time wasted! All this is self-imposed. We must start by throwing away these cell phones. Working diligently and working in Love and with Swami is a quality not often seen these days.

Thank you for your diligent work, Heart2Heart and Sai Radio, to bring all these important messages home: they are there every day to encourage again and again, to really listen, to really get moving! And get moving now!

Conformity and sitting back is not the way of the Lord. Why do we think we can afford it? We must become like the Lord Swami in all and every way! Lots of work must be done!

Sai Ram,
Jutta, Oregon, USA.

For me personally, this subject hits home, very, very hard. Swami has been brought me into His fold for the past 30 years. Some of those years I was not active in the organization, nor focused on Swami as the Centre of my life as He is now.

I will say that over the years Swami's teachings have come into sharper and sharper focus in my life. What I did not understand many years ago is black and white, no need for interpretation now. However in the time lost over years, bad habits have set in. As a result thought, word and deed are not yet one.

Accordingly, how does one share the Glory of Swami, the entire focus of one's life, when one is not the embodiment of His teachings? How can you talk about Swami's teachings in full and clear conscience if one is not a living example of the teachings in action?

Harder yet, how does one come to Parthi without making the effort necessary to be able to look Swami right in the eye and feel like one has given 100% to putting into action His Words? If we do not do so, do we deserve Sai in our lives? If we do not make the effort, do we really appreciate the opportunity that has come our way?

Glenn Rothbart,
Shrewsbury, USA

SaiRam, I read your Sunday special with interest. Being in Prashanthi Nilayam for the last 8 months with Swami's blessings, I have been listening to the speakers and to my surprise there is lot of lamenting about the negative qualities! Why are we not focussing on all the transformation in millions of people all around the world which came about only due to Swami? As I had chances to be in various places before coming to Puttaparthi, I had amazing experiences, with people. There are many who live only for Swami. Let us not criticise others and look into their bad ways. As Swami says all situations and whatever happens is due to His will. We deserve Swami - that is why the

Avatar has come now, in this present age. Hope we have positive thoughts and focus on positive happenings in future.

Sai Ram,
S Purushothaman

Sairam brothers. Your last Sunday special was really a piece and statement on which we should ponder and introspect whether we really deserve Swami? I feel most of us are undisciplined, envy others, and do not practise Swami's teachings. I was shocked when I heard from some news channel during Virata Viswa Darshan that Swami's vehicle could not be given way by us, the so called devotees, to move towards His room. I can not think undisciplined people can be termed as devotees. Out of Bhakthi, they may loose body consciousness but they can not be indisciplined.

Sai Ram,
Papu

