

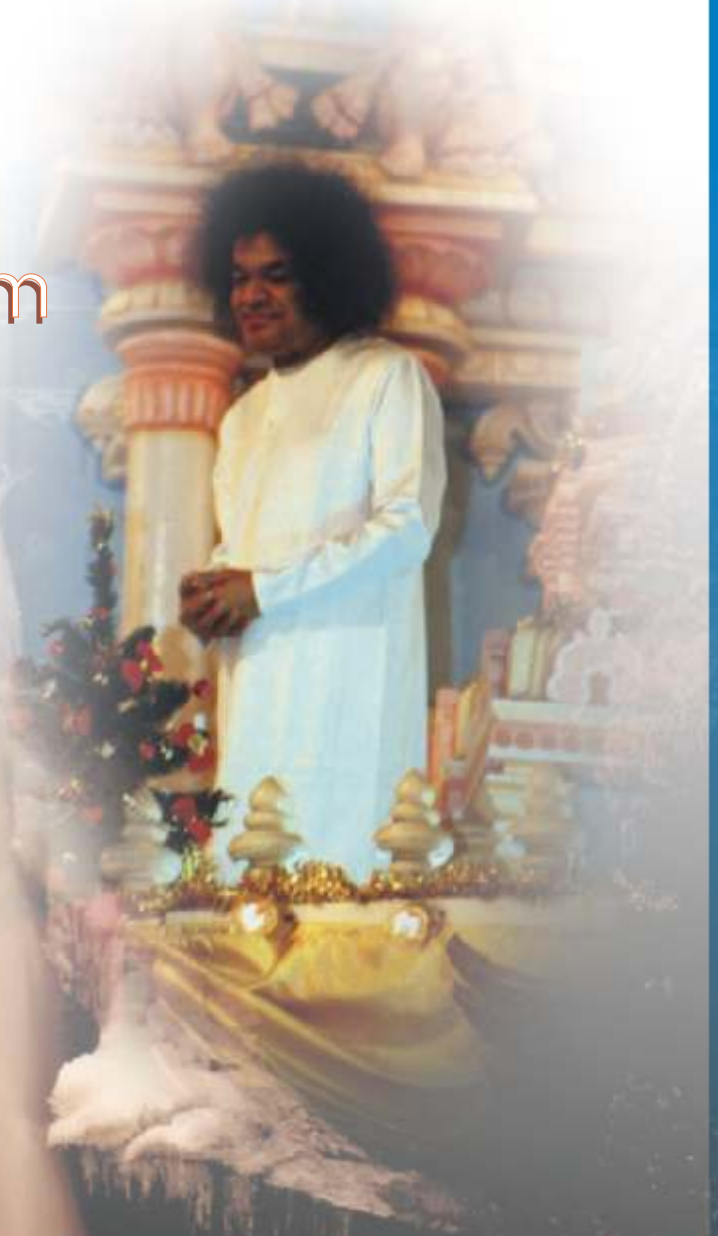


HEART TO hEART



RADIO SAI LISTENER'S JOURNAL

Christmas at Prasanthi Nilayam





PRANAMS AT THE LOTUS FEET

Journal

developed by

SGH Team, Prashanti Nilayam &
S N Informatics Private Limited, Bangalore



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Contents

Between You and Us 1

Cover Story

Christmas at Prasanthi Nilayam 2
Two Masters and One Message 5
The Crucifix 8
Of such is the Kingdom of Heaven 10

Spiritual Bloosoms

Sathya Sai Speaks 11
Reflections 12
Getting Spiritual better 14

Kindle Your Spirit

A Messaage from God 19
Glory of God 20

Prasanthi Dairy

The Lord's Birthday 21

Moments Memories & Miracles 23

Tender Hearts

A Mother's Smile 26
On your Birthday 27

Windows to Sai Seva

Touching Thousand's of Hearts 28

Down Memory Line 31



Between You and Us

Dear Reader,

The cover story this time is Christmas, and in particular, Christmas in Prashanti Nilayam. If you come to Prashanti at that time, you will find lots of overseas devotees, blissfully celebrating Christmas along with the locals. However, the celebration of Christmas by Baba did not start with the large-scale arrival of overseas devotees. In fact, it goes back a long time, when the number of overseas visitors was less than a handful.

Why did Baba start celebrating Christmas in those distant days? Because He wanted to remind humanity about the values that Christ stood and died for. Christ is always remembered for four things: Love, Compassion, Sacrifice, and Forbearance - in Baba's language, Prema, Daya, Tyaga and Kshama. That is the magnet that drew people in increasing numbers to Christ and to the faith that was later established in his name. And it is that very same magnet that is now drawing hundreds of thousands to Him who sent Christ, that is the Heavenly Father.

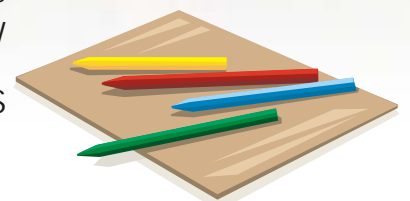
The so-called Middle East gave birth to three major religions – Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. They have many things in common, including the Prophets. Yet, how many conflicts history has seen between the followers of these religions! How come when religions preach Love, many who claim to profess these religions preach intolerance? The Mind holds the key to that puzzle.

Today, there is a lot of violence in that very region that gave birth to the three famous religions just mentioned. Why is that? The answer is, to use Swami's language, that the Mind is being turned towards the world instead of God. Tens if not hundreds of billions of dollars are being spent to fight terrorism as it is referred to. But, as one wise man wrote: "War is born in the minds of men and it is in the minds of men that war must be stopped". And that stopping cannot be achieved with more violence and the philosophy of an eye for an eye. Those days are gone.

There is no use mechanically chanting PEACE ON EARTH at Christmas time while promoting greed, desires, anger, venom, hatred, jealousy etc. In this context, Swami makes a reference to two words: SHANTI and PRASHANTI. What do they mean? Baba has explained. Shanti means Inner Peace and Tranquillity. Bhagavan adds: "When a person has achieved Inner Peace, the calm within radiates outwards and spreads Peace in the neighbourhood – that is Prashanti. Shanti is like the inherent beauty of a rose while Prashanti is like its fragrance; it reaches a long distance." Peace will reign on earth when each one of us achieves Shanti within. If there is Shanti within, there is automatically Prashanti outside. That then is the magic formula.

This issue which offers a glimpse of Christmas as celebrated in Baba's Divine presence would, we hope, arouse noble feelings in all our readers and genuinely contribute to the spread of Peace in this troubled world.

WHEREVER YOU ARE, HERE IS WISHING YOU A MERRY CHRISTMAS FROM ALL OF US IN THE SGH TEAM



Christmas at Prasanthi Nilayam

The birth of Christ brings with it great joy and happiness to the whole world. And all celebrate it with all earnestness. But when it comes to Christmas at Prasanthi Nilayam, Christmas gains an all new flavour. Christmas with Sai is among the best celebrated festivals at Prasanthi Nilayam. Coming a month after the Birthday Celebrations, Christmas is eagerly looked forward to. Heart to Heart brings to you a description of this great festival as it is generally celebrated in Prasanthi Nilayam.

The evening of 24th of December is the starting point of the Christmas celebrations. That evening, the overseas devotees conduct a carol programme in the presence of Bhagawan in the Sai Kulwant Hall. The songs in praise of the Lord and His Divine Son bring the warmth of Christmas to each and every heart.

Then comes the much anticipated morning of the 25th of December. Much before the cock crows, the devotees assemble in the Sai Kulwant Hall. Following the regular Suprabhatham the overseas devotees join the special Nagar-Sankeertan singing Carols while holding candles in their hands. As they walk into the Hall humming 'Joy to the World' or 'Silent Night', it charges the entire atmosphere with a solemnity, which is one of the reasons that make Christmas at Prasanthi Nilayam so special. As all the students slowly light up their candles, the Hall is filled with the soft glow and warmth of the candle lights. It is quite an experience to be present there in the soft glow of the hundreds of candles flickering merrily to the soft humming of carols in the background.

Soon the ornate silver doors open on the first floor of the Prasanthi Mandir and the audience revel in silent joy. There is hushed excitement as people try to catch the first glimpse of the Lord dressed in a Divine white robe.



Bhagawan walks slowly and stands right at the edge of the balcony blessing every body present with a beautiful smile and often raising His hands in blessing. He then walks around the balcony and stands at different places facing all the devotees in turn and sways gently to the tunes of the carols being hummed. Then the Aarhi is lit and all join in singing the Aarhi in unison. Bhagawan retires after this to His residence.



Later in the morning Bhagawan comes for the regular darshan at around 7:00 AM. After He finishes His darshan round, He sits on His chair kept on the stage.

After taking His blessings the students of the Sri Sathya Sai Primary School present a violin concert with several small children playing beautiful tunes on their stringed instruments.

This is followed by the Institute Brass Band presenting an instrumental orchestra. The lilting tunes played by the band lifts the spirits of those present there. The foot-tapping presentation by the Brass band is followed by the carol programme by the students of the Institute and the Higher Secondary School. The students sing several traditional carols as well as newly composed songs in the praise of their Lord. The carols end with the famous song "Dashing Through The Snow" during which a student dressed as the Santa Claus takes Bhagawan's blessings, goes around throwing chocolates to all. The morning festivities come to an end with prasadam distribution and Aarhi.

The 25th of December also happens to the anniversary of the Kingdom of Mother Sai, an alumni association of the students of the Anantapur Campus of the Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning. The afternoon programme starts with the presentation of the service activities carried



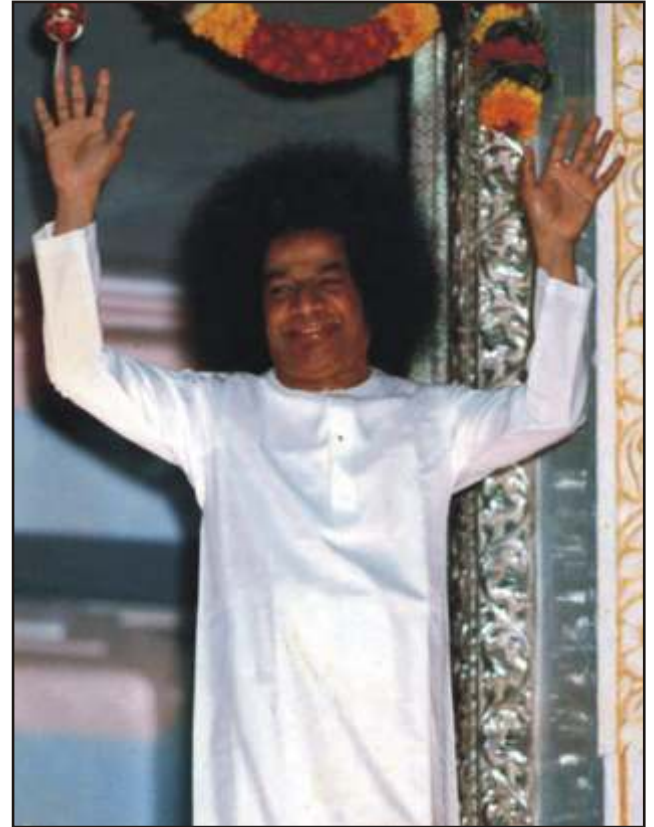
Christmas at Prasanthi Nilayam



out by the organisation and talks by members of the organisation. This is followed by talks by some elderly devotees. The icing on the cake is Bhagawan's discourse, which

follows the talks. Over the years Bhagawan has given a lot of insight into the teachings of Christ. He has also spoken about the life of Christ and what Christ stood for. One memorable Christmas evening, during the course of His discourse, Bhagawan materialised a small Bible, which He said was compiled in Britain around 1530 A.D., containing all the information about Jesus gathered during the preceding centuries. The Russians condensed all this material in a small book which they preserved in a place on the Black Sea coast. Swami produced the little book by a circular wave of His hand and held it before the audience. He said: "This is the book. You can see the cross on the cover page. The book was designed to demonstrate the common features of all religions. What is contained in this book is not to be found even in the Bible. It contains an entirely new account of the life of Jesus." After the discourse Bhagawan accepts the Aarthi and retires.

But the Christmas celebrations are not over yet. The evening is the time for the Christmas pageant presented in the Poornachandra Auditorium. Bal-Vikas Students from overseas present the colourful drama much to the joy of Bhagawan and all the gathered devotees. This beautiful presentation marks the end of the Christmas in Prasanthi Nilayam and marks the beginning of the anticipation of



the next Christmas to be celebrated here. Christmas leaves behind pleasant memories and that feeling of joy and happiness, which is only to be experienced.

What makes Christmas at Prasanthi Nilayam so special? People from all over the globe travel here to celebrate the birth of Christ, in the presence of His Father. We hear very often speakers mentioning that they prefer to celebrate Christmas with Bhagawan than in their own hometowns. It is like one really huge family gathering that celebrates Christmas at Prasanthi Nilayam and shares and thus multiplies its joy. JOY TO THE WORLD, THE LORD HAS COME! MERRY CHRISTMAS!!!



Christmas at Prasanthi Nilayam



The Teachings of Jesus and Sai



Dear Readers,

Two thousand years ago when Jesus walked on this earth He gave mankind a message. He taught them in parables and showed them way to the Kingdom of God. Today we have Bhagawan, the Supreme Lord, once again walking the earth and showing the way to HIS Kingdom. Back then it was the Son and now it is the Father.

But the message is the same!

Jesus: Man cannot live by bread alone, but needs every word that God speaks.

Sathya Sai: Man does not live by bread alone. He lives by the Atma. Devotion and surrender and not greed and deceit should form the basis for man's life and lead to the blossoming of Spiritual Wisdom in his Heart.

Life is not to be dedicated for mere food and drink, or merely catering to the cravings of the senses. It has to be devoted to the attainment of Bliss that God alone can confer.



Jesus: Do not put the Lord your God to the test.

Sathya Sai: Who is there so bold that he can say, "The Lord must wear this dress", "The Lord must act only in this manner"? Who can limit His glory or set His direction?



Jesus: Go away, Satan! The scripture says, "Worship the Lord your God and serve only him!"

Sathya Sai: Fill your Mind with the desire to see God, be with Him, Praise Him, glorify Him, and taste the Glory of His Majesty. There is no Bliss higher than that.

The essence of the Scriptures lies in this one rule: "Repeat the Name of the Lord, keeping His Glory always before the Mind."



Jesus: Happy are those who mourn; God will comfort them!

Sathya Sai: Bear calumny, loss, disappointment, defeat, boldly and with equanimity; then no mental depression can overwhelm you. I must tell you that I am happy when someone among you is subjected to suffering, for that is a chance given to you to demonstrate your intelligence and sense of values.



Jesus: Happy are those who are humble; they will receive what God has promised.

Sathya Sai: Real education requires the cultivation of a sense of humility. Great learning brings humility. Without humility there is no education.

True education gives you humility; from humility you get deservedness; from such deservedness you will get wealth; from wealth you will get Dharma, and thence happiness in this temporal world as well as in the spiritual world.



Jesus: Happy are those whose greatest desire is to do what God requires. God will satisfy them fully!

Sathya Sai: Understand that the purpose of life is to know through Love the ultimate embodiment of Love, namely God. And demonstrate through your own Love that you have known Him.



Jesus: Happy are those who are merciful to others. God will be merciful to them.

Sathya Sai: Live without hating others, condemning others, and seeking faults in others.

The spiritual journey lies through compassion, sympathy, mutual help and service. These are fostered by Society and are to be used for Society.



Jesus: Happy are those who work for peace, for God will call them His children!

Sathya Sai: When man thinks, speaks and acts along virtuous lines his Conscience will be clear and he will have Inner Peace. Knowledge is power, it is said; but Virtue is Peace.

Strive for the happiness of the community and of the human race. Pray that all men everywhere may have peace and plenty. Be eager to do good, and always be good.



Jesus: Happy are you when people insult you and persecute you

and tell all kinds of evil lies against you because you are My followers. Be happy and glad, for a great reward is kept for you in heaven. This is how the prophets who lived before you were persecuted.

Sathya Sai: Meet hatred with your innate Love; Meet grief with innate joy; meet anger with the shield of Shanti or Inner Peace. You are bound to win.



Jesus: Happy are the pure in Heart. They will see God.

Sathya Sai: It is Inner Purity that matters, not the outer movement of lips. Smarana [chanting the Name] being an inner activity, helps that inner transformation.



Jesus: Do not think that I have come to do away with the Law of Moses and the teachings of the prophets. I have not come to do away with them, but to make their teachings come true.

Sathya Sai: I have not come on any mission of publicity for any sect, creed or cause; nor have I come to collect followers for any doctrine. I have no plan to attract disciples or devotees into my fold or any fold. I have come to tell you of this universal unitary faith, this atmic principle, this path of love.

Ekam Sath Viprah Bahudha Vadanti (truth is one, but scholars refer to it by different names). It is not correct to say that you like only Rama or Krishna or Siva or Sai Baba. There is only one God and He is omnipresent. Do not hate other religions. A Hindu should become a better Hindu, a Christian a better Christian and a Muslim a better Muslim.



Jesus: If your right eye causes you to sin, take it out and throw it away! It is much better for you to lose a part of your body than to have your whole body thrown into hell. If your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away! It is much better for you to lose one of your limbs than for you whole body to go to hell.

Sathya Sai: We should not give freedom to the organs but use them in complete accord and control within the limits set by ones country, time and circumstances.



Jesus: You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth'. But now I tell you; do not take revenge on someone who wrongs you. If anyone slaps you on the right cheek, let him slap your left cheek too. And if someone takes you to court to sue you for your shirt, let him have your coat as well. And if one of the occupation troops forces you to carry his pack one furlong, carry it for two. When someone asks you for something, give it to him; when someone wants to borrow

The Teachings of Jesus and Sai

something, lend it to him.

Sathya Sai: I command you: never hate others, or wish evil of them or talk ill of them. Only then can you attain the state of Santhaswarupam [become the embodiment of Peace].



Jesus: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you and pray for those who ill-treat you.

Sathya Sai: To think that some are your enemies, some are your friends, some are your children, some are your relations and to develop attachment or dislike towards them is not correct. See the one Atma in them all. Give up illusion and ignorance.

Imagine that Light in you more and more intensely—and it will be so. Let it shine all around you, enveloping you in the brilliance of Love; let it spread from you, in ever widening circles, taking into its fold your kith and kin, the loved ones, friends, companions—nay, strangers, foes, rivals, enemies—all men all over the world, all living beings—all Creation.



Jesus: Make certain you do not perform your religious duties in public so that people will see what you do. If you do these things publicly you will not have any reward from your Father in heaven.

Sathya Sai: Do Karma, but do not hanker after the fruit. Do not complain that you did not get public recognition for the donations you gave to some Trust. Fruits, whether good or bad, yourself have to consume; so the best means of liberating yourself from the consequences is to ignore the fruit and do Karma, only for the sake of Karma.



Jesus: No one can be a slave of two masters; he will hate one and love the other; he will be loyal to one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money.

Sathya Sai: It should be realised that there is room in the heart for only a single person. It should not be regarded as a long sofa or as a musical chair. God alone should be installed in the heart. Where money is calculated and garnered, and exhibited to demonstrate one's achievements, I will not be present. I come only where sincerity, faith and surrender are valued.



Jesus: Do not judge others, so that God will not judge you. For God will judge you in the same way as you judge others and he will apply to you the same rules you apply to others. Why then do you look at the speck in you brother's eye and pay no attention to the log in you own eye? First take the log out of your own eye, and then you will be able to see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye.

Sathya Sai: Do not try to find fault with others; search, rather for your own. I direct you to implant three ideas in your Hearts: (1) Do not forget God: (2) Do not put faith in the world you see around you; it is changing every second and does not last; (3) Do not be afraid. You are the imperishable Atman that knows no fear. I want you also to banish two ideas from your Hearts: (1) Forget the harm that anyone has done to you and (2) forget the good that you have done to others.



Jesus: Ask, and you will receive; seek and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks will receive, anyone who seeks will find, and the door will be opened to him who knocks.

Sathya Sai: Individual effort and Divine Grace are both interdependent; without effort there will be no conferment of Grace; without Grace, there can be no taste in the effort. To win that Grace you need only have faith and virtue.



Heart to Heart wishes
All Readers
A Holy Christmas
and
A Happy New Year

The Crucifix

Dr. John S Hislop was one of those fine instruments used by Bhagavan Baba to spread His Message across the continents. Most of you might have read his wonderful books like 'My Baba and I' and 'Conversations with Sai.' Swami gave Hislop innumerable experiences so that the latter could get a feel for all aspects of Baba's Divinity. Baba also granted Hislop any number of Interviews, answered his questions in detail, came to his rescue during illness, saved him from disaster, created unusual objects for him and once even blessed him with a vision of Krishna. But relevant to this Christmas issue of Heart to Heart is the famous episode dealing with the creation by Baba of a crucifix for Hislop. Interestingly, the crucifix was created on Mahasivarathri Day in the year 1973, deep in the forest! This holy festival was celebrated by Baba in the company of a small group almost in privacy, and not before massive crowds as normally happens. Let us hear Hislop recall the event:

The crucifix was created by Baba on a most auspicious day, Mahasivarathri.The evening before, we were told to be ready in the early morning for a trip; and that when the cars were loaded and ready we would know the destination. Swami had decided that only a handful of people would be with Him....

Our destination was the Bandipur Game Sanctuary in Bandipur Forest, several hours away from the city of Mysore. We arrived at the Forest rest house in the early afternoon. Later we took various winding roads hoping to come upon one of the Forest's wild elephant herds. the elephants remained in their secret places and not even one was seen. But the drive through the hills had another and more important objective.....

As we crossed a bridge above a sandy, dry riverbed, Baba indicated that this would be the place. ... The cars halted at the side of the road, and we started to climb down the bank to the sandy river bottom. I was beside Baba. As we passed a bush, Swami broke off two twigs, placed them together and asked me, "What is this, Hislop?" "Well Swami, it is a cross," I answered. Baba then closed His fingers over the twigs and directed three somewhat slow breaths into His fist, between thumb and forefinger. Then He opened His hand to reveal a Christ figure on a Cross, and He gave it to me. He said, "This shows Christ as he really was at the time he left his body, not as artists have imagined him. His stomach is pulled in and his ribs are all showing. He had no food for eight days."

I looked at the crucifix but found no words. Baba then

continued: in the cross the wood of cross on w a s find some after 2000 little time! of Christ It is a dead I noticed odd and " S w a m i , hole at the cross?" Baba replied that the cross had been originally hung from a standard.



"The wood is the same as the actual which Christ crucified. To of that wood years took a The image is after he died. face." something a s k e d , what is that top of the

A short while after the materialisation of the cross, Sivarathri was celebrated on the sandy river bed with devotees singing Bhajans and Baba bringing out a Lingam to mark the holy day and the significance of Creation - quite a change from the normal circumstances under which Sivarathri is celebrated.

A couple of years later, some American devotees asked Swami about the cross materialised for Hislop. Baba replied:

Yes, I made it for him. When I went to look for the wood, every particle of the cross had disintegrated and returned to the elements. I reached out to the elements and reconstituted sufficient material for a small cross. Very seldom does Swami interfere with Nature, but occasionally, for a devotee, it will be done."

The story of the cross does not quite end with its physical materialisation. Hislop had a strange experience a few months later, when the cross was being shown to a few friends. This is what he says:

Within a few weeks we were back in our home in Mexico and were soon to witness an amazing series of events in relation to the crucifix. [One day] the time was about 5 P.M. On this afternoon, the sky along the Mexican coast was clear and peaceful. But suddenly without warning, there was a loud crash of thunder and as our eyes turned towards the windows, lightning flashed from a dark cloud where a moment before there had been only clear sky. A violent wind rushed through the house, causing windows and doors to open and shut with such force that the glass was in danger of shattering. The curtains were flying in all directions. We were much startled by this turn of events, but my wife at once said, "It is 5 P.M., the time Christ died on the cross, and what is now happening is described in the Bible." She later brought a Bible and we looked though until we found the pertinent paragraph, which said that at the moment Christ gave up His life, a violent storm arose with lightning and thunder, and winds rent the curtains of the temple. We concluded that we had witnessed a wonder totally beyond our power of imagination. Before our eyes had



Hislop with Baba

The Crucifix

occurred nothing less than a recapitulation of events related to crucifixion. The following day, newspapers in San Diego carried a brief story commenting on the sudden and mysterious storm that had arisen without warning on the Mexican coast, near Ensenada.A year or so later, I sent a description of the event to Dr. Eruch B. Fanibanda for his book, Vision of the Divine. He showed the memo to Baba. After reading the memo, Baba said that the event had occurred as described and that the significance attributed to it was correct.

Blessed was Hislop to have had this wonderful experience and blessed is everyone of us to have heard about it.

Hislop constantly chanted Baba's Name, right till the very end. As he gave up the mortal coil, friends at his bedside kept chanting the sacred OM, even as the soul journeyed to its eternal resting-place, the Divine Lotus Feet. Some time later, Swami asked an American devotee on the veranda, "Where is Hislop?" The devotee looked up, as if to signify that Hislop was in heaven. Baba then said, "He has come to Me. Good man; always thinking of and working for Swami." There cannot be a better eulogy.



The Crucifix

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"Of such is the Kingdom of Heaven"



Sai, The Santa Claus

It was Christmas at Puttaparthi. A quiet stillness pervaded the air as we sat at morning Darshan waiting for Baba to appear. The palm leaves rustled gently in the breeze. The sky was clear and blue without any trace of clouds. It had been six years since my husband and I had visited the ashram. This was the first visit for our children Aaron, 18 months old, and Heidi, 3 years old.

As if from nowhere Baba's orange robe-ed figure suddenly appeared. He walked towards the men's side as if His feet "floated" in the air. Moving among the crowds, He accepted letters and gave His blessings. A surge of happiness welled within me as I experienced His profound love, grace, and compassion. Gradually He moved towards the women's side. As He neared our place, my heart sank as Aaron began to fuss. When I looked up, Baba was several rows past us. I hadn't noticed even a glance in our direction.

As we left, Heidi said, "Mommy, He didn't even talk to me or give me a present!" It then occurred to me that she had expected Baba to be like a grand-father or Santa Claus, lifting her up in the air playfully and giving her presents. She had only seen His pictures at our Cambridge Center meetings and in our home. How could I explain to her the true nature of an Avatar? "Heidi," I said, after a few moments of thought, "the only way Baba can hear you is if you pray to Him in your heart."

During the afternoon and evening I began to notice her praying with folded hands whenever she would sit down to rest. Her concentration amazed me. Even the next morning she remembered to pray.

Morning Darshan found us in the third row with our friend Indira beside us. Baba appeared and walked towards the men's side accepting letters and blessing various items with a touch of His hand. As He neared the women's side my heart began to beat faster. He paused a second in front of us. With a rapid movement of His hand He materialized a small object which landed with a thud in Indira's lap as she still held out letters that He never took. It all happened so fast that by the time we looked up He was several rows down the crowd of people. Indira picked up the small piece of candy in the wrapper and looked at Baba with a puzzled expression on her face. He looked back at us with a playful smile and said in His sweet sing-song voice, "Not for you, for the little girl." Heidi was thrilled. Her prayers had been answered. At the age of 3 she had learned that God hears and answers our prayers. We too can learn from her faith the importance of becoming like children before God. "Of such is the Kingdom of Heaven."

—Cathy Daub (New Jersey)



Peace through sense and Mind Control



You can experience Bliss only when you have learnt to control the Mind. To control the Mind, you have to engage in good deeds. As you go on performing good deeds, you will develop good thoughts and feelings; and when you have good thoughts, you will acquire true understanding of the Real.

Sanctify the time given to you with good thoughts and good actions. To achieve this, you have to cultivate the company of the good, and all of this, in due course, would lead to liberation. Filling your mind with thoughts of God and engaging in good actions is true Sadhana.

People claim to spend hours in meditation. But of what use is it if there is no concentration of the Mind? Far better it is to render social service or participate in Bhajans, and through such means subject the Mind to some discipline. This also is how work gets transformed into worship. When you dedicate all your thoughts and actions to God, your actions automatically get purified.

You can experience God through the performance of your duties and proper actions. The Bhagavad Gita says that the Kshetra (namely the body) and the Kshetrajna (namely the Atma) together constitute the human personality. Similarly, the scriptures refer to the human body as the temple and the Indwelling Spirit as the God residing in that temple. Even a mere intellectual understanding of this fact is enough to make you happy. But you would be happier still, when you put this understanding into practice in your daily life. You should try to seek continuous satisfaction and fulfilment by basing even your mundane activities on spiritual values. Whatever be the activity with which you are preoccupied in Society, you must be steadfast in holding on to the spiritual ideal. This alone will bestow lasting peace.

The sense organs should be sanctified by offering all the actions performed through them to God. You can surely achieve that sanctified state, provided you have strong determination. Unfortunately, man does not evince such a firm determination and tenacity of purpose in respect of spiritual matters, as he does for the sake of mundane things. Man is prepared to make any amount of effort to undertake a journey of millions of miles into outer space, but he hardly ever endeavours to go even an inch within, towards his Inner Self. What is the use of intelligence and worldly acquisitions when they cannot give Atma Shanthi (the untrammelled peace of the Atma or the Spirit)? God alone can confer such enduring peace on man.

As far as possible, avoid causing harm or pain to others. As you sow, so you reap. Whenever you feel disturbed by a sense of anger, envy, pride, jealousy and the like, become alert and resort to the contemplation of the Lord.



Massacre at Jallianwala Bagh Legal but Not Moral

Recently there was an important judgement delivered by the Supreme Court of India, relating to an alleged case of malpractice by a leading politician. The Court while acquitting the politician made certain remarks and commenting on all this, a leading newspaper wrote that it was a “mixed verdict – comprehensive legal acquittal in the main combining with emphatic moral disapproval...” In other words what the Honourable Court said that while no binding law had been violated, the person involved ought to “atone by answering her Conscience...”. Naturally there has been widespread comments on this most unusual judgement and one reader of a newspaper writing to the Editor has quoted French philosopher Jacques Saurin who observed, “The law often permits what honour forbids; instead of asking ‘is it legal’, more people should be asking ‘is it honourable?’ These are the matters I would like to reflect on presently.

I started off with the above developments just to draw attention to how far mankind has moved away from the values it once cherished. Once upon a time, the principle is what mattered rather than the dry letter of the law but today it is the other way around. In fact dodging the law has been perfected into a fine art, especially where taxes are concerned. It is supposed to be a crime to avoid payment of taxes. Yet, the law allows some concessions and clever tax consultants as they are known, are all the time busy advising rich clients how to avoid paying taxes. In the end, as people complain in many countries, it is the low-income group that pays most of the taxes while the rich get away exploiting various legal loopholes.

Gandhi often said that there is a Moral Law governing the Universe but today few acknowledge the existence of such a law. Law is just what is in the Statute Book and anything that is supposed to be in conformity with is claimed to be right. People may wax eloquent about the Rule of Law and all that but one

must examine carefully the entire issue, starting with the question: Which Law? Is it Moral Law or the Law as written down in the books by some legislators, who think they have got it right? We have for example the case of slavery which was for a long time absolutely legal but morally the worst atrocity possible. As late as the eighties of the twentieth century, blatant racial discrimination was considered legal in South Africa; there were just some cosmetic sanctions by the affluent countries, even as they cried hoarse about human rights violations elsewhere. But how many were actually disturbed in their Hearts? I wonder how many of you saw the Attenborough’s film on Gandhi. If you did, I am sure you would not have forgotten that terrible scene depicting the famous Jallianwala Bagh massacre where about one thousand five hundred defenceless people, young and old, were simply and mercilessly gunned down in one single afternoon. Whatever happened to that General who ordered that shooting? He was supposed to be legally right because he was “defending the Empire” as it was described, but morally? I do not want to preach or pontificate on these types of issues but raised them mainly to draw attention to an important point often made by Swami, a Spiritual point in fact. It has got to do with what He refers to as ATMA DHARMA. Baba repeatedly stresses that no one, from a king to a pauper is exempt from Atma Dharma.

What does this Atma Dharma mean and imply? Very simple: “Thou shalt not do anything that goes against thy True nature which is that of the Eternal Atma.” In simple terms, again due to Baba, “Follow your Conscience for your Conscience is your Master.” Shakespeare said the same thing when he observed [in Hamlet]: “Above all, to thine own Self be True!”

Half the problems in the world, perhaps even a higher fraction, problems personal and global, would disappear if people acted according to this simple rule. There is a son for bringing up

whom a mother has made immense sacrifice. When the son grows up, he leaves his mother stranded and goes abroad seeking greener pastures. The mother is alone, old and helpless. At times, this boy feels guilty and tries to make up by sending money, Conscience money as some refer to it. The son has violated no law of any land and yet is he not guilty of the greatest crime of all, sheer ingratitude? But nobody cares because all the time we are only interested in legal crimes.

Take the recent rash of corporate frauds. People immediately started talking of stricter laws and stricter enforcement. Hardly anyone paused to ask why there is a massive absence of Morality in Society? Swami has given the answer but I wonder how many would be able to recall it off the cuff. Anyway, here it is, Swami's recipe: First, there must be Love for God. Then there must be fear of sin [I would say mortal fear]. If these two are guaranteed, then Morality would automatically prevail in Society.

Yes, this seemingly simple three-point formula is the sure answer to everything from terrorism to corporate fraud to the terrible spectacle created by AIDS, even as we go around searching for all kinds of fixes for the numerous problems facing us.



Think about it!

Jai Sai Ram.
G.VENKATARAMAN



Cut the 'I' feeling clean across and let your Ego
die on the cross, to endow on you eternity.



DEAR READER,

Continuing our feature Getting Spiritually Better, we offer below the fifth instalment. We hope you like it, and would share it with others who are interested in enquiry and self-improvement. Do write and tell us what you think, how you find it, whether it is useful, and in what ways this feature can be improved.

Thank you and Jai Sai Ram.

Earlier we saw that if Creation/Nature/Society is viewed as distinct from God, then one's perception and judgement can both become clouded. One would be deluded by the feeling that one can make one's own pact with God via prayers, rituals, and what have you, and thereafter do what one likes when one goes out into the world. Such behaviour is of course illogical, but then as Krishna says in the Bhagavad Gita, desire and attachment can blind even the most intelligent of persons to obvious reality.

We see a lot of this illogical behaviour in the world today, in individuals, in families, in communities, and in nations as well. Seldom do people realise that strife in society is born of extreme selfishness. Despite the bloody French and the Bolshevik Revolutions, the same mistake is being made over and over again. Somehow, people seem to think that they know it all, that their actions are infallible, and that they are above mistakes. One small example is enough to convey the point.

Till the seventies, terrorism on a global scale was unknown. But now, terrorism has become so widespread that life has changed in many communities. Terrorists use deadly weapons like automatic rifles, grenades, remote-controlled bombs and the like. Most terrorists are poorly educated and cannot manufacture small arms and weapons. The factories where they get manufactured are mostly in the developed countries. Many companies in these countries saw the manufacture and sale of small arms as a lucrative business and went about it in a thorough manner. Initially, dictators were the big customers but soon, deadly weapons found their way into the hands of groups inclined towards violence, like rebel groups and terrorists. Now arms have to be purchased; they don't come free. How to finance the purchase? Many strategies have been developed, including drug-trafficking. And who were the best customers of the drugs? People living in rich countries. Thus, while some people in the affluent countries were becoming rich by selling arms to the have-nots, their own countries began to suffer the 'reflection' via drug menace, increase in crime, etc. Here, one must not forget the irresponsible role played by the media in giving a lot of prominence to violence in the papers, in TV, and in films. In short, terrorism has been fathered in no small measure by the greed of small-arms manufacturers, and unconsciously perhaps, promoted by the media in its pursuit of sensationalism. At last, the societies in which these arms peddlers are located are beginning to feel some of the backlash.

Another example: A good many of the first-world corporations do not hesitate to bribe left and right to get a 'market-share' in the so-called developing countries. The multi-nationals have no compunction in bribing politicians, military men, and government officials both highly-placed and petty. But at the end of it all, they cry loud about corruption in these countries. They reap what they sow.

In short, rich people everywhere are trying to build 'islands of prosperity' in a vast ocean of poverty. This is just NOT possible. This trick has NEVER succeeded and it NEVER will. Baba says, "You cannot have a mound without a pit." It means that if there are abominably rich somewhere, then there has got to be other people living in dire poverty elsewhere. Sometimes, wealth and poverty co-exist right next to each other, and automatically this produces tension. In 1999 when Swami went to Bombay, He addressed a huge, elite gathering there. Prior to Baba's Discourse, many speakers prayed to Swami to do 'something' about the terrible state prevailing in the city – high crime rate, kidnapping, extortion, etc. When it came to Swami's turn, He said that the rich of Bombay alone were responsible for what was happening. They lived in posh skyscrapers and penthouses but did not care a damn about the poor living in horrible slums adjacent to their swank homes. They wallowed in extreme selfishness and were preoccupied only with making more and more money, so that they could have a 'good time'. This just cannot go on. Swami made it abundantly clear that the wealthy created the imbalance, and now they have to face the music.

Pure selfishness breeds pure disaster, but curiously, even when disaster stares in the face, no one is prepared to do anything. Insensitivity is widely prevalent today, and naturally this leads to problems – the greater the greed, the greater is the insensitivity; the greater the insensitivity, the greater is the disaster that finally descends. All these are well-known truths and quite easy to understand. But when the mind is clouded by desire, these obvious facts become very difficult to comprehend. Instead, one gets deluded by the feeling that one can 'get away with it'. One CANNOT – there is no such thing as a free lunch; there never was and there never will be.

Selfishness deludes and deludes heavily. It makes people imagine that wrong is right, that Adharma is Dharma, and that they have a right to do what they are doing. Nowhere is this business of 'right' more obnoxiously evident than in the media. The media people believe that they know what is best, that in



their system there are self-corrective forces, and that therefore they are NOT answerable to anyone. Functioning within bounds, they can do much good to Society. However, in the name of 'objective reporting' etc., they can now very much influence events and shape them the way they want. Thus, crime and sensationalism have driven out good deeds as news and events worth reporting. The examples of good people in Society are not considered newsworthy; instead, prominence is given to glamour, unscrupulous characters, gory events, and the like. Everywhere the argument is: "This is what the people want; this is what they like. Otherwise, how would it all sell?" Can one say: "People want drugs. So, let us make cocaine freely available in the super-markets"? The media fiercely claims its rights. But what about the damage to Society? Who finally pays the cost of crime, social unrest, etc?

The moral of it all is the following: We just cannot ignore that we live in a Universe created by God, that the Earth forms a part of this wonderful Creation of the Almighty, and that Society is a limb of Nature. Krishna makes a brief but clear reference in [the Fourth chapter of] the Gita that the whole of Creation is like a closed gear-chain. Every entity in Nature forms a cog-wheel; it is in some manner or the other, linked to every other entity. Every entity receives and also has to give. Every entity except man is 'programmed' by Nature to do this automatically. But man has been given the 'freedom of choice'. This does NOT mean that he can choose and do as he likes. Rather, THIS 'FREEDOM' IS REALLY A TEST ADMINISTERED BY GOD TO SEE IF MAN WOULD MAKE THE RIGHT CHOICE. That choice alone is correct which is in harmony with the rest of Creation. That choice alone is correct that does not seek to grab but to receive and give in fair measure as God intended.

The history of mankind clearly shows that civilisation has grown through co-operation and not through divisive tendencies. As Baba often tells us, the very word mankind ought to remind us that man must be KIND!

Some people are likely to get frightened by all this. They might wonder: "What is all this business about sacrificing and all that? That may be OK for renunciates, but surely householders cannot be bound by such strict norms." Swami has addressed such doubts and given clear answers. He says, one need not abandon one's family, or one's business, and distribute all that one has. One can lead a normal life, even a family life. The only requirement is that one must not succumb to excessive desires; nor must one ignore the importance of mind and sense control.

In this context, Baba draws attention to the four guiding principles of ancient Indians, known as Purusharthas. The four components of the Purusharthas are: Dharma, Artha, Kama, Moksha, meaning, Righteous action, wealth, desire, and Liberation. What is implied is that one can acquire wealth and one can have nominal desires, provided they both are within the bounds of Dharma. A man with a family would perforce have to seek a certain amount of wealth in order to fulfil his obligations, and he can certainly have some legitimate desires [like ensuring good education for his children, for example], but all this has to

be within the bounds of Dharma. This automatically forbids cheating, corrupt practices, and the like. Indeed, all ancient societies have recommended such guidelines. The common underlying principle is harmony with Creation, and harmony with the rest of Society. These ideas are more valid today than ever before.

Today, everyone is gloating over scientific and technological advances. True, such advances have benefited man a great deal and made life more comfortable; to that extent, these advances are to be welcomed. But when man starts to play God [as in cloning experiments, for example] instead of trying to rise to the level of God [as God wants man to do], then one must sit up and take notice. Today, in the name of return to shareholders and the like, multi-national drug companies do not hesitate to avoid the development of much-needed vaccines in the poor countries of the world. Some even go the extent of saying that if there are epidemics and numerous deaths, that is just Nature's way of controlling exploding populations. Clearly, such feelings emanate from the head and NOT the heart. Swami uses the word Hridaya for the Heart, and goes on to add: Hridaya = Hrid + Daya. Daya means compassion; thus, THE HEART MUST BE SEAT OF COMPASSION AND NOT CALLOUSNESS.

We conclude with a beautiful little story by Tolstoy, who drives home the point that children are more natural and easily co-operate, whereas it is the elders who create division. The story goes roughly like this: There lived in a small village in Russia two little girls who were good friends. One day, it was the birthday of one of these girls, and her mother had dressed her up in a nice dress, naturally. This girl went out to meet her friend to show off her new dress and also to play with the other girl. It so happened that it had rained earlier, and there were pools of muddy water in many places. While playing some muddy water splashed on to the new dress, and the birthday-girl immediately began to cry. Hearing the wail, her mother rushed out, and seeing what had happened, slapped the other girl for dirtying the pretty dress of her dear daughter. It was now the turn of the other girl to cry, and soon came out her mother, feeling outraged. A violent quarrel ensued between the two ladies, and the two fathers were forced to join and take sides. All this attracted a big crowd, and many who had nothing to do took sides and joined in the quarrel, creating a huge commotion. At that time, an old man who lived in the village and who had gone to the neighbouring village returned. Seeing the commotion, he asked a small boy as to what was the matter. The boy told the old man what had transpired. Then slowly, the old man made his way to the centre of the crowd and addressed the two quarrelling families. He chided them and said this was not the way to live etc., but the two warring ladies would simply not listen. They asked him how they could forget when such gross injustice had been done – each blamed the other for the whole affair. The old man then slowly said, "Why do you continue fighting when the two little girls have forgotten all about the original incident?" The ladies asked belligerently, "What do you mean?" He replied, "Come with me," and took them some distance away from the crowd. There they could see the two girls playing happily, making paper



boats and letting them float down the flowing rain water. The old man then said, "If they can forget, why can't you? Learn from children, if you do not have the sense to reason out what is correct." The old man then went away, as the two ladies hung their heads in shame and silently returned to their homes.

Swami always stresses unity. A good man always sees unity in diversity. One who is not good sees diversity in unity. We must be united in the family, in the Sai Organisation, and in the community in which we live, without compromising the basics. Life ought to be based on give and take, with more of give and less of take. We must give with pleasure and joy and the feeling that we are giving to none other than God Himself, masquerading as our brother or sister. Nothing is lost when we give; in fact, much is gained, as St Francis so clearly reminds us. This is the way to be in harmony with God, Nature, and mankind.

O LORD!

Make me an instrument
of Your Peace!

Where there is hatred, let me sow Love;

Where there is injury, Pardon;

Where there is discord, Unity;

Where there is doubt, Faith;

Where there is error, Truth;

Where there is despair, Hope; Where there is sadness, Joy;

Where there is darkness, Light.

O Divine Master!

Grant that I may not seek

To be consoled, as to console; To be understood, as to
understand;

To be loved, as to love.

For it is in giving that we receive,

It is in pardoning that we are pardoned,

It is in dying that we are born to Eternal Life.

St. Francis.

ADDITIONAL NOTES RELATING TO THE ABOVE

! In the world of me forward to donate liberally and offer service in various ways. But by and large, there is no longer as much sensitivity as there used to be in olden days.

! Some analysts say that people in countries where poverty has been totally abolished are more sensitive than the people in countries where abject poverty and wealth co-exist. They argue that in countries where poverty is common, many of the well to do have become immune to the difficulties and the sufferings of others less fortunate and in the process also become quite insensitive. On the other hand, people in affluent countries are strangers to poverty, and they become quite disturbed when

they see suffering, and feel a strong urge to help. All this is sociology.

! But even in affluent countries, increasingly the focus is on "me". Thus it is that people talk of the "me" generation and so forth. People increasingly ask, "Why should I help?" or "What's there in it for me?"

! Why do people think this way? In one discussion group, a participant said, "When I look around, I find Adharma everywhere. People seem to be getting away with it all the time. My faith in Dharma is therefore getting shaken. So, I mind my business, try to honest and good, and leave it at that."

! In other words, people develop tunnel vision as they say, giving one excuse or the other for inaction and insensitivity. Individuals do this, communities do this, and whole nations do this. Somehow, people feel they can erect "walls" and remain secure within. Is this possible? Can one have islands of security in a vast ocean of misery?

! People who have such ideas of impregnable security also constantly talk of inter-connectivity of the modern world, how the world is a global village and all that. How can one have inter-connectivity and isolation at the same time? Or is that they feel they can have close connection where grab is concerned and isolation where give is concerned?

! When it comes to money making, there is no morality. The poor have no rights; only the share-holders, and the companies. Immoral practices are given a dubious legal veneer, and legitimised through questionable international organisations.

! There is a rigid mind-set amongst the haves that makes them feel that they have an inalienable right to do what they want, even if it means trampling over the have-nots. This may appear to work in the short run but will certainly not in the long run.

Before getting on to the spiritual aspects, it is important to remember that walls of isolation simply cannot be built, especially of the one-way type that facilitates grab and avoids give. Let us say a country becomes very rich. There is no poverty, and there is a so-called high standard of living. The people then start looking for "excitement" in various ways. This takes them to other lands, many of them very poor. There, while having a good time, they create severe imbalance, economic and cultural. They also, unconsciously perhaps, tend to play havoc with both the Eco-system and local morals. For example, tourism has tended to destroy many coral reefs in the Far East. In due course, this imbalance in its own way, recoils upon the affluent.

! The point is that the Law of Reflection, Reaction, Resound simply cannot be by-passed. The sooner mankind realises this, the better.



! More fundamentally, it is important to realise that there is a higher purpose to human life, and that it cannot be based just on taking without giving. On the contrary, as St. Francis eloquently says in his famous prayer, it is only in giving that we receive. It would be a crying shame if man, who is supposed to be the pinnacle of creation, lags behind other species in this respect.

! When it comes to giving, one can recognise people of four categories. Category one consists of people who are incapable of ever sharing. To the second category belong people who give out of condescension or for other ulterior motives like publicity. In the third category are people who offer out of compassion. The last category is very special and needs discussion.

! Starting from the year 2000, Baba has been organising what is called Grama Seva or Village Service. This service activity is usually arranged in October, and lasts about ten days or so. During this period, literally all the staff of students of the three campuses of Baba's University [the Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning] are involved. Their task: to prepare sweets and food, carry these along with clothes to about a dozen villages every day, and distribute them to all the families living there, without any exception. In practice, this means distributing on an average day, about thirty thousand food packets and laddus, and several thousands of sarees and dhotis. This is done every single day for about ten days at a stretch.

! People ask what is the purpose. Some members of the staff say: "This is Swami's way of teaching students how to care and share." Other staff members observe: "Grama Seva sensitises our students to the problems of the poor in the villages, and induces them to stay back in the country to serve it." The students feel that the service opens their eyes to the problem of the country, and so on. What about Baba?

! Baba's view reflects the highest possible spiritual philosophy. He says [in essence]: "Giving, even with compassion, implies a feeling of "me" and "them". This is the feeling one gets if he focuses on the lower self within. You must not focus on the lower but the Higher Self or the Atma. If in the other person you see the body, then you would see a different person. If, on the other hand, you see the Atma within, then you would see only the Self because the same Self or Atma resides in all. I am giving you this opportunity to serve so that you may see your own Self in others, rather than just poor villagers."

! This last point is very important, and incidentally illustrates

how Baba elevates even simple acts to the highest possible level. It may be difficult for us to do so all the time, but this is a perspective we ought not to lose sight of.

! z As regards the question "What's there in it for me?", it is useful to remember that there is a negative as well as a positive response possible. The positive response would be: "God has given me a wonderful opportunity to serve and I had better seize it. If I let it pass, it would disappoint God." Those who love God in their Hearts would certainly think this way.

! If, for example, they are thinking of spending some money to have some fun, they would stop and rethink. They would say: "Why not I spend this money on helping some unfortunate person?" This is real positive thinking. One can spare not only money but also time and kind words [very scarce these days!] Those are positive responses to the question posed earlier.



Terrorism, who is Responsible

! In this context, the famous story of the Good Samaritan is very pertinent. As we all know, there was a man who had been attacked by highway robbers who after relieving the unfortunate victim of all his belongings also beat him black and blue and left him helpless by the side of the road. Soon there came that way a Levite. He saw the pitiable plight of the wayfarer but went on without stopping. After this came a priest, and he too ignored the wounded man. May be he did

not think there was anything in it for him. But the noble man from Samaria was different. He took time off, stopped, helped the victim, placed him on his donkey, took him to an inn in a nearby village, and also gave money to the innkeeper to take care of the wounded person. He saw there was that there was something in it for him, because he was a person with a positive outlook.

! The question of outlook is very important in today's society. Society is stratified, and there are groups like intellectuals, artists, educators, administrators, politicians, businessmen, white collar workers, blue collar workers, and so on. Two questions arise: 1) How is a person belonging to any particular strata supposed to conduct himself? 2) How are the different strata supposed to relate to each other?

! The answers to these are contained in three golden rules that flow from Bhagavan Baba's teachings. GOLDEN RULE 1: Irrespective of the group to which you belong, every action of yours must be selfless and for the benefit of humanity or at least your community. GOLDEN RULE 2: Every segment or strata of Society must have no thought other than serving all the other



! Thus, a doctor must use his medical knowledge to serve the community.

! The question arises: "How will the doctor live if he starts treating everyone free?" Baba has given a clear answer to this. He says [in effect]: "By all means earn a salary. Or, if you are a private practitioner, you can certainly charge fees. But do so only when the patient can afford. If the patient is poor, treat him free."

! Another question: "I am not a doctor but a ticketing clerk working for an airline. I don't make much money and so I cannot give charity. I am not a doctor and I cannot give free treatment. I am just a small worker at the ticketing counter. What is it that I can give?" Baba has an answer for such questions also. He says [in effect]: "Yours is a job where you come in contact with the public all the time. Make sure you deal with them in a pleasing manner. Sometimes, the customers may be irate, and even make unreasonable demands. Don't lose your cool; be patient; talk gently and try to reason with them. If you cannot oblige, you can at least speak obligingly!"

! The important point here is that doing one's duty with devotion and in a manner pleasing to those who are being served is also a kind of giving. As Baba often says, if only people worked conscientiously and with sincerity, half the problems in the world would disappear. Yes, if this happened, where at all is the scope for corruption? This is a point worth thinking about seriously.

POINTS TO PONDER OVER

! Do a self-audit and check how selfish or unselfish you are!

! What precisely are the reasons that make a person selfish? Is the craving for money, power, position, advantage of some kind, or all of these?

! What "harm" would befall if one were to be a bit less selfish?

! Is there any advantage at all in being unselfish?

! Who is the richest man in the world and who is the poorest man? [Swami has given the answer! Look for it!! Also, get hold of the story that Swami tells about Alexander, in this context.]

! With regard to the so-called public servants [meaning government officials], Gandhi often used to say: Before you spend any public money, picture in your mind the poorest person you have come across and ask yourself whether what you are going to do would in anyway benefit such a person. This is worth remembering.

! The interpretations of the Purusharthaas given earlier represent the standard version. Swami once gave a most unusual interpretation not found anywhere else. It was a purely spiritual interpretation. He said: "Man's only Dharma is to

follow the Atma. Aarthas means wealth no doubt, but the wealth that man must seek is the Knowledge of the Self or the Atma. Kama means desire. What is the desire one must truly have? One must yearn for the Vision of the Atma or Atma Darshanam. And of course, Moksha means liberation from attachment so that one can become one with the Atma!

! People often take this view: "People are poor because they are lazy. I work hard, and am entitled to enjoy the fruits of my labour. Why should I help the poor? How do they deserve my support?" Examine critically what is right and what is wrong in any, about this argument?

! Can one remain totally insulated from the problems of Society? Can they, will they ever catch up? If so in what manner?

! Is it correct to say that one must take care of the poor just as an insurance against trouble? Why not invest that money in tight security, or even get away to another land where there is no poverty? Can one remain insulated there?

! What is courage? Is courage needed for following Dharma, and if so of what variety?

! What is the fountain-head of courage? Is courage shaped by external or internal factors?

! What is the connection between courage and conviction?

! Gandhi was very courageous; a fanatic also is very courageous. Is there any difference between the two? If so, what is it?

! In the Gita, Krishna chides Arjuna for being a coward. How could Arjuna a renowned warrior be accused of cowardice? Arjuna had battled even with Lord Siva Himself! What exactly was Krishna driving at? [See Message of the Lord, for clarifications on this point. The point is important because moral courage is so very much needed in today's world; yet, it is in such short supply!]

A Message from God

When you got up this morning, I observed you, and I hoped
you would talk to me,
No matter if they were only few words, asking my opinion or
just giving thanks for something that happened to you yesterday.
But I noticed that you were very busy looking for the
appropriate clothes to wear and to go to work.

I continued hoping,
While you were doing things in a hurry,
I knew that there were still some
minutes for you to stop for a
moment and tell me "Hello!",
But you were too much busy.
This is why I lighted the sky for you,
I filled it with colors
and beautiful songs of birds
To see if you would hear me.
But you did not notice this.

I observed you while going to work
And I waited patiently the whole day.
With all your activities I suppose you were too much busy to tell
me something.
While you were coming back I noticed your tiredness and I
wanted to shower upon you some water to take away your
stress,
I wanted to make you a favor so that you would think of me,
But you got angry and offended my name.

Later on you turned on the television,
I waited patiently while you were watching it and having your
supper,
But you forgot again to talk to me...

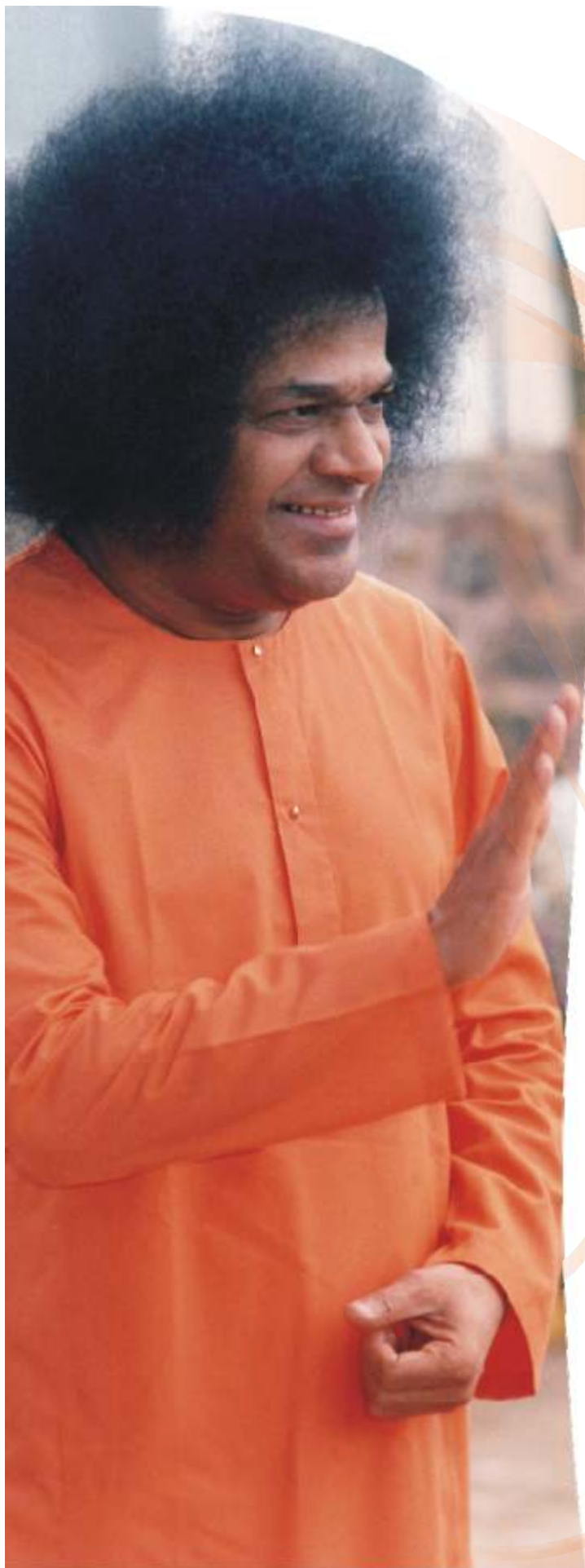
I noticed that you were tired and I understood your silence,
so I darkened the clarity of the sky,
But I did not leave you in darkness,
I just changed it with a small light,
it was really beautiful,
but you were not interested in seeing it.

At the time of sleeping, I think you were already exhausted.
After saying good night to your family,
You lay on your bed and fell asleep almost instantly,
I accompanied your sleep with music, my night animals did very
well,
No problem, because you might not realize that I am always
there for you.

I have more patience than what you can imagine.
I would like to teach you also how to be patient with others.
I LOVE YOU so much that I wait every day for a prayer.
The landscape that I make is only for you ...

Well, you are getting up again
May you have a nice day !!!!

Your friend God

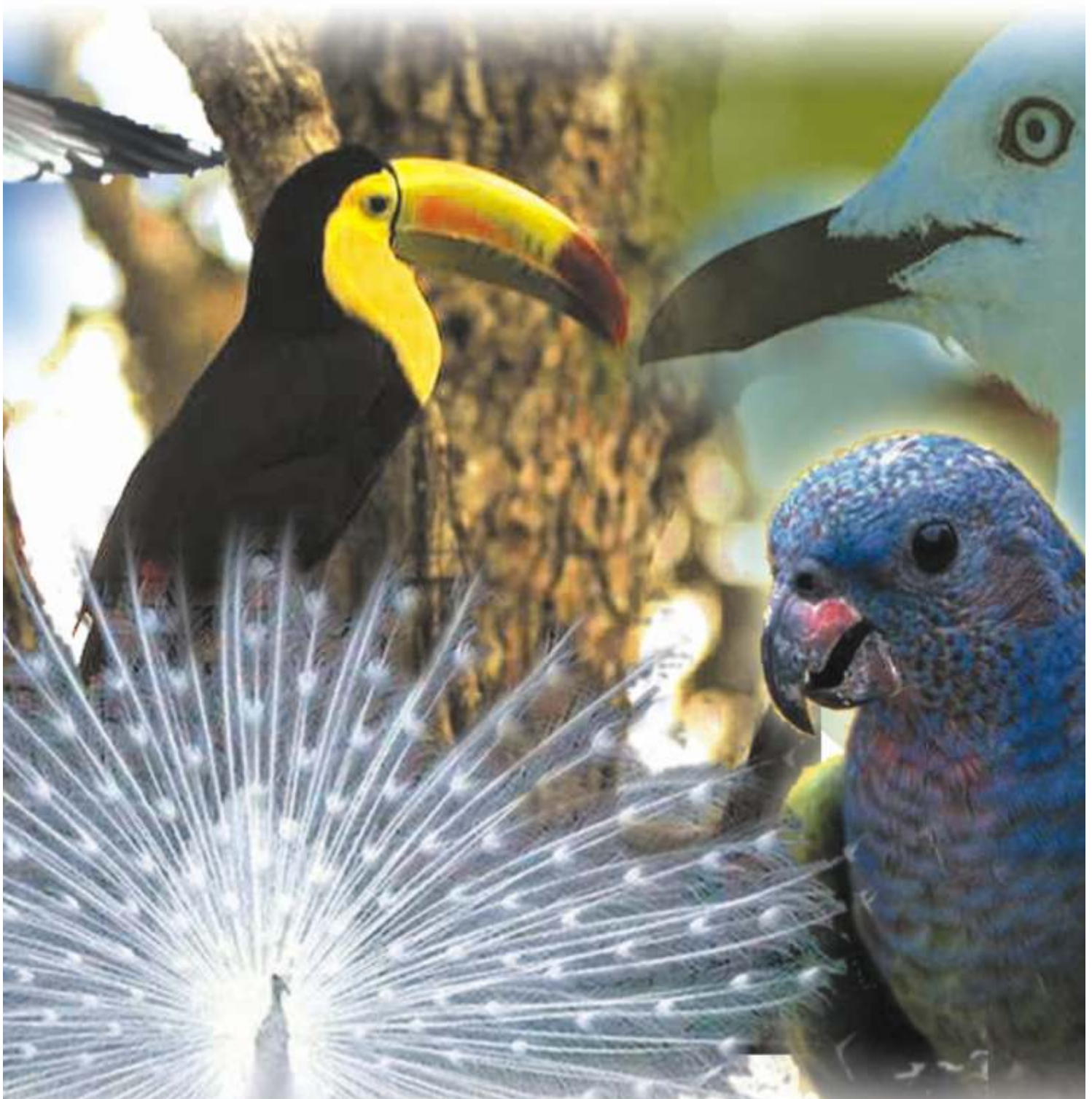


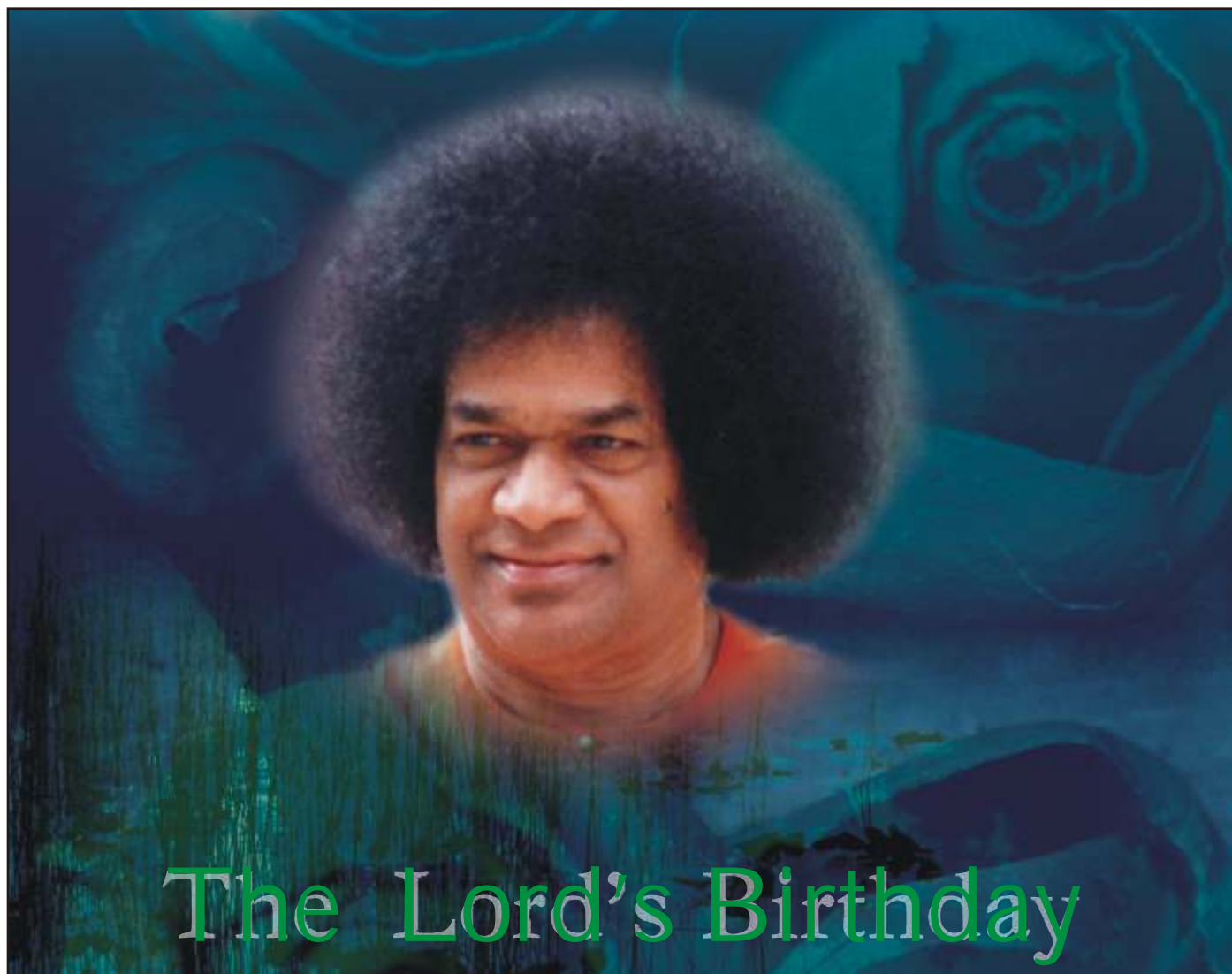
A bird sits upon the bough that sways in the storm, confident of its wings, not of the branch on which it sits. So, too, you should feel strong because of the wings of devotion and dedication, not because of the 'bough' of the objective world whereon you have perched.

BABA

For the bird in mid ocean, flying over the deep dark blue waters, the only resting place is on the mast of a ship. In the same way, the Lord is the only refugee when you are swept by storms over a restless sea (of world).

BABA





Tens of thousands of devotees from different parts of the world gathered to be at the Lotus Feet for the auspicious and joyous occasion of the 78th birthday of our Lord, Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba. Prasanthi Nilayam wore a festive vesture with the Mandir being richly caparisoned with festoons and beautiful flower decorations.

The celebrations commenced with the traditional Rathotsavam or Chariot Festival on the morning of the 18th of November. This is an annual ritual in which the idols of Rama, Sita and Lakshmana are taken in a palanquin in a procession to the Old Mandir in the village of Puttaparthi, followed by a chariot bearing the idol of Lord Krishna, to the accompaniment of Vedam chanting and Bhajans by the students. In the evening, the Bal Vikas students of Kerala presented a programme titled "Bhakta Purandaradasa" based on the life of Saint Purandaradasa, a holy man of South India. The presentation depicted how a worldly man extremely attached to wealth, undergoes a change in his outlook and is inspired to renounce all his wealth and spend the rest of his life singing the glories of the Lord.

19th November 2003 was celebrated as Ladies Day. Bhagawan lit the lamp in front of a portrait of Mother Easwaramma to mark the commencement of the morning's programme. The students of the Sri Sathya Sai Primary school then presented a

dance programme depicting various episodes from Bhagawan's life. This was followed by a drama entitled "Ek Shakti, Roop Anek", in which the different aspects of the feminine principle like Love and Sacrifice were shown as exemplified in the lives of great women like Rani Jhansi Laxmi Bai and Florence Nightingale. The evening programme had Poornachandra Auditorium as the venue and featured talks by five lady speakers and a Carnatic Vocal rendition by the renowned artist Sudha Raghunathan.



The Rathotsavam



Drama by Kerala Balvikas

20th and 21st of November saw plays staged in the evening at the Sai Kulwant Hall by the Bal Vikas children of Singapore and Canada respectively. The plays elaborated on the teachings of Bhagawan and how they are to be practiced in our daily lives, be it at the individual level, the family level or at the community level.



Singapore children in action

The 22nd Convocation of the Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning was conducted in the Sai Kulwant Hall on afternoon of 22nd November. On this day, Bhagawan as the Revered Chancellor of the Institute blesses the students who have graduated that year and gives His Benedictory Discourse. It is an occasion that remains as a cherished



Children from Canada

memory in the mind of every student of the Institute.

The Chief Guest at this year's proceedings was Shri Bhairon Singh Shekawat, the Honourable Vice-President of India. The students were administered the oath to remain true to the values of the Institute to the end of their lives. After the presentation of medals to the students who had passed with distinction in their respective disciplines, the Chief Guest, Shri Shekawat, addressed the gathering. He spoke about the unique and holy atmosphere that he pervaded the ashram and expressed his gratitude to Bhagawan for the various social projects that He has undertaken for the uplift of the needy in the country. He exhorted the students to use the knowledge they had gained during their stay in the Institute, in service of the Nation.

Bhagawan then delivered His Divine Benedictory Discourse. He reminded the students of their great good fortune of having taken birth in the sacred land of Bharat and exalted the values that a true Bharathiya (resident of Bharat) stands for. He advised the students that the degrees that they have earned are not as important as the values that they have learned being students of the Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning. He declared that the most important thing that students must always strive for, is the Love of God, which is the most precious wealth that can be gained. The proceedings concluded with the singing of the National Anthem by the entire gathering.

Later that evening the students of the Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning presented a drama entitled "Tera Tujhko Arpan" based on the teaching of the Bhagavad Gita, that the gifts that God has given us like the talents or skills we possess, has to be offered back to the Lord Himself by using the gifts in the service of the Lord. They must not be frittered away in the pursuit of wealth. The play told the story of two singers, one who decides to make a career out of his musical talents and the other who instead uses his gift to sing the glories of the Lord's Name. At the height of his fame, the career-minded singer loses his voice. His friend then advises him to use his voice to sing for God. Only then does he regain his voice. The evening concluded with arati offered to Bhagawan.

The dawn of 23rd November arrived with Bhagawan in his limitless Compassion granting His Divine Darshan to all assembled in the Sai Kulwant Hall, and added to their joy by going twice around the hall. The morning programme saw three distinguished speakers addressing the vast gathering of eager devotees. The first speaker was Justice Bhagawati, Former Chief Justice of India. He was followed by Dr. Jumsai, Director of the Institute of Sathya Sai Education of Thailand and also former Member of Parliament of Thailand. The third speaker was Dr. Michael Goldstein, Chairman of the Overseas Sathya Sai Organisation and of the Prashanti Council.

Bhagawan then gave His Nectarine Discourse. He spoke on

the greatness of mothers like Putlibai and Jijabai who gave birth to such celebrated sons of this land as Gandhiji and Chattrapathi Shivaji. He then related various incidents surrounding His Advent and from His Life, which with their miraculous nature, convinced all who witnessed these incidents about His Divinity.

In the afternoon, Bhagawan, to the surprise and enormous delight of all devotees, entered the Sai Kulwant Hall, dressed in a bright yellow robe. It was a beautiful sight for all to watch as devotees feasted on the radiant Form of the Lord. The evening programme featured two internationally renowned musicians – Parveen Sultana and Dana Gillespie. Mrs. Parveen Sultana began with a song composed on Bhagawan, by her Guru, Ustad Dilshad Khan. She then went on to regale the audience with her soulful rendition of Meera Bhajans. Ms. Dana Gillespie, with her songs of inspiration that contain teachings of saints and sacred books from all over the world, enthralled the gathering and made it an evening for all to remember.

Thus concluded the 78th Birthday Celebrations of our Lord, leaving everyone with valuable messages to carry home and beautiful memories to cherish.
Jai Sai Ram.



The 22nd Convocation.



Baba with the Vice President



The Birthday Message



Darshan 23rd November Morning



Justice Bhagawathi speaks on 23rd November Morning



The birthday boy in a Yellow Robe



Parveen Sultana Singing for the Lord



Dana Gillespie regales the audience



Cutting the Birthday Cake

COMING NEXT.....

AN EXCITING STORY ON ONE OF THE MOST COLOURFUL
EVENTS AT PRASANTHI NILAYAM :

THE ANNUAL SPORTS AND CULTURAL MEET OF THE SRI
SATHYA SAI INSTITUTE OF HIGHER LEARNING.

WATCH OUT!

"Your letter has not reached me yet; but, I have read it already. You posted it to Madras, not knowing that I have come back here. I was near you when you wrote it. Your mother must know be very much better: is it not?" This is what Baba wrote to a devotee, some years back. He is Sarvantharyami; He is in all places, at all times.

Our letter need not reach Him. Even when it reaches Him, He need not open it and read the contents!

One day, I happened to be in His room when the post came. When He dropped on the floor one letter unread and unopened, some newly arrived person muttered, "Swami, you have not read that letter. It may be some tale of misery". Baba smiled and said, "No, No. It is a tale of joy, He says that a son has been born to him; but, he is worried that the baby was born with frontal teeth." Then, He told us the whole story with the envelope in His hand.

"A Vaisya couple from a village in Telengana had come on pilgrimage to Puttaparthi a year ago; they prayed that they may be blessed with progeny. I gave the man an apple and asked him to share it with his wife. He took it in his hand and examined it. Finding some marks on the skin, indicating that it might have been bitten by a rat or so, he asked me what it was, evidently nervous about eating it. I told him that they both could eat it. 'Only, the baby will have two frontal at birth. Don't worry.'

He has now written that the child has been born and, (Here, He tore open the envelope, took out the letter and turning over the lines showed us the very sentence) "he has asked Me whether any Santhi has to be performed, to alleviate what he fears be a calamity!"

Looking at that sentence, we stood amazed, in the resplendent Presence of Bhagavan.

Baba is Sarvajna, Sarvasaktha, Sarvaantharyami.

(N.Kasturi, Sanathana Sarathi, June 1960)



Dear Young Friends,
Here is a touching short story contributed by one of our readers, Aswin,....

This happened a long time back. I used to be only a doctor then.

As soon as I entered the Mother Theresa Memorial Hospital, the smell of disinfectants greeted me. The familiar scenes - nurses and the ward boys hurrying about their daily duties, sick people sitting patiently, waiting to meet the doctors - filled my mind. Cries of some patient crying out in pain in some ward welcomed me to the day's work.

Within six months of joining the Hospital, I had got used to all these smells, sights and sounds. They seemed normal to me. They no longer disturbed me as they had during my learning days.

Yet in the six months there was one thing I had not got used to. It was the framed photo of Mother Theresa that hung from the wall opposite the entrance of the Hospital. It was the familiar photograph of the Mother that smiled at all who came to the hospital. Yet there was something more to that wrinkled, smiling face. Perhaps it was something in those eyes that had caught my fancy. Certainly there was something in them. Were they tears? Nonot possibly. Or maybe they were, because the eyes looked so sad, ..so...I can't express that feeling in words. Just that they made me feel uneasy. But I could not avoid them. Every time I entered the hospital, inspite of myself, my eyes would fall on the framed photograph and my eyes would meet those eyes. And then the same feeling of ...of... yes, maybe guilt would overcome me. Perhaps I was imagining. But those eyes continued to haunt me for all those six months.

That morning it was no different. I came to the hospital and as soon as I entered, I saw the photograph. I shook off that uneasy feeling and walked to my office. I put on my white coat, placed my stethoscope around my neck and went towards the wards.

I went about my daily business – seeing the patients, checking their progress, telling the nurses the prescriptions, encouraging the patients, talking to the patient's family members – and returned to my office. Then there was a bit of paperwork to finish. After that I had to handle the outpatient department for the rest of my workday. At the end of the day, I was a bit tired. As I was preparing to go home, a ward boy came to my door with an envelope. Inside was my cheque for the services that I rendered to the hospital. With the envelope in my hand, I walked out of the hospital. And as I walked out, I could somehow feel those eyes gazing at my back.

As I was driving home, I was contemplating on my life. Since childhood I wanted to serve the society. So I worked very hard and overcame many obstacles to become a doctor. I had accomplished my dream, for I felt that there was no better way of serving the society than curing the sick. I was doing well as a doctor. I was serving a lot of people. At the same time I was able to keep my family happy. What more could anyone ask for?

Yet something was missing in my life. I could not tell what it was. But somewhere deep in my heart, I knew that I was not really happy.

As my car turned into the National Highway, I could hear someone shouting. A little further I saw a group of people standing while a woman was running up and down the road, shouting something at each vehicle as it passed her. As I slowed down, she ran up to my open window. She was a poor woman, possibly a beggar. She wore a dirty and torn sari. Her dry hair fell over her eyes, which were filled with tears that flowed down her soiled face. As she came towards my window I could hear her crying out something I could not understand. She was pointing towards the group of people standing nearby. In the fading light I could make out the body of a young boy lying sprawled beside the road, near the onlookers. As I went near, I saw that the boy was bathed in blood. I guessed that some speeding vehicle would have hit the boy and the culprit would have driven away in haste leaving behind the poor victim to die. Those standing around were poor people who could not have helped. And those who could have were too busy. And here was a poor mother begging of me to save her child.

I looked at the boy who was in great pain. Possibly he had some broken bones and some internal bleeding. I could see that his situation was critical. And if he did not receive medical attention immediately he would die here on the road, with his mother looking on helplessly. I could feel the poor lady's agony as she wailed, beating her chest and head with her hands. I knew that no hospital would readily accept this case, as the boy was in a very critical condition. And it would involve the police too. I also knew that if the boy were not admitted, he would surely die. I still don't know what made me do that, but in a few minutes I was driving back to my hospital with the boy and his mother in the back seat.

When I reached the hospital, the nurse and the doctor on duty were shocked to see the condition of the boy. As they stood there speechless, I told the doctor, "Admit him."

"Sir,....", he mumbled. He looked at the boy and then at me and said, "Sir, I do not think it is advisable."

I looked straight into his eye with my anger rising inside me. "Give me one good reason why."

He avoided my eyes and said, "Sir, ... this boy.... This boy will die ... and"

"It is a doctor's duty to see that he does not", I told even more angrily than before.

This time it was the nurse who spoke. "But sir, ... who will pay for the treatment?"

I sharply turned towards her and said, "I will. Admit him. Now"

They did not have anything more to say. They mutely followed my orders.

I personally attended to the boy. After we had done the first aid, and given him blood, I had the other tests carried out. All that took a lot of time. It was well past midnight when I administered some medicines and had the boy put to sleep. The whole thing had taken several hours but I was not feeling tired. I fact I was happy to see the boy resting peacefully.

I was about to leave the ward when the boy's mother came to me. She was saying something. There were still tears in her eyes. I told her, through gestures that her son was now fine and out of danger. I told her not to make noise as the boy was sleeping. She stopped weeping and wiped her tears. I gestured as I told her that she could take him home in a few days. But she was not looking at me. She was looking at her son and wiping her face with her soiled sari. As I walked away, she just looked at me and smiled. There was something in her smile. I could not understand it. It was beautiful beyond description... I managed to smile back. As I was going, I just looked back, once more, to see the sleeping boy and his mother, who was now at the door of

the ward, looking longingly at her son. When I got to the entrance of the hospital, I wished the nurse a good night. She wanted to say something. I waited.

"Sir..." She was groping for words. "Sir, Doctor ... asked me to tell you about the bill..." I silently walked out to the car, picked out the envelope that I had received in the morning, and went back and gave it to the lady. She stared at the envelope.

"Take the whole amount of the treatment from here."

She looked at me with remorse in her eyes. "Sir!", she said. I smiled in reply and turned and walked away.

As I was about to leave, something made me turn back. And my eyes fell on the photograph of Mother Theresa.

And there she was. And on her face was an unmistakable smile. Well, the tears too were there. But that smile... It was beautiful beyond description.

That night changed my life. I could not be just a doctor from then on.

Today I am trying to be like the Mother.

On Your Birthday... I Got a Gift from you... Such was your love!!

It was your birthday...
I wanted to give you something...
You told me you didn't want anything...
I insisted again...and...

You told me to get Sathya for you,
I stepped out to search but didn't find Sathya,
I was excited, what next would I have to find?
I came back to you, you smiled.

You told me to search for Dharma,
I asked many people, everyone kept quiet,
I came back to you and you teased me...
"What boy, you cant even get me this much?"

Next you told me to go bring Shanti for you,
The whole world was in chaos,
Where could I find Shanti?,
I came back and said "I failed Swaami".

Lastly you told me to find Prema,
I was tired, tears started running down my eyes,
I said "I know I will fail..."
I cried my heart out because I could give you nothing.

Then you came near me...

"What did I ask you first?"
"Sathya" I replied in tears,
"What was I called earlier,
I exclaimed "Sathya!!"

"What was next I asked?"
"Dharma" I said wiping my tears away,
"Who was I in the Raamayan?",
In excitement I said "Raama and Dharm!!".

"And then I asked for..."
Confidently I replied "Shaanti"
"Who was I in the Mahabharata?",
I was in joy.... "Krishna and Shanti",

"Finally...I asked you for...",
"Prema" zoomed my reply,
"I always address all of you as what?"
"Prema swarupulaa!!" ...I exclaimed.

You wiped my tears, and said,
"I asked you for a simple thing,
you searched the world for them,
but not once did you try looking at me".

I smiled and with a content heart,
I fell at your feet and said,
"Happy Birthday and thanks for your gift!"

I dedicate this poem to Swaami and wish him a Happy Birthday!!

By: Bharath Gudep
Country: Canada
Occupation: Undergraduate Student.

Touching Thousands of Hearts

(continued from the previous issue)



Waiting for his Boys to return

students, He is the Loving God and Loving Mother combined!

Ten days had passed and all the villages mentioned by Baba had been served. It seemed that all that one had to do was now to relax a bit and get ready for the Akhand Bhajan, due to start on Saturday, 11th November, 2000. The day prior to that, Swami was out on the veranda in the company of students, and a few of them were asked to speak. It was rather like the Trayee session, but in Kulwant Hall, and in the presence of the entire audience of devotees. At the end of the speech-making, Baba announced that in response to the prayers of devotees from other places, He had decided to include also Penukonda and Dharmavaram. These were not villages but towns, and much bigger than even Puttaparthi! According to official statistics, the population of Penukonda was over forty thousand. Over night, food had to be prepared and fifty thousand packets had to be made. But with Sai, the impossible becomes possible. When Swami came out for Darshan on the morning of the 11th, He told people on the veranda, "Our girls worked all night and have prepared fifty thousand food packets and laddus! All set for Penukonda service!!" With that remark, He gave a gentle nod and the familiar procession got under way.

Penukonda is about forty kilometres to the west of Puttaparthi. A few centuries ago, it was one of the places patronised

by the kings of the Vijayanagaram Empire. It also has a sizeable Muslim population. On account of its extent and the population, Penukonda posed challenges of its own. However, there was one advantage; being a town, here one could seek the help of the Administration. Needless to say that all the Officials and the Police were most helpful. In fact, they expressed a desire to participate in the service themselves - such was the infection of Swami's Love! Penukonda was a tough assignment in every way. The town was big and long distances had to be covered by the boys distributing food door to door. There were also a large number of shops that had to be visited. Being a trading centre, there is always a large floating population that could not be missed out. And people in the Bus Stand too had to be taken care of. Besides all this, there were two unusual departures from the earlier routine that merit special mention. Firstly, taking the permission of the Police, one group visited the local jail and distributed Prasadam to the prisoners! Next, there were a large number of Muslim colonies. Every one of them was visited and Prasadam was distributed. Later, when Mr. Chiranjeevi Rao went on his monitoring rounds, he found a large number of destitute people in one Muslim locality. These people could not go the place where clothes had been distributed earlier. Spotting a Mosque nearby, He promptly located

Meanwhile, Swami would be out in the veranda, seemingly involved with the afternoon Darshan; but one could clearly see the Mother in Him, anxiously awaiting the return of His dear children. And when He heard their roar, how His face would glow with delight! For their part, the students would just jump out of the trucks without even waiting for them to stop and dash into the Sai Kulwant Hall – wash-up could wait until later! As they rushed in, Swami would walk forward to meet and greet them, plying them with various questions like: "Did you all eat?", "Are you tired?", "Where all did you go?". To the poor and destitute villagers He is Compassionate God but to His



Running back into the Arms of their Mother SAI



Service in the Prison

the Mullah there and sought his help in identifying the deserving. About seventy to eighty such people were identified, and preparations were commenced to distribute sweets, food, and clothes to these people. Just then, it started raining. Till this time [and in fact after this too], no rain was ever encountered. Everybody ran to the Mosque nearby to take shelter, and arrangements were made to do the distribution there. Suddenly, the devotees involved in the distribution recalled Shirdi Baba, who spent all His life in a Mosque. It seemed as if the rain was Divinely ordained to make everyone recall the earlier Avatar of Sai! Understandably, this part of the service was performed with special vigour and enthusiasm, with not only the usual cry of "Sai Ram", but also "Allah Malik" [God is the Master], a favourite saying of Shirdi Baba.

After the break provided by the Akhand Bhajan, it was now the town of Dharmavaram, reportedly having a population of over eighty thousand! All

that had been done up till now paled into insignificance! But such is Sai's Grace that one more peak was conquered, thanks especially to the wonderful co-operation from both the town officials as well as the local Seva Dal Organisation. For years, these Seva dal volunteers had been silently providing various types of assistance to pilgrims coming to Dharmavaram, en route to Puttaparthi. Now, they had the chance to mingle with those sent by Swami for service in their town.

In Dharmavaram too, there was an unusual group that had to be served. For years, this town acted as the outpost for those journeying to Puttaparthi by rail. Passengers had to get alight at Dharmavaram Railway Station, and make their way to Puttaparthi by road [distance of about forty kilometres or so]. Finally, the Ministry of Railways woke up to the needs of Puttaparthi, and sanctioned the construction of a loop railway track from Dharmavaram to Penukonda, via Puttaparthi. This track was getting ready, and people were in

fact working furiously to have the line inaugurated before the Seventy-fifth Birthday [it was inaugurated on 22nd November, 2000]. As happens always, many people had to be moved out of their land to make way for the railway track. In India, people who are displaced by dams and railway projects often face hardship. Remembering this, a special effort was made to visit the colony of displaced persons in Dharmavaram, and give them all food and clothing. It was mid-day and the Sun was scorching from above; yet, volunteers trudged up and down to locate all the displaced families - over two hundred of them - and bring them Baba's loving Prasadam. The events of November 2000 are very distinctive and unique, and carry their own subtle message. Many may perhaps wonder: "All this business of going to the villages might sound great; but what is one day of service going to do the perpetual problems of these people?" In a similar vein, many young people argue, "Look, I have this special skill and training. This country does not offer any



opportunities for pursuing this line. So, I have to go out." In its own way, these ten days of village service cured most people of such doubts and misgivings. For the first time, thousands of young men and women had an eye-ball to eye-ball confrontation with grim poverty and difficult living conditions. They understood that they are in a privileged position because thousands of others have sacrificed quietly and unnoticed. Swami had told them countless number of times: "After completing your education, do not run away to other countries in search of greener pastures. Stay back and serve your people. You are what you are because of what you have received from your society. You owe it something in return." Thus far, it was just another piece of advice, like many others; it had hardly sunk in. But now it was different. Those words of Bhagavan meant something very important. At one stroke, almost all students of the Institute turned their eyes from far off lands to their own. As one student told his teacher who asked him what he thought about it all, "Sir, this is just a

curtain raiser. For me, the 'show' starts when I graduate from the Institute. I have now realised, that life is meant to be spent in service, here, in this country. We owe so much to so many."

There are also the nobler and spiritual aspects of service that are often lost sight of. Significantly, Swami never uses the term poor-feeding; instead, whenever food and clothes are distributed, He always refers to it as Narayana Seva, meaning service to the Lord. When one serves the poor, one's vision must not be purely superficial; one must not see a poor person but the Lord Himself, disguised as a poor person! When in addition one realises that the same Lord is also the In-dweller, then service is rendered to the Omnipresent Self – the Self as one particular body serves the Self coming as another body. A few days after it was all over, Baba told the students that this is the spirit in which service really ought to be done.

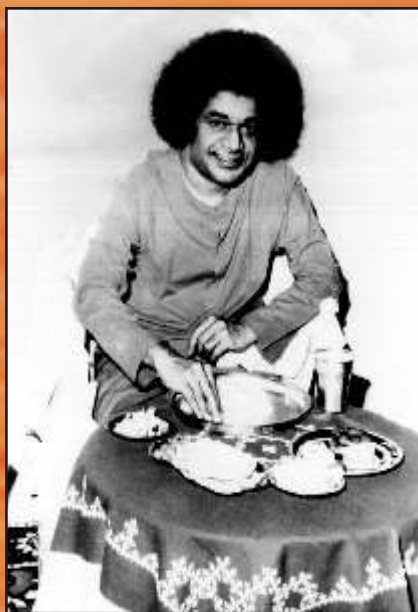
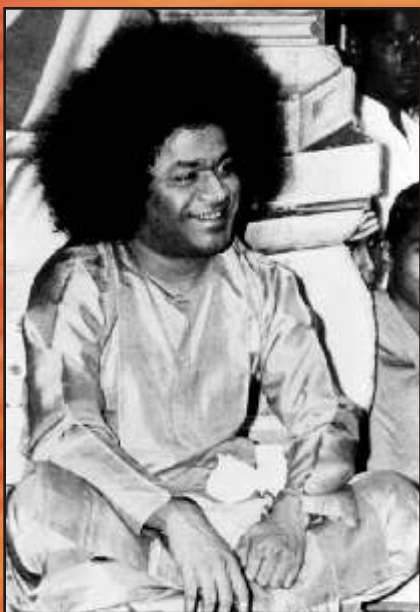
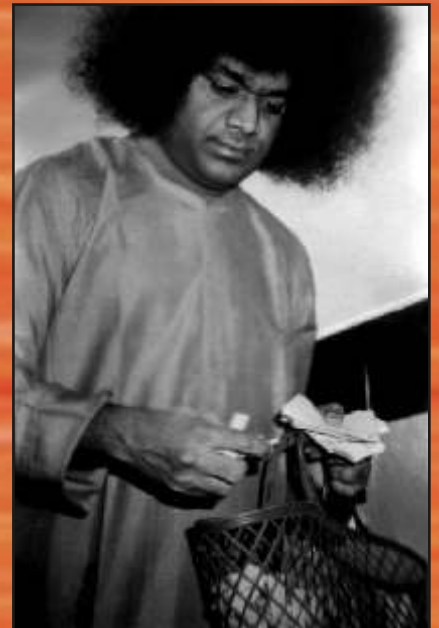
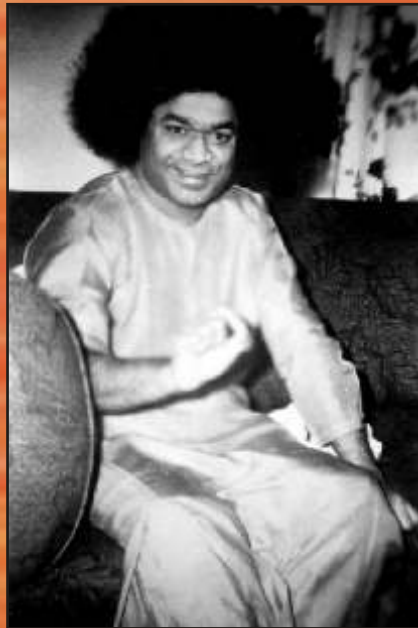
When Swami says LOVE ALL, it really means: "See God in all and Love that Omnipresent God who is also in you." This is the inner meaning of Swami's

saying: "I separated Myself from Myself in order to Love Myself!" And when Swami adds, SERVE ALL, it implies that one must serve fellow beings with the feeling that one is really serving the Universal Self who is in us as also in everything else in the Cosmos.

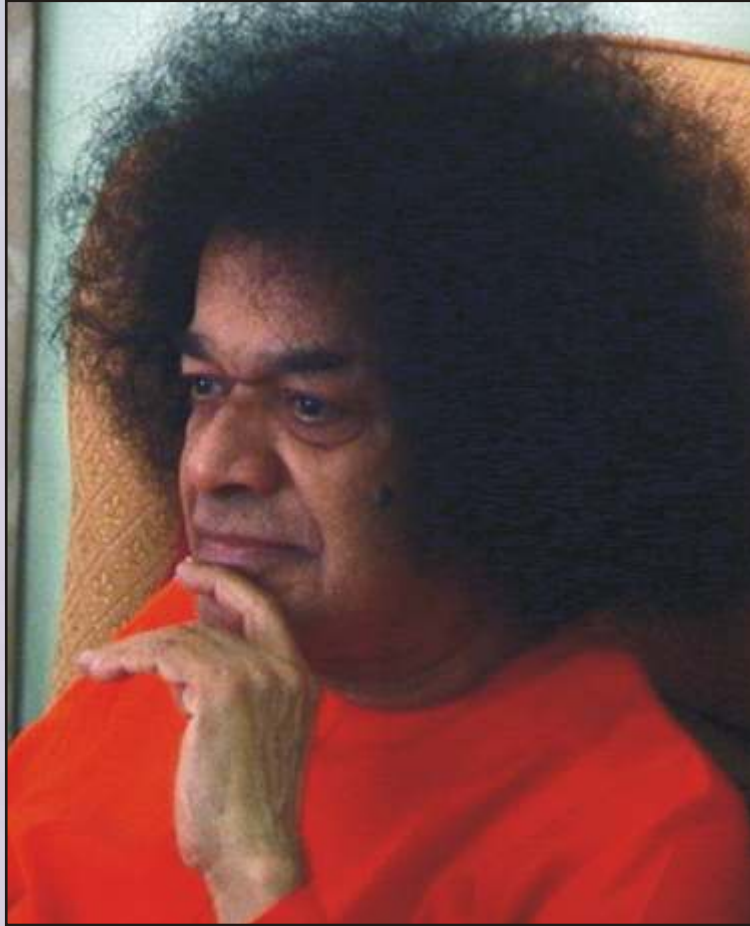
In short, the 'Silent Revolution' of November 2000 brought home the lesson that Love and Service are like the two wings of a bird; flight is not possible with just one wing alone. Through the instrumentality of His students and devotees, in those ten days or so, Swami touched thousands of hearts in a thousand different ways, giving new depth and meaning to the familiar adage: LOVE ALL, SERVE ALL

The end

Here are some old Black and White Pictures of our beautiful Lord!



Down Memory Lane



Your heart is the lock and your mind is the key. When you turn the key to the left, it locks. But if you turn the key to the right it unlocks. It is the turning of the key that makes all the difference. Thus the mind is the cause for your liberation as well bondage.

Baba



Love All Serve All