

## HEART 2 HEART

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## **BETWEEN YOU AND US**

The thousands who had gathered in the Sai Kulwant Hall, especially from the city of Chennai and the state of Tamil Nadu, on the morning of 14 April this year to celebrate Tamil New Year Day in the Divine Presence, went into raptures when in the course of His discourse, Bhagavan said, **“I have great love for Chennai... May you all enjoy good health by eating good food and drinking pure water...My love for Chennai cannot be described in words.”**

Truly, the relationship between Sathya Sai and Chennai is something extraordinary. Not many would know that when Bhagavan visited Madras (the name by which Chennai was known until a few years ago) for the first time, He was just sixteen! That was in 1942. And from then on, how innumerable have been His visits to this city till 1997.

And every visit has been historic: He instantaneously cured a person's asthma and restored eyesight to an ailing mother in His very first visit, and during one of His subsequent visits in February 1949, when He consecrated the Guindy Shirdi Sai Mandir, the idol of Shirdi Sai levitated in the air for a few seconds before returning to its original position, leaving every onlooker dazed in disbelief! In July 1949, He suddenly landed at the door of Mr Hanumantha Rao, His host in Chennai; at 4.30 in the morning, having driven all the way by Himself from Puttaparthi, and what is more, He had filled the petrol tank with water!

The 'madras marvels' list can go on. But here are just one or two more. It was in January 1950, while in Madras, Swami suddenly went into a trance at 9 pm and almost fell down; but when He 'returned' He said, "Maharishi has reached My Lotus Feet." The next day's morning newspapers reported that Sri Ramana Maharishi had left his mortal coil exactly at the same time. And we all know how in 1971, after Walter Cowan passed away in the Connemara Hotel in the city of Madras, Swami went in the early hours of morning to the hospital and resurrected the life of Mr. Walter Cowan, whom the doctors had pronounced 'dead on arrival.'

The Sai Avatar's association with Chennai has been long, amazing, vital and at the same time, very intimate. In fact, Swami inaugurated the Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organisation at a grand function in April 1967 at Abotsbury, Madras. From then on, it has been a crucial cog in the Divine Mission.

Six years ago, during the first Anniversary celebrations of the Super Specialty Hospital in Whitefield, Swami announced, out of the blue, **“Today I have made a new resolve. Madras is suffering from acute shortage of drinking water. The rich can buy water sold by the tanker services but what about the poor? They have to depend on rain water that has collected in puddles and ditches, thus spoiling their health. I have therefore decided to work towards bringing drinking water to Madras, no matter how difficult and costly the task is. This wish of Mine will fructify without fail. Success always springs from deep conviction.”** This was a revelation of

His concern for the underprivileged and the deprived of this city. No one from Chennai or Tamil Nadu had even asked Him to alleviate the all pervasive and perennial problem of the water scarcity of the city. It was just His spontaneous Love for the devoted people of this historic city.

Again, on the concluding day of the Athi Rudra Maha Yagna in Prasanthi Nilayam on 20 September, 2006 who would have expected Swami to announce that the next Yagnam will be held in January of the following year in Chennai? Returning to this year's Tamil New Year day, the concourse of eager devotees who had assembled from this city burst into a thundering applause when Swami again surprised them with a bolt from the blue when He said,

“The water of the River Krishna reached up to the border of Tamil Nadu very smoothly without any wastage. But there was wastage of water after it entered the Tamil Nadu border as the part of the canal on the Tamil Nadu side was not repaired. It was envisaged that this work would be done by the Tamil Nadu Government, but it has not been done so far... Therefore, I have decided to undertake this task. The length of the canal to be repaired towards Chennai is about 25 km. The cost of repairing it is estimated at 30 to 40 crore rupees. There is no need for you to depend upon anybody else. It is enough if you pray to God. God can perform any task. Very soon, I will complete this work... after the work is done, adequate water will reach Sathyamurthy Sagar. Thus, Sathyamurthy Sagar will be filled with Sathya Sai water. You will then have a permanent supply of water.”

Such has been Swami's special love for the people of this city. And therefore, when Swami visited Chennai in the beginning of this year, the city virtually came to a halt. The visit was phenomenal, and like every act of Swami, had multiple dimensions. Apart from forging unity between politicians of various hues and from different states of India to work towards the single goal of serving the common mass with the basic necessities of life through the Chennai Citizens Conclave [which we had as the cover story in March 2007 issue], and also presiding over the grand performance of the Athi Rudra Maha Yagna, there were many other seemingly small but stirring facets of this Divine Visit which are as precious for posterity as it is for the current devotees. And this is the precise reason why we are having the cover story on the historic Chennai Visit again - in a matter of six months. We would have loved to offer this to you much earlier, but it was possible only now. Perhaps, He has designed it this way.

When you read the cover story, you will receive an enlightening and interesting 'insider's view' of Swami's two-week stay in Sundaram; enlivening instances of His interactions with the students and other members of His troupe; His graceful visits to many devotee-homes; His shower of benedictions on the eminent personalities who longed for a few private moments with Him; the story of His spellbinding Sundaram Darshans; and His spontaneous outpourings of Love for the people clamouring for a glance on the roads in front of Sundaram and also on the streets of Chennai – all

interlaced with inspiring interludes, and of course, supplemented with magnificent and moving images.

But, dear reader, we must confess that in spite of this being the third article on the Chennai Visit (the first and second were in March '07 and April '07 respectively), what we have been able to offer you is only a glimpse, which too is grossly incomplete. For, how many facets of His mystifying glory can we really document? When Pure Love touches your being, what happens is only magic. A cab driver who had come for Swami's darshan found his wife's cancer disappear when He gave her the Yagna Vibhuti; an auto rickshaw driver who ferried people freely to the Yagna site as an act of service found that he earned more than ever before, as every passenger voluntarily paid him extra for him to keep; an IPS officer who was a staunch atheist was literally dumbstruck when He was asked to speak in front of Swami...there is no end to the Power of Divine Love.

And like in every issue of H2H, in this issue too you have mind-boggling instances of this incredible Love in action from all the over the world. Your heart will turn so soft when you read how inspired doctors from New Zealand, Australia and even from the USA traveled to Fiji for a week long medical camp for the isolated and neglected people of this small island-nation. In the Healing Touch section you have the story of Swapan, a factory worker, who, but for Swami's Hospital and its pioneering research, would have been forever bereft of light and life. And then there is the story of baby Benjamin, in the Swami and Me section, into whose being the Lord breathed new life, thanks to His all-encompassing Love. There is much more in this issue, dear reader, and it is better we leave that for you to explore, but a last parting thought:

When you see the Photo Gallery entitled "O Sweetest! Beloved Mother Sai" and delight in the pictures of cute babies in the Lord's bosom, just ruminate on what makes the Lord so ecstatic when in the company of infants and small children. If only we cultivate that purity, nurture it and sustain it every moment of our lives, we will experience the proximity of the Divine Mother in every passing moment of our lives.

Let's fill our being with His thoughts, His memories and His messages, till our life, ultimately, becomes a saga of only His love.

Loving Regards,  
H2H Team

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## SATHYA SAI SPEAKS

### The Windows of the Mind

Will Power motivated by God is the active force available for your uplift. This is called *Sankalpa Bala*. Develop it by concentration and *japa* (chanting the Divine Name). The mind must be compelled to submit to the dictates of the will. Now, you are easily led astray by the vagaries of the mind. That is why, I say, WATCH! 'W' is for watch your Words; 'A' is for watch your Actions; 'T' is for watch your Thoughts; 'C' is for watch your Character; 'H' is for watch your Heart. If the watch reminds you every second of the need to watch these five, you can be quite happy.

The mind swings like a pendulum between one pleasant object and another. To stop the pendulum, the easiest means is to stop winding. That will put an end to the swing. So too, stop encouraging the mind by following its whims and fancies. When we beat another or cause harm to him, we justify it as only right and proper; when he beats us or harms us, we revolt and call it wrong and punishable.

Everything is judged by us on the touchstone of the ego. The mind is a double-edged sword - it can save, but it can also bind. Yoga is the restraint of the waves natural to the mind. By learning and practising the disciplines of *yama*, *niyama*, *asana*, *pranayama*, *pratyahara*, *dharana*, *dhyana* and *samadhi* (abstention from evil-doing, various observances, postures, control of breath, restraining the sense organs, concentration, meditation, absorption in the *Aatma*), the seeker can overcome and eliminate the mind.

### The Five Elements and The Five Senses

When the mind is eliminated, the Reality will become patent! It is like the discovery of the lost "tenth man." Ten friends waded across a river in floods, and when they reached the bank opposite, each one took a count and found only nine, for he did not count himself! So, they inferred that "the tenth man" was drowned and began lamenting his loss. Then, a passer-by came along and counted them. He found that all were there; the tenth man too was there; only ignorance had kept him unrecognised. This is the consequence of illusion. Since you do not know the real nature of the Self or *Aatma*, you do not recognise the Self at all; when this knowledge is communicated by the *Guru* or scripture, the ignorance of the Self disappears.

The senses are the prime motive forces for the mind and the illusion it suffers from. The Five Elements have each a characteristic that affects and attracts one of the five senses: Sound (Ether), which fascinates the mind through the ear; Touch (Air) which draws the mind to itself through the skin; Form (Fire) which manipulates the mind in its favour through the eye; Taste (Water), which enslaves the mind through the tongue and Smell (Earth), which attracts the mind through the nose. Contact with the external world is maintained by the senses for the sake of these experiences - which yield joy or grief. In order to escape being tossed about on the waves of joy and grief, one should cultivate unconcern (*upeksha*), an attitude of welcoming either, as a sign of Grace. Sri Raamakrishna Paramahansa (an enlightened soul) said that if you

must avoid the sticky fluid in the jack-fruit from contacting your fingers when you peel it, you have to apply a few drops of oil on them. "So too," said he, "if you do not want the world and its reactions to stick to you, have a few drops of 'unconcern' applied on your mind." This unconcern leads to the deepest yearning for God.

Chaithanya (a great devotee of Lord Krishna) went to Brindavan (the place where Krishna spent His childhood), and every particle of dust there was sacred for him, since Krishna trod that soil centuries ago. He did not see or hear or touch or smell or taste anything except Krishna at Brindavan. He was rendered so forgetful to the world around him that he ignored the demands of hunger, thirst and social etiquette. He yearned for the consecrated food that was offered to Krishna in the Temple. But, one night, the Lord appeared before him, and admonished him for entertaining that one desire too! When at last, he gave up that desire also and was overwhelmed with the thirst for Him and Him alone, Krishna manifested before him, from within him. The Divine *Chaithanya* (Consciousness) illuminated the Chaithanya in human form.

Learn therefore the discipline that can make the mind settle on God only and never waver therefrom.

- *Divine Discourse in Prasanthi Nilayam on October 9, 1967*

## CONVERSATIONS WITH SAI - Part 37

*(Continued from the last issue)*

### God is the Doer

**H (Hislop):** Swami, I have two questions important for our work in daily life, and in preparation for the Symposium in Rome. In His Discourses, Swami says that God should be recognized as the Doer of all actions and that we should not take it upon ourselves to be the doer. Further, Swami also says that instead of depending on limited human strength, we should call upon the strength of God. Since Swami says these two things in his Discourses, then the instructions must be intended for everybody?

**SAI:** Take the viewpoint that God is working through you.

**H:** What does that mean, Swami? How does that apply in the actual actions taking place each day?

**SAI:** You think you are engaging in the action, but it is your body doing so, or your mind, or your intelligence. But God is working through them. It is only the *Atma* in you which is the source of action. The *Atma* is God.

**H:** Then, instead of considering that it is myself acting, I should tell myself- and appreciate-that "I" am just a word, and that all these actions and movements going on are not coming from "Hislop" but are actually God Himself acting?

**SAI:** God is using your intelligence, mind, and body as His instruments for doing that particular work. You write with a pen, or cut paper with scissors - but it is not those instruments that are doing the work, it is you who are using the instruments for the purpose of doing the work. Likewise, the instruments you call "yourself" - intelligence, mind, and body - are used by God for His purpose.

**H:** Is that a practical thing to do, hour in and hour out? Tell myself that my mind and body, at any and every moment, are at that moment being used by God as His instrument? Is that a practical way to live and move through the day?

**SAI:** Yes. That is the fact, and it is practical.

**H:** But Swami! Then it is God doing evil!

**SAI:** At first, maybe (i.e. apparently), but then not. It is not God who does evil. Evil is from the ego.

**H:** When I die....

**SAI:** *(interrupting)* Who are you? You do not die! The body is like clothes - off and on.



**H:** Then after the body dies, I take another? Why?

**SAI:** Balance of desires. Desires are like seeds - they sprout. These desires cause rebirth. Finish with desires - no more birth. Mind is a desire bundle.

**H:** But this creation - world, body, and mind - is it a projection of the *Atma*? Are mind, body, intelligence creations or projections of the *Atma*?

**SAI:** Creation is from the *Atma*. The *Atma*, God, is the positive. Body is the negative. They join and action results. Otherwise, nothing.

**H:** There is the *Atma*, and then creation as the projection from the *Atma*.

**SAI:** No! That is where the mistake is made! Creation is not a projection from the *Atma*; the *Atma*, God, is permeating every fibre of the creation. The form is just appearance....It is energy, God, the Divine Energy which causes the form and which is the actuality of the form.

### **The Unlimited Divine**

**H:** To do all these tasks, Swami, takes a lot of energy. Human energy is low, and Swami says to call on the Divine Energy. How?

**SAI:** Yes, human energy is low and the Divine Energy is without limit! You are God!

**H:** Does Swami mean that when the human energy limit is felt, that I should reject it as false, and instead identify myself as God, as He who is limitless energy?

**SAI:** Yes. Reject it! Look at your shadow - you are sitting and your shadow is there. When you stand up, your shadow also grows. Your shadow is the human energy. You are the Divine Energy. When you rise, and also do the Divine work, your energy grows.

**H:** Swami, the Divine Energy versus limited human energy.

**SAI:** There is only Divine Energy.

**H:** But what seems to me to be my human energy does not seem to be sufficient; for example, the trip to Central America.

**SAI:** All is God. Know that it is He who is Energy. Then all is well.

**H:** Oh! When the human energy slows, leave it and know that the truth is Divine Energy! Like when some years ago on long drives, Baba would look a little tired; and then, instantly, he would be fresh like a flower.

**SAI:** Do not equate this body with human bodies. It is only the appearance of a form for the sake of the devotees. There is nothing of Swami except for His devotees. There are no desires. This body is just an appearance of

form....There is matter. There is humanness. There is Divinity. Matter is selfishness; humanness is selfishness plus some kindness; God has no selfishness, just total love. As the base, selfishness is essential for health and prosperity. Without health, what can be done? Work for these must be done; then help others; then God only.

**H:** But Swami, even in that worldly work of necessary "selfishness", where is "I"? Surely it is only God who is doing work?

**SAI:** That is better. That is the best way. You are only an instrument for Swami, an instrument which Swami is using for His purpose – you, U.S. Chairman, speaking of Swami's teachings and so on.

### **Unlocking Divinity Within**

**SAI:** What is Being?

**Q:** It is "Sat".

**SAI:** That is just a Sanskrit word. Being means immortality.

**Q:** How to feel that Divine Love in the heart?

**SAI:** Your love, my love, they are the same. There is only one and He is God.

**Q:** Do you mean we should affirm that, that we should always say it?

**SAI:** Here is humanity (*pointing to a line in the wall denoting a layer of bricks*). Below is the world, above is God. Aim up, not down. You are God. There is only One. For so many lives you have been declaring that you are human, with limitations, "I am faulty....I am...so and so." That is wrong. Now say, "I am God". Never feel or say that you are other than God. You will show Godly qualities. You will have Godly powers. You will be God. If there are no thoughts, there are no actions. How is your health, Hislop?

**H:** It is very good, Swami.

*(During the group portion of this interview, a lady with a dull colored bracelet on her arm, showed her wrist in front of Baba and asked Him to change the bracelet into something pretty. It seemed to me that Baba was not pleased with the demand, but nevertheless he removed the bracelet, held it with two fingers, blew His breath upon it, and it became a new shining gold bracelet of an entirely different pattern and configuration. At this point, the group portion of the interview ended and Swami began the series of private conversations in the inner interview room).*

## **CHINNA KATHA**

### **Asking For The Right Thing**

Our faith diminishes because our ambitions are limitless. There is a small story for this. There was a rich person who had a daughter with a flat nose. The father wanted to get this girl married. Every person who came and looked at the girl used to go away, although they were tempted by the wealth. In those days, persons who could perform plastic surgery were not available.

In desperation, he announced that he would give plenty of money to anyone who would marry the girl. He somehow found someone willing to marry her. The marriage was performed and thereafter the couple developed considerable faith in God. They visited many temples, went on many pilgrimages and bathed in many sacred rivers. They met a saint who advised them that no one who is involved in worldly matters can give a good nose. Only He, who created the nose, can bring it back to normal. Although they had lots of wealth, they were not happy at all. The girl used to feel that others were looking at her and making fun.

She suggested to her husband that they should both go to the lonely Himalayas and pray to God and spend a month there in that manner. He agreed and they did so. The girl had a great desire to get back her nose, so she began to pray to God in great earnestness.

God appeared, due to her good luck and asked her what she wanted. As soon as God appeared, she asked for the grant of a good looking big nose. God said, so it shall be and granted her the boon.

As soon as God disappeared, she looked at her face. She looked at the big nose and felt that she had become uglier than before. She prayed again more earnestly and God appeared again and asked her what she wanted. She said that she did not want that big nose. God said, so it shall be and granted her the boon. She immediately found that her nose had completely disappeared. She had thought that she was praying to God for a good nose and in the process, she lost her nose completely.

The moral of this story is that although God is present before you, playing with you and talking with you, you do not know what to ask, when to ask and where to ask. Not knowing what we should ask, we are asking him for one thing while really we want something else. In this process, we are getting ourselves into difficulties. God is always ready to give you all that you want, but you do not seem to know what is good for you and what you really want. Since you do not know what you should want and under what circumstances, it is better and easier to surrender yourself completely to God and simply ask for His grace.

**- Baba**

## COVER STORY

### BEAUTY, BLISS AND BLESSINGS

#### ...OF SATHYA SAI IN CHENNAI

By Prof. G. Venkataraman

*Dear Reader, this is the last of the trio of articles covering Swami's historic and memorable trip to Chennai in January 2007. We had the first and second article in March and April 2007 issues of H2H respectively [The links for which are given below to refresh your memory]. In the present cover story we offer you a very comprehensive coverage of the aspects of the Divine Visit not dealt with in the previous instalments, and also more interestingly, an 'insider's view' of Swami's 13-day stay in Sundaram. Over to Prof. Venkataraman:*

If you recall, in the first article, I concentrated mainly on the Citizens' Conclave arranged to express the collective gratitude of the millions who were saved by Swami's intervention in Chennai's acute drinking water crisis that was becoming endemic. Since then, two things have happened that merit attention. Firstly, following the request from the Tamil Nadu Government, Swami has ordered that the Tamil Nadu section of the Sai Ganga Canal also be restored fully, so that there is no loss of water as it flows from the zero point [at the TN-Andhra border], to the Poondi Reservoir. Secondly, water now regularly flows from the Kandaleru Reservoir to Poondi, which means that the citizens of Chennai do not have to worry about drinking water. In fact, this year, while many cities across the country have been facing drinking water shortages [Bangalore, for example], in Chennai they say they get water every single day - this after years of facing nothing but dry taps! If this is not Swami's Grace, what else is it? Think about it! I do hope that those who were born in Chennai but now live elsewhere, would, when they visit their hometown next, take a minute off to thank Swami, when they drink water.

With that intro, let me now get back to the task on hand, which is to deal with Swami's visit to Chennai in January 2007. Before I proceed further, I must mention two pertinent facts.

The first is that there is an "official" account of this trip published by the *Sri Sathya Sai Books and Publications Trust of Tamil Nadu*. Entitled ***Digvijayam***, this book offers not only a diary of the Divine Visit but also gives a lot of background information, related not only to Swami's long association with Madras/Chennai, but also concerning the preparations made for the Yagna, the Yagna itself, and the impact the visit has made. The second point I wish to make is that though I carried a couple of notebooks in my pocket to make on-the-spot notes during the visit, I must sadly confess that I have misplaced them! Thus my recall is essentially from my Hard Disc, which means that my account would be rather personal and impressionistic; in a way, that might not

be too bad, and, together with *Digvijayam*, I am sure readers can get an overall and comprehensive view. With that preamble, padded duly with appropriate caveats, let me get down to business.

### **Early Madras Memoirs**

Numerous are the visits made by Swami to Chennai, starting way back, in the late forties I understand, maybe even a bit earlier. You might recall that till Independence and indeed for sometime thereafter, Madras, as Chennai was then known, was the capital of the composite Province Madras. This Province, a relic of the British Raj spanned territories that covered many ethnic regions – Tamil-speaking region, Telugu-speaking region, Malayalam-speaking region, Kannada-speaking regions, plus a few where certain dialects were spoken. Madras of those days was therefore a very cosmopolitan city, a fact that lent it a very unique character.

Swami must have gone to Madras in those days for a number of reasons, ranging from the call of devotees [always a prime concern for Him] to sorting out administrative matters relating to the Ashram, etc. We must remember that Anantapur District which is now a part of Andhra Pradesh was then a part of Madras Presidency, which meant that for administrative clearances of certain kinds, a trip to Madras was necessary.

Many are the stories of those times that have filtered down to these days, some narrated by Swami Himself in His lighter moods, some by devotees who have witnessed those historic events and so on. I do hope some historically-minded person would come forward to systematically chronicle those wonderful stories. For my part, I cannot forget a couple of stories that I have personally heard Swami narrate.

### **Swami's Exhilarating Drive to Madras**

One of these relates to Swami driving down to Madras in a Morris Minor [if I can recall]. Yes, in those days, Swami often was often His own driver! The story of how He got a driving licence when He was younger than the statutory age is another story!

Swami would get into the car and ask late Mr. Seshagiri Rao to go along with Him. If I am not mistaken, Mr. Rao is the father of the dentist Dr. Padmanabhan, well-known in Bangalore, especially because he always walks behind Swami during Darshans. I believe, Mr. Seshagiri Rao used to preside over the formal Poojas in the Mandir in those early times.

As Swami tells it, the two, Bhagavan and Mr. Rao, would generally leave in the evening so that they could be in Madras city early next morning, leaving the day free for work. Swami would recall, with a huge twinkle in His eyes, that He was a fast driver! [Not for Him the caveat about driving slowly! But then He is different, is He not?!] Fast driving may be nice to watch from the safety of the sideline but to be actually in a car that travels fast on roads that often were so only in name and that too at night? Mr. Seshagiri Rao, Swami says, did not relish that one bit – one can understand why! Mr. Rao would

simply close his eyes and go on chanting Sai Ram, until Swami taps Mr. Rao and says, "Open your eyes; we are in Madras!" For Mr. Rao, that was when the nightmarish dream would end! The way Swami would regale boys with this story; it was a real WOW! How can one who has heard and seen all this actually believe that Swami is God? He is so different from what we all normally believe God to be – a super Cop, always watching our mistakes, and recording it all in notebook so that punishment could be given at the appropriate time! But that is a part of the Leela of the Avatar, trapping us all in web of Maya!

Swami says God is not a Punishing God, adding, "You are God; would you ever punish yourself, unless of course you have gone mad?" God is Love and He simply spreads Love. Through such wonderful examples of Divine intimacy, the Lord teaches us that everyone can easily rise to the level of the Divine. He says: "Just smile and spread happiness without sweating over it. By being friendly and helpful to all seeing God in all, you raise yourself to the level of God. God is no strange object or entity; He is the best friend; be the best friend for all and God you become during those moments at least. Love all without exception, and to the level of God you rise during those moments. Fill all with joy, and earn the Grace of God."

### **Mistaken for a Film Star**

Another Madras story that Swami sometimes tells is how during one visit, His host took Him in a car to Marina Beach. It was famous then and has still kept some allure, though its pristine beauty has been scarred with statues of all sorts – sculptural monstrosities would be a better phrase.

There was the car parked on the Marina Beach Road, with Swami sitting inside. In those days, Swami used to chew *paan* or beetle leaves, that made His lips look red; some of you might recall old photos in which the lips look redder than they ought to; that was because of betel leaf chewing. Swami has narrated a wonderful story about how He gave up this chewing habit - but that story is not for now. I should in passing mention that chewing betel leaves is not a bad habit provided one does not chew tobacco along with it. In fact, calcium which is spread on the betel leaf is good for the body and the leaf itself is a good digestive which is why betel leaf used to be ceremonially offered in the old days after a big meal, especially after marriage lunches and dinners. Also, betel leaf chewing was mandatory for young mothers in the pre and post-natal periods by way of providing calcium supplement.

Back to my story of Swami on Marina Beach. Swami says shortly before He arrived in Madras, there was some kind of a disaster in the Province, maybe a big flood [I don't recall], and by way of collecting donations, many film stars would come to the Beach carrying a box, to make collections. Movie stars are always an attraction, and naturally big crowds gathered on the beach to see these glamorous heroines of the tinsel world going about making collection. One small group of boys saw Swami's car and looking inside, they say a person with a big crown of hair and red lips. I am not sure, but perhaps Swami

was also wearing sun-glasses to avoid the glare from the beach sands. So it did not take long for the crowd to mistake Swami for a celebrated actress, and soon a big crowd surrounded the car, shouting and whatnot, asking the star to come out! It was getting to be a nuisance and to ward it off, the local host, Transport Commissioner Hanumantha Rao, if I am not mistaken – he always figured prominently in many of Swami's stories – came out of the car to tell the young admirers of film stars that the one inside was not a movie star but the One who created the real stars!

That was not exactly the way Hanumantha Rao put it, but he did say something about the identity of the person in the car, that He was Sri Sathya Sai Baba and not a movie star. One reason why I am mentioning this story is that on that day, people went to see movie stars and stumbled on Swami. These days, people come in tens of thousands to have Darshan of Swami and see movie stars queuing up to get the blessings of that very same Swami!

### **After a Decade, Sai in Chennai Again**

Back to the main stream of my narration. Yes, in the old days Swami visited Chennai frequently but when Swami went this time in 2007, it had been many years since His last visit. A huge hunger for catching even a glimpse had built up and the rest of the narration will revolve largely around how that hunger manifested and how the Lord appeased that hunger. As I look back, there are three dominant memories that linger – the manner in which Swami used the opportunity to be intimate with the lucky and blessed group of students He had taken with Him, the Grace that He showered by visiting the houses of devotees, especially those who had been with Him from a long time ago, and the incredible spectacle of the Nara-Narayana relationship that was seen during the Chennai visit. All these I shall try and top off with a footnotes, hopefully spicy enough to make the reader happy!

If there is something extraordinary and unique about the Sathya Sai Avatar, it is His longstanding relationship with His students. Prior to 1968 [which was when the first college was established by Swami], the Lord gave Himself up almost fulltime to His devotees; that monopoly ended once the colleges started springing up. Especially after the Brindavan Arts and Science College came up in 1969, students began to get the kind of intimacy few others received; it was just unbelievable. It is said that when the Lord came as Sri Rama, the *Devas* (divine beings) who hungered to be with Him during His incarnation, were born as *Vanaras* [monkeys]. Likewise, when He came as Lord Sri Krishna, the Gopals were supposed to be *Rishis* (sages) reborn because of Divine Grace. Maybe I am wrong but one thing is for sure; whichever group is most privileged, it is certainly not made up of ordinary people, though to mortal eyes it might seem that way.

Incidentally, once some years ago a student told Swami during a visit to Kodaikanal, "Swami it must be that either we or our parents must have accumulated a lot of spiritual merit for us to enjoy such amazing proximity to You." **Swami looked at that boy and replied, "You are not here because of the merit earned either by you or your forefathers. That would not have earned for you what you are now getting. This proximity is all**

**simply the result of My Grace!"** Yes, as Ramakrishna Paramahansa once said, "God is simply unfathomable. He would shower His Grace on someone we all think is most undeserving while someone else whom we believe ought to have received it is apparently ignored!" I mention this in passing because we all had better learn how to count our blessings and try to deserve them at least *post facto*.

On this trip, Swami took a small band of students and a couple of old students, apart from Mr. Giri, Mr. Anil Kumar and myself [I am sure you can figure out how I got in – obviously, it was unmerited Grace and nothing else! I am sure you are complaining but please direct your complaints to the right quarter!] Superficially, the criteria for selection were the same as Swami uses when He picks boys for His Kodai trips. The boys must be smart; must be able to sing and/or speak fluently as well as with conviction before large audiences; be shining representatives of His University; be exemplars of humility, discipline and decorum, etc. Obviously, there are a very large number of students who meet the norms but as always, it is only a few who win the jackpot. But Swami never leaves anyone out - everyone gets his chance sometime, in some manner or the other that is something one should never forget.

This visit was obviously very different from a regular Kodai trip, which is invariably during vacation time; by contrast this one was during the middle of a Semester, and that meant that Swami could not take a big group. Also, since He was staying in Sundaram, which is not designed to accommodate large groups, the size of the party had necessarily to be restricted. I recall though many years ago, when Swami went to Madras as it was known then, the entire MBA class went there. The students were accommodated in a house elsewhere, and they went there to attend a course of lectures by experts on management and finance; in other words, the students went to Madras for a training course. This time, they went with Swami and formed a legitimate part of His group.

Why did Swami take a select few? Was He not going there to be present at the Yagna? That of course was part of the reason for His trip but not the only reason. Swami is always thinking of students and He never misses an opportunity to be with them, to help them, to guide them, to advise them and to groom them. That is what makes being a Sai student such a rare privilege and sign of Divine Grace. On this occasion, Swami took a select few not only to show them off as a proud mother would – and we should never forget that though He is the Avatar, He is also a Proud Divine Mother, when it comes to students! In fact, we in the party and indeed the city itself got a stunning demo of this when on 21<sup>st</sup> January, suddenly towards the end of His Divine Discourse during the Chennai Citizens' Conclave, Swami suddenly said, "Hey Boys, where are you?" or something to that effect! There He was in a formal public gathering that had assembled to express gratitude to Him but there He was feeling more proud of His students than about providing water to millions!

### **Starting the Day with Love**



It is no surprise then that almost every day started in some manner or the other around the students, even as most also days ended with students. Everything happened rather casually, informally and without any set routine, schedule or script. Our typical day would go like this: We would all be ready quite early – there was no telling when Swami would come out. While the students would be in their quarters somewhere upstairs – I never got to see it – Mr. Giri and myself who were lodged downstairs near the entrance, would get ready and move to the room just outside which served somewhat like a reception hall, where only about two or three were allowed the privilege of gathering. Naturally, they were persons who were in charge of the Yagna on the one hand and Swami's visit in general on the other. All the others, however big they were, had to wait outside – and this applied to movie stars, cricket star, and judges, whether they served in the High Court or the Supreme Court! This alone ought to give an indication of what a great responsibility it is to receive Swami's Grace; the question which constantly nags me is: "What should we do to justify all this?"

OK, let me carry on; there we would be some upstairs and some downstairs, all of us eagerly waiting for the crucial signal. Also waiting would be a small group of youth specially selected to serve in the dining room, and in Sundaram in general. Suddenly the signal would be received: Swami has come out. Silently, all of us downstairs would go up, and even as we did so, we would see students going into the dining room and taking position, shall I say? The last to enter would be the so-called elders, just about half a dozen of us, including those who had come from outside. The room was small, not permitting a large crowd, which was a blessing in a certain sense since a small gathering made it so much easier to have an air of intimacy.

Swami would be seated on His chair in front of a table that served as His dining table. In front of the table and on either side of the room and close to the two walls would be planks meant for seating people who be eating with Swami. And close to the wall facing Swami's table was a small table meant for seating about four or five elders. The number of planks provided on the floor were not enough for all the students. So they divided themselves into two batches, taking turns. While one batch would sit with Swami for breakfast, the other batch would sit for lunch and so on; the batch opting out would eat separately somewhere near the kitchen.

The proceedings would start typically with someone standing near Swami trying to get Him interested in the newspapers stacked up on one side of His table. There was no shortage of news concerning Swami but Swami generally showed little interest. Thus, when it looked like the newspapers would have to be set aside, the signal would go to bring the breakfast items. There were two teams deputed to do the serving; one team took care of Swami while the other team attended to all the rest in the room. The items would be brought one by one, and placed before Swami in His table. Usually, it was Satyajit who attended on Swami but at times, Mr. V Srinivasan who always was in respectful attendance would stand in for Satyajit if the latter was otherwise preoccupied. It must be said that Satyajit had the heaviest load, though the most coveted one.

While Swami was being served, service to all the rest of us also would commence; when enough had been served, a small signal from Swami and the boys would lead the *Brahmaarpanam* chant. After that, the eating would commence. Everyone would eat in silence, as is the tradition but sometime during the middle, even as Swami is checking with those serving Him about some item or the other, the evergreen Anil Kumar (AK) would make the first bold move to pitch in by strongly advocating to Swami some breakfast item or the other. It takes some guts to do that; I, for one, would never dare to do that, but then AK had the Divine license!

### **Ever Effervescent Anil Kumar**

In narrating the story of the Sri Sathya Sai Avatar, one can miss mentioning the name of anyone but not that of Anil Kumar. How beautifully, tactfully, colourfully, and resourcefully he manages situations, no matter what they be! At times it might seem as if Swami is withdrawn; AK alone would be able to break the ice. At times, Swami might be annoyed with some breach of discipline and even as we would be fearing the worst, AK would skilfully save the day by bringing up some subject that would 'distract' Swami's attention and make Him smile again. On other occasions, with a few strategic moves, AK would brilliantly shift Swami into a story-telling mood, recalling great events of the past.

I have had the honour and pleasure of watching AK at close quarters on many occasions, adjusting to the changing moods of Swami with unbelievable speed, injecting life and gaiety whenever required, as only he can. Blessed are those who are able to share intimacy with the Lord, but among all these, AK is not only special but uniquely so. Others might fail to get mention in many versions of the Sai Bhagavatham that undoubtedly will be treasured in the centuries to come, but of one thing I am absolutely sure. No version dare miss mentioning him; I would go so far as to say that any Sai Bhagavatham without mention of AK would be incomplete!

Meanwhile, the boys who had yielded place to eat separately downstairs would hurry to Swami's presence, crowding into the already crowded room. That's when Swami would start asking questions about who ate what and how much for breakfast. This was always a lively session since Swami would make humorous comments all the way. He would then turn to the elders, sparing most but never missing AK.

Used as he was to this routine from so many trips, AK would be at his unabashed best, praising many a dish and making a full disclosure of what all he ate. I am tempted to recall here my experience while visiting Delhi and Bombay in 1999 as a member of Swami's party, with AK as my unforgettable roommate. In Delhi, Swami stayed with the Kulwant Rai family [yes, the same Kulwant Rai after whom the Sai Kulwant Hall is named]. At breakfast time we would all be seated around the same table, with Swami of course at the head of the table. He would finish His Divine nibbling very quickly and then go round the table for a chat - a kind of roving Interview! He would walk towards where AK and myself were seated and standing behind both of us, would make enquiries about what he ate and what he did not.

AK, of course, was the veteran of many such trips and he would therefore carefully skip many items in the first round of serving, to be in readiness when Swami came around. And sure enough Swami, like a concerned mother, would start ordering various items to be served to AK. Fortunately, Swami would be so focussed on AK and that would mercifully spare me!

I am a poor eater and simply cannot face up to overeating. AK, on the other hand, would be ready with a sufficiently empty stomach, to deal with this kind of situation, taking great care to make Swami very happy by accepting everything that was served to him on specific Divine command. It was a command performance really, most entertaining in view of the lively dialogue between Swami and AK, and gave all of such wonderful memories and stories to tell for years! God knows whom to choose for what part in His Divine Drama!

### **First Fortunate Visitors**

Even as the cross examination about the breakfast menu and its quality wound its way to an end, the people in charge of the day's program would slowly inch towards Swami, trying to catch His eye. Recognising the anxiety of these people, Swami would gently turn to them and give them a hearing. While Mr. Ramani [the State President] and Mr. G.K. Raman [Convenor of the Sri Sathya Sai Trust of TN] would brief Swami about the program planned at the Yagna site, others would try to check with Bhagavan what His plans were regarding visits to the houses of devotees. Needless to say there was a long list of applications, with some making their prayers in person at every opportunity that presented itself. Soon things would get sorted out and the day would start unfolding itself.

The day's program having been given some shape, Swami would withdraw briefly to His room only to reappear a little later and come down. He would then go out through the door to the outside and that is when the day's events would formally commence. Typically, some VIP or the other would be waiting, often with his family, right on the veranda facing the public area. There were a whole string of VIPs who got a precious minute of Divine attention, which, I am sure meant for them a lifetime of Grace. One celebrity who so came seeking Divine blessings was Cricket's Master Blaster, Sachin Tendulkar. He showed up one day in Sundaram and was of course duly blessed. What was interesting was that Sachin, a favourite of cricket fans in all continents, extended to Swami a box full of cricket balls asking Bhagavan to bless. There were rumours that these were the balls to be used in a forthcoming matching between India and a powerful rival! I cannot vouch for the story but this much I can say; as always, Sachin's visit was big news!

### **Spellbinding Sundaram Darshans**

A few words now about Darshan in Sundaram premises. When the Yagna was planned, it was assumed that everyone would make a beeline to the Yagna site and seek Swami's Darshan only there; on this basis, minimal arrangements were made for Darshan at Sundaram itself. This is a reasonable assumption and one cannot fault the organisers for this. For

example, in the old days, the Birthdays would invariably be celebrated in the Hill View Stadium; that was where Darshan would be granted and the Discourse delivered. Nevertheless, a handful, would gather in the Mandir, waiting for Him to give Darshan there, which of course He always did. Based on this historical experience [and other similar ones], it was expected that attendance at Sundaram would be rather small. So it seemed for a day or two but soon devotees had their own plans.

Big crowds began to gather, and some barriers and crowd control measures were put in place. Even so, it seemed that Swami would at best just bless them as He got into His car before driving away. Something like that happened maybe once or twice but soon, Swami being Swami, decided to give an extended Darshan in Sundaram itself.

It might have been January so-called wintertime but Chennai is just about 13 degrees north of the Equator, and every season is hot, especially around 10 o'clock in the morning. So quickly a shamiana was put up offering protection to devotees from the heat. However, the story is not so simple as that. What really happened was that one day [before the shamiana came up] when Swami gave a leisurely Darshan, the boys who were with Him quickly produced an umbrella and held it above His head to prevent the sunlight beating down. Swami instantly reacted, a bit testily, one must add.

Later the boys told us that Swami took them to task for offering Him an umbrella when the devotees were being roasted by the Sun! Word quickly got round and in a jiffy, shamianas sprang up everywhere, for the devotees, for the VIP devotees, and of course there was a covered space for Swami also so that He could sit and listen to Bhajans. Having "captured" the Lord and "bound" Him with Bhajans, the Sundaram crowd was no doubt in ecstasy but I am sure the Yagna crowd [which surely must have got the news via cell phones] must have become upset! There is no end to the Leelas, even if they are of a different variety compared to what one saw in earlier days.

In recalling the Darshans including extended ones in the Sundaram premises, I must not omit to mention one important feature, especially because it highlights the wonderful relationship that the Lord has with His devotees. Once it became known that Sundaram too was a venue for Darshan, the crowds quickly grew to the point where they spilled over to the road outside, packing both sides for almost a kilometre I would say. I thought these poor people would at best get a fleeting glimpse as Swami's car sped away to wherever it was Swami was going. But then, has not Swami said, "Love My uncertainty"? Thus, soon we saw Swami going out into the road, even as the security people were tearing their hair. Be that as it may Swami was very happy, as of course were the devotees cramming the road outside.

It would need a writer far more gifted than me to capture the wonderful nuances of those roadside Darshans! Does one go into raptures describing the joy the Lord felt in being so close the devotees, or does one plunge into a poetic recall of the momentary bliss that devotees etched into their memories to last a lifetime? I simply cannot do either, but what my limitations prevent me from doing, the camera has mercifully caught for your and posterity's pleasure. We offer a selection of the photos taken during such "roadside Darshan" and what amazing scenes they portray! A boy in the crowd being

given a chain, a policeman on duty being given vibhuti, people going into raptures just because Swami looked at them for just a fraction of a second, an old woman whose only possessions seem to be a stick and an aluminium “tiffin box” gazing at Swami – their faces tell all. With due apologies to all the great poets of the world, the digital camera has made many of them redundant!

### **Blessings out of the Blue (see web version for pictures)**

*Aren't these series of pictures of Swami's picking a boy out of the blue from the roadside and blessing him profusely fabulous! Actually, we did not know anything about this boy, who he is, from where does he come, etc. But interestingly, now we know, thanks to the Cover Story on the “Prema Jyothi” Exhibition that we had in the previous issue of H2H.*

*Reading the cover story of the September 1<sup>st</sup> issue of H2H where we had mentioned about this incident and also illustrated it with the picture of the panel from the Exhibition that carried this series of pictures, to our surprise, the father of this boy, one Mr. K Kalyanaraman from Chennai wrote to us sharing the experience of that wonderful day, and this is what he writes:*

*“On 26th January 2007, I, along with my wife and daughter, (Jaya and Rohini respectively) and son, Saiprasaad, were standing from 7.00 am on the road next to Sundaram. Swami came out around 10.10 and came straight onto the road. People flocked around Him and He could not come further. We were standing beside the yellow line as directed by the sevadal volunteer. Later, Swami turned and went inside Sundaram campus. We felt sad as we could not get a good glimpse of Him in spite of our long wait. Now, the crowd who had His darshan slowly fizzled out, and we moved further and now had an opportunity to stand near the gate. Having finished His darshan rounds, Swami was now enjoying the Bhajans sitting on the dais. Nobody expected Him to go for Darshan rounds again, but He did!*

*Suddenly He came out and the crowd again flocked. But this time, we were near the gate and hence we had His darshan at close quarters. I was holding my son on the hips. As Swami came near, He started staring at me for quite some time. I instantly burst into tears. I was literally weeping aloud. The Lord now waved His hand and beckoned my seven year old son to Him. He lovingly spoke few words to Saiprasaad in Tamil, and then with a gentle motion of His hand materialized a gold chain. It had in it a Coral Ganesha Dollar and Swami now with a lot of love and affection, slipped this priceless gift onto his neck and then inserted it with care into his shirt. And finally was a beautiful smile and hand raised in blessing. What a moment! I have no words to explain the feeling.*

*Even today, we are all thrilled, excited and expecting Swami to guide us further in our life. We have absolutely no words to express His Divine Love.”*

I should of course not forget the huge crowds that thronged the road that Swami travelled by every day on His way to the Yagna site. His routine was most uncertain and unpredictable but that did not deter the devotees; they stood firm and waited long hours just to catch a glimpse. That spoke volumes about the hunger of the devotees who are really starved for Divinity. For people like me so used to the sight of the Lord, these scenes were a strong lesson of how priceless is the gift and blessing that we receive every day and take so much for granted here in Prashanti.

Recounting the mesmerising memories of these 'Darshan on wheels' as Sai moved on the roads of Chennai, Sri Shashank Shah, one student who was blessed to be part of the group, says,

*On the road outside Sundaram where Bhagavan used to move around and give Darshan and the roads leading to the Yaga Shala at Thiruvannamiyur, there were unprecedented crowds chanting "Sai Ram Sai Ram" which almost echoed all through the city of Chennai. It would take the convoy almost 15 minutes to reach the final lap of 1 km leading to the Yaga Shala. On either side of the road, thousands of devotees – young and old, the physically challenged, women with infants in their hands, all trying to strain their necks for one glimpse of Bhagavan as He passed in His car. They would feel so sanctified, with tears of joy in their eyes after having that one single glimpse. It was a sight for the Gods to watch. While at Tirupati and other pilgrimage places, the devotees stand in long lines to reach the Lord in the sanctum sanctorum, here we had the Lord of the Kali Age – the Avatar Himself, going in the midst of the long line of devotees giving them His Darshan and fulfilling their lives... On seeing these overwhelming sights of the devotees' devotion and longing for their Lord, we realised the greatest blessing that we, the students of Bhagavan have been receiving in the form of the Divine Motherly Love that Bhagavan has been tirelessly showering on us for the last four decades."*

### **Fortunate Few Receive Swami at Home**

One other aspect of the trip that I should not forget to mention is the visits that Swami made to the houses of a few select devotees. There were, as is to be expected, a long list of requests, but only a few got the privilege. This does not mean that God showered His Grace on only those people; far from it. We would all do well to count the innumerable blessings that each of us without exception receives in many ways. The problem is that we often fail to recognise what we receive, even it is very precious. For example, I have slipped in the bathroom many, many times, but managed not to fall and smash my head, or break my hips, hands etc. Was it due to any smartness on my part? Not at all. It was the invisible hand of the ever-present Lord that saved me. But how often do I recall and thank Him? Similarly, I have narrowly missed being hit by moving vehicles on the road, all over the place. Invariably, someone or the other, often someone I did not know, would warn me or push me even. Was it just luck or something deeper? Do I have to tell you? I am mentioning all this because people tend to "rank" devotees using various arbitrary yardsticks, saying 'so and so' is close to Swami and receives plenty of Grace. All of us do; only, we do not bother to recognise it.

Every house visit of Swami is not only a sign of Divine Grace but also an expression of Pure Love, which only He can shower. I saw plenty of this in the Delhi visit, when Swami would visit three or four houses one after the other, having tea in some and dinner in others! Imagine that, so many meals in one short spell of time; and believe me after all that tiring outing, when He returned to the house where He was staying, He had to please the hostess by allowing her to serve dinner so that she does not feel she has been denied Grace! I am sure even gifted sages like Valmiki and Vyasa would be stumped trying to describe this unique Kali Yuga style of the Avatar!

### **Serenading Sweet Sai**

Almost everywhere Swami went, He took all of us too, although almost invariably we just melted into the background, unless instructed otherwise. This was because visits were supposed to be private, by and large, that is. And yet, one could never know when we would be summoned to be close! Thus, the music boys, and there were a few of them, made sure they always had their instruments like harmonium etc., wherever went they like Mary's little lambs! One admired the boys for their uncompromising devotion in being ever ready. I mean imagine running around carrying a fairly big harmonium from place to place, a whole set of percussion instruments, and a big guitar!

As it turned out, the boys were not called upon to sing in any devotees' houses during this trip but since that has happened for example in Kodai, the boys had every reason to be ready; over here, we try to take seriously Swami's injunction: Love My Uncertainty. I can't say we have quite learnt to love the uncertainty – sometimes it can be very difficult to (!) – but we do try and make sure we are not always caught by surprise. However, I recall Swami asking the boys to sing once or twice at the Yagna venue.

When it comes to performances by His boys, especially musical performances, Swami can be very demanding. On this occasion, I think the word went out that He would like an improved performance and that made the boys get immersed in intense practice. They might not have got enough chances, but they certainly worked very hard, practicing all the time, taking advantage of every free minute they could get. I have seen the same happen in Kodai and this is one indication of how deeply involved the students are in trying to please Swami.

While Swami might demand the best of performances, He is at the same time very concerned and protective of His students. He makes sure that they get looked after wherever He goes. Added to this, He gave, as He invariably does when He takes students to Kodai, each student hefty "pocket money" to go shopping, making sure locals would take them to the right spot for making the purchases. On one occasion, when we were headed to the house of a devotee in Mylapore, I found we were taking a rather long road that took us all along the beach. If I remember correctly, that day was 26<sup>th</sup> January, celebrated as Republic Day. Earlier that morning there was the regular ceremonial parade, procession of floats, etc on the Marina. However, by the time we were taken for a drive along the Marina [it was around 11 AM or so], the roads had been cleared and also there was very little traffic. Thus, all of us were able to enjoy a good look of the beach and the sea. I think Swami

deliberately selected this route – He knows the roads of Madras like the back of His palm – so that the boys get a good glimpse of the famous beach.

By the way I am told – I am not able to confirm this but this is in keeping with Swami's style – many decades ago, when Swami first began to drive cars, He took Mother Easwaramma to Madras just to let her have a glimpse of the sea. I believe she was simply stunned by the sight. No wonder. For a person who has grown up for years only hearing about the sea but never seen it, the first look – the broad sweep, the majestic shoreline, the waves crashing on the shoreline, the foam – all these must have seemed awesome and yet beautiful.

Returning to the house visits I can only offer a few random notes. When we went to the house of Mr. Venu Srinivasan [Chairman and Managing Director of TVS Motor Company] we were all swept away by the wonderful ambience. I am sure Mrs. Mallika Srinivasan, a prominent figure in the business world herself, must have had a lot to do with it. As we entered, the first thing that impressed me immensely right away was the wonderful musical atmosphere that filled the house. The music was not coming from a recording but from a leading singer, Bombay Jayashree, accompanied by two young disciples. The songs she sang were not only appropriate but mellifluous, and I for one felt quite uplifted. One of the songs sung was a Kannada song composed by Saint Purandara Dasa in which he pleads for Krishna to come quickly. Apparently, hearing the song, Swami told the hostess, "I have already come!" What a sweet gesture, and what a gentle way of reminding those around of His identity, if such a reminder was needed!

I really cannot catalogue all the various visits, but I must mention a few, for special reasons of course. One of these pertains to the visit to the house of Susheelamma, an old devotee, who along with her husband Venkatamuni, had the pleasure and privilege of having Swami stay in their house whenever He visited Madras in the old days, before Sundaram came up that is. Even when Swami was closeted with the family, all of us eagerly barged into the various rooms where Swami stayed, slept and so forth. It is a small house on a small road with a small compound. Apparently, Swami used to stand in the upstairs veranda and give Darshan while devotees gathered in the compound below; what I am trying to drive at is that in those days, the number of people who came to have the Darshan of Swami was small. Those were different days; I was told [but I cannot confirm this though the story rings true!] in those days, people would phone to check about the Darshan time. The phone was in the room reserved for Swami and guess who answered the phone?! Below, we offer some recalls by late Kasturi about the Grace Swami showered on the family in the good old days.

### **Amazing Instances of Grace to Venkatamuni Family**

Prof. Kasturi has narrated amazing instances of grace showered by Swami on the Venkatamuni family. In 'Sathyam Sivam Sundaram', Vol. I, he writes:

"...Devotees who have gone to far away places including England, France, Canada, the United States, Japan and Germany, have felt His protecting Hand. Mr. and Mrs. G.V. Venkatamuni, for example, proceeded to the Continent and planned from there to attend the Coronation Ceremonies of



Queen Elizabeth II. They were shopping in Paris when they discovered, to their utter dismay, that the bundle of traveler's cheques they had was lost! They could not locate it in spite of their desperate and thorough search not only in their purse and luggage but even in the most unlikely places. They were overcome with sorrow when they contemplated their plight in a strange land. They turned to Baba, as they always did in distress. Baba heard their pathetic cry - thousands of miles away! The next day, while looking in the self-same purse for something else, they were amazed and overjoyed to find the entire bundle of traveler's cheques intact!"

There is another by Prof. Kasturi in Sathyam Sivam Sundaram, Vol IV and it goes like this:

"...A rosary was given by Baba to Shrimati Venkatamuni of Madras. When her aged mother-in-law approached the threshold of death, her bed surrounded by many of her kith and kin, she placed the rosary on her chest and prayed for her recovery. Her mother-in-law did regain consciousness and sat up to greet the dawn of another day, curious to know the reason why the house was so full of people. When her own son, afflicted with frequent fits since childhood, was dangerously on the verge of death, Shrimati Venkatamuni ran to her room to bring the rosary. But her fingers could not hold it; it slipped out of her grasp again and again. When she could at last hold it and take it to her son, it was too late. The illness was a form of repayment of karmic debt which, when repaid, gave him release. Baba told her later that her son was here to liquidate the balance of his debt and he had now attained the region of everlasting bliss. 'If you have genuine affection for him,' He said, 'be happy that he has been relieved of the body that gave him no peace.'"

### **Devoted Service**

I should not forget to mention that Susheelamma along with Mrs. Vidya Srinivasan was almost all the time in Sundaram [except when they went home at night and for the brief periods when Bhagavan visited their homes]. And what is it they were doing in Sundaram? Making sure that not only was food prepared the way it ought to be for being offered to the Lord, but also that proper food arrangements were made for all members in Swami's party. They reported in the early hours of the morning, and could be seen in Sundaram throughout the day, busy in the kitchen, of course. Their only moment with Swami came usually late in the evening when on some days, they were able to offer Arathi to Bhagavan before He withdrew. Hardly anyone knew about the incredible service they were rendering; that is the hallmark of real Seva. I am sure there were many others in that team whom I do not know of; great souls all of them. Like Tyagaraja sang, I offer my salutations to all those *Mahanubhavalus* (great souls) also!

I must also refer to the visit Swami made to the residence of Mr. A. Ramakrishna, the former Deputy Managing Director of L & T Construction Company. Mr. AR has been doing projects for the Sri Sathya Sai Central Trust for well over a decade, ranging from the Sai Kulwant Hall, to the ashram North Blocks, to the Super Hospitals and the large number of drinking water projects, and of course the airport. Mr. AR's residence was quite a distance

from Sundaram and it was really a great sign of Grace that Swami took the trouble of riding all the way through evening traffic to spend time with AR's family [all of them had gathered, some having come from long distances in anticipation of such a Divine visit]. The interesting part of the visit happened before the visit rather than during the actual visit; if I recall correctly, Mr. AR had just about a couple of hours notice! I should imagine the poor gentleman and his family did not even have enough time to love Swami's uncertainty! But such is Divine Grace that even with such little notice, things fell into place, and at the end of the day hardly anyone remembered the short notice – no surprise in that; the joy that Swami spreads sweeps away all other memories!

### **Seeking Divinity in New Zealand**

Talking of short notice, I think the story that takes the cake is one narrated by Hislop during his tour of New Zealand in 1993, which we reproduce below. It is taken from the book *Seeking Divinity*, published by the Books and Publications Trust, Prasanthi Nilayam.

#### **'Swami And The Angels', by John H Hislop**

"In the early days, Swami used to go to Madras often. There was a family in Madras at whose house Swami usually stayed. At that time, He also drove His own car, although now He does not. Now He always has a driver who takes Him everywhere, in a car which somebody has put there for His use.

But before He had His present car, Swami had an old Chevrolet Station Wagon. He used to drive one of the cars Himself. When He would go to Madras to visit devotees there, other devotees would gather along the road at various places to see Swami drive by. The car would be coming along at a very fast clip and sitting behind the wheel was Swami with His arms folded, with the car going along about two inches off the road! Not even touching the road!

One time, Swami went to Madras and arrived unexpectedly at the home of His hostess. You know, when the Avatar comes to visit your house, I am sure you would have something with which to greet Him - some flowers or a tray of food or some way of welcoming the great man to your house. That was the case with this hostess too.

Swami came to the door and knocked. The hostess answered, saw Swami standing there and exclaimed, "Oh Swami, Swami! I am so happy to see You. But Swami, You didn't tell me that you were coming, and I don't have anything to welcome You with. I don't have flowers or fruit. I don't have anything." The poor lady was quite distraught. So Swami said, "Don't worry, don't worry." Then He turned around and beckoned at the car.

Out of the car came two angels with wings, carrying a big silver tray, loaded with fruit and flowers and everything the hostess would need to welcome Swami. The angels brought the tray up to the house and gave it to the hostess. Then Swami turned to the angels and waved back to the car. They floated back to the car, folded their wings, got into the car and disappeared.

Later on as the years went by, Swami acquired another vehicle. He had a bus, and He would take students for excursions in the bus. One time, He took them on an excursion to Madras.

First, He went to the house of the hostess where He would be staying; the students would be staying someplace else. When the hostess came to the door and saw the busload of students, she went back inside and brought out the silver tray. It was still there, and she told the students the story of the angels that I just told you.

At the Conference this weekend [***National Convention of New Zealand, 1993***], I told this angel story, so that people could tell their children. A man, about 55 years old, a big strong fellow, came up to me and said, "Would you mind if I tell you my experience?" I said, "No, no, of course not." He said, "I was sitting in the audience when you were talking, and on the stage behind you was Swami and two angels."

Whether or not it was only in his mind, I do not know. But there were a number of people who told me later that they had seen Swami on the stage during that Conference. Undoubtedly, He is here right now. Everywhere you look, Swami is certainly there."

Maybe I could add a personal foot note about Swami and New Zealand, though it does not involve angels. It happened in 1995, when I visited New Zealand, to participate in the same National Conference that Hislop had addressed earlier. It was the opening day, and I gave my talk in the morning. After my talk there was a short break and those assembled went out for refreshments being served outside. The podium was at the other end of the hall, near the altar, and I could not go out easily partly because there was a big crowd trying to go out and partly because people gathered around me asking questions. When practically all had left and I was more or less alone, one devotee who was earlier shooting my talk on videotape came to me and said, "You know something? Towards the end when you were making some passionate and loving reference to Swami, He actually came out of the photo over there and stood near this podium!" It was clear that others had not seen that happening – I had not – but on the other hand there was no reason to disbelieve this person. He was clearly reporting something he had personally seen, not visible to others. All this seems to happen more frequently than we realise.

### **Keeping an Old Promise**

Getting back to the main story, perhaps the last house visited during this visit was that of Mr. Ramani, and this happened if I am not mistaken on the last day. It was late in the morning, and if I am not mistaken, Swami, having finished His Darshan at the Yagna site, was due to return to Sundaram. Meanwhile, back in the house of Mr. Ramani, the family members sans Ramani were all waiting tensely [Ramani, of course, was following Swami like a shadow, as his father did many years ago]. Particularly tense was young

Sravanam, son of Ramani, a sound engineer, who had set up his own audio recording studio. It was located on the upstairs of their small home in a suburb near the Yagna salai. He very much wanted Swami to come and bless his studio. Earlier, Swami had blessed the idea of a studio when father and son came to Prashanti; Swami even approved the floor plan. The question now was: "Would He now come and bless in person the Studio He had earlier approved or would it be in one of those mysterious and subtle forms?" The family was ready for both but definitely preferred a visit in the human form; who would not!

Swami going to the Studio which was upstairs? How is that possible? For Sravanam, that was not an issue; he had a ramp built all the way to the first floor instead of the usual staircase, and he was sure that Swami would come in His car chair as usual. Deep faith never fails, and sure enough, Swami found time to make it to Mr. Ramani's house. He went up the ramp to the Sravanam's studio, blessed it and spent some memorable moments intimately with the family.

As a part of His unfathomable drama, Swami often keeps everyone guessing. At times, He acts as if He has forgotten a promise He made. God never forgets and it is man who forgets, mostly because of weak faith. The Ramani family is different; come what may, they have deep faith in Swami. I am not tossing words for I know what I am saying. I have had many conversations with Mr. Ramani on many occasions concerning many matters, and he has never failed to stun me with his incredible and unwavering faith in Swami. We should learn from such people; God sends such people to us in subtle ways as messengers. If our look is superficial, we would miss the free lesson and tuition by a mile; but if our focus is on God, every one becomes a messenger of God with his or her own package of love, compassion and lesson.

To get back to the mainline, do you know what Swami told Mrs. Ramani once He was closeted with the family? He said, "Do you remember the Interview I gave your family when I came to Madras in 1988? I said I would come to your house and today, I have done so! You might have forgotten about it but I never forget My words!" Dear reader, we should all take a few minutes off to reflect on the promises the Lord gave in earlier Avatars and in this Avatar too. As Krishna He gave many assurances but they were sort of conditional; that is to say, they were the 'If....Then' kind of statements that one has in logic. But in this Avatar, God in human form has dropped all conditionalities. He knows how frail humans are and says even if you forget Me, I shall help you and come to your rescue. Even if you go away from Me, I shall pull you back for your own good. Who can say God is not Pure Love?

One small footnote. Wherever Swami went, there was always a crowd, along the road traversed, and near the house visited. Such is the hunger for a glimpse of Divinity that people did all they could to see Swami even for a fleeting second. A picture presented elsewhere, captures for you the intensity of love God evokes in all.

### **Swami's Visit to Mr. GK Raman's Home**

My account of Swami's family visits would not be complete without some reference to the visit Swami made to the residence of Mr. G. K. Raman.

Those of you who have read the first article in this trilogy, would know who Mr. Raman is and how he gave Mr. Giri and me a grand conducted tour of the Yagna site the night before the commencement of the Yagna. In recent years, whenever Swami visited Kodai, He invariably visited Mr. Raman's temporary home there and this time, Mr. Raman prayed to Swami that the Lord should bless his regular residence, a two story building not far from the Yagna site, where Mr. Raman lived upstairs while his doctor-yoga teacher and son lived downstairs, using his residence also as a clinic. As usual, Swami kept Mr. Raman guessing but one day, He agreed to pay a visit.

And so we all went like saints marchin' in as the song goes, and of course Swami got a warm welcome. I shall skip all the details but one thing I must mention. As Swami was about to leave and came to the porch to board His car, Mrs. Raman drew Swami's attention to a small group of people gathered there. They were the people who worked in the house, rendering various services ranging from taking care of the garden to assisting in the clinic. I still remember what Mrs. Raman told Swami. She said, "Swami, these are people who are supposed to work in this house of Yours. But for me, Swami, they are all members of my family. Swami, they too want to have Your Darshan and since there was not enough space within, they are all waiting for You here. Please Swami, bless them and make all of them as well as me happy. It is only when they receive Your blessings that Your visit to our humble home would be complete!" I was stunned. I could not believe that in this Kali Yuga there still were people who could speak with such love and sincerity.

### **Prayerful Respects to a Sorely Missed Soul**

There is a particular reason why I am placing this incident on record. With much pain and deep sadness, I must report that Mr. Raman suddenly passed away when he came here recently. It all happened like this. Around 24 August or so, I got an e-mail from him to say that he would meet me on the 26<sup>th</sup> to discuss some matter I had raised with him earlier. On the evening of 26<sup>th</sup> I looked for him in the veranda but could not spot him. I had to rush after Bhajan and so told myself that I would meet with him the following day. Next morning I had a class and so went to the College skipping morning Darshan, as all of us teachers have to do, reluctantly of course. When I came back I first went to the Studio as I do always do and someone said to me, "Do you happen to know Dr. Krishna Raman's phone number? It seems he has changed it recently." Krishna Raman, I repeat is Raman's son and he has been helping us a lot with photos, including many appearing here. I replied, "I do not have his number but I have his father's number somewhere. May be we could call Mr. Raman and find out." This is what happened next.

"Mr. Raman? He is gone."

"What do you mean gone? He is just supposed to have arrived. He can't go before he has arrived, can he?"

"No sir, he is no more!"

I was stunned. I did not know what to say except to remind myself how transient the world and indeed life itself is. Which is why we should always have the Lord's Name on our lips and His image in our Hearts so that we can

be ready whenever the call comes. That certainly seems to have been the case with Mr. Raman, for he gave up his body even as Swami was coming for Darshan to the sound of Vedic chants. Just as He was coming in Mr. Raman suddenly collapsed, completely and without warning. Till a moment earlier he was talking to the person next to him but in a flash, he collapsed. Doctors in the veranda rushed and started helping. Meanwhile Swami came near Mr. Raman, called out to him and gave him some water with *tulsi* leaves. He then ordered Mr. Raman to be shifted to the hospital for emergency support. That was immediately done but the time had come.

Shakespeare said that all that lives must die, passing through here to eternity. For Raman, that journey to Eternity happened in the presence of Eternity. He had a Darshan of Swami for which he had come, then went to the hospital and from there made the final journey to be eternally with Eternity.

I had the privilege of knowing Mr. Raman quite well during the last few years, and he was a jolly good man. On many occasions during our Madras visit, he would ride with us in the car meant for Mr. Giri, AK and myself. And believe me, when AK got the stimulus of Mr. Raman's lively company, the car would be filled with the sound of roaring laughter. Thus it was we forgot all about traffic jams and delays and the strain of tiring schedules. All of us miss a noble soul and I, in particular, miss a person with whom I was supposed to do many things for spreading the Message. May his soul rest in Peace.

### **Rashid Khan's Riveting Concert**

A few more random notes, and I am through. Let me start with some brief references to the Yagna. I am sure many of you must have seen scenes from Yagna streamed via the internet. I shall therefore skip the standard details, confining myself to some aspects that merit special attention. I shall start with the astoundingly uplifting music concert on 26<sup>th</sup> January, India's Republic Day. The concert was given by Rashid Khan. The musical rendering was out of this world no doubt, but what to me was stunning were the songs chosen by Mr. Khan. He started with a song on Sai! Imagine that! A Muslim musician who was singing for the first time in Swami's presence beginning with a moving song on Swami Himself! I have heard many concerts rendered in the Divine presence and it is not unusual for singers to sing songs in praise of Swami towards the end, but this man did it right at start, and with stunning effect too. I was absolutely thrilled. The songs that followed were equally electrifying and clearly even Swami was touched.

How do I know? From the fact that Swami did not wait for the concert to end to show His appreciation. Suddenly He called the artist and materialised a ring for him. A little later He similarly asked the tabla player to come forward and materialised vibhuti for him. The whole concert was memorable, packed as it was with beautiful songs, including of course Meera Bhajans, always a favourite with Swami. I was particularly thrilled to learn that two members of Mr. Khan's party were actually from Pakistan! Here was a Yagna being performed for promoting global harmony and here on the stage, Swami was using art to create a blissful atmosphere of that very same harmony!

Another thing that made a deep impression was the talk given in chaste Tamil by one Mr. Nambi, a poet. What made this talk quite significant was the fact that in earlier days, Mr. Nambi was a rather aggressive atheist and a member of a socio-political movement that protested the inequities of the caste system in a rather abrasive manner. That same person, once a party to obnoxious campaigns against religion and all that, was here now on the stage, speaking in Swami's presence, not only in most respectful and reverential manner but also stressing, religious, moral and spiritual values in every breath. Who says there is no hope for the world?

### **A Sai Bed in Every Hospital**

Another day, the dominant part of the evening proceedings was a speech by a local doctor who, on behalf of the metro was outlining the plans the city had for providing a measure of Sai care to deserving patients. Essentially over a hundred hospitals and nursing homes in the city with different specialities [I do not remember the exact number but the number really does not matter], had pledged to set apart one bed in their institution, every day of the year, for a person in need of medical help. This help would be provided free of charge to any needy and deserving person, recommended by the local Sai Organisation. Seen in perspective, it is essentially creating a free hospital with over a hundred beds. Now that is something. And by way of showing His appreciation and as a sign of His love, Swami then distributed a medical kit consisting of a stethoscope, BP apparatus etc., to over a hundred doctors. God sure works in His own subtle ways all the time!

Fast forwarding, on 30<sup>th</sup> January which is observed as Martyr's Day [in memory of Mahatma Gandhi who was assassinated that day in 1948], Swami asked all in the Yagna site to observe two minutes silence at 11 AM, as indeed the Nation as a whole did. The message is clear and simple. Being spiritual does mean disconnecting with the rest of Society but being in it harmoniously, and serving it positively.

### **Divine Compassion for a Dear Devotee**

One other recall and this too is related in a way with the Yagna. As January was coming to a close [and so was the Yagna], speculation was at a peak about when exactly Swami would return to Puttaparthi. Around 29<sup>th</sup>, we got the information that Swami would leave on 1 February. On the evening of 29<sup>th</sup>, at the Yagna site, Swami called the All India President and was in conversation with him for a while. Apparently, Swami was telling Mr. Srinivasan to announce that Swami would leave Chennai on the morning of 31<sup>st</sup>. This was clearly different from what we had been given to understand earlier and so understandably, Mr. Srinivasan was not sure if Swami had got the dates wrong by chance. [God can never make a mistake, but at times at the human level, as a part of His inscrutable drama, there is a bit of confusion about some matters.] However, Swami was very firm, and in accordance with Divine instructions, Mr. Srinivasan made the announcement.

Thus it was we actually left on the morning of the 31<sup>st</sup>, after being all set earlier to leave on 1<sup>st</sup> February. Now any reason why I am making a big deal about this? Sure, and it has to do with an aspect of Divine compassion. Let me go back to the night of 29<sup>th</sup>. Anil Kumar received word that his mother was

critically ill in Hyderabad, and admitted to an ICU in a leading hospital there. This AK learnt through a phone call from his younger brother, himself a prominent doctor. AK was told nothing was certain and if possible he should try and come to Hyderabad to be at his ailing mother's bedside, ASAP.

Needless to say that Anil Kumar was troubled by the news, although he showed little sign of it externally. But Swami, the Indweller, knew what was happening and asked AK even without being told, how his mother was and what plans he was making to go to Hyderabad. AK was deeply touched by Swami's concern and replied that having come with Swami, he would not go without Swami's permission. In any case, he wanted to delay his departure as much as possible so as to be available should he be needed. He had come with Swami and his first priority was to serve the Universal Mother. What AK was hinting at was that he would like to be around in case Swami chose give a Discourse as the Yagna drew to a close.

Swami, at the human level, was moved by AK's expression of such steadfast love and loyalty. I do not recall exactly what happened immediately but this much I am certain of. There were many scenarios concerning what might happen on the 30<sup>th</sup>. One possibility was that Swami might deliver a valedictory Discourse on the evening of 30<sup>th</sup>, following the Poorna Ahuti on the morning of the 30<sup>th</sup>. AK's well wishers [who were a legion] then began making active plans about helping AK to leave for Hyderabad, to match every conceivable scenario, including catching a flight at night, as soon as the Discourse was over. The general idea was that AK would go the Yagna site with his suitcase, and as soon as the Discourse was over and Aarathi given, he would hop into a car and rush to the airport to catch a flight leaving around 9.30 P.M and be in Hyderabad by night.

Came the 30<sup>th</sup>. In the morning, the Poorna Ahuti was duly completed in Divine presence and with Divine blessings. And in the evening, Swami went again to the Yagna site and gave His Discourse, with of course AK doing the live translation as he always does.

But meanwhile, by Divine Grace, the condition of Anil Kumar's mother had improved somewhat and AK's brother phoned to say that he [AK] did not have to rush immediately. Thanking Swami for the mercy shown, AK then stayed back and left for Hyderabad only after coming to Puttaparthi along with Swami.

### **Swami Leaves Chennai**

Well, I have almost come to the end of the story. Came the morning of D-day and while all of us were packing and taking instructions about when we should leave and in what vehicle, the Youth group associated with the Chennai Yagna brought the Lingam from the Yagnam site, covering the last mile in a ceremonial processions to the accompaniment of Vedic chants and Bhajan singing. On arrival in Sundaram, the Lingam was taken to the Bhajan Hall where Swami inspected the Lingam and blessed the Youth.

Meanwhile we hurried through breakfast and handed over our luggage as per instructions issued earlier. All that remained was to pile into the cars and drive away, which we soon did, ahead of Swami of course. On arrival at the Airport we went through Security and when we went through the departure gate we



were surprised to see that the person in attendance on behalf of Paramount Airways, whose chartered aircraft we were flying, was an alumni of the Anantapur College!

Leaving the departure building we boarded an airlines bus to be taken to the waiting aircraft. This was parked right next to the old air terminal building that has survived from the forties. As we approached the aircraft, I was surprised to see a posse of policemen forming a circular cordon, as a part of the security drill. I have seen a lot of security all over the place, but this is the first time I saw a circle of policemen surrounding the aircraft. I guess most of them manoeuvred this drill so that they could have Darshan of Swami! Anyway, we were all quickly boarded and soon Swami too was on board. While Mr. G.K. Raman accompanied Swami on the forward trip, Mr. V.Srinivasan had the privilege of accompanying Swami back to Puttaparthi, as a representative of Chennai devotees.

After the by-now-familiar quota of photo clicking by the ground staff, the cabin was cleared of the ground staff and the plane got ready to take off. Not surprisingly, the crew were the same as the outward journey! Soon we were airborne, and the Captain as a special gesture took us right over Poondi Reservoir so that we could all rejoice to see how full it was! And when we landed some time later, the pilot obliged us once again by flying in such a manner that those who were on the right side could have a wonderful view of the Divine valley, complete with the Indoor Stadium, the Hillview Stadium and the Ashram etc.

We then flew over the Hospital, took a turn and landed from the Hospital side, ending up close to Yenumalapalli village. A U turn and the aircraft slowly taxied up to the parking station, where, when the plane came to a halt, Swami deplaned, using the special elevator kept in readiness. Of course, while the plane was in flight, Swami went through the regular routine of in-flight Darshan, plus in-flight interview for the cabin crew!

And so by about noon or little later on the last day of January, we were back in Puttaparthi, with Chennai having become yet another set of precious memories! With Swami, every second is a unique and precious experience and it is never easy to capture all of it. I do hope, nevertheless, I have captured the highlights of the Chennai visit in a reasonably satisfactory manner for the benefit of not only contemporary readers but also for devotees who might chance to read this in the future and experience living with the Avatar, who, for us is a reality, but who, for them, would be an unbelievable legend!

Thank you for your patience and God Bless. Jai Sai Ram.

## FEATURE ARTICLES

### IN QUEST OF INFINITY PART 9

By Prof G.VENKATARAMAN

Loving Sai Ram. We resume our joint quest for infinity and before I take you any further, let me look back briefly, to help you appreciate how far we have come. The first stage in our search required us to go back to the time when our Universe was born. How does one go back in Time? We do not have a time-machine that can do that but a simple trick is to look through a telescope. Can one go back in time just by looking? Is that not a crazy idea? So it might seem but actually the idea is not silly, as the figure below would explain.

Figure one (*for all images please see the web version*) shows how when one looks through a telescope, one peeps deep into space. The more powerful the telescope, the deeper one can peep. All the light we receive comes from distant objects in space. The farther we look, the earlier the light must have started to reach us now. In turn that means that by looking deep enough, we can catch the light that started its journey towards us a very long time ago, bringing information about the early Universe. Of course, to look deep into space, one needs very powerful telescopes. What it all boils down to is, that the more powerful the telescope the farther back we are looking in Time.

So the first thing we did was to gaze at the wondrous sky above and admiring what fills it. We saw many things, planets, stars, galaxies, exploding stars and whatnot. We pondered and analysed and learnt how galaxies are born, how stars are born, what makes them shine, how they die, how they are reborn and so on [see SFI - 03].

We learnt that simply by gazing at the sky and combining those observations with what physicists were discovering in their labs here on earth, some dared to speculate that the Universe was actually born in a Big Bang. That seemed a great idea, and went very well with an earlier discovery due to Hubble [after whom the Hubble Telescope is named] that our Universe is not static but actually expanding.

Contact between physics, astronomy and astrophysics constantly grew, and people wondered whether Big Bang could have any basis at all in physics. Yes it could, and that came via Einstein's Theory of Gravitation. We saw that while Einstein was actually the first to discover the fact that the Universe might actually have had a beginning, he brushed aside his own discovery because he was steeped in the *Maya* of those times, according to which, the Universe is neither born nor dies but always is and steady.

Pity we were not able to meet the Prof for if we had, we would have politely coughed and said, "Excuse me Prof, that thing about being neither born nor dying applies to Supreme Consciousness, and **not** the Universe. In fact the

Universe came out of this Supreme Consciousness, that some call the *Atma*." But Destiny had willed that Einstein should "goof" and misinterpret his discovery. Thus he promptly disowned his own discovery, later calling it the greatest blunder of his life. As it turned out, his greatest blunder was to disown his discovery!

Anyway, to get on with the revision, sometime after the idea of the Big Bang was proposed, the Cosmic Microwave Background [see SFI - 02] was discovered, that appeared to strongly confirm the Big Bang. The CMB then became a subject for serious investigations and thanks to satellites it could be studied very carefully, with far greater precision than before. These studies opened up many new avenues of thought.

When the CMB was first discovered, there was euphoria all round, but soon people started worrying. They were worried because the intensity of CMB was the same in whichever direction one looked in the sky. Astronomers murmured, "It is nice to know that the CMB is isotropic, but it is **too** isotropic for comfort. If this is really true, then how come we have galaxies?" We might wonder why on earth these crazy fellows were worried sick when they really ought to be partying and celebrating the discovery of the CMB? Actually, they did party and all that – let me tell you that scientists are second to none in succumbing to all the temptations that ordinary folks yield to; they are no Rishis! – but at the end of the day when they became sober again, they started worrying about unsolved mysteries. It is this worry that propels science!

That was when the astronomers said, "Listen, let us study this CMB more carefully to check how uniform it really is." So they built satellites, launched them, collected tons of data, patiently analysed them and finally discovered some thing very important. The CMB was **not** perfectly uniform; it was substantially uniform no doubt but it also had **minute** ripples.

We might say, "That's nice but so what? And by the way, why spend so many millions for finding this? What's the big deal?" Well, there **was** a big deal, and I told a bit of that story last time. Basically, these minute ripples revealed two important things: Firstly, it gave a strong hint about how galaxies came to be formed in an otherwise uniform Universe. Scientists said, "Oh yes, the Universe was uniform but here and there, there were ripples in the density; that was enough of a seed to trigger the formation of a galaxy in that neighbourhood." The second point about the discovery was that it gave a conformation to the inflation model of Guth, that I you introduced to. If you recall, the Guth model enabled one to understand how uniformity and fluctuations, though minute, coexisted. Guth said that when it was born, the Baby Universe was in fact quite non-uniform; however, one enormous burst of expansion, inflation as Guth called it, made most of the Universe almost uniform, leaving a bit of very tiny ups and downs here and there, and that was enough to drive the formation of galaxies. There were of course other fringe benefits from the discoveries of the COBE and WAMP satellites, that enabled a very fine and detailed study of the CMB; but we shall not go into that.

Just to remind you, inflation is something really mind-boggling. In about  $10^{-30}$  seconds [which means 0.000 {30 zeros}1], the Universe doubled its size 100,000 times. It means the size increased 2x2x.... 100, 000 times! It is hard to imagine what such an expansion means. Imagine two dots that are just one ten-billionth of a metre apart. That is an incredibly small distance. After 33 doublings, the separation becomes about one meter. One metre might not appear very impressive, but hold on. After 75 doublings, the separation is greater than the size of the solar system. After 110 doublings, the separation is about the size of the Milky Way. And so on it goes; an unbelievable magnification!

OK, so where does all that leave us right now? What are the questions we have to consider next? Before I get on to that, I must also take stock of what we have learnt about the microscopic world; remember, we are trying to connect the macro and the micro, and get some idea of how the seed and the offspring are connected. So, a quick revision now about the micro-world. We saw that as we go deeper and deeper, we find that the building blocks of every level are made up of the building blocks of the next lower level. For example, molecules are made up of atoms, which are smaller than molecules. The important point is with 92 different types of atoms, one can build up billions and billions of different types of molecules. Atoms in turn are made up of the atomic nucleus and electrons. Atomic nuclei in turn are made up of neutrons and protons; protons and neutrons are in turn made up of quarks. Proceeding in this manner we came up to the point where we now believe that basic building blocks of all matter are quarks and leptons, making up two families so to speak [see SFI - 06].

Well, there are these particles, and the question now becomes how do they interact with each other? What are the forces that dictate this interaction? I identified four basic forces: They are: 1) gravity, 2) the strong force, 3) the electromagnetic force, and 4) the weak force. I also told you something about “mediator particles” that makes these forces work, and the relative strengths of these four forces as we know today.

Right now, gravity is a very weak force. Later we shall see that when the Universe was tiny, the four forces competed strongly and gravity was as dominant as the other three. I also pointed out that according to our present understanding, these four forces all come into existence from one primordial force that prevailed at the time of the Big Bang.

At the beginning of the Universe [read at the beginning of Time], there was only one force, which very quickly became four. Since then, we have been having just these four, and they have influenced the way the Universe expanded and enriched itself, including with the appearance of living matter.

Naturally, the evolution of the Universe, went hand in hand with this one force becoming many. Thus, one could think of several eras. Whenever one thinks of long periods of time, one always talks of eras. While history and geology have their own eras, where the Universe as a whole is concerned, the important eras/epochs are the ones shown above.

We are now all set to raise the questions that I referred to earlier. There are obviously many questions that could be raised, and here are a few of them:

**Question 1: What exactly happened whenever a new force was born?  
What drove the splitting?**

The short answer to this question is: '**Symmetry breaking**'. This is a very important concept and indeed a corner stone of modern physics. The idea may be understood by considering the solidification of a liquid. As we are all aware, when water is cooled from a high temperature to below 0 degrees Centigrade, it freezes; what we get is ice, which is crystalline. Whereas the liquid is absolutely uniform and homogenous, crystalline ice though very geometric, is actually "grainy" compared to water. We say that this "graininess" is due to "loss of symmetry" and that solidification occurs because of "symmetry breaking". I know I have greatly slurred over a beautiful [but technical] point but that is enough for the present. With this background, we may rephrase the question posed above: "Can one understand the change from one state to another in terms of symmetry breaking?" Yes we can, and that is what I shall now consider.

In discussing the point we are now considering, we must first note that physical systems always like to be in the lowest possible energy state. Sometimes, they may be prevented from doing so by some constraint [constraint is a check; in real life for example, the parents of a girl might not like their daughter getting married to a certain chap!]; but given a chance, a system would seek that state which has the lowest energy. Keep this important guiding principle in mind.

Figure 7's curves show how the energy of the system varies with the "state" of the system. Nature is such that systems always choose that state which has the lowest energy. Curve (a) is typical of water [above the freezing point], while curve (b) applies to ice [produced when water is cooled below the freezing point]. Note that in (b), the minimum energy state [i.e., the state with zero energy] is different from that in (a); it is this difference that drives freezing. Later, we shall use the word *order parameter*, which is more precise while charactering different "states".

**Question 2: How does a curve of type (a) switch over to a curve of type (b) when temperature is lowered below the freezing point? That is left as a puzzle!**

We have two curves here. Let us start with curve (a). It represents the energy curve for the liquid. The x-axis specifies the "state" of the system. The point  $x = 0$  corresponds to the ideal liquid state; and this also happens to be the state of lowest energy. Hence, if the temperature is right [and for water, any temperature above 0 degrees Celsius is favourable for existence as a liquid], the state of minimum energy is clearly the liquid state. When we consider a

temperature *below* the freezing point [equal to 0 degrees Celsius in the case of water], the curve changes to the shape indicated in (b).

Notice that the energy is zero not corresponding to the state that applied above 0 °C but at a different point [representing a different state]. Till zero degrees Celsius is reached, the preferred state is liquid, but when the temperature is lowered **below** zero Celsius, something happens. That is because the system always seeks the state of lowest energy. Below 0 °C, that state of minimum energy is not a liquid but something else [that of ice]. That is how freezing occurs.

Physicists do not use vague words like 'state' and so forth. They instead use the word *order parameter*. In the example considered here, for the liquid state, the order parameter has a value equal to zero while for the crystalline state, the order parameter is non-zero. The connection between symmetry, symmetry breaking and order parameter is very important and maybe I should digress a bit to explain what it is all about. This is best done by considering a magnetic substance like iron.

Iron is made up of iron atoms and the interesting point is that every atom is like a tiny magnet. Imagine the magnetic atom to be like an arrow, pointing in a certain direction. If you take a lump of iron, the question now is in which direction will the different arrows point? That depends on the temperature of the lump. If it is above 770 °C, then the arrows would all point randomly; if, however, the temperature is below 770 °C, then the arrows all point in the same direction.

Figure 8 illustrates the concept of order-disorder in magnetic solids. In both (a) and (b), we have a schematic depiction of [crystalline] iron via an array of arrows arranged on a [2D] lattice. The arrows here are symbolic of the fact that every iron atom is a tiny magnet. The way the arrow points is representative of the way the elementary magnets point [see inset in (a)]. The difference between the two figures is in the way the arrows point on the whole. In (a), the arrows point randomly, representing magnetic disorder, the state that prevails above 770 °C. In (b), the arrows all point in one common direction, indicative of magnetic order [the state that prevails below 777 °C. The critical temperature, namely 770 °C, marks the order-disorder transition temperature for iron.

The change from a state when the atomic magnetic point randomly to the state when they all point in the same direction is called a *phase transition*. When the tiny magnets point randomly, obviously there is no magnetic order but when they all point in the same direction, there is magnetic order. In the state when there is no magnetic order, the order parameter has a value equal to zero, while when magnetic order is established, the order parameter assumes a non-zero value. So we have this rule: High temperature state, no order, and order parameter equals zero; low temperature state, there is order, and order parameter has a value that is non-zero.

OK, all this is fine but where do symmetry and symmetry-breaking come into all this? That is what I shall now briefly describe.

Figure 9 illustrates the important idea of symmetry-breaking. Case (a) deals with the disordered state of iron while case (b) deals with the ordered state. Consider first (a). Imagine that the arrow in every lattice site is rotated by the same angle. We describe this by saying that a rotation is performed on the magnetic system. The illustration in (a-i) represents the situation before rotation and that in (a-ii) represents the situation after rotation. When the number of arrows is small, we could of course distinguish the two patterns, but when the number of arrows is large, it is difficult to distinguish the two. Even in a small lump of iron, we would have about  $10^{23}$  atoms of iron, and in such a case, it is difficult to say by looking at a pattern like (a-ii) whether a rotation has been performed or not, and if so, by what angle. In such a situation, we say there is perfect rotational symmetry, that is the *before* and *after* situations are indistinguishable. This is the concept of symmetry – invariance to a physical operation performed on the system. Turn now the pair in (b). Here, the *before* and *after* situations, illustrated in (b-i) and (b-ii) respectively are clearly distinguishable; we describe this by saying that in this case, magnetic rotational symmetry is broken.

Notice that when there is symmetry, there is no order and vice versa. The message we get is: *When there is symmetry there is no order; therefore, order parameter is zero. When symmetry is broken, there is order and consequently, order parameter has a value different from zero.* Symmetry-breaking is a powerful concept in physics, particularly elementary particle physics.

Suppose you take a good look at (a-i). I now ask you to close your eyes, and when your eyes are closed, I rotate the pattern so that it becomes as in (a-ii). Now if we are dealing with trillions of arrows, then it is really not possible to distinguish between (a-i) and (a-ii). One can rotate the first figure by 1 degree, by 42 degrees, 88.4 degrees, or whatever. It makes no difference; one cannot distinguish the unrotated pattern from the rotated one. In such a case, one says there is symmetry, in this case, rotational symmetry. Now look at (b-i) and (b-ii); in this case, it is quite easy to say that the second pattern is definitely rotated compared to the first one. We are able make this distinction because the arrows are all pointing in one direction. So we get a basic rule [simplified of course]. When there is no order, there is greater symmetry, but when symmetry is lost or broken as physicists say, then there is order. Thus, the symmetry-breaking and the appearance of order go hand in hand. This happens all the time in many physical systems, and thus the study of phase transitions is actively pursued by many. The idea of symmetry breaking [originally applied heavily in the study of solids and liquids] was borrowed by particle physicists to explain some fundamental aspects of microscopic physics. And that part is important for us. How? That is what I shall consider now. Remember the question posed earlier? Let us go back to that.

As a prelude, let us revisit the time line for the splitting of the original Cosmic force into four distinct forces, along side the energy diagrams associated with symmetry breaking. What this illustrates is how the splitting of the forces is related to symmetry-breaking.

We see that first there was only one force, and then at some time, one force became two. We say one became two as a result of symmetry breaking. The symmetry involved is very subtle, but the basic concept is the same as earlier. In the examples discussed earlier, water to ice and non-magnetic iron to magnetic form of iron, order appeared and symmetry got broken when temperature was lowered. Anything like that operating in this case? Sure. Remember, the temperature of the Baby Universe at birth was astronomically high. As time passes, the temperature falls, symmetry gets broken not just once but many times: thus it is that first one force becomes two, then two becomes three, and finally three becomes four. By the way, many solids show similarly a multiplicity of ordered states, as temperature is varied.

So the important lesson we learn is that the appearance of the four basic forces in a particular sequence has a lot of implications for basic physics, and also of course for the history of the Baby Universe. It is because of this that I have spent a lot of time explaining the basics. By the way, all this is needed to understand some crucial aspects related to inflation; that was also part of the motivation for going into these details. I hope you have not failed to notice in passing how beautifully the Lord has “constructed” the Universe! And you have not heard everything yet!!

On now to the third question:

***Question 3: Were the relative strengths of these four forces the same in the Baby Universe also? One can rephrase this question differently; do these four forces maintain their relative strengths, at small distances also, or in other words, do we have to consider different values for the strength of these four forces, when we consider physics at very small distances?***

The short answer to the above question is no; in fact, the relative strengths change. Figure 11 shows how the effect of the four forces varies with distance in today's Universe. Let us say there is a number  $S$  that proclaims the “strength” of a particular force. We know what the value of  $S$  is today, for each of the four forces. Have these values of  $S$  remained the same through the history of the Universe? This question when carried over to elementary particle physics becomes: Do the values of  $S$  remain the same at very small distances, as they are at larger distances? That is the question answered above. Particle physicists have strong reasons to believe that they do not. There is thus much incentive for physicists to get some idea of the values for  $S$  at very small distances. However, the experiments are difficult. Theoretical speculation is, however, possible, and sure enough there is a lot of it. Cosmologists latch on to these numbers churned out by particle physicists,



and then try to figure out what might have happened in the early Universe. That is how the two groups work together.

What is particularly striking is not merely that all three of the four forces tend to become almost equally strong but that gravity, which is usually dismissed as a rather weak fellow becomes pretty assertive at very short distances. In other words, gravity becomes a very dominant player when one is considering the Universe at its very early stage. This is a very important point to which I hope to come later. There are two other questions that I shall pose right away and consider the answers later.

***Question 4: All earlier discussions of physics treated gravity as if it was a sort of stand-alone thing; is there any way of linking gravity in a natural manner to the elementary particles or the building blocks?***

This is a very good and most important question. In recent decades, a connection has been found, and understandably, that is having an amazing and revolutionary impact on physics at small distances and cosmology as well. This is going to engage our attention soon. But meanwhile, let me quickly state the last of the present set of questions.

***Question 5: This dark energy, that featured so strongly in an earlier issue [SFI – 08]; how is connected to all this, if at all?***

In this issue, I think I can at best barely deal with question 4; the last question I may have to leave for the next time. The link between gravity and particle physics comes via what are referred to as strings.

Time now to talk about strings. Let us go back to Figure 3, which shows the basics as we understand them today. For decades, it has been implicitly assumed that these particles are really particles in the traditional sense. But now there is a strong school of thought that the basic building blocks are strings and not particles, and as a result we now have a vigorous theory called String Theory. That is what I wish to discuss next because String Theory is poised to make a very strong impact and contribution.

The String Theory came into existence almost unnoticed, when a physicist named Veneziano guessed a formula that explained many experimentally observed features related to elementary particles. Shortly thereafter, physicist Nambu in Chicago showed that using Veneziano's formula is equivalent to treating particles like neutrons and protons to be different modes of vibration of a string. Now I suppose you are aware that a string clamped at two ends as in the figure below, can vibrate in many modes.

Figure 12 shows a vibrating string clamped at both ends. Left to itself, the string would be stationary as at the bottom. When plucked and let go, it can vibrate in many ways; in general, these are combinations of the basic modes

of vibration, some of which are illustrated here. In String Theory, the basic idea is that there exist elementary strings and that the so-called fundamental building blocks are just different “modes of excitation” of the string. So, with just one string, one can get different particles! That is just one of the interesting points about String Theory. There are, however, many other compelling features, that have made people take String Theory far more seriously in recent years than they did when it first appeared on the scene.

Developing his speculations further, Nambu argued that if Veneziano's idea is taken seriously it simply means that many particles known in physics could be simply regarded as one basic string vibrating in different modes. Since that modest beginning, the idea of strings grew slowly at first and then more rapidly, to assume a very strong and respectable position in fundamental physics. How come this has happened? What is it that is going for String Theory? Has it made any sensational predictions that have been verified by experiments? If not, what is so great about String Theory?

Well, basically there are three attractive features about String Theory that cannot be dismissed easily. Firstly, it is less plagued than conventional particle physics is, by a terrible disease called infinities [nothing to do with what we are after!]. That certainly is a blessing that cannot be dismissed. Next, it makes a natural place for a feature called SUSY, which is short for Super Symmetry; I can't go into that technicality here but SUSY brings quarks and leptons [see Fig. 3] together. SUSY had to be invented and incorporated [by hand, as they say] into traditional particle physics. In String Theory, SUSY does not have to be put in by hand which certainly is a plus. Thirdly, and this is very important, in String Theory, gravity comes in quite naturally. What I mean is this. In conventional particle physics, one has to say, “Well, we have these particles which interact via many forces, which form a natural part of the theory of particles. However, these particles also interact via gravitational force, but that is not a part of our theory.” In String Theory, gravity does NOT have to be put in by hand, and that is a huge plus.

I must say a few words about the significance of what I have just mentioned. In 1915, Einstein made the spectacular breakthrough that related gravity to space-time and gave it meaning as well as substance. Thereafter, cosmology had a framework for development. And then, in the twenties and early thirties, quantum mechanics came into existence with spectacular success and plenty of mystery. For decades, gravity and quantum mechanics ruled supreme in their own domains – the two did not have to meet, and for a good reason; quantum mechanics was for the microscopic world while gravity became a serious tool when one considered the Cosmos. However, when one began to seriously contemplate on the early Universe, it was necessary for quantum mechanics and gravity to confront each other. One was a classical theory while the other mechanics was the framework that had edged classical physics out of the world of the small. Now they were confronting each other eye-ball to eye-ball, like in a great Western! Was it going to be a great

shootout, or was it going to be a mutual compromise with each giving away something? Did it have to be a shotgun marriage? So many questions!

Suddenly, from almost nowhere, String Theory appeared, as a theory based on quantum mechanics, focussed on elementary particles and not on gravity. But unknown to itself, it had left the back door open for gravity to get in and settle into a comfortable relationship with the quantum framework! That is what makes many sit up and take serious notice of String Theory, even though it has still to make spectacular predictions verifiable by experiments. The believers all say, "Making verifiable predictions is just a matter of time. A baby can't run 100 metres in less than ten seconds. But looking at this baby, we can say that one day this kid is going to do it in 9 seconds!" Will it? No one knows at present.

String Theory is not yet everyone's favourite, but its tight mathematics is constantly attracting brilliant minds. Its mathematical beauty has led many to speculate that since it is beautiful, there is a good chance it is true! Sometimes that recipe [mathematical beauty is truth] has worked but other times, Nature has fooled us! Time alone can give us the answer. All this is just the beginning of a very fascinating story.

What more is there? For that you have to wait for the next instalment! Meanwhile, I would like to make only one comment:

The more I see of the amazing manner in which the Universe was brought into existence and allowed to grow, the more does Chapter 10 of the Gita appeal to me. It is all just mind-boggling. In this context, the following quote from one of the poems of William Blake is pertinent. He says:

To see the world in a grain of sand,  
And to see heaven in a wild flower,  
Hold infinity in the palm of your hands,  
And eternity in an hour.

In the Universe, we have the unbelievable situation of Infinity hiding itself in the smallest conceivable particle [or is it string?]. More about all this next time. Meanwhile, have fun reflecting on all this and the wondrous way in which the Lord works.

Often I recall what Swami once said: "Man knows nothing but pretends he knows everything; God knows everything but acts as if He does not know anything!" If only we spend some time thinking about that! But then we are so frightfully busy, which makes me thank you specially for taking some time off

to read this issue. See you again next month. Meanwhile, may God be with you. Good luck.

Jai Sai Ram.

### Rock and the World of Science

In the September issue of QFI, Prof. Venkataraman posed an interesting question which connected the world of science with the rock and roll scene. It was:

“Name a well known rock star who recently completed his Ph. D thesis in astrophysics and submitted it for examination after more than three decades of absence, working in the music world!”

The answer is: '**Brian May**', the lead guitarist from the very successful group Queen. And here are all the people who sent in the correct replies:

Trish Sneddon, USA; Herta Pfeifer, Chile; Soledad Vega, Chile; Chitra Kurup, St.Maarten; Ron Nandha; R Prusty, India; Anuradha Venkateswaran; Sabrina Vharunee, Australia.

Well done!

## HOW TO BUILD CHARACTER THAT LASTS

By Mrs. Mallika Srinivasan

**Mrs. Mallika Srinivasan is the CEO of TAFE [Tractors and Farm Equipment] and is one of the most successful women CEOs in India having transformed TAFE from a 80-crore company to a 2500-crore market leader. She was awarded the Business Woman of the Year Award by the BBC, UK in 1999 and the Economic Times Business Woman of the Year in 2006. Engaged in many social service activities, she is also an active participant in the Mother and Child Care programme undertaken by the Easwaramma Women's Welfare Trust. This is the transcript of the talk she delivered to the delegates of the Sri Sathya Sai World Youth Conference during a workshop session in Prasanthi Nilayam on July 26, 2007.**

I offer my most loving and humble pranams at the lotus feet of our Beloved Bhagavan. Respected elders, Sai youth, brothers and sisters, Sairam to all of you.

### **“Watch, observe, obey, learn and apply”**

Each one of us gathered here today is truly blessed, enjoying and basking as we do in Bhagavan's Protection, Grace and Love. To my family, as to all of you, Swami has been the very centre of existence - mother, father, guru and God. All of you as Sai Youth are exceptionally privileged. For unlike people like myself, who went through a process that began with magnetic attraction, led to intellectual curiosity, and perhaps a degree of scepticism before the spark of devotion could be lit, leading to faith and finally to total surrender, you have been brought into Swami's fold at a time when your heart is open to receive His love instantly. Youth take to Swami like fish to water.

It is the determination of Swami to sow in the minds of young people which are like rays of the rising sun, the seeds of desire for acquiring spiritual knowledge. These seeds have already been sown in the Sai Youth gathered here today. The distinguishing feature of Sai Youth is that material gains are not the sole goal of your lives. You seek to lead holistic lives, yearn to achieve a larger purpose and strive to be better human beings. Living in the presence of Bhagavan offers us the very best opportunity to achieve this. Swami teaches us in a variety of ways through His compassion, through disciplining, through His interactions, through the formal teaching like we had this morning, and at times through direct advice: “Watch, observe, learn, obey and apply.” Then, we will begin to comprehend the essence of what is required for a successful life, i.e., the building of character. Devotion, Duty, Discipline, Determination and Discrimination are the pillars on which the robust house of character is built. These are the few things I would like to touch upon today.

## **The Charismatic Charioteer**

Devotion to God is fundamental to leading a virtuous life. Swami, through His Divine Love and in His own inimitable way, evokes in each of our hearts, this devotion and builds our faith. I would like to share with you, one such instance, when Swami through a simple and appealing example captured the heart of a young boy in an instant, making him a devotee for life!

During an interview, Swami asked our young son to ask Him a question.

The boy said, "Swami, which is your favourite car?"

My heart sank and I thought to myself, "Is this the question to ask Swami? Time with Swami is so precious!"

Swami gave a lovely smile and answered, "Morris Minor" and went on to tell stories of how He used to drive to Madras and how He obtained a license.

"You used to drive it yourself Swami?" Exclaimed the boy, stars in His eyes!

Swami had woven a bit of magic and our son looked at Swami transfixed.

Swami went on to say, "I will give you a big car. Will you take it? You mustn't say no!"

And the boy, a bit overawed by now, said, "OK!"

Swami then asked, "Will you give me your car?"

Prompt came the answer, "Sure Swami!"

"Shall I drive it?"

And the boy again said, "Sure, Swami."

Swami then smilingly placed His hand on our son's heart and said, "Your heart is the car and I am the driver."

One of the most profound lessons in devotion had been taught by Swami in the simplest possible manner! Swami says, "Have faith in Him" and "Be free from fear, anxiety and agitation. Surrender to God; His Grace can save you. His wisdom can enlighten you. His power can overcome all obstacles. Faith and surrender are the manifestations of devotion."

## **The Right Attitude**

Duty without expectation of reward is the essence of the Bhagavad Gita. Let us cast a glimpse of what is actually happening around us in the world today, especially in the lives of younger people. There is, if you permit me to say, an obsession with being remunerated; with obtaining greater and greater power

and authority. There is a constant measurement of work versus reward and a continuous comparison with other family members, friends, colleagues and peers. Opportunities and temptations abound in a growing economy and this is fuelling these trends.

Frequency of job change has reached new heights and as the search continues for something elusive, our inner peace is destroyed. If, on the other hand, we enjoy doing what we are doing, do our very best, excel at it, going beyond what is commonly termed “the call of duty,” do our tasks with devotion and love, without fear of failure, leaving the rewards to Swami, not only will we achieve inner peace, but we will exceed our own expectations of performance.

### **Surrender, the Best Strategy!**

In our professional lives, we may have the illusion that we control outcomes. That it is only an illusion becomes quite clear, when we are faced with a personal crisis.

For example, let us take the illness of a loved one. My mother, a very healthy person, was recently diagnosed with having an ailment, for which the prognosis was indeed poor. Only God could save her. It is in situations like this, that faith and surrender make us witness Swami’s magic. His Grace fills us with a sense of calm. He directs and guides us to do our duty taking appropriate decisions and leaving the rest to Him. It was raining heavily and the hospital room began to leak. And a fungus infection would be disastrous for my mother. The Hospital administration and doctors out of concern were urging me to move her immediately to another Hospital where the care would not be of the same order, but the room would not leak. We seemed to be moving her for all the wrong reasons. Couldn’t we move her to the smaller room or to the intensive care? A quiet prayer to Swami seeking His guidance and the answer was clear. “Do not move her.”

It is Bhagavan’s infinite grace that she is today completely well, truly Swami’s walking miracle. Faith enables us to carry out our duties calmly, even under extraordinarily extenuating circumstances, surrendering the problem at His feet. Our duty, however, extends beyond our jobs and serving our families to serving humanity at large.

### **Inspiring Examples**

Speaking at the Harvard Commencement in June 2007, Bill Gates said, “When you consider what those of us here have been given in talent, privilege and opportunity, there is almost no limit to what the world has a right to expect from us.” We gathered here today, are even more privileged than those in Harvard. For, we have in our midst, Bhagavan, to teach and guide us as we strive to give back to society, what society has given to us! “We make a living by what we get, we make a life by what we give,” said Winston Churchill.

While our ancient texts have laid down the way wealth should be distributed, 1/4<sup>th</sup> for personal use, 1/4<sup>th</sup> for charitable purposes, 1/4<sup>th</sup> on other living beings, 1/4<sup>th</sup> in support of state, even in this materialistic world, there are a handful of the richest of men, who have set outstanding examples of giving back to serve the larger cause of humanity. Many of you would probably have read Warren Buffet's recent announcement that he would donate 85% of his 44 billion dollar empire to charity to serve communities across the world and most importantly, without heed to religion, caste or community. Inspired by such examples, Sai Youth, having imbibed Swami's teachings of

"Service to man is service to God" can play a prominent role in the establishment of a new world order. Participating actively in Swami's Seva Organization and programs, be they providing water, food or medical care, gives Sai Youth a unique opportunity to serve with love under Divine Guidance.

### **How Can 'I' Start Service?**

Opportunities to serve are everywhere; one does not have to search for them. They are in your neighbourhood and in your work place. As Swami says, you may not get a chance to participate in some gigantic scheme of service through which millions may be benefited, but you can lift a lame lamb over the side, or lead a blind child across a busy road. That too is an act of worship. If you look around you with love, service to others will come spontaneously and become an intrinsic part of our daily lives.

In the words of Bhagavan, the real value of seva and its most visible result is that it transforms and reshapes you. Devotion must be directed along the lines of duty and tested in the crucible of discipline, says Bhagavan.

### **Discipline – Indispensable for Success**

"Why do we need discipline?" Swami's analogy comparing life to a football game, gives us the answer. If any player can do anything with the ball, and there is neither foul nor out, neither offside nor goal, neither throw nor penalty, then it be a meaningless game incapable of giving joy. It is these rules and restrictions that give charm to the game of life. It is disciplined societies that emerge victorious.

Japan was decimated during World War II and Korea sank into poverty after the Korean War. It is discipline that has enabled the resurgence of both Japan and South Korea that has enabled both these countries and propelled them into being economic power houses. Discipline pervades every aspect of life in their society. Their daily routine, their work habits, their interaction with each other, and everything is done in a particular way at a particular time and with no deviations. In Japan, even the tea ceremony is a much disciplined affair. Quality, efficiency and excellence in everything they do are the hallmarks of these societies. It is individual discipline that translates into this kind of societal discipline and ensures success.



While discipline is a prerequisite in every endeavour, be it social, economic or material, it is even more vital for Sai youth aspiring to pursue the spiritual path. Swami expects the highest levels of discipline from his students and the youth, for it is this discipline that builds credibility, the foundation stone for leadership.

When a new employee joins a firm, both his seniors and his subordinates are watching him closely. Does he come to work on time? Does he do what he says he will? Does he deliver his assigned tasks on schedule? Is there unison in what he thinks, says and does? Is he willing to shoulder additional responsibilities? No one can succeed in his or her mission alone, and success depends upon the support we are able to garner from others and this support is garnered only through credibility established by the practice of personal discipline. People may not believe what you say. But they will surely believe what they see you do. Emerson, the American author had this to say. "What you are shouts so loudly in my ears that I cannot hear what you say." It is character that communicates most eloquently.

### **Discrimination - The Most Vital Tenet**

All of you gathered here are aspiring to be leaders in your own respective spheres of life. Besides demonstration by personal example, two key differentiators between leaders and others are determination and what Swami referred to this morning in His inaugural address as "The Power of Discrimination."

Determination is widely acclaimed as the king of faculties and as the one that succeeds when everything else fails. Nothing can take the place of persistence. Talent will not. Nothing is more common than unsuccessful men with great talent. Genius will not. Nothing is more common than unrewarded genius! It is now almost like a proverb. Education will not. The world is full of educated derelicts. Persistence and determination alone are omnipotent.

A distinction however may be made, between determination and obstinacy. An obstinate man is not open to suggestions and course corrections become impossible. In sharp contrast, a determined man has a flexible approach, keeps his eye on the goal post and freely takes inputs that help to further progress towards the goal. Obstinate people are filled with ego. Determination without a trace of ego or self-interest empowers the individual with a sharper sense of discrimination.

Discrimination is the ability to distinguish between good and bad, right and wrong, and take the correct decision, given a specific set of circumstances. What is right in one situation may not be right in another and leaders are often faced with difficult choices. But in every situation, discrimination implies applying the principle of *dharma*, the righteousness that upholds the universe. A couple of examples. Each one of us has different roles that we play in life. The father at home is many times the boss at work, be it a small, medium, or large business. The factors that he takes when taking a decision vis-à-vis his

son in his role as a father will be distinctively different from those that he uses when taking decisions at the work place. At the work place, he cannot take decisions based only on his son's individual interest. For, these affect the larger good of the Organization. Therefore, necessarily, it has to be above self-interest. He needs to give up on mine and thine.

Hitler was a determined man. Why was he destroyed? His determination was filled with ego and megalomaniac tendencies. The larger good was not in sight. He lost his discrimination for his decisions were not based on the principles of *Dharma*.

While the *Dharma* for each person may be different, depending upon the role he plays, the basic principles of dharma, based on which discrimination is applied remain unchanged, namely, truth, love, fortitude and non-violence. These are the cornerstones of the practice of *Dharma* and upholding *Dharma* is the insignia of a true leader. When there is *Dharma*, there is victory. And the protector of *Dharma*, will always be protected by Bhagavan. Devotion, Duty, Discipline, Determination and Discrimination are integral parts of the whole and need to come together in perfect balance to form the character of an ideal Sai Youth.

Each of these attributes cannot be viewed in isolation and when closely intertwined, make for a successful and holistic life. All of you, young delegates are filled with idealism, dreams and aspirations. In conclusion, I would like to share with you the words of Swami, that to me have been through the years, a joyous source of inspiration. "Life is a Game, Play It! Life is a Challenge, Meet it! Life is Love, Enjoy it! Life is a Dream, Realize it!" Jai Sri Sai Ram!

## LEARNING TO LOVE...

By Mr. Viswanath Das

**Mr Viswanath Das is a current student in the Prasanthi Nilayam campus of Sri Sathya Sai University pursuing his Masters in Sciences.**

I believe in love. And I believe and worship this love in the form of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba. To Him I offer this "Love".

*If I speak in the tongue of men and angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have prophetic powers and understand all mysteries and knowledge and if I have all faith, so as remove mountains, but have not love, and if I deliver my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing.*

*Love is patient and kind; love is not jealous or boastful; it is not arrogant and rude. Love does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrong, but rejoices in the right. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, and endures all things.*

*Love never ends; as for prophecies, they will pass away; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will pass away. For our knowledge is imperfect and our prophecy is imperfect; but when the perfect comes, the imperfect will pass away. When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child; when I became a man, I gave up childish ways. Now I know in part; then I shall understand in full. So faith, hope, love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love.*

### Understanding True Love

Everywhere in the world people are in search of love, for everyone is convinced that love alone can save the world, love alone can make life meaningful and worth living. When we are in love we find ourselves looking at everyone with new eyes; we become generous, forgiving, kind hearted, where before we might have been hard and mean.

But how very few understand what love really is, and how it arises in human hearts. It is so frequently equated with good feelings towards others, with benevolence, or with non-violence, or service.

What is love? Take a look at a rose. Is it possible for the rose to say, "I shall offer my fragrance to good people and withhold it from wrong?"; or can we imagine a lamp that withholds its rays from a wicked person who seeks to walk in its light? It could only do that by ceasing to be a lamp. Love brings and enriches love. Love does not rest content with merely loving, but flows out in acts of service. Love is delightful only when it freely gives itself. Love must be revealed in service; otherwise love has no value; it is not love. Love cheerfully sacrifices. Love willingly suffers. Such a love illumines and blesses life.

*"The man who is filled with love has great peace of mind, is pure at heart and is unruffled by any adverse circumstances, failure or losses. This fortitude is derived from love of the Lord, which endows him with self-confidence. Self-confidence generates an immense internal power. Everyone has to develop this power. Everyone has to develop this self-confidence so that Atma-Ananda (bliss of the Self) may be experienced. Love should be free from feelings of expectation of any return or reward, love which arises out of desire for something in return is not true love. Utterly selfless and motiveless love should be developed", Swami says.*

*"He who loves not, knows not God", said Saint John. "For, God is Love". Swami, the very personification of this True Love Himself, says, "God is Love. Love is God. Live in Love."*

### **Practicing Love**

Learning to love is the most difficult, the most demanding, the most delightful, and the most daring of disciplines. It does not mean loving two or three members of our family; that can often be a kind of ego-annex. It does not mean loving only those who share your views, or read the same newspaper, or play the same sports. Love, as God puts it, means blessing those who curse you, doing good to those whom you don't know; these are the real measures of love.

Swami says, *"Humanness blossoms in a pure heart. When we come into this world, it is only love that comes with us. From love comes truth. When love and truth come together, humanness finds its sustenance. The mansion of human life can be built with self-confidence as the foundation, self-satisfaction as pillars and self-sacrifice as the roof. Only then can you have self-realization in life. For self-satisfaction this self-realization is needed. Without self-satisfaction there can be no happiness in life. And the happiness comes from love within. One who does not have inner love does not see the happiness outside.*

*"Love is experienced in three ways, rather love is of three types - svaartha prema (self-oriented love), paraartha prema (love towards all fellow beings), and anyonya prema (mutual give and take type of love). Svaartha love is comparable to the bulb that illuminates just one single room. Anyonya love is like moonlight. Though it illumines all directions, it is very dim. It does not help one to have a clear perception. Paraartha prema is like sunlight which is very bright and will not give room for any doubt."*

### **Nourishing Love**

*"There is hunger for ordinary bread and there is hunger for love, for kindness, for thoughtfulness; and this is the great poverty that makes people suffer so much" - Mother Teresa.*

Our modern civilization is so physically oriented that when we hear the word hunger, we immediately think in terms of vitamins and minerals and amino acids. It seldom occurs to us that just as the body develops problems when it does not get adequate food, the person who is deprived of love - or worse who finds it impossible to love - becomes subject to problems every bit as serious. Absence of love takes away our humanity and makes us blind to others around us.

More and more evidence indicates that lack of love not only leads to loneliness, despair and resentment but eventually may even lead to deterioration of the vital organs. In the book entitled 'The Broken Heart: the Medical Consequences of Loneliness', James J Lynch of the University of Maryland Medical School, makes a good case connecting cardiovascular accidents with selfishness, isolation, alienation, and bereavement, all of which can be traced to lack of love. It is said that a man is not born a terrorist from the womb of his mother. It is a lack of love that destroys his humanity.

More than intelligence, love quickens talent and genius. Without love, intelligence can do much harm. Such a person then hardly thinks of the aftermath of a bombing. The ears cease to hear the cry of pain, agony of a mother mourning over the body of her young daughter. The mind ceases to see that no purpose can be achieved by killing innocent lives.

More than logic, love recognises the dignity of an unerring thought. Without love, logic can be dangerous.

When Bhagavan talks about our need to love and be loved, the need is not metaphorical. Bhagavan is not talking about spirituality alone; He is talking about a nutritional need too. Resentment, hostility, alienation and selfishness are the deficiency diseases of society. You can have nourishing food and all the essential supplements, but if we cannot love, we are not likely to remain in good health. This bad health would be like any other epidemic disorder, spreading in the community, crippling society's very foundation stones of Sathya, Dharma, Shanti, Prema and Ahimsa.

Usually a good physician will not write a prescription without some accompanying instructions like plenty of rest, lots of fluids, and so on. **Similarly if love is prescribed as the remedy for our condition, to perfect pure love we need to follow five principles –**

- **Quality Time**
- **Control over our Attention**
- **Nourishing our Life Energy**
- **Discrimination**
- **Awareness of the Unity of Life.**

### **Nurturing Love – Five Principal Ways**

An obsession with time has so worked into our social system that we scarcely notice we have left no time to love. Everywhere the slogan is 'Hurry, Hurry, and Hurry'. **To be aware of the need of the other, to spend time with**

**others, to speak and act with patience and consideration, we must make time.**

Mother Teresa drew a beautiful unexpected connection between time and love. *"Everybody today seems to be in such a terrible rush,"* she observed, *"anxious for greater developments and greater riches and so on, so that children have very little time for their parents. Parents have little time for each other, and in the home begins the disruption of the peace of the world."*

Slowing ourselves down is closely connected with increasing our one-pointed attention. When we are in a hurry, the problem is not only one of speed. Our attention is riveted on ourselves - our needs and desires - so there is no attention to give to those around us, who probably have needs and desires very much like our own.

People are not boring; we get bored because our attention wanders. Giving someone our full attention says clearly: "You matter to me. You have my respect." **Almost every disruption in human relationship - between parents and child, friend and friend, worker and co-worker - can be prevented by learning control over attention, for, with mutual attention between people comes loyalty, interest and trust.**

To love we have to be able to do things for others, even if it is inconvenient, or when we have no energy. For example, when we know we should help one of our classmates with his homework but have only enough energy to drop into a beanbag chair with a soft drink in hand, how can we be of service. Our minds are great repositories of energy – when healthily used - but we go through life trying to punch as many as holes in it as possible, multiplying our desires, our possessions, our anxieties, our frustrations, until by the end of the day we have scarcely any energy left at all. **The biggest of these holes is selfish desire. The more we want for ourselves, the less energy we shall have, and therefore the less capacity to love. Swami says, "God's love fills you with energy. It is God only who gives us this energy. Therefore, love God and love all people who are verily the children of God."**

The capacity to discriminate between right and wrong desires is the fourth essential safeguard of love. Right desires benefit everyone - including of course, ourselves. Wrong desires may be pleasing, but they benefit no one - again, not even us. The problem that arises is that wrong desires can be very skillful impersonators. They put on a three piece suit and a false mustache and present themselves as suavely as Mr. Right. To love we need to be able to recognize right desires and yield to them, which creates a healthy and happy life - a somewhat rare condition in today's world. But much more importantly, we need to be able to recognize wrong desires and resist them, which is very difficult. **Whenever we defy a powerful, selfish desire, immense power is released into our hands and this is the secret of all spiritual work and transformations.**

Our desires are not our business alone; they are everybody's business. Whenever we resist a selfish desire, even if we do so for no one in particular, that is an act of love. **The reason is simple: everything we do affects**

others, whether directly, through the environment, or by our own example. To love is to be responsible in everything: the work we do, the things we buy, the people we look up to, the words we use, every choice we make from morning till night. That is the real measure of love: it is a wonderful demanding responsibility.

Discrimination then leads us to the last quality of love - the awareness that life is one individual whole. This is the very basis of love. **Any violation of the unity of life, whether it is between individuals, between nations, between us and the environment, is a failure of love. Everything that separates diminishes love; everything that unifies increases it. Lack of love divides; wealth of love heals.**

Beneath the thinnest shell of differences, every one of us is very much the same, whether we live in Asia, Africa, or Antarctica. In times of nationalism and international tensions we forget this; had we remembered, no nation would have ever gone to war. "Vasudaiva Kutumbhakam" (the world is one family) is the fruit of pure love. Once we realize the unity of life, we see the whole world as a single family, whose welfare is indivisible. Most of us would not dream of tearing up our front yard, filling the garage with garbage, spraying noxious chemicals around the house and then telling our siblings, "We are moving out. You can have whatever is left." That is exactly how we are behaving towards the Earth. **When we love all life as our family, it will be impossible for us to waste anything, be it money, food, water, energy, resources, and time. We will want to share everything which we have. Bhagavan says, "Mamai Vamso Jiva Loka Jiva Bhuta Sanathana" (I am the One who became many) - when He is present in bit of every atom, why would we then want to waste anything.**

God is love, and therefore, religion ceases to be religion if it is not a religion of love. Love understands, knows, illuminates, conquers and makes life eternal. Love purifies and liberates. Love is to be known and experienced by love. Love of God is the soul of religion. It annihilates all limitation and differentiations. It frees human perception from errors, the human heart from its mistakes, and human life from its imperfections. Pure love is an irresistible force.

### **Becoming Embodiments of Love...**

To him whose heart is filled with pure love, the voice of his own conscience is the voice of God. He engages himself in alleviating the suffering of others. He is an ideal of selfless service. God's Will works through him. God's Light shines through him. God's Life expresses through him. Ever joyful and fearless, he brings into the life of anyone he comes across peace, harmony, strength and happiness. From the lover of God, love streams equally to all beings, even as the warmth streams forth from the sun equally to all. It is the most potent remedy for curing the diseases of fear, hatred, discord and unhappiness. The religion of pure love is the only real foundation of lasting unity for all

**humanity. With such a religion alone life becomes a song of peace, progress, perfection, and the world a heaven.**

Learning to love is not a luxury. It is a vital necessity - especially when the whole world today is threatened with violence on every side, and is striving for love and unity. "In the home", Mother Teresa said, "begins the disruption of peace of the world." Similarly, it is in the home that the peace of the world is preserved. In nourishing our family, our community and finally our world with love, in bending over backwards when necessary, to give what the world so desperately needs, we become in the words of Bhagavan, instruments of peace, embodiments of love and 'Ideal Sai Youth: The Messengers of Sai Love.'



## **SERIAL ARTICLES**

### **THE DIVINE STORY OF SHIRDI SAI PARTHI SAI**

Part - 34

*(Continued from the previous issue)*

#### **ACT X - SCENE 1**

*At the time Sathya went to the Pushpagiri Carnival, He had not yet declared to the world that He was an Incarnation of God, that He was a Poorna Avatar. That would come later, in October, 1940. But already, He was proclaiming His Message – Love, Compassion, Sacrifice and Selfless Service. He had no money, yet He went. In the process, He faced many difficulties. He showed by His own personal example, even at an early age, that if one wants to serve, then one must be prepared to face any number of difficulties. For example, with twelve annas, He had to sustain Himself for ten days. Food was no doubt inexpensive those days; still twelve annas was too small an amount for ten days. He ate only once a day, quietly, without letting anyone know when He ate and what He ate. When friends asked Sathya to join them for food, He would say, “I have already eaten.” If they refused to believe, He would hold out His hand, and they would get the smell of food! He would have just drunk water but yet, the hand would carry the smell of food! That was His miracle, performed out of love for the boys; Sathya did not want them to feel pain on His account.*

*The scene is the Carnival. Sathya is talking to one of His friends.*

BOY: Raju, are You eating every day?

SATHYA: Am I not buying and eating dosas everyday?

ANOTHER BOY: Raju, why don't You eat with all of us?

SATHYA: Today, I have finished My meal.

THIRD BOY: Raju, You are not making it up, are You? Did You really have food today?

SATHYA: I really have eaten. If you want, you can smell My hand.

BOY: Yes, there is the smell of food.

ANOTHER BOY: Yes, it's true.

THIRD BOY: Yes, there is a smell.

FOURTH BOY: It is true, there is the aroma of food.

*Carnival scenes. There is a small girl who is lost, and is crying. The scouts go to her to help.*

SCOUT: Don't cry, dear! .....What's your name?

SECOND SCOUT: With whom did you come?

ANOTHER SCOUT: Tell me, dear.

FIRST SCOUT: Did your mother come with you?

SCOUT: Who came with you? Tell us, won't you? ..... Don't cry!

Meanwhile, a boy picks the pocket of a man, and the scouts nab the thief.

SCOUT: Hey, a pickpocket! Catch him! .... Come to the Police Station!

In between, the mother of the lost girl is located and the girl is restored to the lady.

SCOUT: [to lady] Please take proper care of your child, and don't lose her like this again!

LADY: Thank you, my son; I will not lose her again!

*Days pass and the Scouts continue to do a good job. They render a variety of services. Slowly, the time to leave draws closer. At that time, the Scout Master calls the boys and talks to them.*

MASTER: Students, you have all done hard work and good service during the past ten days. Good. You have earned a very good name for our School. Very good! Now, we shall return to Kamalapuram. I am giving all of you one hour in case you want to buy anything. At the end of that period, we shall all meet here again at this tent. Understand?

CHORUS: Yes sir!

*Sathya is now with His friends.*

SATHYA: Ten days have gone by like ten minutes!

RAMESH: If You had not been here, it would not have been so nice!

BOY: Raju, we must hurry! Let us go and make purchases. Come on.

*The boys now disperse to do last minute shopping. Sathya goes to a lady who is selling things that ladies normally buy. He purchases a few items from her, using the small change left over from the twelve annas He started with. He is*

*purchasing the gifts to present to His sister-in-law [Seshama Raju's wife]. Raju's friend who is with Him does not know this; he is curious and asks.*

BOY: Raju, for whom are You buying these flowers, fruits, turmeric, and vermilion?

SATHYA: For My sister-in-law, who is soon to become a mother. These are auspicious gifts.

BOY: Is that so?

SATHYA: [to lady] Mother, pack it quick please!

LADY: Will do. Here it is my boy! ..... He is so adorable!

## **SCENE 2**

*Sathya returns to His brother's house in Kamalapuram after an absence of ten days. His elders there had no idea where Sathya had gone. Seshama Raju is furious, and so is his mother-in-law. But Suseela, the sister-in-law, is more understanding.*

SESHAMA RAJU: Like a vagabond, You have been roaming for ten days without the elementary sense to take the permission of the elders, Your brother, and Your sister-in-law!

SATHYA: Brother, friends and Master compelled Me. I went because I don't like to say no and refuse those who seek Me.

SESHAMA RAJU: May be, but even then, don't You think You have to take our permission?

SATHYA: I went to the Carnival just for doing service.

SESHAMA RAJU: Oh yes! A great lot of service!! Don't You know that Your sister-in-law here is in the family way? Poor thing, all by herself, she had to struggle to fetch water. Service must first be in the home, and then only outside.

MRS. RAJU: Let go! Poor child, He has worked hard for ten days.

SATHYA: Sister-in-law, look, I have brought for you this flower, fruits and various other items.

S-I-L: Why all these things?

SATHYA: I don't know, I just felt buying these things, and that's why I bought them.

*Sathya tries to offer what He has brought, but they are snatched away by the mother-in-law.*

M-I-L: Stop acting as if you have done something great or have brought silk sarees. There's not a drop of water in the house to drink, and the throats are all dry. Here, take this and go and fetch water.

*Throws a couple of pots before Sathya, for Him to go and get water.*

SATHYA: As you say.

*Pleased with her action, the mother-in-law now takes the bananas brought by Sathya and starts eating them.*

M-I-L: My, these bananas are good!

### SCENE 3

*Drinking water was an acute problem in Kamalapuram. Everyone had to fetch water from a well that was quite some distance away. This well alone provided potable water. Everyday, Sathya had to bring water from this well. The task was hard, and He was but a small boy; yet, He had to do the job.*

*One might wonder: "Sathya was God incarnate. He performed miracles. Why does God have to undergo suffering and punishment? Even if His elders gave Sathya tough tasks, could He not have used His miraculous powers to get water?" Bhagavan Baba has answered all such questions. He says that when God comes down as man, He will undergo suffering in order to show how man ought to face difficulties. In this case, Sathya never complained. He bore all inflictions cheerfully; and He never spoke ill of those who treated Him cruelly. In later years, Swami declared that people who treated Him badly were destined to do so as a part of His Divine Drama. He wanted to show humanity the meaning of forbearance; how else could He demonstrate it?*

*This scene opens with people drawing water from the well. Sathya comes there with His two big pots. Some are surprised; some pity Sathya.*

LADY: Boy!

SATHYA: Yes mother?

LADY: Can you draw water in such a big vessel?

ANOTHER LADY: Aunty! Do you see? This small boy is drawing and carrying water for his house. If I ask my husband to do the same, he complains about shoulder pain!

FIRST LADY: If you feel so sorry for the boy, then why don't you help him?

SECOND LADY: Aunty, I wish I could but I am pregnant.

FIRST LADY: Oh I see.

THIRD LADY: There is the job of cooking waiting for me! I have to run home and do all those jobs!

FIRST LADY: That's the way it is, my dear! There is always so much work and so much rush! I still have to draw two more pots of water. You go now.

*Sathya returns home with the water. It was not just bringing water from afar; Sathya had to do a lot of household chores as well. He did all these cheerfully. At the same time, He did not allow these to affect His studies. He was demonstrating to the world that the human body is given just for service. In later years, Baba has repeatedly emphasised the importance of service.*

#### **SCENE 4**

*Sathya returns to Puttaparthi for vacation. His mother is giving Him an oil bath in the backyard near the well in the house.*

V.RAJU [to Easwaramma]: Smear oil well and massage the body; it will do a lot of good. Also, put a few drops of oil in the ear; it will clean them.

EASWARAMMA: Will do, will do!

Easwaramma sees bruises on Sathya's shoulder

EASWARAMMA: Oh my goodness! Sathyam, what's this? The shoulder is swollen and seems bruised! Don't You feel pain?

SATHYA: When one carries water in pots suspended from a bamboo pole with slings, does it not cause swelling?

EASWARAMMA: You?! You carried water in a sling? What for, my dear?

SATHYA: Mother, there is acute water shortage in Kamalapuram, and one has to fetch water this way from long distances. Brother Seshama did not have time for this, and so I used to do the job.

EASWARAMMA: Seshama saw all this?! Didn't he stop you?

SATHYA: Haven't I already told you that he didn't have time?

EASWARAMMA: Hmm. ....They made You carry water just because You were available!

SATHYA: Mother, what's wrong with that? All the five elements are forms of God, and one of these elements is water. So I went to God, received the water of the sacred Ganges, filled the pots, and brought them home.

EASWARAMMA: Sathyam, what kind of a story is this?! Didn't Your shoulder hurt while You were carrying water? I never thought that Seshama would do such a thing!

SATHYA: Mother, I fetched water not only for Seshama's house but for all the people in our street.

EASWARAMMA: Great! You and Your crazy actions!!

SATHYA: You are talking just like the others! No one can understand Me.

EASWARAMMA: Okay, my son, okay. ....[to daughter] Give me that.....[to Sathya] Next time You go to Your brother's house, don't carry water like that. I can't bear You suffering. ....[to daughter] Bring that water.....[to Sathya] Tell Your brother gently, "I am sorry, I cannot carry water anymore."

*(To be continued next issue)*

## GITA FOR CHILDREN – Part 36

(Continued from the last issue)

### CHAPTER 17

1. Arjuna says, 'Krishna, I want to ask You a question about the modalities of worship. I have seen two kinds of people, who seem to worship You in two entirely different ways. One group employs elaborate rituals and its members assert that unless these procedures are rigorously followed, God would be displeased with the worship. The other group does not seem to bother at all about procedures. Its members behave in strange ways; they talk to You, sing to You and dance for You. In many ways they appear crazy and abnormal. Yet some people say that that is the way to worship You. I am totally confused. Please can You explain how exactly are You to be worshipped?'
2. Krishna smiles and replies, 'Arjuna, based on all the things I have told you thus far, you ought to be able to figure out the answer yourself! Yet, since you have asked Me, I shall give the answer.'
3. 'There are basically two approaches to worship, the external approach and the internal approach. The external approach relies heavily on procedures while the internal approach does not bother about procedures. Both approaches are acceptable, provided Love is the basis.'
4. Arjuna says, 'Krishna, this I am unable to understand. The two approaches appear to be totally contradictory; and yet You say both are acceptable to You! How can that be?'
5. Krishna replies, 'Oh no, the two approaches are not contradictory. Let me explain with some detailed examples. Let us take one form of ritual. In this, the devotee has an idol, and offers worship to it by chanting various *Mantras*. Instead of mechanically uttering the *Mantras* without understanding the meaning, try to understand what is being said and done.'
6. 'First you welcome God to your house. You wash His feet at the entrance and respectfully conduct Him inside. After this you offer Him a seat. Next you make preparations so that He can have a bath. After the bath is over, you offer Him new clothes. Then flowers, incense etc. After this the lunch and so on. All this is done via suitable *Mantras*.'
7. 'A person who goes through this routine mechanically before the idol would not realise that He is actually having the Lord as his guest. But one who is filled with that feeling does not think he is uttering routine chants. Instead, he is swept by the feeling that he is actually playing host to the Lord. No, it is not make believe as an atheist would imagine. Since I am the Indweller, I know exactly what the devotee feels. If the devotee is merely acting as a chanting machine, then the worship remains external. But if the chants are uttered with feeling, then the very same ritual becomes internal! See?!'

8. 'Another example. You know Vedic priests perform complicated rituals called *Yajna*. These *Yajnas* are full of grand chants that proclaim the Glory of God. If the Vedic *Mantras* are uttered with feeling, if the one who chants experiences the Glory of God while chanting, then the *Yajna* is not a mere Vedic drill but a profound experience; otherwise it is a ritual that sceptics would dismiss as extremely wasteful. But if the *Mantras* are uttered with deep feeling, then even the atheist would be irresistibly moved by the majesty of the sound and the power of the words.'

9. 'In short, if Love is made the basis, then it really does not matter whether the procedure adopted is formal or informal. Have I not told you earlier that as far as I am personally concerned, I am delighted if you worship Me with just a flower, a fruit, a leaf or even just a bit of water.'

10. 'I shall go one step further. You don't have to offer Me a flower. To get that flower you have to go to a shop or a garden. Save yourself all that trouble. Just say, "God, I offer You one bad habit of mine!" God would be quite happy with that!'

11. Arjuna replies, 'Krishna, I know you mentioned this before but I still think you can't be serious.'

12. With a big laugh Krishna replies, 'No, that is not true, and as a matter of fact I am quite serious. You see Arjuna, when you offer Me a bad habit, you become purer to that extent and come a bit closer to Me. Is it any wonder that I am pleased?'

13. 'Arjuna, for Me the priority is faith plus Love. A child is not able to speak properly; it is just able to mutter a few words incoherently. Yet the mother feels deliriously happy. Why? Because the mother sees Love in the child's words, that is why. She is not bothered about grammar but Love! Got it?'

14. 'It is the same with Me, naturally! For Me, Pure Love is primary. If unadorned Love is all that you can offer, no problem! I am not bothered about the frills.'

15. 'Let us go back to the mother and child example. Let us say the child has composed a small poem expressing her love to her mother. The mother is very happy, as happy as she was when her daughter was a mere baby and was able to only prattle. What the poem and the prattle have in common is love, and that is what really matters.'

16. 'Having said that, I must clarify that I am not anti-procedure. Just that if procedure is what you want to follow, then do so with the proper feeling. It is not correct to worship the idol thinking all the time about other matters. In this case, there is a lack of harmony between thought and action. As you know I am a great stickler for harmony of feeling, thought, word and deed. That ought not to be compromised, ever!'

17. Arjuna says, 'Krishna, if ritualistic procedures can make a person slip, how come they came into existence in the first place? What role do they have to play, if at all, in the development of devotion?'

18. Krishna replies, 'Now that is an interesting question, and let Me reply to it in some detail. Thousands of years ago, the world was very different. There were many sages and *Rishis* then, and they all adored Me so much that that they spent all their time thinking of Me and doing My work in many ways.'

19. 'For example, the *Rishis* would meditate intensely for long stretches of time, and it was then that I would reveal great Spiritual Truths to them. Later, these Truths got compiled into what are called the *Vedas*.'

20. 'The *Rishis* performed a useful service to Society. They ran little schools called *Gurukulas*, where disciples absorbed Spiritual Truths. This is how the *Vedas* have been preserved through time, by being passed on from generation to generation. By the way, do you know that I Myself attended a *Gurukula*?!'

21. 'Besides preserving Spiritual Knowledge, the *Rishis* also started the custom of performing *Yajnas*. As they chanted the *Mantras*, there was a tremendous outpouring of Love for God, and so compelling was the grandeur of the chant that they drew even ordinary folk to the function. Their very presence did a lot of good to these people, even though they did not understand one single word of the *Mantras* chanted. So powerful were the vibrations of the Vedic sound that it produced beneficial effects unknown to them.'

22. 'In later years, many ordinary people took to rituals, often without understanding their full significance. However, this in itself is not bad. These people performed rituals with full faith – that is the important point. In due course, they began to understand the inner meaning, whereupon the ritual acquired new significance for them.'

23. 'You see Arjuna, children are taught multiplication tables. At that age, they do not quite know the significance of the tables. They just get it by heart, because that is what they are supposed to do. Years later, when they understand better the principle underlying arithmetic, these tables become more meaningful.'

24. 'In short, rituals are a stepping stone. They are like the floatation aids used by those learning to swim. Once they know how to swim, the floatation aids are thrown away. In the same manner, rituals are supposed to get people started on the path of worship; later, when love for God develops in full measure, rituals could be given up.'

25. 'The bottom line is faith and Love. If these are present, then any procedure or ritual, formal or otherwise, is acceptable. That is the point really. Got it?'

(To be continued)



## WINDOW TO SAI SEVA

### **SAI MEDICAL CAMPS IN FIJI - LOVE IN ACTION**

*For eight decades now, the Lord of Prashanthi Nilayam, Bhagavan Baba has been inspiring His devotees in every nook and corner of the globe to follow His example of living a life of utter selflessness and compassion, and work towards bringing relief and love to those in pain and poverty.*

*The much talked-about gram seva or rural service projects and the Mobile Medical Hospital of Prashanthi Nilayam are proving to be the epicenter whose ripple effect is spreading across the planet, to far-flung island nations, countries and continents.*

*Through a series of well-planned medical camps, the devotees of Baba from New Zealand, Australia, the United States of America and Fiji worked in unison to serve the most neglected and needy patients in the remotest areas throughout the island nation of Fiji, spreading love and light of Baba's universal teachings in a coup ravaged nation. Over 50 medical professionals and many more volunteers worked round the clock to serve 5,000 patients from the 16<sup>th</sup> of June through the 23<sup>rd</sup> of June, 2007 and the fuel that kept everyone going was the loving energy of Sai that was felt palpably by those who served and those who were served.*

*Doug Saunders reports from New Zealand on the Sai medical camp that delivered specialized medical relief to 5,000 needy Fijians across the isolated nation, while drawing medical professionals and volunteers from 4 different nations, to work in unity as Sai's instruments of selfless love, compassion, consideration and service.*

*The report archives the daily accomplishments of the group at a time when Fiji had been through yet another coup, the country's diplomatic relations with the international community were at an all time low and the political environment was unstable. Yet the devotees of Bhagavan Baba forged ahead to render service propelled by selfless love and found doors opening for them everywhere.*

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

*Sathya Sai Baba – Divine Discourse of  
3.6.1995*

On Friday, 15 June, fifty health professionals and volunteers from the Sathya Sai Organisations of Australia, New Zealand and the USA met up in Lautoka, Fiji and began preparations for the 7 days of medical camps coordinated by the Fiji, New Zealand and Australian devotees working together in unity and love.

Fiji is made up of a group of 330 islands (of which a third are inhabited) which lie in the heart of the Pacific Ocean midway between the equator and the South Pole, with the majority of the approximately 840,000 population living on the largest island of Viti Levu and about 200,000 residing on the second largest island of Vanua Levu. The population breakdown is roughly 50% indigenous Fijian, 34% of Indian descent and the remainder is of other races. Fiji has experienced four military coups over the past 20 years which has caused many qualified people to emigrate overseas which in turn has led to the problems encountered today in the remote areas where adequate health care is not easily accessible.

The locations for the camps, particularly in Vanua Levu, were chosen because of poor infrastructure, the remoteness from urban areas with difficult access to secondary level health care facilities. Most of the population on this island live on subsistence plantations under very trying conditions, and the political upheavals over the past 10 to 20 years have added to their woes creating a feeling of helplessness. The medical camps were targeted to benefit those most in need who form part of the following statistic's sad story:

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

### **Fijian Government Supports the Camps**

The Sai service teams in Fiji arranged all the sites where the camps were to be held and once again, thanks to the faith that everyone had in Swami's grace and compassion, doors opened with the permission of the Fijian Government's Minister of Education and local Headmasters, six of the seven camps were held at schools and one held at Nabuowalu Hospital, with the blessing of the local Fijian District Health Board. The Headmasters and staff helped by supplying meals and drinking water for all the team, and this showed everyone working together in unity and love, as they provided a much needed service to those in real need without any expectation of any reward. It was a living example of Swami's Love in Action.

At approximately 5.30 p.m. on 15 June, the team from New Zealand landed at Nadi Airport on the island of Viti Levu accompanied by 20 cartons of medical supplies that had been supplied free in New Zealand by various groups with no strings attached. A week or so earlier, a team member had traveled to Fiji and had purchased another 30 odd cartons of medicines from a supplier there, all paid for by wonderful Sai devotees in Australia and New Zealand who had once again, opened their hearts and their wallets as they had all seen just how beneficial the camps in 2006 had been. A volunteer non-Sai group in Auckland gave 600 used spectacles and sunglasses which they had sterilized, sorted, graded and packed. As well as this, the optometrist from

Australia brought over 750 sets of brand new spectacles which he had donated himself and they were all given out.

The New Zealand group was traveling light with their personal effects as they knew they would be overweight with the 20 cartons of medicines and medical supplies, but once again, God smiled on them as they checked in at Auckland International Airport as the Airline allowed them to board without any penalties. Also, a few weeks prior to their departure from New Zealand, the military in Fiji had taken over the elected Government with yet another coup! And as a result of the changed scenario, the new military junta had banished the current New Zealand High Commissioner causing angry exchanges between the two governments. The Australian and New Zealand Governments had then posted warnings on their respective websites, plus on the TV news channels advising people not to travel to Fiji. But with their pure faith in Swami, the teams from Australia and New Zealand ignored this and proceeded as if nothing was out of the norm.

Once they landed, the Fiji devotees in Lautoka picked up the group from Nadi Airport and transported them to the Sai centre where a briefing was held followed by devotional singing and a meal lovingly prepared by the Sai members.

### **Medical Camp Number One at Raki Raki on the Island of Viti Levu**

Saturday, 16 June, dawned - a beautiful still day as the team met at the Sai centre ready to board the bus to take them to the first camp. This was to be held at Penang Sanga School in Raki Raki, approximately 2 and a half hours drive from Lautoka out to the western side of Viti Levu. Arrangements were made to pick up the Australian team from their accommodation and bring them directly to the camp. The local Sai volunteers had left earlier for the camp and when the medical team arrived they were already getting the various rooms that would be used ready, and arranging signs. The team was joined by a dental unit and other medical staff from the local hospital in Lautoka which made it a real multi-country project. As one young non-Sai Doctor from Lautoka hospital said:

*"I missed the camps last year and made sure I could come this time and am so happy I have. The unity and love that has been shown here is just amazing and something I would not have thought possible. I only wish that I could have had the whole week off and joined them for the rest of the camps".*

The camp proved to be a learning curve for everyone – especially the team from Australia and the USA, as the New Zealanders had experienced similar conditions in 2006 – but it proved to be extremely successful for the first day together. People poured in from the surrounding villages, both Fijian and Indian together, and with the volunteers from Fiji, New Zealand, Australia and the USA working hand in hand, it was ensured that the patients did not have to wait too long for consultations or prescriptions. It was a fine and clear day and not too hot which helped tremendously. Also, holding the medical camps

at schools proved extremely beneficial as it gave the team plenty of rooms to use for consultations as well as a separate room for the makeshift pharmacy, dental and optical.

The last patient was treated at 6 p.m. and the total seen for the day was over 520. Many prescriptions were issued and a few serious cases were referred to the hospital in Lautoka. The teams from Australia, New Zealand and the USA worked extremely well together with the local members, and everyone there felt that Swami had been with them throughout the day.

Thus concluded the first day of the combined medical camp and at the debriefing at the end, all who had taken part felt that the unity and love felt between the team members also rubbed off onto the patients and that a definite need had been filled. A meal was shared at the School, a few devotional songs were sung, and our thanks were offered to Swami for His guidance and His love before we boarded our buses to head back to Lautoka.

For the first time at Sai medical camps in Fiji, dental fillings and dental prosthesis were made for patients on site in addition to routine extractions, and an average of 100 to 200 patients with dental complaints were seen daily at each of the 7 camps. The depth of dental services were limited by availability of appropriate facilities which will be rectified in future camps, but regardless of the limitations, the dental services brought joy to the many patients serviced by them with their experience and innovations.

### **Medical Camp Number Two at Tavua on the Island of Viti Levu**

At 6 a.m. on Sunday, 17 June, the day again dawned fine and clear as we all met at the Lautoka Sai centre ready to load up and travel to our next camp which was to be held at Tavua College, Tavua - a one and a half hour journey to the Western side of Viti Levu. By the time we arrived there was already a large crowd of people waiting to be seen, so no time was spared as we began setting up the rooms so that registrations and consultations could begin. Again we were ably assisted by the local Sai volunteers and by some of the teachers from the school who had given up their Sunday to work with our people. This day proved to be extremely busy with everyone working to their utmost as the people kept pouring in from villages all around. The Police Department even supplied a local constable to direct the traffic for the day and he did a sterling job and was always smiling and jovial. Swami's love obviously rubbed off on all!

Once again we were blessed to have the help of some medical people from Lautoka Hospital and these few extra hands really made a difference as the day progressed, as our makeshift pharmacy came under a lot of pressure to supply the patients' prescriptions within a reasonable time frame.

On this day, the team saw over 1,100 people and supplied 1,600 plus prescriptions and even though the team was tired at the end of the day, all agreed that it had been an incredible experience with a wonderful feeling of love and happiness at being able to help those less fortunate than ourselves.

An evening meal was shared at the school once we had finished - a short debriefing and then once again, a prayer and thanks were offered to our Lord Sai for making this day so memorable. Then we boarded our buses for the journey back to Lautoka in preparation for our early morning flights to the island of Vanua Levu the next day.

*"It was an incredible experience. Many of the team was meeting for the first time yet they all worked so well together - joined together in unity and Swami's love and to see so many patients over the past two days was amazing. I am so thankful to be part of this wonderful organisation."* – Local Camp Coordinator

### **Monday 18 June – The Preparation Day**

On this day we traveled to the island of Vanua Levu after meeting at Nadi airport in the morning. We had learned from the trip in 2006 that it was not wise to undertake a medical camp on the same day as traveling, so we had decided to use this day to get to Vanua Levu, ensure all our accommodation at the motel was in order and then spend time sorting out the many cartons of medications that we had brought with us. Once again it seemed as though there were going to be problems at Nadi airport as we turned up with a lot of cartons of medical supplies and with the small planes in use, extra weight was not appreciated.

But, as usual, Swami ensured that everything worked out okay as, after a brief standoff with the check in staff, we were given our boarding passes and departed on the flight to the small Labasa airport on Vanua Levu. As we were a large party, some arrived on a later flight which helped in the transporting of our cartons. By early afternoon all had settled into the motel and then we spent the rest of the day sorting and marking the medicines that would be transported from one camp to another over the next 5 days.

The local Sai people were wonderful and that evening they had arranged a meal for us at a local temple which was much appreciated. Everyone turned in early as the next day was to be a four hour drive to the first camp on this island and we needed to be well rested and refreshed.

### **Medical Camp Number Three at Nabouwalu Hospital, Vanua Levu**

Tuesday, the 19<sup>th</sup> of June, the two buses we were to use for transport over the next 5 days were waiting for us in the motel compound at 4 a.m. as we boarded and then departed on the 4 hour journey to Navouwalu Hospital which is out towards the north east end of Vanua Levu.

We stopped for a brief on-board breakfast on the way and arrived at our destination at approximately 8 a.m. as planned. The bus trip was long, but with bhajans sung as we traveled, the journey seemed shorter. The first part of the trip was on good roads but after one hour we hit the rough gravel roads and this is what made the journey seem to take so long. The tin sheds that we saw in which poor people were living were sad to see but we did notice that all

the children who we saw walking to school on the side of the road were well dressed, and gave us a happy smile and a cheery wave as we passed by. Both races are affected by this poverty which showed up with symptoms of Chronic Pain Syndrome which could be a manifestation of a psychosomatic disorder that is fuelled by the economic and social hardships faced by the people in these rural areas.

On arrival the team set up the allocated rooms as best as we could and then the consultations began. As usual, the Ministry of Health of Fiji was very helpful and welcomed our services, providing the venue of Nabouwalu Hospital for us to use and also providing some staff members to help. We could see that under the existing circumstances, the Fijian health professionals employed by the Ministry of Health were doing a great job in these remote areas serviced by our camps.

At this venue, lunch was supplied by the local Sai volunteers who had traveled with us and they did an incredible job working under some pretty trying conditions. Most of the patients at this camp were of Fijian descent and it was sad when now and then one was found to have a serious health problem that we could not alleviate. In the serious cases, our Specialists wrote letters for the patients and made sure that the hospital in Labasa was informed. The patients came from outlying villages and spent many hours traveling to get to the camp, so it was gratifying to know that at the end of the day, all who had come had been seen by our doctors. It had been decided at the very beginning of the trip that no one would be turned away and that all who came would be seen.

At the end of this camp, well over 400 people had been seen, many prescriptions had been given out and the faces of those who had come were a joy to behold as their smiles told us everything. Even though we saw less people than at some other camps, it seemed to be one of the busiest which was probably due to the cramped conditions that we all had to work in.

*"It has been so wonderful that your team has been here helping our people. We always have a struggle trying to get enough medicines for our patients and trying to see all the people that come to us so your visit has to me, been obviously organised by God! The patients that I know have commented on just how caring your Doctors and other staff have been to all – that you all have shown compassion and love. I pray that we can have you here when you come again. Please do not leave it for too long."*

Chief Medical Officer –

Nabouwalu Hospital

So ended the first camp on Vanua Levu, and after our long return bus trip, a shared meal at our motel, a debrief was held followed by a prayer to Swami, a few devotional songs, then everyone trooped off to bed, extremely tired but also happy.

## **Medical Camp Number Four at Seaqaqa School, Vanua Levu**

Wednesday, 20 June, early in the morning, found us once again boarding our two buses in the compound of our motel. This day, however, it was luxury. The camp was only one and a half hours away so we were departing at 6 a.m. From the previous year, we knew we would get a large number at this camp as our 2<sup>nd</sup> camp of the trip in 2006 had been held here, so it was good to get there early and set up well in advance. By this time everyone knew what role they had to play and the setting up of the camps become a lot easier. Even though we were early, people had already begun to queue waiting to register. This area had equal amount of Indian and Fijian patients and once registrations began, efforts were made to ensure that the seriously ill, the elderly, and those mothers with young children were seen first.

The Headmaster of the school was not available on this day but his Deputy Principal spoke passionately with regards to the camp.

*"We prayed that you would come back again and here you are. The people from this area still talk about the love and caring that was shared last time and it is happening again today. We thank all of you from the bottom of our hearts for your sacrifice in coming here and for your dedication and commitment. Myself, and the staff here still talk about it and just know that God must be smiling on us for this to happen today. Please return."*

The people queued in good humour and in harmony with each other as they waited patiently, and the young children who accompanied some of them were very well behaved and disciplined. Time seemed to go so quickly even though everyone was extremely busy, and at the end of the day our team of medical professionals had seen well over 500 people and given out many prescriptions. Once again, there were some who needed further treatment at Labasa Hospital so letters were written for these people and the local Sai volunteers promised to follow through with this.

Some of us were helping our optometrist pack up as he saw his last patient. This was at about 7 pm and as we watched him at work we realised something special was happening. His patient was an elderly Fijian lady who had obviously had problems with her eyes for years and had not been able to read for some time. To travel into Labasa town and purchase spectacles was just not possible for her due to a lack of finances. So when our optometrist placed a pair of spectacles on her after taking time to test her eyes, and she realised that she could read the writing given to her, her face was a joy to behold as she lit up in a beaming smile. All of us there had tears in our eyes as we realised that it was Swami's love and compassion working in that room as it had been throughout the day within the whole camp. By this time her family had filed into the room to watch and everyone erupted into laughter as our optometrist then told her; "These glasses are for reading the Bible, not love stories". At times like this, there is only one race in God's eyes – mankind.

We arrived back at our motel around 9 pm and after a debriefing, a meal and a few songs, we offered our prayers and thanks to Swami and all retired to bed, as the next day was going to be another long bus trip out into the countryside.

### **Medical Camp Number Five at Waibunabuna Primary School, Lekutu, Vanua Levu**

On Thursday 21 June, the team was up bright and early to board the buses for the long trip out into the hinterland to Lekutu, where the camp was to be held at the local primary school. This was another long bus ride of 2 and a half hours and onto some fairly rough gravel roads as well, but once again, with bhajans being sung, it certainly helped to seem to make the journey shorter.

We arrived at about 7.30 am and began to set up in a small building. The school was in the middle of constructing a hostel for some of the children who came from many kilometers away. This building was over half a mile away from the main school so we did not disturb the children during their lessons. It was only half way through construction and even though it had been partitioned into small rooms, there was no electricity connected which caused consternation at first, until a local Sai devotee from Labasa suddenly arrived and immediately began to arrange two solar panels he had in his van and connect them up to a large battery. Voila! God once again had sent help! We needed electricity for our pharmacists' label machines to operate and for their laptop computers, although if it had not been possible to access electricity then we would have found a way to operate regardless.

This school was in a very remote area and the small rooms in the building were very cramped as the medical team, optometrist, dental unit and the pharmacy crammed themselves in. Also, there were no toilet facilities where we were working but two local families very close by allowed us to use their outdoor toilets, which was great. The school grounds were beautifully kept with manicured lawns and lovely gardens and it was hard to believe that there was so much poverty in the area. I had a good talk to the School Principal and he told me that the Government only gives a very small grant to cover teacher's wages and any money needed for maintenance, books, etc. has to be raised from the local community so it is an ongoing struggle to survive. I was deeply impressed with his dedication and commitment to the children to ensure they received an education and his obvious love for his staff that were just as committed. At the end of the day we packed up a box of medicines for him to add to the school's first aid kit and he was overjoyed as this meant he did not have to worry about where to find the funds for this for some time to come.

*"We were so happy when we were approached by your people from Labasa a few months back asking if they could use the facilities. Our committee voted unanimously to allow you to use our building and we also made up some brochures and sent them out with the children when they went home from*



*school. We heard from last year how lasting the impression the medical team had left and just grateful to God for ensuring that you came here.”*

School Principal – Waibunabuna Primary School, Lekutu

It was most likely Swami's grace that on this day we had the least amount of people turn up, as when the team held the debriefing in the evening, many said that they felt they would have really struggled to have seen many more than were seen. Even so, due to the fact that less people came, we still did not leave until 6 pm as most patients came after midday.

The local people were extremely happy that we were there and want us to return. At this camp just over 300 patients were seen but some seen had multiple problems and it was a blessing that we had come.

We arrived back at our motel tired but again happy and because we were earlier than normal, arrangements had been made for us to visit a local temple by the Sai devotees from the area for some Sai bhajans and a meal. It was a gentle night and all were happy as we then retired to our motel for a good night's sleep to get ready for the next day. By this time the team was working extremely well together and it felt as if we had all known each other for ages – not just met for the first time on the prior weekend.

*“I work as a nurse for one of the Sai Doctors who is from New Zealand, and when he asked if I would like to join him and his wife on these camps in Fiji I was worried at what I would get myself into when I agreed to. I had been pre-warned about the conditions we would find there but only having seen the tourist side of Fiji I had no idea how poverty stricken some areas are – especially where we are going each day. I am a devout Christian and not a Sai devotee but have been absolutely blown away by the love, the caring, the dedication and the commitment shown by all the members of this combined team and can only say that the words of Sai Baba of “Love All Serve All” are entwined within all of these people. To me the teachings of Jesus Christ and Sai Baba are the same.”*

- A nurse

from New Zealand

### **Medical Camp Number Six at Nadogo Secondary School, Wainikoro, Vanua Levu**

Friday, 22 June dawned fine and clear again as we all boarded our waiting buses in the motel compound at 6am. The journey was about one and a half hours from our base and the medical camp was to be held at Nadogo Secondary School which had a school roll of 50% Indian and 50% Fijian children. There was a very tricky small bridge over a stream which our buses had to negotiate at the entrance of the school which proved to be easier coming and extremely difficult when leaving. On our return, all the passengers had to disembark from the bus and then spend almost 45 minutes trying to get across without falling into the stream. With Swami's help, this was accomplished but not before a few anxious moments had passed.

Everyone set up the rooms very quickly as even though we had arrived early there was a huge number of people already waiting to register and we realised that we could not waste any time if we were to see all. The Principal and his staff were marvelous. Even though it was a normal school day, we were allocated 7 rooms to work from with the children that normally occupy those rooms cramming into other classes for this day. They also allowed some of the senior students to help out and these children proved to be a wonderful asset to us as they knew quite a few of the patients and would help them find the right room and also help them with their registrations.

This day proved to be our busiest day of the whole trip. By midday 1000 plus people had been given numbers and they were still pouring in. Bus loads would turn up at the school entrance every half hour – some from over 150 km away and the facilities were being stretched to the limit. Most people realised that it was going to be a long day and had brought food and water to last but there were still anxious moments as some felt that they would not be seen. The pharmacy unit, dental unit and optometrist did not stop until late at night as well as the Doctors and in fact, all who were there felt the pressure. But as usual, Swami was there and seemed to ensure that there was no breakdown in communications or with the team morale as all were working under stressful conditions.

*"I did not realise just how lucky we are in our comfortable 1<sup>st</sup> world countries until I came here. I have had tears in my eyes to see the joyous smiles from some of the patients I have helped with their problems, and can only thank Sai for allowing me to be on this journey of love. At first I could only think of how difficult it will be setting up the equipment I have brought but after the first couple of days, everything now seems such a breeze that I just know we have Sai with us at all times."*

- An Orthodontist from Australia

By mid-afternoon over 2000 people had been given registration numbers and as many had to leave in buses departing at a certain time, the team tried to get as many as possible who were in this predicament seen first but, unfortunately, it was an impossible task. There were not enough medical professionals for so many patients. What our team found was that many of the patients needed multiple consultations which caused the lines to stretch even further. We also realised that people were coming from villages miles away as there was a small health clinic in the area but staffed by a nurse not a Doctor.

In future, there must be two camps held in this area so that all can be seen over two days. It was a joy when over 20 senior students at the school realised just how busy we were, and immediately volunteered their services once they had finished their classes and stayed until we finished late at night. The students were from both races and showed everyone that people of all races and cultures can work together in harmony and love. Without them, we would not have gotten through the number of patients we saw even though we missed seeing many. They were given jobs in the pharmacy as well and proved completely adept and reliable once they had settled in. To them it was

a wonderful experience of solidarity and unity and they were all extremely happy that they had been part of the camp.

Unfortunately, because of the vast numbers, many people had to leave to catch their buses before we could fill their prescriptions and hand them out and we were left with 3 cartons of prescriptions not collected. The Headmaster assured us that he would ensure that all who had missed their collection would get them as he would be happy to let the villages know that he would be holding them. Since then, we have found out that this has happened and that all outstanding prescriptions have been collected.

*“You know, in my practice in Australia, I get so grumpy and sometimes very impatient with some of my patients yet I don’t care or apologise. I only work for 5 hours a day but still moan and groan about my life. Yet here, I cannot believe it! I am standing up and helping people the whole day with only a small 10 minute break for lunch and feel so happy all of the time.”*

- An Orthodontist from Australia

The last person to be seen left at 8.30 pm, and by 9.30 pm, we had packed up and boarded the buses ready to leave. Before we did so, we thanked the Headmaster and staff, and the students who had helped and handed the Headmaster a box of medicines for their first aid kit.

*“Even though it is sad your people could not see all the patients that came, we fully understand as we ourselves also did not realise that so many would come from so far away. I and my staff thank you very much for your sacrifice in coming here to help our people and feel that today has helped in putting aside any racial differences that may have been emerging between our peoples especially after the recent coup. I know that you will be back next year and we are only too happy to host you again and now realise it should be over two days as the need in this area is tremendous. May God go with you and keep you in the palm of His hand.”* - The Headmaster at Nadogo School

At this camp over 1100 patients were seen, an incredible amount of prescriptions were given throughout an extremely long and busy day, but all who were there felt very happy that they had been part of the team and after a debriefing, and a quick meal back at the motel, we all retired for the night in preparation for the final camp to be held the next day.

### **Medical Camp Number Seven at Cogeloa School, Naleba, Vanua Levu**

Dawn broke on Saturday, 23 June as we gathered beside our buses ready to be transported to our final camp approximately one hour away from the motel. There was a tinge of sadness in the air as we began to realise that this was the final camp and that the Australian and USA contingent would be leaving at about 1pm as their flights back to Nadi were departing at 3pm. The New Zealand contingent was leaving the next day.

This final camp was held at a very beautiful site, up on a plateau which looked out over cane fields, pineapple, banana, and coconut plantations and beautiful forests. The Headmaster and three of his staff had sacrificed their day off to help us and worked hard as did our Sai volunteers from Labasa who were busy organising water, tea and a light but very satisfying lunch.

Once again, upon our arrival, the rooms were set up early and we began to register the patients who were already waiting. Having these medical camps at schools was an absolute blessing as being able to set up over 7 or 8 rooms made it so much easier. Having the makeshift pharmacy in one separate room helped tremendously as spreading out all the medications took up a lot of room.

People were pouring in and as the Australian and USA teams and one of the New Zealand Doctors were going to be leaving early we felt a slight tinge of trepidation, especially when we looked back at the previous day when a huge amount of people had come in after midday. Again Swami smiled on us. Over 400 people were seen before 1pm, then, after the departure of the Australian, USA members and one of our Doctors, we only registered approximately 130 people. It amazes me to no end just how Sai looks after us all without needing to be asked! It also seemed to be a day when everything went just right and there seemed to be no pressure whatsoever.

*"I have been absolutely amazed just how all of us from four different countries have worked so well together without any problems, complaints or hiccups. The unity and love that has been shown between all who have been part of this programme is just amazing to see. I am so happy and proud to have been part of this group and feel that we have definitely filled a need."*

- A Senior Doctor from Australia

The morning went quickly as everyone worked hard to get through the registrations and before long we were all gathered to say farewell to our brothers and sisters from Australia and the USA. Tears were shed as we said our goodbyes and soon they had boarded the bus and departed for the airport at Labasa to begin the journey back to their homes.

Our team carried on working and saw the last patient at 5.30pm. We then spent almost two hours sorting through and packing up the medical supplies we had left ensuring that the school had a pack of supplies for their first aid kit as well.

Dr. Ami Chandran who is Director of Medical Services for the Fijian Government, Northern Division, had this to say as he made a surprise visit to the school in the afternoon.

*"This service provided by the Sai organisation has been extremely useful. It is a complimentary service to what we have been doing but due to our resource constraints we are not able to tackle some of the problems on our own and there is very little private sector input in this division. I feel that the services just provided by the Sai organisation in our communities has been a very*

*welcome move and we hope that this will continue. We also hope that we can build on this relationship to provide better healthcare for our peoples. I thank you all very much for your help and input."*

At 7.30pm we were all packed up and after saying our goodbyes to the Headmaster and his staff we boarded our bus to return to our motel. On this occasion, because we were now a smaller group, we agreed to go to one of the Sai devotees' houses who had been helping us throughout the week for a meal and some devotional singing. We had not done this after the previous camps as we felt that with a group of almost 50 people it would be too much strain on the local devotees to have to supply a venue and food each night plus the fact that in most of the nights we did not get back to our motel until quite late. On this occasion, the meal was excellent and we shared some beautiful universal bhajans with our hosts - everyone singing sweetly and softly.

The next day at 11 am, we all flew back to Nadi from Labasa to await our departure to Auckland which was scheduled to depart at 2pm. All of us felt extremely blessed to have had been a part of this exercise but also felt humbled at what we had seen and experienced.

Close to 5000 patients were seen over the 7 days of camps in some pretty remote and rural areas of Fiji where we found that many of the patients had multiple consultations that included medical, eye, dental and gynecological assessments. We also donated cartons of medicines to the various small health centers that were near the schools and to the local hospitals as these would ensure that patients whom our Doctors had seen do not run out of medications. The Sai people in Labasa ensured that these were delivered.

Each morning before commencing the camps, we said a small prayer to Swami asking for His guidance and love for the day ahead, and all were in agreement that we had been the main beneficiaries of this service project. We were completely self-sufficient with medications and equipment and all of the team paid for their own airfares and accommodations whilst there.

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

All the people from the four countries involved worked extremely well together in an environment of unity, love, and a genuine desire to ensure that if there were any problems then they could be overcome. It was extremely impressive to see the commitment shown by one Doctor who was over 70 years of age. At no stage did this Doctor slow down or show an eagerness for the camps to be over. This showed just how Swami's grace helps different people at

different times. Wherever detached love is practiced, all things impossible become possible.

## **PRASHANTI DIARY**

### **31 August, 2007: Bhagavan Distributes Robes to Office Bearers**

Since August 29, a banner heralding the Conference of all the office bearers of Sri Sathya Sai Organisations in India has been fluttering in the Mandir premises. Half a dozen plasma TVs have been set up to aid the presentations to be made. But somehow, the conference has not yet been held at the Mandir in Swami's presence though the office bearers have met after the morning and evening bhajans in the Conference Hall and have had many constructive sessions.

On August 31, Swami came out on the wheel sofa, just like the previous day. But He was not accepting letters from anyone. To any person who stretched out a letter, Swami just signaled for them to hold on. He was a picture of contentment just looking at everyone. He completed the ladies side and as He was among the boys, there were many eager beavers trying to give letters. Swami continued with the gentle signals and gentler smiles.

For once, let us trade places with Swami and occupy the wheel sofa! As we come out every morning and every afternoon, there are thousands of people waiting to relate their psychological problems, medical ailments, financial difficulties, relationship mismatches and yes, some are present even to offer their gratitude for favours received, to express their Love for Him. We are in that position where, by just reading all the correspondence received daily, we would have read almost every word that exists in a dictionary and that too not of English alone, but many other languages too! And then, we are expected to smile as we receive yet another letter!

But wait a minute, God is not supposed to be affected by the fatigue and ennui that affect us mere mortals right? Correct, but then God does not need to be informed of everything like mere mortals right? He knows everything. Well the problem arises if we make someone God for some reasons and mortal for others! And as the famous episode goes, Swami told the genial Prof. Anil Kumar, "So many want to give letters to me." The professor replied, "Swami maybe they have some emergency and so they want to give letters to you." Swami quipped, "Once anyone comes to me, will they ever have an emergency?" When we write to Him, it is only for our satisfaction that He receives the correspondence and not out of His need to stay informed and there is no theorem or axiom that says that problems presented to Him on paper are faster resolved than those presented via prayer!

Swami completed the gents side too and then went into the Mandir portico. He took a round there also granting darshan. Then He came out and sat on the gents side of the stage. None had guessed that Swami had planned something grand. He called the co-ordinators of the

Office Bearers' Meet and presented them with His precious robes. So many devotees the world over send robes to Swami as offerings of their Love and gratitude. Swami was now offering them back to His devotees as a sign of His Love and Grace. What happened next was truly special. Swami said that He would personally give robes to all the 500 plus devotees who had gathered for the conference! There was so much excitement and joy!

All of them began coming to Swami in an orderly line. Up front, Swami continued to present them with robes. Many offered letters (!) to Swami which He now accepted. A few of them broke down in gratefulness and made no secret of their dedication and Love for Him. Swami sat thus distributing robes from 4:10pm when He sat outside, till about 5:00pm. Midway through, the organisers felt that they were tiring Swami and they even suggested that Swami could stop and just direct the distribution. But Swami continued. He appeared tiring, but the smile never faded. How does 50 minutes of continuously giving affect someone who has been doing it for the last 80 years!

After the distribution, Swami went into the interview room. Bhajans began as scheduled and at about 5:35 p.m., Swami received Aarthi and left.

## **2 September 2007: Sri Sathya Sai Central Trust's 35th Anniversary**

September 2<sup>nd</sup> morning saw all of Swami's past students who are presently serving in various capacities in His institutions assemble in the Prayer Hall. There was an atmosphere of joy and every face was shining. Swami came for darshan at 7.55 a.m. and came inside the bhajan hall. He asked why were all seated inside when the programme was outside. A teacher said, "Swami, the programme outside is in the evening when elders will be speaking. Swami should now please speak to us." Swami then went to where the lamp was and gently lit it. He also cut the cake placed next to it. He then came and positioned Himself in the centre and asked, "What news?" looking at the coordinator and beckoning him. There were some songs that had been prepared and Swami listened to them. One could see that He was very relaxed and enjoying the songs. One person from those who had assembled would come at the beginning of each song and give Swami a flower and a sheet of paper on which the songs were written. Swami received these and went through the lyrics as they were sung or closed His eyes enjoying the song and the full hearted singing. Swami asked it to be announced that there would be a public meeting at 4 p.m. in the Sai Kulwant Hall in connection with the Sri Sathya Sai Central Trust's 35th anniversary in the Divine presence of Bhagavan. The announcement was repeated in Telugu also by a member of the Book Trust and Swami smiled when the announcement was completed. He asked, "Did you not eat any breakfast? Such a soft voice!"



Swami then asked what was next. Two speakers were ready. Mr. Ruchir Desai, a lecturer at Brindavan campus, came forward and gave a short talk. He expressed gratitude to Swami, on behalf of everybody, and said, "Why is one grateful to the Sun? Is it because it rises everyday bringing light and joy to the world? Or because of it the bees and birds sing or we get the warmth ... these and many more. Then, what to speak of the one who has put the sun in place - our Lord!" The speech was very apt and at the end Swami rewarded him with a smile and a touch on the head.

It was next the turn of Mr. Satish Babu, a teacher from the Higher Secondary School to speak. He spoke his heart out in Telugu and narrated moving incidents. One of these was about a student who was sick to whom he gave a set of instructions like - be careful about what you eat; do not go out and play, and such other directions. The student agreed to follow all these instructions except the one in which he was asked to pray to Swami. "No, I will not do that," he said. The teacher, bewildered, asked, "Why?" And then He said, "Because He will cure me instantly but He will Himself suffer the illness." Such pure thoughts can come even to such small children only by the blessings of Swami, he said.

Another incident was about how one day he was told of a sick boy and being busy, he went off for darshan forgetting to attend to the boy. Waiting for the darshan, he suddenly remembered the student and was torn between his desire for darshan and the call of duty to attend to that boy, but convincing himself that it was the Lord who was actually looking after everyone, he sent a prayer to Swami to look after the small student. When he returned from darshan the small boy came up to him and thanked him as he had given him medicine on time and he was now fine, revealing that it was indeed the Lord who is the Doer. Swami was once again touched with his speech and blessed him with a *Padanamaskar* and the divine touch.

After this Swami reminded the boys that there were two more songs and asked them to sing them. So they sang "O maa, O maa" and "Why fear when I am here."

Swami then asked how many boys were there and when the reply came as 155 boys, He smiled and said "*anthe na*" (Is that all?).

Swami then asked Subramaniam (research scholar) what he was doing. Next He asked Praveen, "*Nuve kada America Poyindi?*" (Was it not you who went to America?) "Yes Swami" was the reply.

Swami: What did you do?

Praveen: I did a course in hospital management, Swami.

Swami: What are you doing now?

P: Administration work in Bangalore Hospital. Swami, people are not able to believe that we are doing free surgeries in our hospital.

Swami: We are not doing for them to believe...we are doing it for our happiness.

P: Swami, in our hospital we are able to do operations which even big hospitals are not able to do, even hospitals like NIMHANS send patients to us.

Swami: They don't send for that sake. They send because we are doing free operations.

P: We do all kinds of complicated surgeries, Swami.

Swami: How many doctors are there?

P: 60 doctors, Swami. Doctors who are less qualified than Dr. Hegde (the Director of Whitefield Hospital) himself are offered 5 crores outside; even Dr. Hegde has got so many offers, but he rejected all of them saying he wants to work only in Swami's hospital.

Swami: Money has no value....

P: Yes Swami, money has no value.

Swami: Money has value but the people who take it lose their value.

P: Swami in our Hospital we perform 8 brain surgeries each day.

Swami: How many heart surgeries?

P: 6-8, Swami. Angioplasty, etc are 20 per day.

Swami: Those are small, who does them?

P: Dr.Das, Swami.

Swami: Oh, Orissa man.

P: He is also getting so many offers Swami. But he also tells people that he is born only to do Swami's service. In one of the fields of brain surgeries called Aneurisms our hospital is world no 1. One of the boys doing Phd in our Hospital also got an All India Gold Medal, Swami.

Swami: Very good.

P: People who study here and go out are taking care of patients very well, Swami. From our Hospital one Mr. Keshava Murthy joined Apollo

Hospital. They were ready to pay him a huge amount, but he said to give that to poor patients.

Swami: That is not Apollo hospital, it is *appulu* (debts) hospital...If you get admitted there, you have to incur debt.

P: Many foreign doctors are also interested to come and join here, Swami.

Swami: If they are good, give permission. If they are not good and spoil our name, then keep them away.

P: Seeing that the facilities in our hospital are good, they want us to start courses so that they can learn here and earn outside. Outside each MRI costs 10,000 Rs and X-Ray 500 Rs, and we do 20 MRIs per day, Swami.

Swami: Money earned like that won't stay.

P: Both our hospitals in Parthi are doing so much work, Swami. Swami is doing what governments are not able to do.

Swami: Government does not do any work.

Student: Politicians just come for votes and promise that we will give gas stove, TV, etc.

Swami: They give only 'gas' (everybody bursts into laughter)

P: Because of Swami's water project so many people could benefit.

Swami: Yes, in Chennai, small children were drinking dirty water and spoiling their health (Swami looked visibly moved). Now they are getting good drinking water.

In Redhills there is lot of wastage due to the mud there. We told Mr. Karunanidhi to tell us when it is dry and that we would do desilting. We have put polymer there in order to curb wastage. You may believe it or not every Monday I sign cheques for distribution towards various projects. Mr. Kondal Rao and Mr A Ramakrishna take good care and do these works without bothering about rain and sun. That's why I gave each of them one car. I gave Mr. Chakravarthy also one car so that he can go round and see that everything is alright.

P: Swami all our students are getting a good name outside.

Swami: Yes, before it was not like this but now they are good. They all came with their wives and children in an aeroplane. They say that they get peace only here.

When the conversation turned to the music college and it was mentioned that “Swami our music college boys sing well”, Swami interrupted and said “They sing well but are always scared as to when they may fall!” provoking laughter. (It was a lovely pun reminding everyone that we need to not only ensure class in our talents, singing or whatever, it is but also our behaviour).

Aravind of Super Hospital Bangalore asked, “Swami, please give us all a message on this occasion.” Swami said, “Be happy with whatever work you are doing, and don’t think that you are doing for some one else, only then you can be happy. (*Mamaivaamso jeeva loke jeeve boothasanathanaha.*) Know that it is one God who is present in everyone and within each of us.

Next when boys expressed their gratitude to Swami for having blessed them with the opportunity to serve Him, Swami smiling said, “*Meerandaru cheyyagalaru. daani valla ne meeku ee avakasam icchanu... andariki istunaana?*” (I know that you are all capable of discharging your responsibilities. That is why I gave you this opportunity. Do I give it to everyone?)

It was already about to be 10 o’clock and Swami now asked for the Aarathi. He Himself lit the camphor, and blessed the basins of sweet prasadam which boys showed to Him. When boys asked for group photos and paada namaskar, Swami said, “I will bless you in the evening.”

In the afternoon, Swami came out at 4:00 pm. He had said in the morning that 4:30 onwards would be the *Rahukaalam*. All the students working in various places in the Central Trust (CT) had assembled by 2:30 pm itself. Swami went directly on stage and took His seat in the centre. Four respected seniors working for Swami were part of the panel to discuss on the ‘Role of Sai Institutions in Transforming Lives’.

They were: the All India President, Mr.V.Srinivasan; the Secretary of the Central Trust, Mr. Chakravarthi; and the former Vice Chancellors, Mr. S.V. Giri and Dr. G. Venkatraman. First, there was an introductory speech by Mr. Rameshwar Prusty. He gave a brief outline of the formation and functioning of the Central Trust. There were two speeches by Mr. Sudheendran and Dr. T. Ravikumar. Sudheendran, with the aid of Vedic lore, narrated experiences how Swami had come to be God for him and how he had slowly but surely shaped and moulded him. The second speaker said that though he had lost his mother at a very tender age, he never felt the lack of a mother's love in his life. He narrated his experiences where Swami had shown him that loving Him meant more to Him than anything else. Being deeply touched by His love, he spoke with that conviction and his emotions slowly percolated the fibre of every listener till all seemed to be in deep emotion of gratitude. Then the four eminent elders spoke on the various ways in which Swami was inspiring the Trust and every member with

His Love and example. After that, though it was 5:35pm, Swami rose to speak. And this is what He said:

*Embodiments of Love,*

*Our students have sacred hearts, pure minds, selflessness and innocence. A few of them may commit mistakes but they correct it on their own. Therefore, students are our Central Trust. They do all the work. The elders are there as elders alone and the students take care of everything. Sometimes however, elders commit mistakes due to the students. Students are not to be considered as small children. In fact, I stood up not to talk to you but to describe the glory of their selflessness. The work done by them is really wonderful and unique. These students are the future support of the Central Trust (CT) too. The CT fully depends on them. There are students working day in and day out. One cannot single out who those are and specifically name them. All work very hard. None can describe their abilities. So students, you should put the CT on the proper path and show the ideal to the world by being leaders. The CT will progress because of you; the future depends on you.*

*Not only the money here but all the Pani (work) too is yours. Outside everywhere it is only money, money and money. Money comes and goes, morality comes and grows. Your morality makes your status high. So uphold the morality. Being human, we have our imaginations and expectations. But these are all to be considered as illusions. They are not permanent, but like passing clouds. Do not submit to them and be victims of your imagination. For the purpose of keeping up the character, all other forces must be resisted and all other things be cast aside. Dear students, your effulgence, your future and your work must all be ideal and then alone will the world emulate you. Science has advanced into "Trick Knowledge" instead of Technology these days. Only the feelings that arise from your heart are True and Permanent. Discriminate between Truth and Untruth. All the unnecessary things must be cast aside.*

*Spend all time in sacred duties. How many students are there working in CT? (The answer came that it is 155.) All come and sit in the front. (Swami tells the boys behind Him to go in and get watches for all.) Sanctify the time, utilize it properly and achieve a good name. Not only the CT, other Trusts too depend on you. But do not depend on any Trust. Have Self-Dependence. Atmashakti must be the basis for that. Have self-confidence and that will confer everything on you. Faith gives you power. It is responsible for the flow of Love. No Faith - No Love. Only out of Love can anything be achieved, big or small. Faith and Love are the two eyes without which one is blinded. Truth is God. Love is God. Live in Love. Truth and Love are the two feet on which I walk on. I achieve everything with this confidence.*

*The British promised drinking water to Madras but faltered on it. I*

*sanctioned it immediately. You may not believe it, but every Monday, I sign cheques. Mr. Chakravarthi knows about this. It is his job to distribute it. Swami can do everything but some help is needed. I have kept some as Trust members and through them I send the cheques. For Madras, the Godavari water was not enough. So water from the Krishna was diverted via Bhadrachalam and through taps has reached every hut. Every child says there, "Sai Baba has given us nectar!" But for that I never extended my hand even for a naya (single) paisa. You all know that if Swami asks, so many are ready to give. But I never desire for anything from anyone. My Will is the Power.*

*Never worry about money. It is virtues that are more important. Have Love and with that anything can be attained. Never expect anything from anyone. Love will supply everything like a current. Don't worry for anything. That Love will give everything. Never tread the wrong path. Do not utter untruth. Don't resort to injustice. Don't be intolerant. Sahana (Tolerance) is of utmost importance. Bharatiyas have everything but only lack in Unity. Unity leads to Purity and then to Divinity. When that Unity and Love exists, all desires are automatically satiated.*

*Never feel bad that Swami is not talking to you or spending time with you. My mind is always on you children. Without you I cannot exist. When you exist, I exist, and when I exist, you exist. I and you are one. With that feeling, do your work happily.*

Then, out of supreme Love, Swami personally gave each of the 155 students a beautiful wrist watch. It was a wonderful sight to see the Mother blessing Her children in spite of the time being so late and till about 6:15 Swami carried on distributing watches. He also personally gave prasadam to many of the students. After that, Mr. Harishankar delivered the note of thanks. Swami then received Aarthi and left.

#### **4 September 2007: Krishnajanmastami Celebrations**

This morning was the celebration of the birth of the charming and sweet Lord - Sri Krishna. The music boys of the University were ready with a programme. There was also the scheduled cow procession. Swami, coincidentally, arrived exactly as the cow procession reached the Gopuram gate. Swami came in the car and as He neared the marble block area, He stopped to look at His devotees from the animal kingdom, so to say! He was dressed in bright yellow and looked as sweet as ever. Leading the procession was Krishna Geeta, the new baby elephant. She had been decorated and looked like a miniature of Sai Gita. Swami said that He would get down near the animals. There was an anticipatory smile as He got down. He first fed bananas to Krishna Geeta who wolfed down everything very hungrily. First, she came straight to Swami and making a customary salute, began to eat out of His hands. But soon the little elephant was attracted to the trays laden with fruits! And her trunk went towards them more. Swami just

smiled lovingly seeing her eat joyfully.

God is such a fulfilling and elevating goal in life - in fact the only goal worth having. When we see God in all majesty, we are so overcome and rush straight to Him. Still however, the veil seems to lie so thick over us, that giving up the nourishment at His Divine Hands, we hanker and clamour after the loads of "fruits" the world has to offer for us! And the Lord just smiles. Animals have no discrimination, but what about us?

Swami then went ahead and started to feed the cows that had gathered. He didn't seem to mind the copious saliva from the cows that fell on His Robe and Hands. He went on feeding bananas to all. He also blessed the deer at the end. All the staff members at the Sri Sathya Sai Gokulam came to Him and offered roses and sought blessings. Swami blessed all and gave padanamaskar to some. Then as He went towards the stage, He once again blessed the elephant. Swami gently dipped His delicate hands into a bowl of water and wiped His Hands dry. Aarthi was taken and Swami went to the stage. There two boys brought white doves to Swami. Like He always does to anybody who comes in contact with Him, He "released" the doves to their "freedom". And just like anybody who has been "touched" by Him does, the doves returned and sat in front of Him on the railings facing Him. There were smiles everywhere and a burst of applause too.

Swami called Mr. S.V. Giri and told him to announce that the morning session was now over and that the programme in the evening would begin at 4:00 p.m. That being done, Swami received Aarthi and retired for the morning.

In the afternoon Swami came in the car. The Institute Brass band had come dressed up as Gopalas. They had a programme unscheduled originally but scheduled by His Grace! Swami completed darshan rounds and sat on stage. The band programme began. It was innovative in the sense that it aimed at depicting the birth and childhood of Lord Krishna through small skits in the foreground as the band played in the background. They played the piece, "The Tempest" to depict Krishna's journey to Nanda Gokulam. Then it was two bhajans to show the rejoicing at His birth and the subsequent 'butter *leelas*'. Our dear Sai Krishna too had some plans of His own. He told the boys to stop the programme. Then He asked the drama scheduled to begin.

The drama was in Telugu and was performed by Bal Vikas children from Andhra Pradesh. The story revolved around a lad, Sri Hari, who is called *Anna* (big brother) by all in the locality where he polishes the shoes of school children. The father of one of the students condemns Hari and tells him that he better not associate with his son. What follows next are scenes where Sri Hari teaches profound lessons in humility and 'in'dependence as he reveals how Sathya Sai Baba with the gift of a tricycle and the spiritual gifts of faith and self confidence, has made

him whatever he is today. The play was interspersed with dances to highlight the theme and these were very tastefully choreographed. Swami blessed all the participants with Abhayahasta at the end of the play and said that He was very happy.

Then came a bolt from the Saffron shall we say! Swami asked for the discourse table to be brought. He then rose to speak and there was excited applause at this unexpected shower of Love! He said:

*“Sathya (Truth) alone is responsible for the creation, sustenance and mergence of the whole universe. It is all pervasive. It is the Shuddha Satwa (Pure Principle). It is like the pure golden linga that Swami often takes out during Sivarathri. (At this point, Swami waved His hand and showed a golden linga for all to see and there is applause.) All the forms here also are manifestations of that pure principle itself. That came as Vishnu in the Krita Yuga, as Rama in the Treta and as Krishna in the Dwapara. Seeta always had one pointed attention on Rama. She kept seeing the one in all beings and had Rama in her thoughts always. For her, except Rama there was nothing else in the world. That oneness is the Suvarna (gold).*

*Gold has 24 carats and then alone is it Poornam (complete). It was during the times of Morarji Desai that 14 carat gold too came into existence and thus the gold value diluted. God has 16 aspects and then alone it is the Poorna Tatwam. Others do not have these 16 aspects. In Dwapara, none recognised Krishna's divinity. He was barely 7 when he did the leelas with the gopikas. It was like playing with one's mother but people criticize him telling that he went after women. He is the ideal. Krishna was the ideal man in Dwapara while Seeta was the ideal woman in Treta.*

*God incarnates for the sake of devotees and to set man's mind right. In Dwapara, Kuchela was a poor brahmin but was always immersed in the thoughts of the Lord. His children kept asking him for food as they were hungry. But he always kept his faith and sang out, “You are beyond all word and description. You protected Pandavas, satisfied Kuchela and even Kubera.” Krishna and Rama are the only two avatars accompanied by women. No other avatar has been so. But God is always One and has no second.*

*Dasharatha is one who has ten senses. He had three wives, Kausalya, Sumitra and Kaikeyi. The children were Rama, Bharata, Lakshmana and Shatrughna with Rama's sister, Shanta. Dasharatha did not get a child from Kausalya and so he married Sumitra. In those days one had to take the permission of the other wife before remarrying. So when he asked Kausalya, she said, ‘Go ahead by all means. It is necessary to have an heir to the throne.’ And so he wedded Sumitra. Sumitra means a good friend and she was a good friend to all. When there were no children, with the permission of both the wives, he married Kaikeyi. She was from Kashmir. She put a condition, ‘Since you are marrying me to*



*get an heir to the throne, promise me that my child alone will be the heir to the throne.' He promised her. There were no children again. And so the Putrakaameshti yagna (Sacrifice to beget children) was done. The pudding that emerged from that was distributed to the three wives.*

*Sumitra was heart broken. 'Kausalya's child will have right over the throne by the virtue of she being the senior most queen and Kaikeyi's child too will have a right as she has elicited a promise. What about mine?' Lamenting thus, she went to the terrace to dry her hair. Those days there were no electric fans or hair dryers! As she was doing that, an eagle came and picked up her share of the pudding. It carried it to the hills where Anjana Devi was praying. She partook it and gave birth to Hanuman! Sumitra then went to her co-sisters. They both then gave her a part of their pudding. Thus the children were born. Lakshmana, born out of Kausalya's part was always attracted to Rama and Shatrughna, similarly, was attracted to Bharata.*

*Even when it was so, while passing through the forest once, Lakshmana began to scold Rama as to why they alone had to suffer for no fault of theirs? That was because of that place being the home of many demons. Once they moved out of that place, Rama lovingly explained that to him. That is why one must always keep good company. The three of them settled in the beautiful forest. The Sarayu River too was nearby. At that time Sita saw the golden deer. After having renounced all the pleasures of Ayodhya, was she the one to run after the deer? No. It was all part of a plan. It also shows that if you go after Kama (desire), you will move away from Rama (God). That is why, less luggage, more comfort makes travel a pleasure. Lakshmana faithfully guarded her till she taunted him and flung insults at him at not going to Rama's aid. He drew a line and advising her not to cross it, and then left. But Ravana in the guise of a begging mendicant, kidnapped her.*

*In the war on Lanka, Lakshmana fainted. Hanuman went and instead of a single plant, got the whole mountain! As he was flying over Ayodhya, Bharata saw him and wondered, "Who is this flying monkey?" When Hanuman came down and related all details, even Sumitra and Lakshmana's wife, Urmila, were also present. The noble Sumitra said, "If Lakshmana has fallen, then take my other son there. Rama will take care of everything I know. I am so happy that my son is of service to Rama." That was their nobility!*

*Finally with the killing of Indrajit, the war almost came to a close. Vibheeshana told Rama that the secret to kill Ravana was to shoot at his thumb. The fatal arrow brought a lot of joy to the monkeys. They all began to jump up to have a glimpse of Mother Sita. Rama told them that they must all fetch firewood. Sita had to undergo the trial by fire. The Lord of the Fire himself came and testified to Rama that Sita was pure. He said, "Oh Rama! You are all knowing. Do you not know about the purity of Mother Sita?" Rama replied, "I never doubted her chastity*

*but I wanted to prove to the world what an ideal woman she is." At this all the monkeys applauded. (The whole Kulwant hall also applauded!) When Rama returned to Ayodhya, all the people sang joyously - Rama Kodanda Rama. (At this point Swami sang the whole song and there was a very energetic following of the bhajan. )*

*Rama, Krishna, Sai Rama, Sai Krishna - all are one and the same. Take any name. The Ramayana is a very sacred story. What I narrated now is true - all other versions have a lot of imagination too. Sing bhajans."*

After the discourse, bhajans continued. Swami blessed prasadam for all. Then after a while, as He sat, He took the lingam in His left hand. Then, He slowly put it into His mouth and sipped water. After a short while, He turned to those seated near and said, "It has gone back in." Then He went to the car and retired for the day.

### **6 September 2007: Pandari Bhajan Group from Nellore**

Thousands of devotees from the Nellore district of Andhra Pradesh had thronged the holy hamlet of Puttaparthi to have darshan in the first week of September. After the Nalgonda district, it was the turn of Nellore district devotees to arrive in strength at Prashanthi Nilayam! First, the Pandari Bhajan group of the Nellore district got a chance to perform in the Divine Presence after Swami decided to sit out and watch them. After His evening darshan round in the car, Swami asked for the group's performance, and the central part of Sai Kulwant Hall was quickly cleared for the programme to commence at 4 p.m. Immediately, men dressed in white and orange took centre stage. The songs were all so simple and in rustic tongue. The dance steps too were very simple. But Swami sat watching it, engrossed in their feelings. In between, He went into the interview room for a short while, but returned soon to watch the Pandari bhajans again.

After 45 minutes of vigorous and enthusiastic dancing around the accompanists at the centre of a circle, Swami blessed the group with clothes. He personally handed over white cloth pieces to each member who performed. All were dripping in sweat after their spirited effort but Swami's response ensured that every drop of sweat was "worth its salt"! Swami then called out to the leader of the bhajan group. Well, being a former leader of His own Pandari bhajan group, Swami knows the effort involved in leading such a group! He materialised a chain for him. The beautiful moment came when a few moments later, Swami called him again and gifted him with the photo of him receiving the chain also. He was doubly delighted. Then Prof. Anil Kumar was asked to speak briefly, and he announced the staging of a drama by the Nellore devotees the next day. Bhajans began in the Bhajan Hall, with Bhagavan seated there till Arati at 5:40 pm.

### **7 September 2007: Dance Drama "Archana" performed by Nellore Devotees**

As announced the previous day, the Balvikas children from Nellore staged a classical dance drama "Archana" on the evening of 7 September. The forty minute programme got underway at 4.10 pm when Bhagavan came on stage. The protagonist, who had the same name as the drama, offers her dance to Bhagavan, interacts with inspirational devotees of the Lord like Thyagaraja and Pundarika and ultimately ends up free of a debilitating disease. She learns many lessons from each of these exalted devotees of the Lord. Thyagaraja teaches her that to chant His wonderful name and see Him alone in all things animate and inanimate is the only way out of this world of misery. Pundalika teaches her reverence of one's parents can lead one to God. In the process, she is not only spiritually uplifted but also physically cured.

The drama brought out a subtle point that spiritual health is of paramount importance. When that is all fine, physical and mental health follows like a shadow. The Lord and Lord alone is the greatest panacea for all troubles. Swami blessed the little girl who played the main role with a chain at the end of the programme which uplifted her spiritually and otherwise! Swami also came down to pose for group photos with the children. He was so sweet as He directed the photographers to three different angles to ensure that all the children were covered. Prasadam was distributed, and Bhajans were in the Sai Kulwant Hall itself. Swami asked for the singers to come out and seat themselves in the hall. The bhajans went on for about twenty minutes and after that Swami received Aarthi and left.

### **11 September 2007: Indoor Stadium Badminton Match**

In the afternoon, the indoor stadium was lit up with several stars from the galaxy of Indian sportsmen. The top players of the badminton fraternity had arrived in Puttaparthi to play a series of friendly matches. The 1st, 2nd and 3rd ranked Indian players had come along with the top Junior players and the top doubles pair in India.

All the students had assembled in the indoor stadium by 1:00pm. The matches started soon. It was a nice experience for Puttaparthi to witness the power and speed of shuttle badminton. An international referee was also present. The games were thrown open for all to see and the stadium was slowly filling up with ladies and gents. There were two singles matches which were won by Anoop Shreedhar and Chetan Anand respectively. Then there was a short break. Swami was expected to the stadium at 4:00 pm and He was there promptly on time.

New energy seemed to be breathed in into the stadium as He came. He moved along the lines of students who were seated on the floor and then came to the lined up players. Pullela Gopichand was the first to

bow down to him and he was followed by all of the others. Everyone seemed eager to touch His feet and He was smiling beautifully to all. Then He went to the place that had been specially "cordoned" off for Him and the play began.

Gopichand teamed up with the Sanave Thomas, India's no.1 doubles player against the No.2 and No.3. The match began in right earnest and Swami was absorbed seeing the play. It was such a cute sight to behold. Swami's Head going to and fro depending on the speed of the shuttlers just like a small innocent child would watch! He keenly watched every move as the first set was taken by Gopichand's team. The second set was taken by the other pair and so the final set became more thrilling. The beauty of the doubles match was that it was much faster and reflexive compared to the singles. The match was heavily encouraged. Somehow the applause gets harder and the cheering louder when Swami is around! After the third set was won again by Gopichand and Sanave in a closely fought encounter, Swami called all the players.

They all went and knelt before Him. Swami created vibhuti for all of them and gave it in their palms. Seeing that it was a little less, He materialised vibhuti again and applied it too on one of the player's forehead. He saw the gold chain around Gopichand's neck and reminisced as to how He had given it to him. Gopichand smiled and touched His feet. Swami then posed for group photos with all the players. He blessed both Anoop and Chetan for their finals. Then He went to the car and returned to Mandir. Bhajans went on in Mandir till about 6:05 pm. Swami then received Aarthi and left.

### **15 September 2007: Ganesh Chaturthi Celebrations**

15 September dawned as the holy day of Ganesh Chaturthi, a very important day all over India. The Lord in His elephantine form is worshipped as the remover of all obstacles. And so a festive atmosphere pervaded Prashanti Nilayam. It had been charged the previous day evening by a series of significant events. Swami had come at 5:15 p.m. during the bhajans and had gone straight to the bhajan hall. After the bhajans, He sat through the whole Aarthi and then waved His hand in benediction as *Loka Samasta...* was going on. Then He had enquired as to what songs would be sung the next day and seemed to be lost in a kind of serene bliss. He left but before that had said, "Vinayaka is here" as if Lord Ganesha was present in the hall witnessing all that was going on. Then He had retired.

In the morning, Swami came out at about 9:15 a.m. Instead of the ritual Veda chanting, the notes of the Ganesh Gayatri followed by the Ganashtakam rent the air. Swami completed the darshan rounds and then went into the interview room. After a short while, He came out and then sat in the wheel sofa on stage. Songs continued. There were three group songs and more than five individual songs. Swami sat through

listening to all of them. After about 45 minutes, He directed that prasadam could be brought and distributed. There were two kinds - a sweet and another, a packet containing oval toffees. He opened the toffee packet and checked them! Then He beckoned to the primary students sitting nearby and told them to start distributing. He also called all the children holding cards and began to view them.

In the meanwhile, the songs concluded and Ganesh bhajans began. The bhajans had a very enthusiastic following. Swami kept seeing all the cards and He also gave every child who went near Him a sweet in His own 'sweet' manner. More than thirty children must have walked up the steps to Him expectantly and then walk down those very steps with satisfaction and a smile. After blessing all of them, Swami sat enjoying the bhajans. Then He received Aarthi and left. The time was about 10:50 am.

Near the Yajur Mandir, Swami blessed huge Ganesha statues that had been specially procured and then each statue was sent to its destination (the different schools, colleges and other institutions) - one being kept near the Ganesh temple at the entrance of Prashanti Nilayam.

In the evening, Swami came out at about 4:45 pm. He went around in the car for the darshan rounds and then at 5:00 pm, went into bhajan hall for bhajans, retiring after Aarthi.

### **16 September 2007: Swami Blesses Physically Challenged People from West Godavri**

The morning of September 16, was one that touched the hearts and made one and all feel the impact of His Pure Love. Swami came out for darshan as bhajans began at about 9:15 a.m. There was an assembly of devotees from West Godavari. Special mention must be made that the devotees and doctors there had carried out a very noble venture of fitting people who had lost their legs with artificial limbs that had literally, and figuratively, made them stand on their own feet! They had been seated in the marble blocks on chairs and Swami directly went amidst them. The wheeled sofa was taken along the lines they were seated and Swami was continuously smiling and blessing them. He first went from front to back, interacting with them and enquiring of their welfare. These people truly were doubly "gifted" with a new lease of life!

He then came to the front, where the first row of these "gifted" people was seated and began speaking to them. He enquired as to where they had come from. One of them took out a photo from his pocket. It was a picture of how he was before. The legs were not present even up to the knees. And he now stood before Swami, eyes filled with gratitude and hands folded in surrender. Swami took the photo into His hands and saw what was and is. Then encircling His palm, He created a green diamond ring for the person. He asked for cloth pieces to be brought

and personally gave it to them. He lovingly interacted with all of them and it was such a touching experience for all concerned - the onlookers, the recipients and for Swami too. He then went over to the ladies side half of the marble block. He created another ring for a person there and put it on his ring finger. As He sat watching all of them getting prasadam and clothes, some of them got so overwhelmed, that they came up to the front and fell at His feet. As He blessed them, He very compassionately said, "I will come to you. You need not make that effort." (Isn't this a statement of profound implications!)

Swami kept watching them all so silently. He was sitting facing them in the front. It was a beautiful scene and one wished that time would just freeze and preserve that feeling-filled scene for eternity. A serene smile now danced on His face. He seemed to gaze not only at them but somewhere deep within them too. After a while, He went on stage. As He got there, He said that He would speak to all of them and so the mikes were brought out. Given below is the full transcript of His discourse (which did not have real time translation.) He said,

*"Embodiments of love, today, it is a very joyous day. The body is made up of many parts. Only when all the parts function properly we can perform our duties. In any country, in any situation, to carry out any work, our body is very important. So we should take care of our body. We are being very careless with our body because of which we face many difficulties and we become dependent on others. If we want to be independent we have to take care of each and every part of our body so that they function properly.*

*The doctors who have given you these artificial limbs are very noble people. Without those doctors, you would not have received these limbs. So, each one of you has to take care of your limbs. Every human being is able to live because of these body parts. The eye sees, the mind comprehends and it is expressed through speech and the ear hears. But in all this there is only one principle and that is divinity. Mamaivaamso jeeva loke jeeva bhutah sanaatanaha (The One has become many). With so much of hope you came here and you are so happy now. This is your home and I am yours. Please do not have any hesitation as to how to come here, how to see Swami? Don't have such hesitation. Come whenever you want. Speak to Swami and go back happily. There is no difficulty.*

*You be brave. Shraddavan labhate gnaanam. (One who is steadfast attains knowledge). That wisdom is not the one which we have. It is the spiritual wisdom which comes from divinity. With this divine wisdom we come to know that God is there in every one. You go on saying this is my leg, my hand etc....when you are saying it is yours, then who are you? You are THAT and that THAT is nothing but divinity. Don't forget divinity and always remember God.*

*When you remember God and think of Him let there be any difficulty you will win over them. When you have God's power with you, you will*

*win over every thing. Even if you have all other things like wealth, education, etc., if you don't have God's grace, then all else is a waste. So pray for God's grace and do namasmarana and I bless that you and all your family members may have a happy and peaceful life.*

*The doctors who have helped you for giving you these limbs are very noble ones. They have taken many troubles to do this help for you. Now also they are planning many other things. Implement all those plans. For all those things I will also help you. I extend my full support to you. Loka samastha sukhino bhavantu (May everybody in all the worlds be happy). Only when all are fine will you also be fine. Do not think that you are some where and they are some elsewhere. Everyone is interconnected. For everyone there is only one leader. And He is God. And He is the Atma swaroopa. So have self-confidence and carry out all your functions and He will take care of all the things. If you have confidence on God, you will develop love and with that love you will gain truth and the combination of love and truth leads you to righteousness. Love is within us and in the same way God is also with in us. If you think of **that** God you can come over all the difficulties.*

*I hope that these kinds of difficulties never trouble you again in any birth. Many difficulties come and go. They are like passing clouds. Don't brood over them. When you don't brood over them, they will go away by themselves. See me now. Once I fell down and 4 bones were broken. They said they want to bandage it. I did not allow them to do it. I have been like that only and it will surely go. Again in Kodaikanal I slipped. They told me to take the help of some people. There is no need to take any help from any one. With courage and patience you have to lead your life, God is there to help us.*

*India has helped so many countries. Our country, our land, our language - Keep that honour for your country. Even if there are some difficulties in your family don't get troubled mentally. When you think of God and leave everything to him all will go well.*

*Seeing you all here I am very happy. When you all are happy, only then can I also be happy. When you are not happy, how can I be happy? It is not possible. I bless that you all be happy and blissful throughout your lives.*

After the discourse, Swami continued to speak but the mikes had been removed! Swami said that the mikes were not good and He called Anil Kumar Sir to tell in brief all that He had said. But with a torrential flow, the professor not only summarised the discourse, but also captured the gratitude and feelings of all the assembled devotees. Prof Anil kumar spoke about the grandeur of Swami's trip to West Godavari in 1984. He also appreciated the service activities done by these districts and offered heartfelt gratitude on behalf of all the West Godavari devotees. He also went on to recollect how Swami gave bliss to so many people in this district by even addressing them late in the night. He also shared

in English to all assembled what Swami spoke in His discourse a few minutes ago, especially regarding the importance of this human body and how it should be used for divine purpose and not to waste in mundane activities. After that, Swami asked for bhajans to be sung. After the students had sung three bhajans, the devotees from West Godavari took over and their group sang a few more bhajans with vigour and zeal. Swami then had prasadam distributed and left, after receiving Aarthi, at about 11:00 am!

### **September 17, 2007 – Ganesha Idols Immersion Day**

Monday, September 17, was the day when Swami had said that all the Ganesha statues must be immersed. Much work of preparations were undertaken by the students and staff of all the institutions at Parthi. The Vidyagiri stadium had become home to the students who had become artisans designing vehicles for Lord Ganesha's journey. One could see the Harry Potter influence on school children as the main chariot was shaped like that of the Tri-Wizard tournament cup! There was also the Hogwarts shield as one of the palanquins. Apart from these, there was a chariot that was aptly named "Ekadanta Express" and was shaped like a train engine. A huge urn (sacred pot) was the theme of the Institute chariot. There were flowery chariots and the Ganesha temple at Prashanti Nilayam entrance had been beautifully replicated as the Central Trust chariot. (The descriptions here are only a few of the numerous chariots and palanquins that wended their way to the mandir.)

The roads had not only been washed by the heavy rains, they had clogged too! Everything everywhere was wet but nothing seemed to dampen the spirits of the students and staff as they walked in the procession singing bhajans and chanting vedas in full gusto. Within an hour, the Mandir had a transformed look. It looked like the divine forces had gathered on some ethereal battlefield - battling to win the Lord's Grace and Love. Swami came out at 4:40pm. He preferred to come on the wheel sofa rather than the car. He went around slowly looking at all the assembled chariots. The labour of Love seemed to be paid back in full with the look of Love. The head priests of each chariot went up to Swami with an idol of Ganesha and Swami blessed them. Swami also blessed the prasadam at many chariots.

The whole exercise of making these chariots is so spiritual. The central theme of the Bhagavad Gita is Karma Phala Tyaaga (renouncing the fruit of action - action without expectation.) This chariot making seems to embody that philosophy. Everybody sweats and toils - days and nights - to get beautiful chariots ready for Ganesha. The glory and grandeur of the chariots lasts only a few hours during the procession. Once the immersion ceremony is over, the chariots are just forgotten. Nobody seems to cringe or cry that such a mammoth effort is not being preserved. It is often missed but a real powerful example of detachment and renunciation. And all the effort is just to make Swami happy. It



would indeed be an uplifting experience if we make our lives into one big chariot making ceremony.

Swami completed a full round and then took His place on the stage. He said that it was getting late and the idols should be taken for immersion. One by one in a disciplined manner, each chariot was brought front and displayed before Swami. Swami would bless the chariot and then they would be taken away. Each group seemed to adopt its own unique way of offering obeisances to Swami. Some of them fell fully prostrate on the floor. There was a lion dance by one group, loud bhajans by another and a U shaped formation by some others. But the love, devotion and enthusiasm were all the common factors. By about 5:15 pm, all the chariots were on their way to the immersion pond. Boys rushed in to fill the place that had been kept vacant to accommodate the chariots.

The Veda chanting went on. It now seemed to be resounding as all the boys chanted with renewed vigour that comes when God sits in your midst. Swami was very insistent that the boys who had gone for the immersion should be back in the Mandir soon. What could be seen on His face was motherly concern and care. It had been raining very heavily the last few days in the evening and Swami wanted to be done with the immersion as soon as possible. He blessed prasadam to be distributed. Seeing the sweet packets in the hands of the students in the first row, He signaled them to eat them and have fun! Then, saying that He would be back soon, Swami left for Yajur Mandir. Bhajans began. Messages were sent that Swami wanted all the boys back in Mandir soon. A steady stream of boys began trickling into the Kulwant Hall. As per His word, Swami came out at about 6:00pm again and went into the bhajan hall. He once again came out on the wheel sofa as if to confirm whether all the boys had returned. He went around wearing a beautiful and fulfilling smile. All present were indeed fortunate to have God coming out to have their darshan literally, for He wanted to ensure that all were safe and happy.

There are so many things that God need never do at all. He has no duties or responsibilities. He has complete freedom. And yet, when out of sheer Love for all of us, He goes out of His way to do things, one cannot help feeling touched. That same sensation welled up in anyone who sat seeing Swami going around at 6:15pm. Swami never tires of doing the same things over and over again - year after year. Ever-fresh - that must be one of the foremost qualities of Love.

Then at about 6:20 pm, Swami received Aarthi and then retired.

**23 September, 2007: Divine Distribution for the Needy and Cultural programme, "Neti Yashoda Karnam Subamma", from devotees of Mahaboobnagar District.**

The whole of Andhra Pradesh seems to be arriving district-wise to see Swami. The devotees from Mahaboobnagar had arrived in huge numbers and Swami had permitted them to put up a cultural programme entitled, " Neti Yashoda Karnam Subamma."

Swami came out for Darshan at 4:15pm on the wheel sofa. The stage had already been set for the drama. He seemed totally uninterested in taking letters as He allowed His gaze to move over the thousands who had gathered. A gentle divine detachment spread over His face. At one corner of the gents block were tricycles, sewing machines, mechanic kits and computers which were to be given away to some identified needy people. He passed by them and then went through the gents side. Then, as He was passing by the birthday students, He went towards them. He blessed all the birthday boys by accepting their letters, cloves and showering the holy grains( Akshata ) on them. After a very brief peep into the interview room, He came on to the stage. He sat for a while and then suddenly He did something that made all of us feel that the detachment He had displayed earlier was a Masterplan to shower greater Love on all assembled.

He seemed dissatisfied with the darshan He had granted! He said that He wanted to go down again. As He descended from the centre path, He began another round in the reverse direction this time. Everyone delighted at this special bonanza. The birthday boys got their second round of blessings and all those who had felt only "partially" blessed must have felt fulfilled. Swami then took a turn into the portico from the region where old students sit and there were slight looks of disappointment on some of the devotees' faces. Swami went through the portico towards the interview room. And from there, He went to the ladies side! It appeared that Swami was stalling the proceedings and also granting precious closeness to all the devotees. What was He waiting for?

Swami went around the ladies side and came to the gents side again. Now He seemed very deeply interested in the service offerings of the devotees. He looked at the tricycles etc. and also spoke to the devotees there. He found out all the details of how the distribution was being done. There was a monk in orange with whom Swami spoke for quite some time. After that, Swami moved into the gents side and there was a burst of applause. Disappointment that a few had felt earlier seemed to give way to His-appointment. This time, Swami went through collecting letters and blessing everyone.

He once again came to the region where the birthday boys were seated. They seemed to be at their wits end! Swami was near them again and they had nothing else on their person to get blessed! Really

when it rains, it showers. They sat with folded hands as Swami passed by them. Swami was all smiles as He neared the Vedam group again. There was a sudden onrush. The Primary school students had arrived. Swami's face lit up even more and it looked as though He was waiting for them to arrive. He went through them and spoke to some of the kids before settling on the stage once again.

Before the cultural programme, representatives for each type of token of Love - tricycle, computer, mechanic kit and sewing machine - were called out and it was announced that all of them would be later distributed with the blessings of Bhagawan. The representative chosen to receive the tricycle was so excited that he came straight to Swami on all fours. Swami tried to indicate to someone to help him but they were all a bit slow and he was very fast in his enthusiasm to get to Swami. He offered Him a rose and his salutations. Swami immediately materialised a gold chain for him. One person came forward to help him up as Swami put the chain around his neck.

It was such a perfect display of spontaneity from both sides - the natural attraction that exists between the Lord and His devotees. The other representatives too came up one by one and received blessings from Swami. A lady who came to receive the sewing machine was so touched that she almost broke down in front of Swami. Offering a rose, she accepted the sewing machine and went back to her place.

Then the programme began. Swami seemed very interested in it, for it was on Karnam Subamma. In the beginning was a small dance by the Sathya Sai Vidya Vihar. Then the Bal Vikas children took over. The drama began with a depiction in the Dwapara Yuga where Yashoda has come to know that her little Krishna has to go to Mathura and that his real mother is in fact Devaki. She is very sad and asks whether she is not blessed to be his mother. Krishna says that she is as much a mother for him as Devaki and also promises her that He needs a mother just like that in the Kali Yuga when He would come again.

The drama then depicted the sweet story of Divine love between little Sathya and Subamma. Subamma has no children of her own and so she takes Sathya as her child. Everyday she searches for him to feed him. But Swami always offers to His friends before eating Himself and so she is forced to cook on a large scale always. She witnesses the glory and grandeur of the Pandhari Bhajan group and convinced of Swami's divinity, she even enters the Harijanwada (where the "untouchables" live) with Swami. When people tell her that being a brahmin she would lose her caste, she says that only Swami is valuable for her. If she has Him with her, she has nothing to lose in life and without Him everything is lost.

That scene was so poignant and pregnant with message. Swami let out His emotion as He saw that scene. Some said that Swami was being touched by her feelings. One senior devotee put it beautifully, "Swami is

overwhelmed because inspite of Him exhorting the same message throughout His life, people do not seem to realise it and they give up God for the world. He feels very sad for them in His love."

The drama concluded with Swami raising Subbamma from the dead and granting her the greatest fortune of Darshan and pouring Tulsi (Basil leaf) water into her mouth to signal her merging in Him. As the final song was on, Swami called "Subbamma" and created a green diamond ring for her. He then went down to pose for group photos. He then began to distribute sarees for everyone. He saw the girl who acted as little Sathya and called 'him' near. He made 'him' sit by His side and told 'him' to pose to the cameras! After giving sarees to all, He asked 'him', "Will you wear shorts and shirt?" It was such a sweet question and surely Swami must have been a little nostalgic of His Sathya days!

Swami then distributed white cloth pieces to all the boys. He blessed all and then went into the interview room for a short while. He came out and asked for Aarthi. He sat for the full Aarthi and at the end of it blessed the children again with both hands and then retired to Yajur Mandir.

### **26 September, 2007 – Programme by Sai Youth of UP and Uttaranchal**

Early in the afternoon, it became known that Swami had blessed the Sathya Sai Youth of Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand to put up a programme in front of Him in the evening. The youth were galvanised and they quickly went about putting up the screen which was to be their only prop. Swami came out for darshan at about 4:00pm. He came in the car and there was a kind of traditional bugle and drums that began playing a rhythm. Swami took a detour after the ladies side and came near the interview room. From there, He came straight out.

When He came and sat in the marble portico, He noticed that the Primary school block was empty. He wanted them also to be present in the Mandir so that they would be able to witness the programme. He was actually about to halt the vedam so that the programme could begin, but He halted Himself instead and every now and then kept asking whether the children had come. Very often, we hear that Swami spends almost all His time thinking of His students. Here was an example for all to see. Swami, in fact, went into the interview room to wait for the Primary children.

The relationship between a student and Swami is so special for both of them and the intimacy and connection becomes so special for all those who are watching too. Swami does nothing without the students. Any project He takes up, any trip He goes on, any program that He witnesses - you name it - the students are an integral part of it. Is Swami attached? No way. But it is a beautiful lesson on how He expects His students to lead their lives. He too should be a part of

anything that they take up. Swami should be the only constant in our changing lives. Whomsoever manages to do that are alone truly His students, for hadn't He Himself said once, "I know that you are a student of Sathya Sai College, but you should also become a Sai Student."

Soon the students from Primary School arrived and so did Swami. He came out and asked for the programme to begin immediately! The programme was entitled "Mahasu Ki Mahima." Mahasu is another form of Lord Shiva. The initial roses and cards were offered to Swami and then the programme began. It was a play based on the culture of Jaunsar Bawar, a tribal area in the western part of Uttarakhand. With Bhagawan's clarion call of Grama Seva, the Sai youth go to the Jaunsar area with the VIP plan. VIP here stands for Village Integration Programme and consists of the package - child care, women and men care, critical care, youth care, educare, medicare, animal care, agricultural care, spiritual care, social care and special care. While engaged in this seva, the youth are impressed by the simplicity and value based traditions and customs of the villagers.

The story of how the region was freed from the terror of the demon Karmasur by Lord Mahasu was depicted. Apart from this, the Palki Nritya (the dance with a palanquin of Lord Shiva), the Harul Nritya (a traditional dance performed on festivals conveying many teachings like Love for God and fear of sin) and the Pandav Nritya (dance by the five Pandava brothers and Draupadi as part of the simple depiction of the Mahabharata) were also part of the evening programme.

After the programme concluded, the performers made a kind of formation and were singing aloud a song. Swami called the State President and materialised a green diamond ring for him. He then called the children in the front line and materialised Vibhuti for them. The participants were overjoyed at this sign of Grace. Swami then told that He would distribute cloth pieces to all. He personally gave cloth pieces to each and every participant.

It was a comic sight to see "Draupadi" receiving shirt and pant pieces! After 15 minutes of distribution, Swami topped the cake of Grace with His special icing. He told everyone to sit neatly around and that He would come down for a group photo! He went down and insisted that He would stand so that He would be clearly seen in the picture. After that He came on stage and asked them, "You know bhajans? Sing then!" There were three or four bhajans. As Swami signaled for Aarthi, the group photo taken was given to Him and He in turn gave it to "Draupadi" who was thrilled. He then received Aarthi and left.

## **SWAMI AND ME**

### **THE COSMIC LION'S ROAR**

**By G S Srirangarajan**

**This is the transcript of the talk delivered by Mr G S Srirangarajan, a former student and currently a faculty member in the School of Business Management, Accounting and Finance of Sri Sathya Sai University, on August 23, 2007 in the Divine Presence in Prasanthi Nilayam.**

Bhagavan says that this entire Universe arises from the mind. *Mano Moolam Idam Jagat*. Therefore, needless to say, all the problems that arise in this manifest world are ultimately related to the mind. The only aspect that separates a human being from His own Truth, from God is his mind. If we were to think deeply, we would realize that the purpose of all religions, the purpose of all spiritual practices, be it the *Karma*, *Bhakti* or the *Jnana Marga* – are all associated with just one objective – mastery over the mind; so as to turn the mind inwards and realize one's own true Self.

If this is the essence of all spiritual practices and the secret of our bondage and freedom, obviously this becomes the very purpose for which the Cosmic Lord comes down in a human form – to correct man, to transform him – which in essence means turn his mind inwards and make him realize his own true nature.

How does Bhagavan accomplish this feat? Once a devotee prayed to Swami, "Swami you say that this whole world is nothing but a projection of our mind and is therefore nothing but a dream. But you too have taken a Form in this dream, so are you also not a part of this dream?" Bhagavan smiled and replied, "Yes my dear, I too am part of your dream. But I am like the roaring lion in the dream. My roaring will wake you up from this dream unto reality!"

Let us have a glimpse of how Bhagavan – the Cosmic Lion roars and wakes each one of us into the reality of our own Self. The roar could come in any form. It could be a dream, a smile, a deep look, a conversation, a single word, even a whisper or even His Silence! Let me take recourse to a few conversations that I have had with Bhagavan and some that I have heard in the last few years at His Lotus Feet, to illustrate how He wakes us up from our deep slumber.

#### **Where Am I From?**

The most common conversation that I have heard between Bhagavan and a devotee in the Mandir verandah is Swami asking the devotee, "Where do you come from?" Invariably, the devotee replies: "Swami, Canada", "Swami from Delhi", "Swami, Italy" and so on. But this dialogue goes on every day and often one starts wondering as to why Swami asks the same question every time. Does He not know where we come from and why the same question

again and again? Later, we understood that Swami does this to set us on the path of introspection. We start thinking, “Hey what is wrong with my answer? What does Swami expect from me?” Thus begins our inward journey, a journey of self introspection wherein the mind is used as the instrument to turn itself within and look for a deeper meaning and purpose in life.

Now we all know that an appropriate answer to this question is, “Swami I have come from you.” Many devotees have given this answer and we have seen a blissful smile on Bhagavan’s face. But well, you can never outsmart Him. When I discovered this answer I got fully prepared for the situation, if at all it would arise; and arise it did. One day, it was Darshan time. Bhagavan came towards me and asked, “Where do you come from?” With great joy and a sense of pride for I was well prepared, I replied, “Swami, I have come from you.” Immediately, I saw a frown on Swami’s face instead of the blissful smile that I expected and He said, “That is different *saar*, which place do you come from?” I knew I was caught. Whom was I talking to? The indweller of my heart. How could I play with Him? Swami wishes that the answer must come as a result of deep self enquiry and not merely from the tip of our lips! The journey inwards has to be undertaken.

### **‘You Are God’**

There are several occasions when Swami has even asked many devotees, “Who are you?” I remember one occasion when we all were seated right over here. Swami was floating amidst us slowly with a beautiful smile on His face. As He just came close to me, He turned to a M.Sc. student sitting just opposite to me, and asked him very casually, “Who are you?” The student was taken by surprise and remained dumbfounded. Bhagavan patted his cheek and very naturally, with a spontaneous ease He said, “You are God.” It was as simple as it would be for us to look at this mike and say ‘this is a mike’ or look at a table and say ‘this is a table’. The Truth is as clear as that to the Cosmic Lord, nay He is the Truth Himself and is revealing Himself – the true Self to all of us. This incident left a deep impression on that student and on many of us who heard those sweet words from Bhagavan’s lips.

### **A Bold Request**

For Bhagavan, the entire world is one unified entity and He sees nothing but His own Self everywhere. However, looking at His physical form, one gets so easily deluded in believing that He is just a human being like us. Bhagavan says that He comes down in a human form to live with us, laugh and talk with us, but at the same time He rises to the supreme heights to remind us of His reality and to take us along with Him. It has been a very common experience for we students to witness how Swami mingles with us and makes us feel so comfortable as though we are with our dearest friend and then suddenly through a single word or remark, He reminds us of His grand Truth and reality. Almost a decade ago, there was one undergraduate student from Delhi. He was the son of a temple priest and thanks to the past *samskaaras* and family upbringing, he was a very devoted and sincere student. He was a true *Jignasu* – a seeker of truth and had just one wish – to receive the grace of self

realization from the Lord. When he would talk to us, we would explain to him that this was not an overnight affair and one had to struggle a lot for it and so on.

One evening, it was Darshan time. This boy was seated in the first row across the passage where Swami used to come walking giving Darshan. I was seated a couple of rows behind him. As Swami came closer to the boys' section, suddenly, this boy knelt down on his knees and looked pleadingly towards Swami. Normally, unless Swami gives an indication – no student is expected to kneel down that way and so I was truly concerned as to what would he ask Swami, what would he do? The student in a loud voice – loud enough for all around to hear – without any hesitation or feeling of shyness, asked Swami, "Swami I want Self Realization!" We were shocked. How could this boy be so arrogant? What would Swami say? But it was too late to do anything and we just sat glued to our seat. What happens next? It was amazing! Swami comes close to the boy and in an equally loud voice promptly replies, "I will give!" Who other than the supreme Lord can dispense Self Realization – as simply as that – just like distributing chocolates! We all were stunned with Bhagavan's response and the mind received a strong jolt – once again turning inwards to proceed on its partially traveled journey. The Cosmic Lion had roared and woken us up! It was unto us now to keep awake or go back to our deep slumber.

### **A Child of God**

Once in an interview in Trayee Brindavan, Swami explained to us the meaning of true devotion. He said, "How can everybody simply claim that they are My devotees? It is I who must certify to that effect. You saying that 'Swami I am your devotee' is not as important as Me saying that you are My devotee." Bhagavan went on to say that, first we must say, "Swami, I am Yours." This is like sending a registered post to Bhagavan – not an ordinary registered post but registered post with acknowledgement due. Then, Bhagavan must tell us, "Yes, you are Mine!" This is like we receiving the receipt. Only then the relationship is complete. Having heard all this, I was deeply moved and this truth got embedded in my heart. Towards the end of the interview, Swami went around distributing Vibhuti Prasadam to all of us seated in the room. As He approached me, He asked like an ideal teacher conducting the test on the syllabus that He had just completed, "Who are you?" I was so happy to hear that and smilingly I replied, "Swami, I am Your son!" Immediately Swami shot back. What did He say? It was again His roar. He said, "No, do not say I am your son. *Son bhi ho sakta hai, daughter bhi ho sakta ha* – you may be a son or even a daughter. Say, I am Your child!" What pearls of wisdom! Bhagavan was, in one sentence taking us to the reality of our true Self – wherein we are neither male nor female. These attributes are all related to the body and not to the Atma. He wanted the mind giving this answer to keep the Atma as its reference point and not the perishable impermanent body. That is our Lord. How subtly but yet profoundly, He reminds us of our own Truth through every gesture and word of His!



## **Beauty is Within**

Another wonderful incident. This was in the Brindavan Campus college auditorium. Swami had just completed delivering His Discourse on the valedictory day of the Summer Course. Towards the end, He had materialized a beautiful diamond swan, which He related to the mythological story of Nala and Damyanti. But what was more joyous was that, Swami came walking across the auditorium, between every row of chairs, holding the diamond swan in His hand for all to see. What compassion and love - the Lord walking across every row of chairs in an auditorium. But would He waste this opportunity without giving one of His roars? Impossible.

As He came closer to where we all were seated, He stood for a while at one point. All of us craned our necks to catch a glimpse of that beautiful swan. Well, this was the right moment for Bhagavan. He withdrew the swan and as we all suddenly turned towards Him, He said, "That is only creation - who is the creator? You all are interested only in the creation, not the creator." Wow! That was like a lightning from the blue! Immediately, our mind did a summersault and went inwards to appreciate and feast on this wonderful statement made by Bhagavan. Do we all not get caught in this pretty trap of His? Bhagavan compares this to an aircraft and the pilot. He says that when a plane flies across the sky, we get so enamoured by its majesty, that we forget that there is a pilot who is inside the cockpit driving the aircraft. Bhagavan is the Cosmic Pilot who is driving the entire Universe.

Again and again, Swami propels our mind to turn inwards and again and again we bring it out and let it loose among the temptations of this attractive world. How painful must this task be for Him? As Bhagavan Himself says, "I alone know the agony of teaching you every step of the dance."

## **Who is Sai?**

How do we express our Love and gratitude to our dear Lord. Simple - by helping Him to facilitate this journey of ours. The journey may be painful, full of thorns and stones, but let us not complain. Let us bear all the difficulties for it is only after the heating, hammering and twisting that the gold is transformed into a beautiful jewel. Do we all not want to be instruments in His Divine Hands? Again, a beautiful episode and one of His Cosmic Roars. It was the Parthi interview room and all the MBA students were enjoying a beautiful interview with the Lord. Towards the end, all students started praying, "Swami, please make us your able instruments." Swami smiled and said, "That is My duty *saar*, that is My duty. You are all My instruments." Pointing at each one of us, He said, "You are My instrument, you are My instrument...." and finally pointing at His own body, Bhagavan said, "This too is My instrument!!" What? Our breath stopped for several moments. If this Divine body is also Your instrument, who are You Swami? Who are You Swami?

## The Player of the Flute

He is the ultimate reality, the Cosmic Self, the 'I' in each one of us. The bodies are just instruments in the hands of the Cosmic Self. We have no separate existence of ours. What we perceive and feel as a separate existence is only a delusion of the mind. Just one more roar of the Cosmic Lion and I shall stop. This was right here at one corner of the Mandir verandah. It was 5.15 pm and the flute recital had just begun. It was those days when before evening Bhajans, there would a 15 minutes flute recital inside the Bhajan Hall. One of my brothers was seated at the corner. Swami came walking towards him. The student folded his hands and knelt down. Swami asked him, "Where is this sound coming from?" Pointing to the speaker above, the student replied, "Swami the speaker is up here." Bhagavan smiled and said in a voice that all of us could hear – for the message was meant for all of us – "The speaker is outside here, but the actual player is inside." Saying so, He smiled and went further. The message was loud and clear. The real doer is within, and the body is just the instrument.

## A Startling Revelation

The earlier we embark on this inward journey, the better it is for us. Why? Swami Himself gives the answer, and this is not just a roar but this is like an atomic explosion which has to wake us up. The scene was the Bhajan Hall over here. The occasion – a surprise Divine Discourse to the staff of the Mudelahalli School and our Prasanthi Nilayam Hostel teachers. Bhagavan was talking about the Mahabharata and the episode where Lord Krishna reveals to Karna the truth that he was actually the brother of the Pandavas. We had heard Swami narrating this story before and hence we were anticipating further details from the Mahabharata story. But most stunningly, Bhagavan gave a sudden twist to the story and said,

"Understand that after Karna realized that the Pandavas were his brothers, he felt so sorry that he was fighting and causing them pain for so long. He was filled with uncontrollable grief. My dear ones, one day you too will realize that there is only One Self and that all the others around you are none other than your own reflections – reflections of the one Divine Self. At that moment, you too will feel immeasurable pain for having hated and caused harm to so many of your own reflections. Therefore, to avoid such a situation, realize now and at this moment that there only one Divine Self everywhere."

This alone is the solution to all the problems of the world. *Manomoolam Idam Jagat*. Therefore all the problems are related to the mind alone. *Mana Eva Manushyaanaam Kaaranam Bandha Mokshayoho*. This mind is the cause for both our bondage and our liberation. Turn it outwards and it binds us to the world, turn it inwards and it reveals to us our eternal Self and frees us forever. The mind when turned outwards sees diversity in unity, but when turned inwards, it perceives the grand unity in creation and nurtures a world full of love, peace and harmony. May I conclude by reminding one and all that our dear Lord Sai stands for SAI – See Always Inside. Jai Sai Ram.

## **HOW 'THE SAFFRON' SHAPED ME...**

**By Ms. Sutopa Sen**

**Ms. Sutopa Sen is a former student of the Sri Sathya Sai University, who completed her Bachelors and Masters in English from the Anantapur Campus in 1992. Currently residing in the UK, she works for the City of London Corporation and is an active member of the East London Sai Centre.**

It was the month of August; Swami was in residence and the ashram was a hive of frenzied activity. Back in the hostel at Anantapur just a few days earlier, the Warden's announcement at evening prayer about the intended trip to Prashanti Nilayam had been received with the usual excitement. It had been only four weeks since the last visit but it felt more like four, long months...

Morning darshan was now over, but Swami was still out on the verandah talking to the Primary School children and joking with lecturers. Suddenly He motioned to our Warden and gave her some brief instructions. Before we knew it, we were being asked to sit in lines, facing each other – as we always did when Swami was about to distribute some gift. On several occasions previously, we had received blouse pieces cut from Swami's robe, but we were yet to be the blessed recipients of a full robe. In the past, Swami had responded to our pleas sweetly explaining that if He gave us His robe we would probably put it on an altar and worship it, so a robe piece was much better. We had grown accustomed to this kind of "divine reasoning" which was usually met with shrieks of delight. I suppose we should have known then that He was only waiting for the right time.

### **'What Does Orange Mean?'**

A few moments later, boys emerged from Swami's room with armfuls of coloured robes. Within minutes, He was moving gracefully among us dropping various colours of silken cloth into our eager hands – pink, gold, white, bright yellow, deep red – we had never seen Swami wear these colours! As He approached my line, my heart was beating fast. Which colour would I receive? Within seconds, He was in front of me - His form enveloping my face in a haze of orange – and eyes full of intense love met mine for a lingering second, before He dropped a folded robe into my lap and moved on. It was several minutes before I finally looked down at the robe. Instead of fresh silk, I saw the familiar saffron terrycloth that was Swami's "everyday" wear and on closer inspection, I noticed it was well worn and laundered; there were even 2 stitches missing from the neckline! I soon realised that most of the girls had received crisp, new silken robes in beautiful, unusual shades. My heart was singing with joy at the thought that my gift had actually been worn by the Lord.

Once Swami had disappeared inside the Mandir, the excited chatter soon began; what colour have you got? Did Swami look at you? Did He smile? Did He speak to you? A few had taken it upon themselves to elaborate, announcing... 'Pink stands for Love, White symbolizes Purity, Red is for Auspiciousness...' "What is Orange for?" I interrupted. No one heard me. "What does Orange signify?" I persevered. **The girl next to me pulled herself away from her conversation and turned towards me, a sudden smile spreading across her face. "Saffron is for Sacrifice" she whispered, squeezing my arm.**

## **Out Into a Lonely World**

Seven years flew past and I eventually completed my education at Anantapur and returned to England to re-join my family, and resume my former life there. I naively assumed that on completing my education, my life as a student would be over. In actual fact, though the theory lessons were over, the practicals were just beginning! The road was hard, long and lonely and I felt ill equipped due to my lack of experience in all things worldly. I often tried to recall the words that had been spoken by Swami to my mother at the time of my admission to Anantapur... *"I'm going to look after your daughter, don't worry!"*

After such divine reassurance, surrendering the outcome of my life to the Divine Will should have been simple. Sadly, not so. Looking back, I recall how every event, every occurrence, every happening in my life was still being filtered by my ego, my intelligence, my personality, my understanding, my interpretation and my expectations! In short, the result of countless lifetimes had created this "I" which was ruling my reactions to everything, and Swami's words of re-assurance were cast into the shadow as attempts to surrender to Him were short-lived. To make things worse, Swami seemingly pulled back into the darkness during this time and stopped appearing in my dreams as well. I searched for Him frantically – to no avail. My loneliness was complete. Satsang, particularly bhajan singing and reading Sathya Sai literature seemed to be the lifeline for me during this period of my life. I would regularly be invited to speak at various Sai centres across the UK about my experiences as a Sai student and these visits never failed to instruct and uplift me.

The culmination of this activity was being asked to speak in front of Swami as a Messenger of Sathya Sai on the Annual day in December 2006. For over a week leading up to the event I intensely prayed to Swami to advise me on what to speak about. Sure enough, one by one, the thoughts started to pop into my head! But simultaneously, I was tested on numerous occasions about the subject matter of my talk – and throughout all of this, the little voice inside my head kept repeating – "Swami, whatever you wish...". The great day finally arrived and Swami had instructed that the programme should be held in the Mandir, not in the Poornachandra Auditorium. Despite this unexpected development, I still felt strangely calm as the entire proceedings seemed to unfold like a drama in which I was merely playing a small part.

## Just His Instrument

Minutes before my speech was due to begin, I looked at Swami and said in my heart - "Swami, I am nothing, just your instrument – even if I have to trip on the stage and fall flat on my face in front of thousands of people, if it is Your Will, so be it". In this way, I managed to control my ego and surrender my talk to Swami and surprisingly enough, it made Him very happy! During one of the rare occasions in my life, the Lord used most unexpected and generous words of praise to describe my efforts. At last, I had discovered the secret to His heart...it was to surrender one's actions and He would take care of the rest, transformation us from zeroes to heroes. I was so grateful to our Beloved Lord for giving me the best Christmas gift I had ever had.

## Into the Clouds

Swami often uses the term "passing clouds...all passing clouds" in His discourses and slowly I began to observe a recurring theme in my life; each and every time I was knocked down, I always bounced back and recovered. In December 1997, I managed to squeeze in a trip to Prashanti Nilayam around my Christmas holidays. Although still weak from a recovering chest infection, and having just completed a course of antibiotics, I eagerly travelled to India to see my Beloved Lord. Indeed, I had a wonderful trip, although unknown to me then, due to my weak immune system, I somehow contracted a terrible virus which would eventually take its toll on my health. It actually took more than a year before the virus really started to weaken me.

Looking back, an early diagnosis by the doctor could perhaps have prevented much suffering, but as is often the way with *karma* – somehow, despite numerous visits to doctors, no one knew what was wrong or could help me – until the time was right. Eventually, my condition was managed with strong antibiotics, but I felt far from well. I finally forced myself back to work after a six month absence and for the next two years, I became a complete shadow of my former self, an invalid - barely venturing out the house unless absolutely necessary. I thought my life was over and focussed all my energy on just getting through each day.

Finally, one Saturday afternoon in April 2003, feeling completely desperate about my health, I fell before a huge picture of Goddess Durga in my bedroom and begged for Her mercy. The very next day, my prayer was answered. I came across the telephone number of a spiritual healer who listened sympathetically to my plight and agreed to help me. He slowly put me back on the road to recovery with various natural medicines and prayers. Within six months, I had regained most of my former strength and energy, astonishing everyone. In this way, like a phoenix from the ashes, I would emerge – after varying periods of absence – time and time again. A Divine Hand was leading me, guarding me through all the ups and downs of my *karma*, which although inevitable – could not destroy my spirit.

## Professional Stepping Stones

In my professional life, Swami would actually lead me directly into potentially conflicting situations. In retrospect, I now understand that these “trials” served to strengthen and shape my character as well as providing me with valuable professional experience. On one occasion, I had completed an application form for a job the night before the closing date, and placed the sealed envelope by my bedside before falling asleep. The next morning, I was woken by drops of cold water falling on my face, although looking around – there was nowhere this could have come from. Mystified, I looked at the clock - it was 5 am. I was now wide awake so I thought I would use the time wisely and check my application again. When I did, I discovered that, in haste, I had omitted a crucial part of my IT experience that was essential for the vacancy I was applying for! As I had the time, I carefully amended the information on the form to my satisfaction, and submitted it.

A week later, I was invited to the interview, which was accompanied by a very difficult test which was virtually impossible to complete within the allotted 15 minutes. Just when I thought I had lost all chance of finishing the test, my computer suddenly crashed! As a result, I was apologised to profusely and given a further 15 minutes to re-do the paper. Needless to say, my test performance exceeded that of the other candidates and I was offered the job. I duly accepted, but for the next five years, I found myself beset with problems on every side. I often wondered why Swami had led me into this particular job.

However, I now realise that the experience I gained in those five years has proved to be most invaluable and, in fact, has recently resulted in my being offered an excellent opportunity within the City of London, my current employers. In this way, what felt like “dead end” jobs at the time have since acted as real “stepping stones” in my career. It seemed that God had already decided the set of experiences that I needed to undergo to address my numerous foibles, so resistance was futile. I just needed to let go, trust and surrender. As Swami had told us in our outgoing interview with Him back in 1992, *“whatever happens, take it for your own good...”*. Learning to be patient certainly wasn’t easy, but an invitation to attend bhajan, or to speak to a Sai group, would always come out of nowhere – whenever my spirit began to tire.

As time passed, I began to observe a subtle change in myself as a result of my experiences - which can only be described as a feeling of calm detachment. I realised that the more I applied positive thinking and let go of the outcome of things going on around me, the easier life became. Swami’s words came back to me time and time again... *“Swami will take care...don’t worry!”* During this time Swami also started flooding back into my life in various manifestations – dreams, experiences, miracles, articles, photographs, bhajans, contact with devotees – suddenly, SAI was everywhere!

## Coming Back to the Father

In March 2005, I came to Prashanti Nilayam with sad news weighing heavily on my heart - my father had passed away the month before. I let Swami guide me by the hand through these difficult months and amazingly, everything fell into place smoothly. During this time, I also witnessed the outgoing students of Swami's Institute pour out their heartfelt agony at the thought of physical separation from Him. I sat and cried for hours, feeling their pain and reliving every emotion from my own physical separation from Him – nearly thirteen years before. My earthly father may have departed, but my Divine Father had stepped up with His usual precision timing. I suddenly felt that I was a student again and the darkness of those thirteen years disappeared in a flash. Like a weary traveller returning from the wars – with new inspiration, filled with stronger resolve and a sense of real purpose, I had finally returned home.

Slowly, I began to immerse myself in Swami's discourses explaining His expectations of students. I had read most of the material before, but this time it took on a whole new meaning. The difference was, this time I felt equipped and strong enough to lend myself to the task at hand. Too many long years had been spent tussling in the darkness with myself. Swami had probably allowed me to go through these difficult experiences to "uncondition" me and remove the effects of past experiences/*karmas* and their associated *vasanas* (tendencies), destroy the ego, the sense of doership and infuse me with a feeling of selfless love. For the first time, I understood why Swami had taken such pains to teach me the essence of sacrifice and surrender. The answer was simple – this was not just about me! I had to broaden my outlook. The maxim "to those whom much is given, much will be expected" constantly started to play in my head like a broken record and I began to pray to Swami to give me more resources, more strength, more time and more resolve to enable me to do something meaningful with my life.

## Learning the 'Saffron Lesson'

It has taken many years to understand and appreciate the lesson given to me on that day in Prashanti Nilayam, when the Lord had lovingly placed His robe on my hands. I think of sacrifice as the quality of giving up something for nothing in return. But the irony is, the reward for this one selfless quality is that we receive everything that we can ever want – in the form of God's Grace. In short, sacrifice endears one to God – and makes Him love us! And what more could anyone want?

I've often since thought about visits to Prashanti Nilayam. It seems that the more you give up, such as sacrificing your comforts, the more you receive. Why does close *darshan* involve 3 to 4 hours sitting on the hard floor – usually giving up both food and sleep? And in decades gone by, staying in the rural village of Puttaparthi may have been a physically challenging experience... but no-one could complain about the close and loving *darshan* opportunities! Today, with each passing year, Prashanti Nilayam grows - in size, in amenities and creature comforts – and while many think that the Lord

will become more inaccessible physically, He is actually giving Himself away so much to the devotees.

Moreover, Swami constantly urges us to engage in *seva* or selfless service. Why? Can we really make such a difference? If each soul has to pay its *karmic* debts, how are others involved? What has it got to do with us? Why should we interfere? Each of us comes to this world alone, and will leave alone. I think the answer to all these questions is simple. The purpose of *seva* is not so much to alleviate the suffering of others. I believe each person's suffering is pre-determined and can only last in accordance with their own *karmic* debt (under normal circumstances), so surely any alleviation or relief can only be rendered that extent?

No, I think the reason Swami urges us to carry out *seva* is to alleviate our own suffering. Because *seva* is nothing more than a sacrifice of time, energy, emotion, resources – and sacrifice eliminates negative karma. Of course, this means that sacrifice isn't actually selfless at all. In fact, it is purely selfish! But there is only one catch – sacrifice cannot be faked. It has to be 100% genuine – otherwise it is not sacrifice. And that is the process of *sadhana* or spiritual discipline. We must become selfless to be selfish – and so the circle is completed.

And where do all these ponderings leave me? My debt to Swami can never be repaid – however many more births I may take. But the one thing I can do – is to attempt to put into practice the lesson He has so painstakingly taught me ...and remember the quality of sacrifice as a prime, motivating force in my life.

And what of the gift I received from His hands? Needless to say, it takes pride of place on my little altar – just as the Lord once predicted it would - over twenty years ago.



## INCREDIBLE BLESSINGS

### *The Startling Story of Benjamin*

*By D Ariarajah*

***This is an amazing story of grace sent to us by one of our readers, Mr. Ariarajah, a former Superintendent of Police in Sri Lanka, currently settled in Melbourne, Australia.***

This is a story of a miracle in my family life and it concerns my son, Nirmalan Ariarajah who works in the Law Faculty of University of Melbourne and his wife Marion, who is a nurse. They were married in 2000 and were expecting their first baby in the latter part of January 2006.

On December 24, 2005, all our family members came together at their residence to celebrate Christmas. However, on the night of the 24<sup>th</sup>, Marion became concerned and told us that she felt reduced movement from the baby in her womb. We decided to wait until the next morning and on the 25<sup>th</sup> we got up early and after breakfast my son and Marion gave a lift to some of our relatives to Melbourne Airport.

From the airport they went straight to the Royal Women's Hospital, as there seemed to be no movement at all coming from the baby. They were very worried at this development. After carrying out various tests at the hospital, the doctors discovered that the baby's heart beat was very low, and they decided to operate and remove him from the womb immediately.

Hearing this news all the remaining family rushed to the hospital and spent a very anxious time awaiting the news. At about 1.40 p.m. my son came out of the Operation Theater and said, "It is a baby boy" and then went inside to support his wife. Five minutes later, he came out of the operation theater again, but now he was crying. ***"The child was 98% dead and has no chance of surviving,"*** he said. In these circumstances doctors do all they can to maintain any signs of life and so the baby was taken to the Intensive Care Unit (ICU). By that time my son had named the baby as Benjamin. At birth he weighed only 1.35 kg. (Below 2.5 kg is classified as a low birth weight.)

All our euphoria at the arrival of our only grandchild had disappeared and dejectedly we remained at the ICU. Benjamin's condition required the combined attention of seven expert doctors who were frantically trying to save his life, as all his internal organs had failed including his lungs, except for a mild heart beat.

During this time of acute crisis and pain, we somehow had the presence of mind to pray to Bhagavan. As I entered my prayer room that evening, I asked Bhagavan why He had given us this child if He was to take him away so suddenly in such a fashion. I seemed to receive a reply that I should touch

him while chanting the Gayathri. I clung desperately to this hoped for inner guidance and resolved to carry this out.

On the 26<sup>th</sup> morning at 11.00 a.m., my wife Lilian and I arrived at the ward. A doctor was standing by and observing the child in the incubator with the necessary life-supporting tubes attached to his body.

**When I asked the Doctor about the condition of the child, he said that he will not survive for another 2 hours.** I then asked his permission to touch the baby and to pray, to which he agreed.

I carefully inserted my hand into the incubator, placed it on the baby's head and chanted 108 Gayathris in my mind. When I finished chanting, it was 11.45 a.m.

At about 12.40 p.m., the Doctor who was observing the child shouted and called the other doctors over as Benjamin was breathing. Later, when I asked him how it happened, he said that he had no answer and that it was simply a miracle!

This was on December 26th. In the evening, my wife and I sat down in our prayer room and chanted 1008 Gayathris. It was a time of anguish and intense prayers to the Lord. That same night Bhagavan came in my wife's dream and walked all over the house from room to room, followed by her and my son. But before leaving, Bhagavan picked up a crowbar from a room and threw it out of the house.

The next morning, on the 27<sup>th</sup>, at about 11.30 a.m. when we arrived at the hospital, my son said, "Doctors have announced that Benjamin has recovered to a sufficient extent. Now he will surely survive." What an incredible turn around! Needless to say we were ecstatic and shouted for joy, though we were all exhausted - emotionally and physically. In ten days he was taken out of ICU, but remained in the hospital for few more days.

During the second week, the Doctor in charge of the section where Benjamin was in, called my son and his wife, and said, "***We have performed a brain scan and we fear damage to the brain. We suspect that he will be a disabled child.***"

When we thought we had just been saved from the worst situation ever of our lives, here was another blow. In my prayers I asked Bhagavan the truth about the statement of the doctor and I seemed to receive this reply: "***When I gave him back, I removed all defects and it was only a scar.***" By the end of the third month Benjamin came home to much rejoicing in the family. Now he was loved and cared for in his own home and his mother and father poured out all their love on him 24 hours a day.

True to the word of Bhagavan, Benjamin has now progressed and after his first birthday he began to take all his meals and weighed over 9 kg. Today he goes for swimming classes and other physical exercises, and calling "mum"

and “daddy” He is trying to walk a few steps. He knows “Baba” very well and gets exhilarated by the daily chanting of Gayatri Mantra.

This was a time of great anguish for our family, which was crowned with the triumph of a gift of grace from our Lord Bhagavan of a healthy baby boy, saved from the clutches of death and disability. Is there nothing He cannot do when we call upon Him?

## **H2H SPECIAL**

### **ENTHRALLING ENCOUNTERS WITH ETERNITY:**

#### **CONVERSATIONS WITH MR. RAJA REDDY - PART 1**

**Among the few fortunate devotees, who came to Swami in the early years of His avatharhood, Mr Raja Reddy is exceptional. He was one of the most privileged who came to Bhagavan as a teenager and continued to stay in the Divine Presence enjoying His blissful divine proximity for nearly three decades. A sincere spiritual aspirant right from his childhood, the story of His encounters with 'The Eternal' is most fascinating. We had an enthusiastic Sai worker go over to his home in Mumbai to interview him and below is the transcript of the first part of that conversation.**

**Q:** Sairam, Mr. Raja Reddy. To begin with, please tell us how you came to know of Swami and how the relationship with Him blossomed? And how was Swami in those days?

**RR:** Sairam. Originally I was a devotee of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa (an enlightened soul). From my early days, I was almost a hero-worshipper of Swami Vivekananda and I loved Sri Ramakrishna who had a resemblance to Swami Vivekananda. Sri Ramakrishna, you may be aware, had very little respect for miracles. In fact, he went to the extent to say: "Do not visit miracle-men." That was the background I was coming from.

But my mother used to go to Bhagavan much earlier, in the early fifties. Then, I was a student studying in the Loyola College, Madras. I was advised by my mother to go and have a Darshan of Bhagavan. He was then a guest of one Mr. Hanumantha Rao, who was a Transport Commissioner in Madras. It was the first time that I had the good fortune of coming into physical contact with Bhagavan.

**Q:** Did you see Him?

**RR:** Yes, I physically went there; I saw Bhagavan and I was most attracted by His gentle, loving voice and speech. And then He went on moving His hand in air – in His usual inimitable style. I, then, asked Him why He was waving His hand in that particular manner. After all, since I was educated, I was a little inquisitive. But Swami didn't give a direct reply; He said: "Then, why are you wearing a tucked-in shirt?" I said: "This is how we should be in our college."

**Q:** So, he gave you a question instead?

**RR:** Yes, and answered it indirectly! It was brief but it was a very loving speech and I was very impressed by that; that's how that chapter of the first meeting closed. After that I went to college to do my studies.

**Q:** Where were you studying?

**RR:** Loyola College, Madras.

**Q:** What was the course that you studied?

**RR:** I studied there for about five years and I had taken Economics Honors. It was a very disciplined and good college.

**Q:** So when was your next interaction with Swami?

**RR:** My next interaction was later, on October 4, 1956. That was when the first Hospital in Puttaparthi, the General Hospital, was opened. It was opened by the then Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh, Mr. Bezawada Gopala Reddy. And I was present there on that occasion.

Prior to that I had finished my studies and was totally absorbed in my *sadhana* (spiritual practice). Because spiritually, I am sort of an incorrigible introvert – that's what I would say of myself! I used to have my own meditation, my bhajans, my yoga sessions and things like that.

So with that background, I went to Baba. And the very first question I asked Him was: "Are You a realized soul?"

**Q:** Did He call you for an interview?

**RR:** Yes.

**Q:** So what was His answer?

**RR:** You know, He is not given to giving direct answers! He just pointed to a light in the room with His hand. He said: "This is the hand; this is the shadow of the hand on the wall. There is no such realization." What He meant to say is: "I am the Original! You're the shadow; there is nothing to realize for Me! You have to realize!" That's how it was. I had to read in between the lines.

And then of course, I was totally absorbed by Him – it was just irresistible! His power was something else! And I became His regular follower.

**Q:** Did He call you again? Did you go back again to Parthi after that?

**RR:** Yes! After that I went home but then I returned and settled down with Bhagavan, because I was in search of a *Sadguru*, a spiritual master. During this time, I was drawn by Swami Shivanandaji from Hrishikesh too, who is no more. He passed away many years ago.

**Q:** Is he the one from the famous Shivananda Ashram?

**RR:** Yes. He was then alive and I had half a mind to go there and take *sanyasa* (become a renunciant) or that sort of a thing. So with that

background, Bhagavan absolved me; gradually he put me in bhajans and in driving His car and looking to His various duties; getting His bath ready and His bed, and so many other opportunities! He has been immensely graceful to me – giving me all those chances to do seva, and so it went on.

But of course, I had been a skeptic in my own way – not easily giving into everything; because at that time, at the back of my head, I always had Sri Ramakrishna's influence on my mind (to not believe in miracle-men).

So much so that at one time, knowing my doubting mind, Swami revealed Himself. It was in Ooty and Baba was relaxing on a cot; only we two were there in the room. Baba said: "If you are a devotee of Vishnu, you will see the *parama-jyoti* (Supreme light) coming from My heart; if you are a devotee of Shiva, you will see it from My forehead – where the third eye or the Jnana netra (eye of wisdom) is located." I, of course, saw a *jyoti* (Divine light) in the heart area, as I have been a devotee of Lord Krishna right from the very beginning.

**Q:** Did that have any change in your outlook?

**RR:** Not a change exactly, I told you I am a born skeptic! I wouldn't yield that easily; I have an ego too! As I told you we were in Ooty at that time and after Baba went out of the room, I took His torch which He had kept under the rug. I thought: 'Will it give me the same effect? Let me try it!' Immediately Baba caught me red-handed! He came inside and said: "What shall I do to make you believe?" He Himself was at a loss, so to say!

**Q:** So He caught you red-handed with the torch!

**RR:** Silly fellows that we are! You know how ego comes into play and you get all sorts of doubts! But it's better to get rid of all this to start with.

**Q:** You could see a *jyoti* in His heart; which is a very unusual thing.

**RR:** I did have Darshan of the *jyoti*, no doubt; but I must tell you the fact that I had doubts too!

**Q:** As you went along, were these doubts getting cleared?

**RR:** Yes! He was very gracious to me. I used to sleep on the floor and He used to sleep on the cot. Early in the morning I used to meditate and I had some wonderful experiences! Like the *kundalini* (spiritual energy within envisioned as a coiled serpent) rising and waves and waves of bliss being experienced! Also, I used to see flood-lights during meditation. I can't explain, but they had a wonderful, pleasant effect.

As I told you, I was an incorrigible introvert - even until now! I don't know if you have seen the old Mandir; Bhagavan's bed was in one room and then next to it, are His shelves where we used to keep His things, and then there was the bathroom. So I used to sleep there near the shelves, and Baba was

in the other room on the bed. All of a sudden something happened; it was like half of the Sun's circumference was falling on me! It was an incredibly huge light coming! It was rather shocking. That was a great experience; it didn't last long enough to shatter me off but then I had the shock enough! Of course, Baba was behind all this but He used to pretend He didn't know anything.

Once I had a difference of opinion with Baba – you know ego coming out! We were stationed in Bangalore - in one devotees' place. And I took it so much to heart that I thought I must back off! And in fact, I did back off. I took a 3 hour bus journey to return to my home. But half way through the journey, as I was having a snack in a way-side hotel, I don't know what happened! My whole heart was being wrung like a wet towel. I could not stand it! Automatically tears started flowing from my eyes unendingly. So much so that the other inmates at the hotel thought: 'Poor fellow; he must be suffering from some agony!' In spite of myself, the tears would not stop. It was a ceaseless flow. I could not stand it anymore; I was finished! I took the next bus to Bangalore and said, "Come what may, I am going back to Baba!"

When I reached, I saw Baba sitting quietly on the bed, writing a letter to me!

**Q:** Writing a letter to you?

**RR:** Yes! He was writing: "Where will you leave Me and go?" From then on I decided - He is *sakhshaat hridayanivasi* (the Supreme Indweller)! And nothing can be done without His permission. When He has your heart under His control, you can't do anything! You're finished. Your brain doesn't work. So that's how it happened and that's when I decided: "No Baba! I will not go anywhere without Your Will – it can't be done!"

**Q:** So it was sort of an ego-breaker experience?

**RR:** Yes and the *hridaya-vasi* realization, that He knows absolutely everything; it was something fantastic! And you know all the rest of it – whenever a thought rises in the mind of any one of the devotees sitting there, it at once gets registered there in Baba's Solar Consciousness; so much so that He reacts immediately!

**Q:** You had that sort of an experience?

**RR:** It has happened umpteen times! So much so that it has become a common place.

For instance, my wife, and my son – they have also had such experiences. Once Swami was giving an interview; and He called my wife too. There were some rich people around Him. Then she had a faint thought in her mind: 'He gives special attention to rich people!'

Swami was talking then about something else, but He immediately turned to her as if following her thought and said: "Why? Because under them there are so many other people who are working; and they will all be benefited by it!"

**Q:** Everybody working under the rich person can get influenced.

**RR:** Yes, and not only that, so many people will be benefited if one at the helm is corrected. Naturally, His heart goes out to other people also; so they also stand to benefit. So, instead of catching every small ant, catch hold of the queen ant! That's what Baba is doing; and that's what Swami Vivekananda used to do too.

I had some doubt regarding Baba's ways and I was thinking about it but I did not express my thought. That's how it happens when His physical Form is present there, immediately those thoughts come. If you were there as a third person, you wouldn't understand anything at all.

That is why in Baba's discourses too – many that I have heard, not recently, but in the earlier days - there used to be a lot of 'loss of linkage' so to say, between one statement and the other. Because as and when doubts used to arise in the minds of the audience, He used to stop whatever He was explaining and answer them then and there. So naturally, sometimes that correlation used to be missing.

**Q:** The other person might feel that this is not coherent; but actually it is.

**RR:** It is! See, actually He has come for *jiva's* (individual's) sake; and not for publicity or any auditory nonsense! That's how He operates – it's something wonderful!

**Q:** You had the privilege of being with Baba that other people can only dream about. So please tell us more – how His routine used to be in those days and how He used to interact with other people?

**RR:** Even during informal conversations, Bhagavan, in those days, used to allow devotees or people who had come there to express their doubts and He used to clarify their doubts immediately. At the same time, He would give them direct experiences too, which are known to some of us.

One thing I have noticed in Bhagavan - while in contact with individuals, He always treats an individual as an individual; He is not enamoured of crowds. He wants to give instructions to every individual where He corrects them Himself and He develops them, for He has intense interest in the evolution of the individual. That's something very remarkable of Bhagavan!

**Q:** He would like to instruct an individual singularly to evolve higher.

**RR:** Absolutely; and correct him too! For instance, there used to be one Mr. Jawa from Joy Ice-cream; he was the proprietor of the company. Before coming to Bhagavan, he was very well-off financially. In those days, Joy Ice-cream was very popular in Bombay too – like Kwality Ice-cream now. And before coming to Bhagavan, He was used to taking alcoholic drinks. So much



so that even small children in his family used to take to it, just for fun; this practice was so much impregnated in his family.

He came to Bhagavan when He was staying in Gwalior Palace, Mumbai, which is, of course, now demolished. So there, when He was in Baba's presence for the first time, Baba said, "Hello, Jawa!" and that's it, there was some inner transformation in him and he threw his drinking habit into the fire instantaneously.

Therefore, Bhagavan takes particular interest in the development of an individual, come what may; but at the same time not hurting the individual. As if He has been his friend right from his birth!

**Q:** How about Mr. Jawa's family?

**RR:** They too have had beautiful transformations. And Baba gives an inner strength. It's not easy to be an addict of liquor and leave it overnight! Take the case of my own cousin, Shiva Reddy. He is a dental surgeon and his wife, who is my niece, is also a lady doctor. Both of them are now retired and stay in Prasanthi Nilayam ashram. He had a habit of smoking and used to have his practice in Nigeria then. He says, "One fine morning Baba comes in my dream and gives me *padanamaskar* (privilege to touch His feet). And I said, 'I will leave smoking.'"

So it happened just like that. Baba came in his dream, gave him *padanamaskar* and he left smoking altogether! This is how Baba enters into an individual, into the depths, because He is *antharayamin* (the indweller)! He is not satisfied with your show or other things – no! He goes straight right into the core. It's so wonderful! That's why Bhagavan can converse with anybody; He needs no intermediary, no introduction.

**(To be continued...)**

## **GET INSPIRED**

### **THE MAHATMA AND THE OLD WOMAN**

Gandhiji was an impassioned crusader for the moral and spiritual regeneration of India. For many years he traveled the length and breadth of the country, visiting cities and villages, inspiring the people to believe in themselves and to have faith in a free India. His vision and ideals were based on the values of non-violence, unity and purity and he was feted wherever he went.

During one of his tours he addressed a meeting in Orissa. After his moving speech, an elderly woman got up. She was bent with age, her hair was grey and her clothes betrayed her poor background. She had been very touched listening to Gandhi's words which had expressed her own deeply felt sentiments. At last she had heard someone who had articulated so powerfully and sincerely her own cherished beliefs. Gandhi's heartfelt words had set her whole being ablaze and given her a new sense of self esteem. There and then she threw off the labels of poverty and insignificance that society had given her and fearlessly moved towards the stage. She, old and unimportant, had to meet him, famous and adored. The volunteers tried to stop her, but she persisted until she came to where he was sitting.

"I must see him", she insisted and going up to Gandhiji she slowly bent down and touched his feet in all humility. Then, moved by some inner prompting, from the folds of her sari she brought out a copper coin and placed it at his feet. Gandhiji looked down, picked up the copper coin and put it away carefully. He gave the lady a beautiful smile and wished her God's peace, as she went away without drawing more attention to herself.

Gandhi would often remark on this episode to illustrate the sacredness of the old lady's action. "This copper coin that the lady gave me is worth much more than thousands of coins," Gandhiji said. "If a man has several lakhs and he gives away a couple of thousand, it doesn't mean much. But this coin was perhaps all that the poor woman possessed. She gave me all that she had. That was very generous of her. What a great sacrifice she made. That is why I value this copper coin more than a crore of rupees!"

Rare is the one, like the old lady, who truly gives to the level of self denial and inconvenience. Such people show us by their lives and example that the way to God is by sharing and sacrifice.

The elderly lady's act of sacrifice was exemplified in Gandhi's whole life as he strove to further his dream of an independent India. He adhered to his principles even if it lead to imprisonment at the hands of the British, or confrontation with his compatriots. His struggle was for exactly those such as this lady - the poor and downtrodden of society. In one of his last statements, given a few days before his tragic assassination in 1948, Gandhiji's feelings and love for his country, and humanity at large, is depicted magnificently. He says,

"I will give you a talisman. Whenever you are in doubt, or when the self becomes too much with you, apply the following test. Recall the face of the poorest and the weakest man whom you may have seen, and ask yourself, if the step you contemplate is going to be of any use to him. Will he gain anything by it? Will it restore him to a control over his own life and destiny? In other words, will it lead to *swaraj* [freedom] for the hungry and spiritually starving millions? Then you will find your doubts and your self melt away."

## THE LITTLE GIRL AND THE FAIRY

There is a wonderful fable about a young orphan girl who had no family and no one to love her. One day, feeling exceptionally sad and lonely, she was walking through a meadow when she noticed a small butterfly caught unmercifully in a thorn bush.

The more the butterfly struggled to free itself, the deeper the thorns cut into its fragile body. The young orphan girl carefully released the butterfly from its captivity. Instead of flying away, the little butterfly changed into a beautiful good fairy. The young girl rubbed her eyes in disbelief.

"For your wonderful kindness," the good fairy said to the girl, "I will grant you any wish you would like." The little girl thought for a moment and then replied, "I want to be happy!"

The fairy said, "Very well," and leaned towards her and whispered in her ear. Then the good fairy vanished. As the little girl grew up, there was no one in the land as happy as she. Everyone asked her the secret of her happiness. She would only smile and answer, "The secret of my happiness is that I listened to a good fairy when I was a little girl."

When she was very old, and on her death bed, the neighbours all rallied around her and were afraid that her fabulous secret of happiness would die with her.

"Tell us, please," they begged. "Tell us what the good fairy said."

The lovely old woman simply smiled and said, "She told me that everyone, no matter how secure they seemed, no matter how old or young, how rich or poor, had need of me. So I do as much good as I can, whenever I can."

*East and West June, 2006*

## MY VISIT TO HEAVEN

I dreamt that I went to Heaven and an angel was showing me around. We walked side-by-side inside a large workroom filled with angels.

My angel guide stopped in front of the first section and said, "This is the 'Receiving Section'. Here, all petitions to God said in prayer are received."

I looked around in this area, and it was terribly busy with so many angels sorting out petitions written on voluminous paper sheets and scraps from people all over the world.

Then we moved on down a long corridor until we reached the second section. The angel then said to me, "This is the 'Packaging and Delivery Section'. Here, the graces and blessings the people asked for are processed and delivered to the living persons who asked for them."

I noticed again how busy it was there. There were many angels working hard at that station, since so many blessings had been requested and were being packaged for delivery to Earth.

Finally at the farthest end of the long corridor we stopped at the door of a very small station. To my great surprise, only one angel was seated there, idly doing nothing.

"This is the 'Acknowledgment Section'," my angel friend quietly admitted to me. He seemed embarrassed. "How is it that there's no work going on here?" I asked. "So sad," the angel sighed. "After people receive the blessings that they asked for, very few send back acknowledgments."

"How does one acknowledge God's blessings?" I asked. "Simple," the angel answered. "Just say, 'Thank you, Lord.'"

"What blessings should they acknowledge?" I asked.

"If you have food in the refrigerator, clothes on your back, a roof overhead and a place to sleep ... You are richer than 75% of this world. If you have money in the bank, in your wallet, and spare change in a dish, you are among the top 8% of the world's wealthy. And if you get this on your own computer, you are part of the 1% in the world who has that opportunity. Also .....

"If you woke up this morning with more health than illness ..... You are more blessed than the many who will not even survive this day. If you have never experienced the fear in battle, the loneliness of imprisonment, the agony of torture, or the pangs of starvation .. You are ahead of 700 million people in the world.

"If you can attend a place of worship without the fear of harassment, arrest, torture or death ... You are envied by, and more blessed than three billion people in the world.

"If you can read this message, you just received a double blessing in that someone was thinking of you as very special and you are more blessed than over two billion people in the world who cannot read at all."

**Have a good day and count your blessings every day!**

## **TEST YOUR SPIRITUAL QUOTIENT**

### **QUIZ ON SHIRDI SAI**

*This month celebrates the life of Shirdi Baba, as it includes the day of His Mahasamadhi, which is the last day of Dasara Celebrations in October called the Vijayadasami Day. We have five questions for you, mostly culled from the pages of Heart2Heart, to test your knowledge on the previous body of our beloved Lord Sai. Good luck!*

1. Vijayadashmi is a big festival in Shirdi, venerated as a holy day when Shri Shirdi Sai Baba (September 28, 1835 to October \_\_ 1918) left his mortal body. It is also known as Shirdi Vijayadashmi.

On which day did Shirdi Sai Baba pass away?

- A. October 5<sup>th</sup>
- B. October 15<sup>th</sup>
- C. October 20<sup>th</sup>
- D. October 25<sup>th</sup>

2. Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba has declared that the Shirdi Avatar was the first of a trilogy of Sai Avatars. The second, of course, is the current Sathya Sai Avatar, and the last would be the Prema Sai Avatar. Of the three, the Shirdi Avatar is the Prologue and the Prema Sai Avatar is the Epilogue to the Sri Sathya Sai Poorna Avatar.

It has further been revealed while Sathya Sai is an aspect of both; Shiva and Shakthi, the yet-to-come Prema Sai would be an aspect of Shakthi alone.

What aspect was Shirdi Sai Baba?

- A. Mostly Shiva and less of Sakthi.
- B. Shiva and Krishna
- C. Shiva Alone
- D. Ganesha and Shiva

3. When our Dear Lord, Shri Sathya Sai Baba was in His thirties, one of Shirdi Baba's oldest devotees' – Sundaramma - heard for the first time that the young Sathya Baba claimed to be 'her' Shirdi Baba. What was her reaction?

- A. She laughed in disbelief.
- B. She began to pray to Shirdi Baba to reveal the 'imposter'.
- C. She said "My Lord is Shirdi Baba alone".

D. She started reading books on Sathya Sai Baba.

4. In the Sundaram Temple that Swami resides in when He visits Chennai, there is a “Shirdi Shrine” located at the northern end of the compound. They say that the peace that pervades the atmosphere here has to be experienced to be believed.

Swami materialized a flower-shaped jewel for the Shirdi Baba idol that makes it so special. What kind of a jewel was this?

- A. Jasmine flower-shaped.
- B. Rose flower-shaped.
- C. Diamond shaped flower-shaped.
- D. Nine-gemmed flower-shaped.

5. On the morning of 15th October 2002, exactly 84 years after Shirdi Baba had taken Samadhi, yet another chapter was added to the Shirdi connection. What special thing did Swami do on that Vijay Dashami morning?

- A. Bhagavan gave a Discourse on Shirdi Baba's life.
- B. Bhagavan materialized a lot of multi-coloured vibhuti.
- C. Bhagavan fed 1,008 poor people.
- D. Bhagavan unveiled a new Shirdi Baba statue.

### **Answers:**

1B

The festival is also celebrated as Shri Sai Punyathithi in Shirdi attracting great number of devotees from all over the world. Various religious activities are arranged. Great numbers of people flock to Shirdi during this Festival. During this festival 'Brahman Bhojan' is arranged with Dakashina (Donation to Guru). This year the festival is celebrated from 20th to 23rd October.

2C

Swami has declared that Shirdi Sai was an aspect of Shiva.  
*Please see Cover Story: The Shirdi Story – Oct 1<sup>st</sup> 2003*

3C

In the 1960's when Sundaramma was told by one of her friends that Sai Baba had reincarnated again in the hamlet of Puttaparthi, she wouldn't believe it. But her curiosity got the better of her and she came to see the young Sathya



Sai Baba, who claimed to be 'her' Shirdi Baba. Quite some days went by and Sundaramma was not convinced that Sathya Sai could be the same as Shirdi Sai. She remarked to one of her friends, who was a devotee: "I will never bow down to this Baba. My lord is Shirdi Baba alone. I am going to leave this place soon".

Word reached Swami about Sundaramma's plans. The time had come to prove to her, the Shirdi connection. One day, He quietly walked into Sundaramma's quarters. She was cooking something. "Sundaramma! Is it true that you want to leave this place?" He asked. "Yes Swami, I would rather go to Shirdi than stay in this godforsaken village!" She was still cooking, her eyes not meeting Swami's.

"Do you want to see your Shirdi Baba?" Swami asked.

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

"Do you still want to see your Shirdi Baba?" Swami persisted.

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

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

And she never ever left Prashanti Nilayam.

*Please see The Shirdi Story Continued – Oct 15<sup>th</sup> 2003*

4D

It is special because Swami has blessed and spiritually charged this temple profusely by materializing a nine-gemmed flower-shaped jewel which He pressed on the forehead of the marvelous sparkling white Shirdi Baba idol. Besides this idol, there is also a miniature idol made of *panchaloha* (five metals) for the purpose of *abhishekam* (doing worship with flowers, milk, etc.) which is performed every Thursday and on all festival days. There is also a beautiful 'shaligram' (a lingam), again manifested by Baba, which is placed before the silver *padukas* (sandals) in front of the idol with a metal-snake hood over it. No one can be untouched by the soothing divine vibrations emanating from this place.

*Please see the Cover Story: Sundaram, A Prashanti Nilayam in Chennai – March 2006*

5D

Swami went up the hill, adjoining the Vidyagiri stadium. Halfway to the hilltop, between the statues of Shiva and Krishna, was a tall statue, draped in silk, waiting to be unveiled. Swami pressed a remote controlled button and the silk veils fell down, to reveal the beautiful form of Shirdi Baba. The statue of His Previous incarnation stands today, amidst the 'Grand Gallery of Gods', in the Stadium.

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

*Please see The Shirdi Story Continued – Oct 15<sup>th</sup> 2003*

## MULTI FAITH QUIZ

***This quiz concerns religious festivals celebrated all around the world in the month of October. We offer you only a few illustrations of the rich tapestry of spiritual expression, as people rejoice in communion with God this month.***

1. On October 12/13, for Eid-ul-Fitr, Muslims gather to watch the new moon rise, which marks the beginning of this three-day festival. For Muslims, Eid ul-Fitr is a joyful celebration of the achievement of enhanced piety. It is a day of forgiveness, fellowship, brotherhood and unity.

After which festival is this celebrated?

- A. Ramadan
- B. Muharram
- C. Eid-al-Adha
- D. Ashura

2. The 'Kathina' festival, which originated 2,500 years ago, celebrates the largest alms-giving ceremony of the Buddhist year. During the Vassa period, normally nomadic Buddhist monks will have remained in one place for three months, and the 'Kathina' celebration marks the time for them to move on. The offering can take place up to one month following the end of the Vassa period, from 19th October to 16 November, and is celebrated by Buddhists of the Theravada tradition.

What offering is made to the monks in this ceremony?

- A. An offering of Money
- B. An offering of Housing and Shelter.
- C. An offering of Food.
- D. An offering of Robes.

3.

'Dussehra' (also spelled 'Dasara') or 'Vijay Dashmi' ('Vijay' meaning 'victory' and 'Dashmi' meaning 'tenth day') is a very popular Hindu Festival, celebrated with éclat throughout the country. 'Dussehra' marks the end of the nine days of 'Navaratri', and is celebrated on the tenth day.

On which day is it being celebrated this year?

- A. 10 October
- B. 18 October
- C. 21 October

D. 28 October

4.

'Karwa Chauth' is the most important fast observed by Hindu women of North India. This year it is being observed on October 29<sup>th</sup>. On this day married Hindu women offer prayers for their husbands. What do they seek?

- A. Material prosperity.
- B. Long life and welfare.
- C. Spiritual advancement.
- D. Physical health.

5. When the seven days of the Jewish festival 'Sukkot' ends, the Old Testament decrees yet another holiday, called 'Simchat Torah' along with 'Shemini Atzeret' – meaning the Eighth Day of Assembly. This year, it begins on the evening of October 4<sup>th</sup>/5<sup>th</sup>.

What does it refer to?

- A. It is a time to start fasting.
- B. When the reading of the holy book Torah is completed.
- C. The beginning of the Harvest festival.
- D. A time when people exchange gifts.

6. Since October 1708, the Guru Granth Sahib has been held in the highest regard by the Sikhs and treated as the Eternal Guru, as instructed by Guru Gobind Singh. It is also considered as one of the 11 Gurus.

Which one is it?

- A. 1<sup>st</sup>
- B. 6<sup>th</sup>
- C. 11<sup>th</sup>
- D. 9<sup>th</sup>

7. Nagasaki Kunchi, the most-awaited autumn festival of Suwa Shinto Shrine, is renowned as one of the three great festivals in Nagasaki, Japan. The word 'kunchi' is said to be derived from the word kyunichi, or "shrine day." Another theory ascribes the origin to ku'nichi or "ninth day," referring to the auspicious ninth day of the ninth month (Oct 9 on the modern calendar).

Which Asian country's influence does it depict?

- A. Malaysia
- B. Vietnam

- C. China
- D. Taiwan

8. "Nava-ratri" literally means "nine nights." In India, this festival also known as Durga Puja is observed twice a year, once in the beginning of summer and again at the onset of winter. Navaratri is divided into sets of three days to adore different aspects of the Supreme Goddess. On the first three days, the Mother is invoked as a powerful deity called Durga in order to destroy all our impurities, vices and defects. The next three days, the Mother is adored as a giver of spiritual wealth, Lakshmi, who is considered to have the power of bestowing on her devotees inexhaustible wealth.

To which Goddess is the worship of the final three days directed to?

- A. Goddess Santoshi
- B. Goddess Parvathi
- C. Goddess Sita
- D. Goddess Saraswati

9. The origins of the Bahá'í Faith go back to a religious movement founded in AD 1844 by a young Iranian merchant, Sayyid `Alí Muhammad Shírází (1819-1850), who took the title of the Báb and whose birthday is celebrated on October 20<sup>th</sup>.

The Bab was the Prophet-Herald of the Baha'i Faith, whose mission was to proclaim the imminent arrival of "Him Whom God shall make manifest," namely Baha'u'llah (1817-1892), the Founder of the Baha'i Faith. His followers were therefore called Bábís.

What does the title Bab mean?

- A. The Chosen one
- B. The Gate
- C. The Founder
- D. The Holy One

10. Like Canadians, Germans, too, celebrate a day of Thanksgiving to God called 'Erntedankfest' for a plentiful harvest in the month of October. It is a rural and a religious celebration.

On which Sunday do they celebrate it?

- A. First Sunday.
- B. Second Sunday.
- C. Third Sunday.
- D. Fourth Sunday.

.....

**Answers:**

1A

Eid-ul-Fitr is a festival breaking of the fast and it comes at the end of Ramadan.

Muslims here are not only celebrating the end of fasting, but thanking God for the help and strength that they believe He gave them throughout the previous month to help them practice self-control. It is a time of giving and sharing, like Christmas in Christianity.

During Eid al-Fitr cities, towns, and villages in Islamic countries are decorated and people put on their best clothes. Muslims greet neighbors, relatives, and friends at the mosque or on the street, exchanging hugs and wishing one another "Eid Mubarak" ("Blessed Holiday"). Children receive presents or gifts of money from their parents and other relatives. Eid al-Fitr is also a time for visiting friends and relatives.

2D

'Kathina' is a word from the Pali language referring to the wooden embroidery frame used in India to make monks' robes that came to be known as 'Kathina Robes'. The 'Kathina' ceremony is also known as the Robe-offering or Robe-presentation ceremony. It marks the end of the three month rains retreat period. It is a time of giving, to express gratitude to monks. Lay Buddhists (householders) bring donations to temples, especially new robes for the monks. During Kathina, members of the Buddhist laity visit the monastery carrying food and gifts. The new robe symbolizes a new beginning.

3C

'Dussehra' can also be interpreted as 'Dasa-Hara', which means the cutting of the ten heads of Ravana signifying us to cut the ten heads - passion, pride, anger, greed, infatuation, lust, hatred, jealousy, selfishness and crookedness - of the demon, Ego, and thus justify the celebration of 'Dussehra'.

It is believed that it was on this day Lord Rama killed the demon-king, Ravana and conquered Lanka, his kingdom. In other words, it signifies the triumph of good over evil. The legendary triumph is reenacted to this day.

Huge effigies of Ravana, his giant brother Kumbhkarna and son Meghnad are placed in open grounds. Fireworks and crackers are placed inside these and actors dressed as Rama, his wife Sita and brother Lakshmana enact the final moments of the battle. The character playing Rama then shoots an arrow with a flaming tip at the effigies from a safe distance and the crowd cheers loudly as the crackers catch fire.

4B

On this day, women pray seeking the long life and welfare of their husbands. The fast is very difficult to observe as it starts before sunrise and ends only after offering prayers and worshipping the moon. No food or water is to be

taken after 4 a.m. or after sunrise. The fast is broken once the moon is sighted and special rituals and prayers marking the day have been offered.

In the evening women dress up in special clothes, usually red or pink coloured and apply bindis on their foreheads. New brides wear their bridal outfits and others wear outfits woven with gold. Bangles and other jewelry are worn and special henna patterns are applied on their hands. The fasting women in a neighbourhood usually gather in a group and narrate mythological stories illustrating the importance of fasting on Karwa Chauth.

5B

‘Simchat Torah’ is a joyful holiday, as love of the Torah is openly expressed. ‘Simchat Torah’ takes place on the Jewish holiday of ‘Shemini Atzeret’, or Eighth (day) of Assembly, which falls immediately after the seven-day holiday of ‘Sukkot’ in the autumn (mid to late October). ‘Simchat Torah’ is a Hebrew term which means "rejoicing with/of the Torah". The annual cycle of reading the Torah is completed and begun anew.

6C

The Guru Granth Sahib Ji is kept wrapped in a silken cloth, constantly fanned over by a chauri, a fan embedded in silver or wood and installed under an ornate canopy called a chanani when the Guru is present in the Diwan Hal.

The Shri Guru Granth Sahib is the 11th Guru of Sikhism, the holy book of Sikhism, which is revered as a living Guru by the Sikhs. The Shri Guru Granth Sahib became Guru of the Sikhs and successor to Guru Gobind Singh on October 1708, when the 10th Guru of Sikhism made the Guru Granth Sahib the 11th and final eternal Guru of Sikhism.

7C

From 7-9 October the presentations of the festival, which vividly reflect Nagasaki's colourful history, spills over from the three festival sites onto the streets and creates an atmosphere of celebration throughout the city.

Floats are decorated like river barges or Chinese boats on wheels. The floats are brought in gorgeous parades. The 11 localities participating in the festival are divided into a section of seven dance groups, each section having special floats and dances. On the morning of 7 October, the floats are brought out and the dance groups showcase their dances. The special dance consists of a dragon, which runs after a golden ball dancing to the tune of traditional Chinese instruments. The Nagasaki Kunchi Festival not only reflects the Chinese influence, but also is a festival of fun and joy.

8D

The final set of three days is spent in worshipping the Mother as the Goddess of Wisdom, Saraswati. In order to have all-round success in life, we need the blessings of all three aspects of the Divine Mother; hence, the worship for

nine nights. Durga Puja is the greatest Hindu festival in which God is adored as Mother. One's relationship with one's mother is the dearest and the sweetest of all human relations. Hence, it is proper to look upon God as mother.

The festival is dedicated to Mother Goddess Shakti who incarnated in the form of Goddess Durga, a combined manifestation of the divine energies of the Holy Trinity - Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesh and all the other devatas, when they summoned her to kill the mighty demon known as Mahishasur and free the world from his terror.

Durga represents the Divine Mother. She is the energy aspect of the Lord; hence Hindus offer salutations to the Divine Mother, Durga, who exists in all beings in the form of Intelligence, Mercy, and Beauty; who is the consort of Lord Shiva, who creates, sustains and destroys the Universe.

During Navaratri, devotees of Durga observe a fast. Brahmins are fed and prayers are offered for the protection of health and property. On this day, the idols of Goddess Durga are finally immersed into water after the nine days of festivities. It is said that the people of the earth here adopted Durga as the daughter and thus, she visits the home of her parents every year during the last four days of Navaratri along with her sons Ganesha and Kartikeya and daughters Lakshmi and Saraswati. She finally leaves for her husband's place on the Vijayadashmi day.

9B

The title Bab means "the Gate" in Arabic. On 20 October, Baha'is observe this Holy Day by abstaining from work and holding joyous meetings open to all. There are no prescribed ceremonies, but gatherings usually involve prayers, devotional readings, music and fellowship.

Baha'is are monotheists who believe that all religions come from God, that all human beings are equal, and that any form of prejudice is immoral and destructive. Baha'is observe the birthdays and dates of death of the Bab and of Baha'u'llah.

10A

On the first Sunday of October, visitors to German churches will find a plethora of fruits, vegetables, sheaves of grain, and also baked goods, as decorations around the altars. Visitors to market places and fairgrounds will oftentimes find Erntedankfest (literally: harvest gratitude festival) dances, displays, booths, a special Erntefeuer (harvest fire), and other festivities to celebrate this occasion.



## H2H QUIZ

**This quiz tests your recall powers from reading Heart2Heart. This being the month of October, all the questions are based on events from Bhagavan's life that have happened in this month. And in the answers we have included the links to all the stories and articles from which they have been taken. So please click on these links and enjoy reading about His glory.**

1. On 20 October, 1940, when Swami was barely 14 years old, He sang His first bhajan in public:

*Manasa bhajare Gurucharanam,  
Dustara bhavasagara tharanam.*

What has that epoch making day been commemorated as?

- A. Divine Proclamation Day.
- B. First Bhajan Inaugural Day.
- C. Avatar Declaration Day.
- D. First Devotee Congregation Day.

2. The custom of celebrating the Navarathri festival in a grand manner in Sai's presence originated even during the *Paatha Mandiram* [old mandir] period. In those days, Swami would be taken every day in a grand procession.

In our April 2004 issue, in the Sai Leela section, Mrs. Vijayakumari described the procession of the concluding day of Vijaya Dasami, during the celebrations of 1946.

"The festivities were a gala affair, and in the evening, Swami was taken in procession to a particular tree, to shoot arrows." What for?

- A. To commemorate Lord Rama's prowess with the bow.
- B. To shower pots of coins.
- C. To offer salutations to the auspicious tree.
- D. To practice archery.

3. Every year during the Dasara celebrations, Puttaparthi is witness to a grand spectacle "The Veda Purusha Sapthaha Gyana Yagna" – a Vedic sacrifice performed in the Divine presence of Bhagawan Baba for seven days. This festival in Puttaparthi is more than six decades old.

On October 1, 1962, during the Yagna, Swami retorted: "Some critics are raising a hue and cry that the Yagna is the occasion when a good deal of cow's ghee is wasted and a large quantity of sandalwood is burnt."

What explanation did Swami give on the significance of offering ghee?

- A. Man must give up all material desires.
- B. Man must offer the inner core of his entire personality.
- C. Man must offer to give up all his bad habits.
- D. Man must vow to become a renunciate.

4. On 11th October, 1997, on the concluding day of the Navaratri festival, after the religious ceremonies were over, a special function was arranged in the Sai Kulwant Hall, to mark the formal transfer of the Sri Sathya Sai Drinking Water Supply System, to the people of Andhra Pradesh.

When everybody praised Swami and expressed gratitude, Swami raised His hands and showed they were empty. What happened after that?

- A. Swami materialized vibhuti.
- B. Swami took the mike and gave a Discourse.
- C. Swami whispered: "Everything is in these Hands!"
- D. Swami wrote out a one crore rupees cheque.

5. On October 9<sup>th</sup>, 1998 which temple did Bhagavan consecrate in Prashanti Nilayam?

- A. The Ganesha Mandir.
- B. The Gayatri Mandir.
- C. The Rama-Laxmana-Sita shrine.
- D. The Hanuman statue.

6. On October 28<sup>th</sup>, 2000, during His discourse, Swami recalled a tragic incident of a mother, who, unable to feed her children gave them poison instead, after which she ended her life by consuming the poison herself. While recounting this horrific incident Swami's eyes became full of tears and His voice trembled with emotion. What did that lead to?

- A. The Grama Seva project.
- B. The founding of Swami's home for orphans in Puttaparthi.
- C. Swami went to that village to offer donations.
- D. Swami cancelled Darshan for that day.

7. In His first public discourse on the occasion of Vijaya Dasami (last day of Dasara) in 1953, when Bhagavan was only 27, what did He reveal that between His age 16 and 32 He would be doing?

- A. Predominantly doing miracles
- B. Giving spiritual instructions
- C. Touring places in South India
- D. Writing spiritual books

8. In the time when she was alive, on which day would Easwaramma, Swami's Mother, be honoured?

- A. Swami's Birthday.
- B. Easwaramma's birthday.
- C. Diwali day.
- D. During Navaratri.

9. On 2 October, India celebrates Mahatma Gandhi's Birthday. In our October 2005 issue, Professor Venkataraman shared with us some of Gandhi's principles; one of them being *Sarvodaya* meaning – welfare for all - to which he added; 'welfare for all based on a moral philosophy relating to the principle of Trusteeship.'

Which of Swami's teachings does this best relate to?

- A. Loka samastha sukhino bhavantu.
- B. Hands in the society, heads in the forest.
- C. Love All, Serve All.
- D: Watch your words, thoughts and deeds.

10. As we all know, that Swami has so benevolently gifted mankind with His vast knowledge in the form of several Vahinis. In October 1982, Swami began to shower divine knowledge to the world anew in the form of Sutra Vahini. What is the subject matter of the book?

- A. The Brahma Sutras.
- B. The Bhagavad Gita.
- C. Spiritual marriage.
- D. The religious texts of the world.

## Answers:

1C

October 20, 1940 was that day. In the morning of that day, Sathya left for school as usual but within minutes He was back home. Standing on the doorstep, He flung aside the bag containing books and in ringing tones declared, **"I am no longer your Sathya. I am Sai. I don't belong to you. I have My work. My devotees are calling Me. I am going. I can no longer stay here."** Walking up to a neighbour's house, He sat on a rock in the middle of the garden there while people flocked, bringing flowers. And then, most lovingly and compassionately Sri Sathya Sai Baba led the congregation in a *Bhajan* that has now become very familiar to us. He sang:

*Manasa bhajare Gurucharanam,  
Dustara bhavasagara tharanam.*

*O mind! Meditate on the Lotus Feet of the Lord!  
That alone will help you to sail across the turbulent sea called life.*

The *Avatar* had finally revealed Himself. Physically, Sai was still a fourteen-year old. Yet, such was His magnetism, and such was the faith of the devotees who flocked to Him that they had no reservation in accepting Him as a Divine Incarnation.

2 B

By three in the afternoon, they kept ready a cart beautifully decorated with flowers. On this day, Swami was to go the "Juvvi Tree" [a special type of tree, worshipped on this particular day]. As Swami was proceeding, we looked at His Royal mien, holding in His hands a bow and arrows. Verily He appeared to us as Kodanda Rama, Kalyana Rama. He shone forth as a bright light in the Ratnakara clan. What regal grandeur! What solemn dignity! ..... We accompanied Him, offering salutations as Sai traveled on the decorated cart. When we reached the Juvvi Tree, Swami stood straight and, adjusting the bow and taking aim, sent three arrows onto to the top of the tree. Pots of coins showered down! Swami caught some and flung them in all directions. We all scrambled to collect as many as we could, and later stored them carefully. This was a rare good fortune; we had never seen or heard of anything like this before. We inquired the significance of this, and Swami explained that on this auspicious day, the five Pandavas took out from a hole in a tree, the weapons and other items they had stored away [prior to the commencement of the incognito period of their exile].

3B

"The ghee and the sandalwood are but symbols for other more valuable offerings, which these critics ignore. The cow or "go" means the Jivi and since the ghee is the most precious product of the cow, the idea symbolized by the offering of ghee is that man must offer his most precious treasure, the inner core of his entire personality, to the gods."

4 C

The function was simple. The speeches were few but the praise for Baba was lavish - naturally. There was also an expression of deep-felt gratitude, and the water works now formally became a property of the people. In His Discourse, Swami said: "You all are praising Me, but what have I done? Whose money has been spent? Who has given the money for the project? It is all people's money. People's money has been spent for people's welfare. What is there in My hands?" At this point, Bhagavan raised His hands high and showed they were empty. Then He softly whispered, "Everything is in these Hands!"

5B

Situated opposite to the "Seva Dal" block, this Gayatri Mandir was consecrated by Bhagavan Baba on 9 October 1998. The five faced Goddess, Gayathri, the Mother of the Vedas is the Presiding deity there.

6A

He, who was above all worldly feelings, was nevertheless moved. He showed how our hearts ought to melt, instead of being like stone. He then asked: "Are all of you prepared to go from village to village, from house to house, to distribute food and clothing? I want you to speak to people in a loving voice and make them all happy. You must become the instruments through which they experience Swami's Love. Are you ready?" In one voice the teachers replied, "Of course Swami!" Baba smiled sweetly and said, "Good! You have My Blessings. No matter how gigantic the task, you will succeed for I shall be with you all the way!" After this, Swami reeled out a long list of names of villages to be visited, and also the names of hamlets surrounding them, where tribals lived. Nobody has seen Swami go these places at least in recent decades, but He knew everything about them. When the teachers came out, no one had the slightest doubt about the execution. They all were beaming with confidence and full of spirit. A Silent Revolution was taking shape.

7A

"The first sixteen years of this Life have been, as I have often told you, the period when Bala leela (divine child sport) predominated, and the next sixteen is being spent mostly in Mahimas (miracles) in order to give santhosha (joy) to this generation.

Joy and contentment are short-lived sensations; you have to catch that mood and make it a permanent possession: Aanandha (bliss). After the thirty-second year, you will see Me active more and more in the task of Upadesha (spiritual instruction) - teaching erring humanity and in directing the World

along the path of Sathya, Dharma, Shanthi and Prema (Truth, Righteousness, Peace and Love)....Not that I am determined to exclude leela and mahima from My activity after that; I only mean that re-establishing Dharma, correcting the crookedness of the human mind and guiding humanity back to Sanathana Dharma (eternal universal religion) will be My task thereafter.”

8D

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

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

9 C

Swami has given the simplest route to achieving *Sarvodaya*. He says ‘Love All, Serve All’. Spend five minutes and analyze carefully the implications of this profound teaching of Swami. If you do, you will find, as I have, that this seemingly simple formula if adopted by all at least to some extent, CAN indeed bring a good measure of welfare to a good many. And, as a result, a good many of the world’s problems would also get solved in the process. Maybe we will not have 100% *Sarvodaya*, but even 50% would give us a far better world!

10A

Swami put to paper the “Sutra Vahini”. “Sutra” means “that which, through a few words only, reveals vast meanings”. “Brahma Sutras” of ancient India are the multicolored flowers gathered from all Upanishads, and in each syllable it contained a volume of profound philosophical thought. Swami, in His sixteen serial essays, unrivalled these precious spiritual wisdom and placed it in a manner a layman to a litterateur could appreciate and apply them in their daily life.

## **HEALING TOUCH**

### **SWAPAN SEES ANEW AND CELEBRATES LIFE, AS SSSIHMS PIONEERS CUTTING-EDGE RESEARCH ON BRAIN TUMOURS**

There he is, sitting on his bed next to a window, looking out at the lush-green lawns in front of the Hospital. He is dressed in the green hospital clothes, his head is shaven, and he has a two-day stubble. As he notices you approach him, he immediately gets up, smiles invitingly, greets you lovingly and offers you a seat. He is extremely happy, you can see, and is 'at home' in the post-operative ward.

Swapn Garai's world, in a matter few days, has changed from absolute dejection to complete joy. A young man who had left his native town of Calcutta in search of success and work, and traveled north-west to New Delhi, the capital city of India, found a small-time job in a factory making bicycle helmets which fetched him a meager Rs. 4,500 a month (approximately US \$ 110). But just when he thought he had made a start and hoped to build a new life with hard work, the glimmer of hope that had begun to shine at the end of the tunnel seemed to fade away. His vision started playing tricks with him. He ignored it at first, then self-medicated, but finally when he went to a doctor in New Delhi, the verdict from the physician shattered him: His fading eyesight was due to a kind of brain tumour. He was advised to carry out more diagnostic tests but each one cost the equivalent of his entire month's gross wages.

Swapn Garai was faced with his life's worst nightmare, and true to his Bengali upbringing, he surrendered to his divine mother, Goddess *Kali*. There was no way he could afford treatment in any of the city's hospitals. Not only that, the government hospitals did not have the required equipment and expertise for the kind of surgery it demanded. But thanks to the Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Medical Sciences, Bangalore, and the high-quality research being carried out here in the area of tumours, Swapn today is a picture of bliss. And what is more important, he did not have to pay even a penny. How was all this possible?

#### **Prestigious Institutes Seek Hospital's Collaboration**

Bhagavan Baba's Hospital, the Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Medical Sciences in Bangalore, continues to blaze new trails each day in providing the best of care to the poorest of poor, but most of the world, unfortunately, continues to be absolutely unaware of it.

The Hospital has been chosen as the key participant in a research study initiated by the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR), a Government body, to find out the correlation between the genetic makeup of gliomas (a type of Central Nervous System tumour) and their WHO Grade (the four grades of gliomas classified by the World Health Organisation), and to further determine the efficacy of certain drugs in preventing the recurrence of the gliomas. The Project is a collaborative effort between the Indian

Institute of Sciences, Bangalore, which validates the genes involved, Dabur India, which has locally developed the chemo-therapy drug Temozolomide, and the Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Medical Sciences (SSSIHMS). Dr. A.S. Hegde, the Director of the SSSIHMS has been leading this high-profile project as the Principal Investigator.

According to Prof. Hegde, "This research would lend us valuable information, which could one day change the way we treat gliomas. The Institute is proud not only to provide totally free healthcare but also participate in cutting-edge research, with far-reaching benefits to the patients. It is ultimately Bhagavan Baba's Love and Grace that we have been chosen by the Government for collaboration in this Project."

### **Cutting Edge Research and Compassionate Care - In Tandem**

The SSSIHMS, Whitefield had been selected for the Project as the medical team from the Neuro-Sciences department there had already done some work on gliomas. Glioma is the most malignant form of cancer, with the highest chances of recurrence (see Inset on Cancer). As a follow-up after surgery, to curb the recurrence of the tumour, the SSSIHMS refers its patients to other centers for chemo-therapy and radiation therapy.

Dr. A.S. Hegde further elucidates, "Presently, under the CSIR Project, the patients operated at our Institute under the Project are eligible for free chemo-therapy and radiation therapy in other centers. Under the Project Grant, a private Hospital provides the chemo-therapy and radiotherapy free of cost to the patients who undergo surgery at SSSIHMS. Elsewhere, the patient would have had to spend upto Rs.3 lakhs (approximately US \$ 7,500) for the follow-up therapies, apart from the surgery costs, which can range between Rs.2 lakhs -Rs.4 lakhs (US \$ 5,000 - \$ 10,000). Imagine what a boon it is to a patient, unable to pay for one MRI scan receiving treatment worth almost Rs.6 lakhs, (\$15,000) **absolutely free**.

"It is not that once the surgery is performed and the course of chemo and radiotherapy is done, the treatment ends. On the other hand, all the patients treated under the Project come every three months to the Hospital for follow-up MRI/CT scans and other diagnostic tests necessary to track their progress and study the patient for the likely recurrence of the tumour. All the follow-up tests are also done free of cost to the patients. Up to now, over a one and a half year period, we have operated on 23 patients with glioblastoma multiforme (GBM) in our center."

Dr. Prasanna, Project Officer, Ms. Cini, Project Assistant and Mr. Chandrasekhar, Lab Technician comprise the team, which assists Dr. Hegde in screening the patients, and coordinating between the histopathology department of the Institute (histopathology is the study of the microscopic anatomical changes in diseased tissue) which does the grading of the tumours, and the other collaborators, especially the Indian Institute of Science. Explaining the background work of the Project, Dr. Prasanna, says,

"The CSIR Project has two prominent phases. In Phase I, which is now completed, we had collected 380 samples of gliomas belonging to all four WHO Grades, ranging from WHO Grade 1 to 4. The histopathology evaluation



was done and these samples were sent to the IISc for a large-scale validation of genes.

“Phase II is a prospective study with GBM to establish the expression profile of short-listed genes from Phase I and correlate with clinical outcome following standardized therapeutic protocol,” adds Ms. Cini.

From governments across the globe to research foundations, NGO’s and think tanks of various political hues, all are unanimous in recognizing the Sri Sathya Sai Healthcare system for its unique feature as facilities that cater to the poorest of the poor. The distinctive clientele of the Hospital make it a preferred choice for this research. Given the economic disadvantages of its patients, most of them tend to have neglected their symptoms for a long time or spent months and years seeking free medical attention elsewhere in vain before finally coming to the Hospital, by when in most cases the condition has deteriorated very badly. “There are therefore high-risks involved in these surgeries,” Prof. Hegde further adds.

Given the mission of the Hospital, its highly trained doctors spring into action to do everything that can be done to serve, treat and assist such patients with love and consideration.

### **How My Ultimate Dream Came True: Swapan Garai**

Swapan Garai was no exception, rather just one of the many who have stepped into this Hospital and found new hope, life and happiness. Ask Swapan to share his experiences about his visit and stay in the hospital, and his instant enthusiasm is a sight to see. A former patient of glioblastoma multiforme (GBM – the most virulent form of glioma with an average life expectancy of 12 months), Swapan, in unmistakable sincerity, expresses his utmost reverence for Bhagavan Baba and gratitude to all the doctors, nurses and staff at the Hospital, who have all contributed to his healing process. Narrating the story of his life, which transformed from a tragic tale to a story symbolizing the triumph of faith and pure love, he says:

“I hail from Calcutta, West Bengal. My parents, younger brother and two younger sisters live at Calcutta, where my father has a Government job. I work in New Delhi, in a private company which makes bike helmets. I earn around Rs.4,500/- per month. My problem started early January this year (2007) when I started having bouts of severe headache and nausea. Thinking it was a minor problem I took some tablets for headache and nausea, and the symptoms disappeared for a while. However, they never really went away.

“After a few days I noticed the vision in my left eye become hazy. Slowly, but surely I started losing my sight. Only then did I begin to take it more seriously. At this time I was living alone in Delhi. I had not told my family anything about this. I went to many eye hospitals, thinking it was a problem with the eye.

“The doctors’ findings were inconclusive. I finally came to a government-run hospital. I can’t forget the lady doctor who, by a mere examination told me that I had a brain tumour. She advised me to get an MRI scan done to help confirm its existence and also plan for the treatment. The scan would cost me Rs.4,500. I was not prepared to pay such a large sum, which is my one-month’s salary, towards the scan. I was the eldest in the family and both my sisters were yet to get married. Every rupee was important to me and I

thought if, in a Government hospital, we have to pay such large sums of money, what use are they? Compare this to the situation here at Baba's Hospital, where so much is given totally free!

"I was alone in Delhi without any family support when I was diagnosed with the tumour. Luckily for me, I had immense faith in *Kali Ma* (the divine Goddess) and believed in the universal law that good actions beget good results and bad actions beget bad results.

"I called up my father to inform him about my malady. By this time my vision was down to 50% in the left eye. I then went to Calcutta, where I got the CT scan done, which confirmed the existence of the brain tumour.

"The search for a hospital to get the treatment done began. We went to many hospitals in Calcutta and New Delhi. Some Government hospitals did not have the doctors and equipment to do the surgery, whereas we did not have the money to afford treatment in private hospitals. It was a tough time for us. As a family, we were devastated. We did not know where to go and whom to ask for help. We felt lost and helpless but held on to our prayers and surrendered our situation to *Kali Ma*, praying each day for Her Divine Mercy.

"Hope was restored in our lives by a teacher in the school where my youngest sister studied. He was a *seva dal* member, who used to come regularly to Puttaparthi for volunteer service. He was also aware of Baba's Hospitals and used to regularly guide patients to this unique facility.

"He was so convincing in his tone about the quality of the treatment being given here. Though he mentioned it was completely free, we had our own doubts. Most of our life experiences have taught us that if something is too good to be true, it probably isn't. It is hard to shake off that cynicism at once. Who would really offer all this at no cost! We suspected a catch in the offer. However, it was hard to ignore this man's confidence. He even said that if I could not be treated here, I would not have hope at any other hospital in the country. It was that man's faith in Baba's Hospital that finally brought us here."

Swapan came with his father, younger brother and a sister in May, 2007. Ask him about his initial impressions of the Hospital, and he says, "Words escape me if you want me to describe how I felt when I saw the Hospital for the first time. To me, it looked like a palace, or the Rashtrapathi Bhavan (residence of the Indian President in New Delhi), or a temple. The ambience resembled that of a temple more than anything else. While running from pillar to post due to my health situation, my family and I had visited any number of hospitals, but once we entered this 'Temple of Love', the peace we experienced was indescribable.

"I could sense genuine concern amongst the doctors about my condition. There was obviously not a penny being charged either for the registration or for the tests and consultation. We were all completely moved. The teacher from my sister's school was right after all, we thought, and we reprimanded ourselves for doubting his claims about Sathya Sai Baba's Hospitals.

"He had also assured us that once admitted we wouldn't have to worry about anything at all. We found it so true! We have seen outside hospitals and the contrast is too glaring. You're in a constant state of tension of - arranging for this, paying for that, filling up dozens of forms. Here we don't even have the

tension of arranging for blood. It is such a boon to be a patient here!” Swapan eyes light up.

### **A Delicate Operation**

The rest of Swapan’s story is, as they say, history. In June of this year (2007), Swapan underwent two surgeries to remove the tumour. Prof. A.S. Hegde, Director of SSSIHMS, Whitefield and Chairman of the Neurosciences Department, comments, “In Swapan’s case, the glioma was found in the occipital region of the brain (back part of the skull) and was about 48 cubic cms in size, and this was causing visual field defects in Swapan.

“An occipital craniotomy was performed when we tried to excise the complete tumour. We were able to only partially decompress the tumour and excise only 25% of it. There was substantial blood loss during this procedure, due to which we had to plan for a second procedure.

“The second surgery was successfully completed and we were able to excise the entire tumour and the decompression was complete. The bone flap was replaced and the scalp was stitched back. The first surgery lasted six hours and the second eight hours. We had to also deal with a lot of blood loss, which is common in such procedures. Finally, at the end of both surgeries, Swapan regained much of the vision in the affected eye.”

As Swapan gets ready to leave the Hospital, he is oozing with happiness, contentment and gratitude. It is hard to recognize him, now that he has changed out of the green hospital clothes and the two-day stubble is also gone. Clean-shaven, wearing a bright-red shirt, he has covered his head with a scarf. Reflecting the altruism of the environment, he says: “When I first came to this Hospital, I used to pray, ‘Baba, please cure me’. During the course of my stay here, after seeing so many of my fellow patients suffering, I now say, ‘Baba, please cure everybody’.” The Divine, in His own way, has taken care of the brain of this worker from the helmet factory who has been working hard to protect others’ heads from injury! And Swapan today has undergone a transformation of not only the head, but also the heart and the vision. In his own way, he recites the universal peace prayer: “*Loka Samastha Sukhino Bhavanthu*” (Let all the people in all the worlds be happy).

“Swapan has been very fortunate and has the signs of a survivor. After two months of surgery, he has not shown any signs of recurrence. With His Grace, he should be able to go back to work, and live an absolutely normal life,” Prof. Hegde assures.

### **Sai Hospitals – Running on Love**

Currently, two Sathya Sai Super Specialty Hospitals in Prashanthi Gram (Andhra Pradesh) and in Whitefield (Karnataka), along with another in Rajkot (Gujarat), and dozens of other general hospitals and hundreds of medical, dental and eye camps are delivering free treatment and alleviating the suffering and pain of thousands of patients every single day. This silent medical renaissance initiated and inspired solely by Bhagavan Baba has been growing each day, to take on greater responsibilities, including the latest medical research studies, seeking long term cures and treatments of diseases, while lovingly relieving the pain of the poor and the sick along the way.

Combining its social responsibilities to the medical fraternity with its focus on holistic treatment, the Sathya Sai Healthcare system continues to carve a niche for itself by keeping its doors and heart open to the neglected and the downtrodden and by offering every single patient the care and treatment fit for a king! It is the only system that trades exclusively in the currency of selfless love, treating all who step into its embrace (symbolized by its two wide wings on either side) as equals of the supreme Godhead. Like Swapan Garai, thousands have been blessed with good health and along with it, more importantly, a good attitude, because they have received warmth, care and treatment at these 'Temples of Heavenly Healing'.

#### **ADDENDUM:**

*Cancer is a global disease that poses severe challenges in the healthcare management in all societies. Although the incidence of various types of cancers is relatively higher in developed countries, recent lifestyle changes in developing countries are expected to result in increases of cancer incidence in these countries. The international research efforts on the fight against cancer resulted in better understanding of the initiation and progression of various types of cancers and identification of several target molecules. Despite these positive outcomes, in many types of cancers the available prognostic markers and therapeutic options have been limited.*

*One such cancer type is the glioma, the most common brain tumour with an incidence of 12 per 100,000 people. The WHO grading system classifies gliomas into Grades 1 to 4, based on their biological behaviour and histopathological evaluation. Among gliomas, astrocytomas are the commonest comprising of more than 60% of all gliomas. Astrocytomas are subdivided into four grades based on histological criteria and certain marker expressions. Grade 4 astrocytomas or glioblastoma multiforme (GBM) are the most aggressive and invasive tumour, with the mean survival period from the time diagnosed as GBM being approximately 12 months, even after chemotherapy and radiation therapy. [Swapan, whose story is discussed in the main article, had this condition].*

*The immediate need in the management of GBM's is the prediction of the treatment outcome. This is because of the diverse results of patients in the response to radiotherapy/chemotherapy. A possible reason for this could be the difference in the gene expression patterns, which the CSIR Project will seek to reveal.*

## YOUR SAY

### **Feedback from Readers on the September Issue**

#### **Feedback on the Cover Story: 'Prema Jyothi, A Celebration of Pure Love'**

Dearest Heart2Heart team members,

I was immensely fortunate to see the exhibition in person during the WYC and wanted to express my awe and appreciation at your monumental efforts that have touched every single heart that walked through. I have always read with keen interest about His projects and seva activities but to actually see those photographs had an altogether different impact.

Not surprisingly so, the heart speaks only of love and love speaks in silence. And in that very silence the Lord and His divine acts, the suffering faces of humanity and the selfless love that can alleviate it spoke and in silence our hearts understood.

So congratulations team, Mission accomplished! Now it's up to all of us not only to carry it forward but to live it for the rest of our lives.

I remember talking to one of the brothers during the exhibition who was kind enough to share with us the beautiful description in this month's cover. And I also remember my disappointment when I was told that the photos and video recording were not intended for public view. So, you can imagine the pleasant surprise and boundless joy when I poured over the text and drank in all the pictures - it took me almost 90 mins to read through! I could scarce believe my eyes - one little wish made a few weeks ago and the grand fulfilment today, through this exquisite piece, not just with Swami's photos but a detailed description of all His expressions and comments. As I read through it, I felt the thrill and joy that you must have felt on that day. You gave the best gift possible - a "remote Darshan". You brought our Swami into my living room.

So, from the bottom and every other place in my heart, I express my gratitude for such loving service. It is said that the highest service one can do is to serve the children of the Lord.

Thank you, with love, Meema Kalluri

Dear Sai Brothers,

From start to finish the story was captivating and humbling as the realization of the grandeur of what we are experiencing in this lifetime hit home. Both "indescribably magnificent" as well as magnificently indescribable. While reading the words towards the end of your article "...without sparing a thought about the strain on the planet's resources as the population rises exponentially" one of the many feelings prompting this heart was relative to a

holiday here in the States, that of All Souls Day, when “all souls rise from the dead” and the role of the Sai Organization.

It was deeply felt here that as devotees of Lord Sai, we are all Seva Dals in this vast gathering of souls on planet Earth and we have been blessed with the opportunity and responsibility of promoting peace and silence among this unruly crowd through loving feelings, thoughts, speech and behavior, as the “Greatest Love Story Ever Written” unfolds, His Story. As the photo of the Earth in his hand depicts, “It’s all in the Hand”, which He lovingly told this heart in an interview. We need not worry about anything, just play well our part in the story, and pay attention to His directions.

Was it inspiring? Without reservations. Again, towards the end of your article, these words prompted this heart onwards with the above expressed feelings: “Incarnations of God in human form are extremely rare. God is now here with us and clearly, this is an opportunity we simply cannot afford to miss”.

Did it help you in any way? It helped to reassure the feelings in this heart that Swami’s Form is a focal point for the entire world in His Story, without exception or exclusion, and we need not concern ourselves with our seating arrangement as He has blessed each of us with a part to play, regardless of where we have been stationed. His Presence has been lovingly felt and expressed globally now,

With Love in Sai to all, Jai Sai Ram, Micheal Rogers

Sai brothers and sisters,

I do not have words to express my happiness and joy in reading such a huge and loving work of dear Baba’s students. It has given me tremendous happiness and peace and longing to be a smallest particle of service in His compassionate plan. Thank you for every article in H2H Radio Sai. . I depend on them as my satsang. Thanks a lot again.

May His blessings be with everybody and always, Gouri.

Dear All,

Again it is Swami's expression of Love that those of us who could not be present physically were given a taste of the exhibition through your cover story. Stupendous effort and marvellous job.

Thank you and Sai Ram, Indra Deo, Fiji

WOW! Thank you so much for sharing the background to making this display. This article sends such a powerful and positive message to all – “Anything

can be achieved if it is for the benefit of Mankind” and “Shared vision and selfless service accomplishes miracles.” Imagine this story being shared in a corporate world to inspire team building. I was in awe as I read the article.

Sai Ram, Seelan Moodley, Deployment Programme Manager, Slough, UK

Dear H2H team,

Sairam. You ask if I 'liked' this section....and if it 'helped' me! Well yes, it made me feel like I was actually present there physically when all this was going on.....

It gave me total bliss.....I felt as if Swami was talking to me face to face...wow!

I also like the inspiration page very much.....

Keep up your excellent work....God bless!

With love and light,

Madhvi

After visiting the exhibition “Prema Jyothi” during Guru Purnima, it is such a heart filling experience to see it again at the internet, with a commentary which is:

- so profound,
  - so sweet and full of the same love Swami is expressing,
  - and so completely in accordance with the fullness of the exhibition itself,
- that I want to thank everybody again who worked so hard to get this great work done, bringing Swamis love and grace even deeper in our hearts. Thanks a lot!

With love, Aum Sai Ram, Jaap van Setten, Netherlands

Sai Ram!

Thank you so much for the extensive report on the exhibitions and Swami's blessed, loving Presence there. In the article His Life and the effect of it in the world, all come together in moving words and pictures. It makes me feel as if I am present too. And, as so often, I feel overwhelmed with gratitude to the Lord that I may know Him in this lifetime, and be so close to Him in my heart and, at times even physically.

With grateful Love, Constance Eykman, The Netherlands.

Sairam, I just finished reading the Prema Jyoti exhibition and would like to thank you so much for sharing this with us. It made me feel as if I was there watching the exhibition. I was so moved and overjoyed to read this.

With our beloved Sai's blessings,

Sister Amutha.

Sai Ram to all involved in the new Exhibition. It is a wonderful example to the whole world what can be done for the global harmony of the earth we are living on. It is really moving and exceptionally professional. Here in Australia we are experiencing the worst drought in centuries, and I know Swami is aware of all this.

Some people will be slow to come to terms with their innate divinity, and until then, we will have catastrophies. With the blessings and salutations of our Lord, we will overcome all hardships.

Thank you for the wonderfully inspiring articles, I always look forward to them, as they set the seal for my day. I am not the same without the inspirations you continue to send to me. I thank Swami for your hard work.

Yours in Sai, Judie Rowling, Australia.

### **Feedback on 'In Quest of Infinity - Part 8' Dear Sir,**

The 'Feature Articles: In Quest of Infinity by Prof. G Venkataraman' are giving good insight into the matters pertaining to the universe from scientific studies. Such valuable information in the form of serial articles may not be ordinarily available. Though it is difficult to understand all aspects covered in these articles, on the whole it is very interesting. I would like to convey my deep regards to Prof. Venkataraman for sharing his knowledge in such a simple, free and frank manner.

Recently, I read an interesting item, 'Still in the dark on the stuff of the universe' by James Watson Cronin, who won the 1980 Nobel for physics who said, "We think we understand the universe, but we only understand 4 per cent of everything." Some other interesting aspects about dark matter are also mentioned in this.

Swami said, "Truth is more fundamental than the atom." Further, Swami on many occasions mentioned about the limitations of science, "How can science which is bound to a physical and materialist outlook investigate



transcendental phenomena beyond its scope?... Spiritualism, on the other hand, reins over the cosmic field where science has no place. That is why some discoveries of science are useful while others can be disastrous.” (From the book ‘Digest’- page 286).

I hope, in course of time, those scientists who are struggling to know ‘the stuff of the universe’ turn to the spiritual path or come to the presence of Swami, to know more about the Universe.

With kind regards, C. Venkata Ratnam.

### **Feedback on ‘Sai Krishna – The Enigmatic Enchanter’**

I was thrilled to read this article. I have been reading your articles for the last three years. This is one of the best and it straight went to my heart possibly because we all are in similar situations as the author and pray to Swami.

Surlinathan, Chennai

Sai Ram Dear Members of H2H,  
I really liked the article "Sai Krishna - The Enigmatic Enchanter". It's given me a new perspective about the Krishna Avatar and the inner meaning behind the pranks of our Sai Krishna, which call for introspection. Please do present more such articles from the students, I am eager to read them.

Loving Regards, Nimish Ubhayakar

Thank you for this beautiful article. I know very little about Lord Krishna but try to understand Him because I love Sai Baba. Your article came at a critical time for me. I am trying to surrender all to Baba. I just had a very disappointing, hurtful experience. I pray to Baba to free me of feelings of grievances and even spite. I just want Baba to know whatever caused it, I know it is His grace. I am thankful. Your article was the blessed coincidence that let me know Baba is hearing me.

Thank you.  
Constance Robinson, USA

### **Feedback on ‘Living Up to His Message’**

Sai ram, Brothers at Radio Sai,

Sri Sanjay Sahini's message to the Youth at WYC was inspiring; He clearly reflects he is a Gold Medalist. It is very thought provoking message not only to the Youth but to every member in the Sai Organization.

Would appreciate to publish more of Sri Sanjay Sahani's speeches. Also if you can get the speeches by other Youth leaders at WYC published, we can see their approach, too, including Dr. Reddy's speech.

S. Pathy, Toronto, Canada.

Sai Ram,

The article on 'Living up to His message' was truly touching and inspiring. It reminded me of what another student said in his talk. This student was in Swami's house for a decade. He would see Swami every day and was very close to Him. But he still felt that he was lacking something. He would write letters to Swami every day. Then one day Swami asked this student what he wanted and this person replied, "I want you Swami," then Swami asked, "Do you want Swami or Sai,". Then the student cleverly replied, "I want both Swami". To that Swami said, "If you want Swami, I am there today, but Sai is always there. I am with you, around you, in you everywhere." In this article it is the same feeling. If you are a Sathya Sai University student then you are one only for a few years - but you are a Sai Student forever.

Thank you for sharing this article. I was an Institute student, at one point so when I read articles like this it brings back a lot of memories. Thank you once again.

Regards, Kanthi Ayyagari, Taipei

**Feedback on "'He Is My Swami", Conversation with Mrs. Padma Kasturi, Part 5.'**

Sai Ram,

I read the interview with Padma Kasturi. Really I felt very happy. I am Indian but now we live in Singapore because of my husband's job. But everyday I spend my time with Radio Sai. I want to read more experiences of old devotees because we can learn valuable lessons from them.

With regards, Visalakiran K

Dear Sir,

I found the article "Conversation with Padma Kasturi" very inspiring as well as it helped me understand Swami's many ways of being in constant communication with us. Please publish more articles on these lines.

Sai Ram, Ashok Bhandarkar, Mumbai, India

### **Feedback on 'Love Shines Through'**

Sai Ram Dear Brothers,

The experiences by Ms Lulu Plata 'Love Shines Through' are very inspiring and show that Swami is always present to help, guide and shower His infinite love. Thanks for presenting nice experiences everyday. You are doing a wonderful job. Keep it up.

Regards to all members of heart2 heart team, Khesseven

### **Feedback on 'Salt Water Turns Sacred and Sweet'**

Sai Ram,

The article 'Salt Water Turns Sacred and Sweet' is enchanting. Thank you for all the good work you are doing - may Baba bless you always - we get great joy by logging on to the computer every day.

Prabha Lalvani

### **Feedback on 'A Stirring Story of Surrender'**

Dear H2H team,

Thank you for the article on Mr. Ivan Bavcevic's inspiring personal story of transformation. It is something just what I needed to read at the moment. I hope I can achieve such a selfless level of surrender someday.

Thank you! SJ

Dear Editor:

This feature is very moving and very impressive. We all know about the many miracles of Swami, and have witnessed many. However, He always mentions that it is the transformation in our attitude that is the miracle to count. This young individual has gone through that process and has laid it out beautifully in this article. It is from the depth of his own experience. It is encouraging to us, who are still learning this discipline of surrender. Thanks.

Krishnan

Dear Sir,

After reading this article, it has rekindled my soul. I felt that it was Swami speaking through him. It woke me up, and I must aggressively go on with my seva project I promised Swami when I was in Puttaparthi last month. Thank You for circulating this article.

Love Ravi, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

Sai Ram H2H Team,

I would like to let you know that you're commitment, discipline and love shows through the Radio Sai website! I'm not one to usually comment or even browse through websites, but today I thought I'd take a "quick" look around! You see, I usually get the "thoughts for the day" sent by someone else and I read that and be on my way. But, today, my "quick" look took some pleasant "time" and turned into sadhana!

Your article about the Youth Coordinator from Croatia was very inspiring and uplifting to all who are yearning and putting forth the needed effort to transform our lives and putting into practice, Baba's Teachings!

It is a good article to share with center members, including the older youths of the SSE wing of Sathya Sai Baba Centers. I will definitely read/share it for our study circle.

I hope it will give them some perspective of knowing and hearing how others, like Youth Coordinator, Ivan Bavcevic, can implement 'spirituality into living' and be viewed as a "cool" person among their peers who are not necessarily Baba devotees but are devotees of God! This article applies to all and all can benefit from it! Thank you.

With Baba's Love and Blessings, Nazneen Daruwalla, Arizona, USA.

Sai Ram,

This is a truly inspiring article. Applicable to each of us who 'claim' we have surrendered. May Swami's blessings always be with Mr Bavcevic and may he have a positive influence on people he encounters in his daily life, spreading Swami's message of love and service. Our life should be the Mission itself.

Sai Ram, Bhanu

Dear Brothers,

I was in ecstasy when I read Ivan's letter. Yes, I am inspired enough to follow what he has said and has to say. Thank you all at h2hradiosai for bringing this news to us in the USA.

Sai Ram. Loves. Vasu

### **Feedback on Prashanti Diary**

Thank you for the Prashanti Diary! For senior citizens like us who are not able to make it to Prashanti Nilayam, it is a virtual treat to be able to have a glimpse into the events.

With pranams at the Lotus Feet of Swami, Padma Shetty, Mysore

Dear, dear friends,

Thank you so much for the Prashanti Diary. The commentary is so heart touching, the pictures are so beautiful and Swami's divine presence is so concrete...! Thanks for your love and devotional contribution, to all, who are living abroad. It really brings heaven on earth in the hearts and the lives of all of us.

Aum Sai Ram, Jaap van Setten, The Netherlands

### **Feedback on 'From Cardiac Blues to the Family's Blue-Eyed Boy'**

Dear Heart2Heart Team,

Another wonderful and inspiring article. I have decided to share this article with many of my colleagues at work. This article touched the very core of my being so much so that I just wanted to leave what I am doing and work at the hospital even if it meant cleaning the floors. This is such a wonderful lesson on Selfless Love in Action.

Seelan Moodley, Deployment Programme Manager, Slough, UK

### **Feedback on the Quizzes**

Sai Ram, Brothers/Sisters,

It was nice playing quiz online with heart to heart. It is very interesting and gives us a chance to go back and recollect our sweet memories with Sai world. Thanks a lot. It's a great effort from your side.

With Best Wishes,

Achinthya,

Bangalore.

These kind of quizzes are very, very good. We can learn a lot of other religions. How else could we learn about them without reading books etc. Happy to have discovered this possibility, thank you

Esther Meyer

Dear Sirs,

What a wonderful quiz! I look forward to attempting them, do they come every week?

Sai Ram and Regards,

Pinakin Shah

### **Feedback on 'Information Please'**

Jai SaiRam!

I really enjoyed the beautiful article. The language is simple, the underlying meaning is profound. The profound moral of the story has left a lasting impression in my mind. A very good selection. The illustrations are simply good. Thank you!

Sairam! Dr S Krishnamurthy, Coimbatore.

### **Feedback on the Sunday Special 'Which Do We Need More, SMS Or SMN?' from 9 September.**

Sai Ram Dear Radio Sai family,

Living in a very busy world, with literally 'no time' for anything, and after working for 28 hours, I opened up my mail. Finally some time to myself. Tried to glance through Swami's message for the day. I did not think that I will be awake enough to go any further with my reading.

But, the question 'Which Do We Need More, SMS Or SMN?' that has been put forward seemed really irresistible. And I was curious to know what SMN stands for.

As I go through your article, I see myself there....being nailed down....But I feel happy to see that part of myself undergo some change. Yes that's Swami's grace.

"No matter how busy we are, we should never allow ourselves to be so busy as to neglect the fundamental purpose of life"-

All of a sudden the truth seems so simple and so obvious--- Thank you all for this precious minute.

Sai Ram, Dr. Yamuna Sanil.

Please complement whoever wrote---SMS or SMN--for an outstanding contribution.

Prof Anantharaman

Your article on SMS or SMN was very inspiring. Everyone complains they have no time but we all have the same number of seconds in the day. We should get our priorities right.

Deepak Fakey

### **Feedback on Radio Sai**

Sairam Radio Sai Team,

To be honest, the word 'Thank you' will not do justice to the seva you are doing. But, unfortunately this is the only word in English and I'm using it. Thanks a lot for your stupendous work you are carrying out in respect to Radio Sai and heart2heart. The programmes and articles are really helping me in one or the other way towards my goal of self realization. There are lots of lessons to be learned from various experiences, Chinna Kathas, discourses etc.

My humble request is kindly increase the on demand programs so that we can listen at a later times as it is difficult to listen live. I've asked earlier and I know it is really tough but am unable to hold back, please, please increase Telugu programmes. There is an enormous amount of Telugu audiences not just in USA but across the globe. So, it will be of great help to everyone. Also, please post more Telugu conversations by Prof Anil Kumar, Prof Gangadhar Sasthry etc. Kindly increase on demand interviews in English/Telugu. Thanks for your time.

Jai Sairam! Srinivas Takuri

### **Feedback on Sai Inspires**

Dear Radio Sai Friends,

Thank you so much for what you do. Over here in England the moments of the reading the daily article gives me so much joy, often tears of joy. Just yet another beautiful story of our Sai - it lessens the physical distance to Puttaparthi. I felt particularly moved by 'Conversations with Padma Kasturi', a tender Swami reminder and encouragement to mothers everywhere! How very lucky we are.

Sai Ram, Moira Rowe, Devon, England

Every time we go through the 'Thought For The Day' from the Nilayam, we are taught new lessons on spirituality. Also, Sai inspires brings us every day, Bhagavan's message as well as His beautiful photo enchantingly. Our memory is short lived and hence it is necessary for us to go through the messages more often so that it will get enshrined in our heart. Mundane things get lodged in our memory very easily, but the spiritual lessons take time to sink in our consciousness. In today's thought, Swami has said 'everything happens according to God's will alone' - Hence forget the plans etc and leave everything to Him. He will get things done.

Sai Ram, Deshpande, Abu Dhabi



