

## **HEART 2 HEART**

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## BETWEEN YOU AND US

The healthcare scenario in India in the current times is peculiar. World-class five-star hospitals have sprung in various cities across India, and suddenly 'medical tourism' has become a buzzword in the corridors of the Government's health ministry promising 50-100 billion rupees of additional revenue by 2015. But at the same time, 80 children out of every 1000 born in the rural India – where more than 70 per cent of the country's population reside - do not live to see a single day; and 30 per cent of all infants born in India weigh less than 2.5 kg, which is the World Health Organization's cut-off level to determine low birth weight with a lower chance of survival.

India, the second most populous country in the world with changing socio-political-demographic and morbidity patterns, is now in a critical stage, healthcare wise. Typically, in low income countries, the greatest burden of ill-health results from communicable disease (respiratory illness, measles, etc.), malnutrition and complications of pregnancy and childbirth; and in high income countries, it is the non-communicable conditions - heart disease, cancer, and accidents – which are concerns of the nation's health administrators. Developing countries usually experience an epidemiological transition from a communicable disease profile to one characterized by non-communicable diseases. It is this interim period, where there is 'partial transition', is what is painful. And India, currently is in this complex condition wherein a good part of society requires costly treatment for chronic illnesses; while a very significant balance remains mired in an earlier (communicable) disease profile. In 1978 India signed the Alma Alta Declaration (named after the city where the conference was held) undertaking to provide "Health for all" by 2000. Since then, three decades have gone by, and in rural Andhra Pradesh today, the situation is no better than only 13 doctors and 9 beds for every 1,00,000 villagers. A farmer has to travel a minimum of 10 kms to spot a government hospital. There are Primary Health Centers at more accessible distances, but they are more often than not dysfunctional, beset with shortage of qualified doctors and non-availability of supporting infrastructure on one hand, and poor health awareness and disbeliefs of the village folk on the other. The consequence is a pathetic health profile of more than half of India's population.

Hypertension, the most prevalent of the non-communicable disease (if one excludes anaemia and undernutrition) which leads to stroke, ischemic heart disease and renal failure, is not detected in 90 persons out of every 100 in most parts of rural India. The situation, unarguably, is far worse than the 'Rule of Halves' in hypertension according to which - only half of the cases are detected, of which only half receive therapy, and of that only half are adequately controlled on it. The state of affairs with diabetes is no different. Though all of us know someone suffering from diabetes, as many as 13 million cases in rural India remain undiagnosed, and given the nature of the disease which opens a Pandora's Box of complications, the problem is far more serious than one would usually imagine. Again, it is common knowledge that most of the epidemics that have and continue to devastate the Indian underbelly can easily be prevented with small but serious steps in improving rural hygiene.

What is needed, therefore, are effective diagnosis, proactive prevention and raising the health awareness of the rural folk, which can happen not by adding more hospitals in the cities or setting up Primary Health Centres in the villages (as is evident from the current scenario), but by a novel approach of taking 'the hospital' to the door step of the patient, simply because most of the rural folk are too poor to travel, are fearful of big towns and cities, set with superstitions carried forward from generations and, for lasting transformation, need a lot of emotional and psychological help, which can happen only in a one-to-one interaction. But is such a thing practical? Can it be done in a country like India where the poor number up to 250 million or more? Read our cover story to find out.

You will be surprised and inspired when you read how Laksminarayana who never knew why his health had deteriorated suddenly or what diabetes is, is happy today with his sugar under control and energy levels high. Rangappa, who thought drinking and smoking is common and harmless, is now an 'ambassador of clean health' in his village (Nidimamidi), after been saved from an acute cardiac arrest, thanks to timely diagnosis and instant action by the doctors. And these are only random samples from the 50,000 rural folk that are under the umbrella of Sri Sathya Sai Mobile Hospital service project, started by Bhagavan more than a year now. Just like all other mega service projects of Swami, this too, is a model – a demonstration to the world of what is possible, how it can be done and the enormous benefits it can confer.

What started as the fulfillment of a tiny noble desire of Mother Eswaramma, who just wanted a small hospital in the Puttaparthi village, is now the greatest model of ideal healthcare to the whole world. Bhagavan, the ever compassionate Mother, even after setting up two super specialty hospitals that have offered medicare completely free to over 1.8 million patients irrespective of economic, social or religious background, felt this was not enough; there are too many who are left out, in the vicinity of Puttaparthi itself, who need this more than anybody else. And thus was born the Sri Sathya Sai Mobile Hospital. It is said that for the forlorn and the deprived, God is the only refuge. We see here live examples of this dictum.

It is therefore that, God, in the Lalitha Sahasranama, is described as 'Pranada' and 'Vandaru Jana Vatsala' which mean 'the giver of life to all' and who 'loves her devotees like a mother'. In fact, this 'mother aspect' of the divine is, perhaps, the most favoured facet to relate to by many spiritual aspirants and ordinary folk alike. And in the days of yore, when the number of devotees in Puttaparthi could be counted with ones fingers, there were few privileged families and individuals who were blessed with incredible experiences suffused with this enthralling motherly aspect of beloved Swami. One such fortunate soul is Mrs. Geeta Mohan Ram. When you read her sweet encounters with the divine in the Swami and Me section, you will surely be amazed.

But it is not as if this aspect of Swami is only a thing of the past. On the contrary, we see increasingly more of 'Swami as a Divine Mother' as years pass by. All the mammoth service projects, if anything, are only manifestations of immense concern of the Loving Mother. But at a more personal and physical

level, the students of Bhagavan are the privileged recipients of this priceless boon. To see how sweet it looks when God becomes your mother, see our Photo Gallery. We also have an inspiring article on this theme by a former student of the Anantapur Campus, again in the Swami and Me section.

More than 50 countries across the world, starting from USA in North America to Zimbabwe in Africa to Australia and New Zealand, celebrate Mothers day in this month of May. For Sai devotees, it is even more special as we observe the death anniversary of Mother Eswaramma on the 6th of this month every year. If there is one thing that we have to emulate from her saintly life, it is her purity.

Purity is, in fact, the basis for all spiritual endeavors. If the Mobile Hospital is successful today, it is because of the purity of purpose behind the whole project. Siddhartha became Lord Buddha (whose birthday we celebrate in this month too) when purity pervaded his entire being. Swami says, "If you have purity, patience and perseverance, you can become Me". Let us therefore, clean ourselves within and without, and fill it only with holiness, so that, 'we' can one day ultimately become 'He'.

Let noble thoughts enter us from all directions.

Loving Regards,

H2H Team.

## **SPIRITUAL BLOSSOMS**

### **SATHYA SAI SPEAKS**

#### **Mother's Love and Divine Grace**

*Embodiments of Love!* There is no nobler quality in the world than love. It is wisdom. It is righteousness. It is wealth. It is Truth. Everything is permeated with love. Everything in the cosmos arises from love, grows by love and merges in love.

Every human being is born from the mother's womb. He is fostered by the mother's love and enjoys many things in life because of the mother. He enjoys all happiness in life because of mother's love. Hence, there is no higher divinity than the mother. But this divinity relates to the body alone.

Man has to recognise the truth that the food which sustains his body is derived from the sun. The sun helps food crops to grow. Hence, without the sun man cannot have food to sustain life. The term *Sathyam* (Truth) is made up of three syllables which represent life, food and the sun. It follows that man is inherently an embodiment of truth. As such, he should lead a life based on truth. Unfortunately, man today leads a life divorced from truth. Consequently, he becomes a prey to innumerable troubles. He has no peace. He is racked continually by many afflictions.

Man has to recognise the significance of Love and Truth, which are fundamental to human existence. The mother represents these two basic qualities.

#### **Love The Mother And Revere The Father**

Rama attained Godhood because he was the son of Kaushalya. Lava and Kusha became heroic children because of their great mother, Sita Devi. It is the noble thoughts of the mother which make the children great. A mother may go wrong in other respects, but she will always strive for the well-being of her children. Hence every son has to love the mother as the primary duty. Then he should love the father and revere the preceptor. The mother confers the body. The father protects it. The preceptor imparts knowledge and wisdom. For every human being all three are essential for getting on in the world.

Many great men have embarked on noble deeds after securing the blessing of their mothers. For instance, before going to the battle to fight against the demon, Taarakaasura, Sanat Kumaara got the blessings of his mother, Gowri. Similarly, Parasuraama received his mother's blessings before he went to fight his foes. Likewise, Vinatha blessed her son Garuda...

It is because of the blessings of noble mothers, the wives of great sages, that many men were able to perform heroic deeds. Shankaracharya taught that sons who did not get the blessings of the mothers suffered from various

vicissitudes in life. Those who had the blessings of their mothers often secured freedom from rebirth.

Many enlightened men have extolled the greatness and power of mothers. It is the foremost duty of children to secure the blessings of their mothers for their worldly well-being.

However, spiritually man's obligation is different, according to *Vedhantha* (essence of the Vedas). Here, there is room in the heart only for the love of God. Affection for the mother and reverence for the father are necessary. But parents and preceptor are transient. Even friends are impermanent. God alone is permanent and unfailing and God alone should have the permanent place in the heart.

### **Use The Body as a Divine Instrument**

The human body acquires its sacredness from the fact that it is the abode of the Divine. The Geetha refers to the body as *Kshethra* (sacred field) and the Divine Indweller as the *Kshethrajna*. Because of the sacredness of the body, it should be used properly as an instrument of the Divine. Man should develop faith in God. Without that faith, life will be meaningless. Man can have no happiness or satisfaction in life without the grace of God. Men today are too much immersed in affairs of the world. The result is they have no peace of mind. They can have peace only from the supreme embodiment of peace: God. He is the abode of infinite love and enduring peace. God's love should be secured by chanting the Lord's Name. You should be grateful to your mother for endowing you with a body which enables you to chant the Lord's Name.

## **CONVERSATIONS WITH SAI - PART 32**

*(Continued from the last issue)*

### **Peace On Earth**

**SAI:** Crime has become very bad in India. There is no safety.

**H (Hislop):** Swami, this is not particular to India. The same is true all over the world. How will it all end?

**SAI:** To the good. In a few years, all will be peaceful.

**H:** But Swami, it is getting worse, and it is the Kali Yuga (a world period of diminishing virtue).

**SAI:** No, it is not as bad now as it was. It is like in the ocean. There is a time of high waves, and there may be some peak waves that crash heavily on the shore, but this is followed by a calm and peaceful sea.

**H:** Many people are saying that, very shortly, we will enter a period of great catastrophe.

**SAI:** There may be some peak waves, as I mentioned but the world will be happy, peaceful, and prosperous.

**Guest:** No world war?

**SAI:** No, no world war.

**H:** We are fortunate to be alive so that we may see this peaceful world.

**SAI:** You will all see it. Even old men will live to see it.

**Guest:** Then Prema Sai will not have much work to do! Swami will have made the world peaceful.

**SAI:** That is some forty years away (*this conversation took place in December 1978*). At that time the world will be peaceful. That is the Name: Prema Sai. All will be love - love, love, love everywhere.

**Guest:** It would be good to be reborn in the time of Prema Sai!

**SAI:** It is best to merge with God. No rebirth.

**SAI:** In all countries there is a rapid deterioration of the human quality.

**H:** When will it change for the better?

**SAI:** Soon there will be a change.

**H:** When is soon, Swami? Twenty years? Ten years?

**SAI:** No, now. Already there is some slight improvement in India. One cause of the general deterioration in the world is rapid communication. This allows advertising and



publicity to have a strong influence on people. Your American election is an illustration of how the leaders are television actors.

**H:** Swami, there is no evidence of a change for the better.

**SAI:** If there is a change, it will be a universal change not local. It will occur at every place.

**H:** This rapid world-wide communication also results in common knowledge of how to build an atom bomb. Is there not a great danger of some small nation using the bomb?

**SAI:** The danger is not of someone using the bomb. People are no longer afraid of death from the bomb. So long as they can pursue their objective of getting money, they are willing to risk death and to die. It is not the bomb that is the danger, it is the mind that is the danger. The bomb exists only as an instrument of the mind. The need is for a change of mind.

**H:** But Swami, people do not care to learn about that. They have no interest in Swami or in listening to Him.

**SAI:** Minds can and do change. For example, the life style of people can be so bad that they become ashamed and change. The hippies' lifestyle is so low and so dishonest and immoral that groups of hippies, observing their own life reflected in another group, become ashamed and of themselves they change.

**H:** Well, at least Swami's devotees know about changing the mind and can do so.

**SAI:** Were it not for the mind change of Sai devotees the world would already have fallen into complete chaos. The deterioration of mind and man has been very rapid and abrupt, even precipitous during the last fifteen years. That the world is not in total destruction is due to the change in mind of Sai devotees and to Sai's Grace. You are not aware of it, just as you are not aware of your eyes until they are lost. In the same way, the world is not aware of Sai's Grace.

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### **Swami Talks with Jewish Devotees**

*A request was made to Baba that He deliver a discourse directly to the Jewish people; a unique, ancient and powerful minority in the society of the world. The occasion for a major discourse was not at hand, but Baba graciously called all the Jewish devotees presently in the ashram for an interview, and included a few additional persons, of whom I was one, fortunately indeed for me. Unhappily, I was unable to keep up with the rapid exchange of questions and answers and could not remember afterwards, largely, I think, because of my unfamiliarity with the subject matter. I did manage to take a few notes and believe it worthwhile to make them a part of the book. Prior to the questions and answers, Baba made a few comments:*

**SAI:** The great scriptures of mankind came into being through sound, the word of God. This is fully true of the ancient Jewish religion. It was the word of God. Over the centuries, however, man has made changes in the Bible, and present

misunderstandings are due to these man-made changes. In the early days there were differences between the Jews and the Christians, but they are not appropriate today.

Today the standard should be the brotherhood of man, based on the divine love of God for all mankind. Each religion should follow that which is its own and not follow a path which belongs to others, but which is not its own. Follow your own tradition, but do not hate others. Be broadminded, as are the followers of Sai.

The Bible, the Koran, the Vedas, the Granth - all represent the same creation. All were following the voice of God. All arose from the whisper of God which, in the pure minds of the hearers, flowered into eight sounds, eight letters, and from this, all words evolved. The eight sounds were the vowels and consonants of language. The foundation of the Jewish religion is precisely the same as that of the Vedas. The breath of God, cognized by the pure attention of the ancient seers, was heard as eight sounds, and these sounds have been given names. *(Baba here pronounced each of these eight primeval sounds, but I could not write them down.)*

The Sai symbol of five religions represents the five major religions found in India. For the West, the Jewish Star may be added as a sixth representation on the Sai symbol.

**Q:** Was Jesus the Messiah of the Jews?

**SAI:** No. He did not represent the ancient Jewish tradition. He represented the factor of change.

**Q:** In the Bible it says that the Jews are God's chosen people.

**SAI:** All people were created by God. Thus all are His chosen people.

**Q:** What is the significance of Hitler?

**SAI:** Hitler's actions were activated by ego and power.

**Q:** For what reason have the Jews been persecuted?

**SAI:** For every event there is a cause. There is no reason. Sai acts only for love, for the benefit of others. He has no desires. He has no selfish interest.

**Q:** God appeared to the Jews as a burning bush.

**SAI:** God appears in any form. It is according to His wish, not because of any necessity or limitation. It is His choice. God is formless. He is Sound. He can take any form according to His wish.

**Q:** Is Sai the Messiah of the Jews?

**SAI:** That is not for Sai to say. That must be determined by you. The real Messiah is the totality of good. Sai is not any particular thing. He is everything.

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**Swami Directs the Finding of Sweet Water**

**SAI:** *(to devotee driver)* To the Gokulum.

**SAI:** This area is now very busy. The College is here, and now there are the fields to the left. There are 60 acres, and there is the land on the college side also.

**H:** Are the lands irrigated?

**SAI:** All is under irrigation.

**H:** Where does the water come from?

**SAI:** We have dug wells. They produce a large volume of water.

**H:** Is the water good? Is it fit to drink?

**SAI:** It is good, sweet water.

**H:** How deep are the wells?

**SAI:** Fifteen to twenty feet deep.

**H:** But Swami, that is very shallow. Usually wells need to go beneath the surface water table in order to be sweet.

**SAI:** But Swami located where to dig.

**H:** Well, that is different!

**SAI:** The Government experts came to locate wells, but even though they went down 100 feet no water was found.

### **The Preciousness of Sai**

**H:** Swamiji! I cannot understand how the Government does not come to Swami, touch His Feet and ask Him to run the country!

**SAI:** It is not that the Government is unaware of what Swami is doing. They do not think it would be good for Swami to be involved in politics. Nor does Swami wish that. His interest is with His devotees and with what He is now doing. If the Government should really know Swami's Reality and His power, they would declare Him to be a ward of the Government, surround Him with security and He would be unable to continue to see the devotees. It is not Swami's wish. With a move of His hand, Swami could have the entire world acknowledge Him - but to what end? It would be spectacular only and would accomplish nothing of value.

**MG:** When will the whole world know about Swami?

**SAI:** Even now Sai is known in many countries of the world. This is entirely without precedent. Never before have so many known of the Avathar. In the time of Rama, He was known only in the city-state where He lived. And He was naturally venerated there because he was the ruler. Knowledge about Krishna was also very limited. In His earlier days, Krishna was known only in two small villages.

**H:** Is the difference due to changes in communication, or to the will of the Avathar?

**SAI:** Rapid communication and transportation are largely responsible. In olden days to move from Puttaparthi to Whitefield (i.e. about 120 miles) would be like a trip to a foreign continent. Now, Americans come here from the other side of the world in just a few hours time.

**MG:** Will the University be here?

**SAI:** No. In Puttaparthi only. This college and others will remain as colleges.

**H:** Swami, may Mr. Kasturi publish Swami's talk to the Jews?

**SAI:** Why? I said words which were just heart-to-heart.

**H:** Is there enough milk from the Gokulum to provide the college?

**SAI:** Oh, yes. Enough also for the canteens and the residents in the compound. Some of the cows provide as much as 32 liters of milk a day.

**H:** How about the two cows at Prasanthi Nilayam? Are they still good?

**SAI:** Yes. The two from you and Mrs. Hislop still give more than 30 liters of milk a day. Now they have had five calves each. Very good cows.

### **Overuse of Computers Harms the Intellect**

**MG:** Will the new university use computers?

**SAI:** No. No computers. The National Exams were put on computers. It was a disaster. The many errors caused severe distress. Some students committed suicide. Afterwards, when the parents were told that the deceased students had really made high passing grades, much suffering resulted. The growing tendency to rely on computers and calculators to provide answers to problems is bringing about a rapid deterioration of intellect. In times past, people had to use their brains to think long and hard on problems. Now, the mental work is handed over to a computer and the mental faculties deteriorate through disuse.

**MG:** But is it not possible to use computers in a constructive and beneficial way?

**SAI:** Yes, this is going on. There is the intention to use them in ways that are beneficial and constructive. The immediate results appear to be very good. But in the long run the use of computers and calculators will result in a severe deterioration of human intellectual power.

**H:** Swamiji, a personal question, please. Is December 9 the correct day for our departure, or would another date be better?

**SAI:** December 9 is the correct day. It is a good day.

**H:** Dr. S. wants to publish Swami's Christmas day talks.

**SAI:** Go ahead. He may do that.

**H:** The translations are those that Mr. Kasturi once showed to Swami. I carefully read every word.

**SAI:** It is all right.

**MG:** Swami, on Wednesday the Jewish festival of lights starts and continues for 8 days. Could the Jewish devotees have the lights burning here at Brindavan?

**SAI:** Oh, yes. They may do so.

**MG:** Where, Swami?

**SAI:** Under the central tree in the compound.

**MG:** Would Swami light the first lamp in the evening?

**SAI:** Yes, yes, I will do that.

*(To be continued)*

## CHINNA KATHA

### The Victory of Virtue

King Ambarisha performed a *Yaga*, but at the crucial moment, the animal intended for the sacrifice escaped. Now the priests ordained that to make amends for this sinful neglect, a human being should be offered as a substitute to the Gods. The King promised 1,000 cows in exchange for a son, but which father will send a son to death, even when 1,000 cows are given in exchange?

There were also other conditions: the King's messengers should not ask anyone for the son. They should not commit the sin of equating 1,000 cows as equal to a human being. The father too should not break the sad offer to the son. The offer to immolate himself must come unasked from the son, without any prompting or persuasion. It is only such a son that will be accepted by the Gods. Now, Sunasshepa heard the news by himself and approaching his father he said he would go, and gladly too. For, what greater good fortune can a mortal expect than ascending to heaven through the sacrificial flame?

Sunasshepa persuaded his father that his wish to proceed to the Yajna and offer himself was legitimate and approvable, and left for the capital. On the way, he went to his maternal uncle, Viswamitra, who tried to prevent the boy from going to the sacrifice. "This is all just foolish superstition. Can any one substitute a man for a cow?" Viswamitra asked. Sunasshepa replied that all men are cattle, for until Viveka and Vairagya (wisdom and renunciation) dawn, they are but animals. So, in spite of his uncle's arguments, arguments like the ones used by some to dissuade persons from coming to Puttaparthi, Sunasshepa managed to reach the *Yagasala*.

In the same way as the lights before us are lit when a switch is moved up at Penukonda (which is 40 kms from Puttaparthi), when the Lord decides on something, it has to happen so. Well, the Lord is not a rock or a stone. His Heart melted at the plight of the boy. Indra appeared in the sacrificial fire and departed showering blessings on his head. It was Indra who had carried away the original cow and elaborated this entire plot, to bring Sunasshepa and his greatness to light and to bless him.

- Baba

## **COVER STORY**

### **A 'Moving' Marvel of Holistic Medicare**

#### **- The story of Sri Sathya Sai Mobile Hospital**

#### **The Puzzling Excitement**

It was a sight to behold. The air was thick with excitement. Though the earth was red, rocky and dry, and looked disenchanting – its drought-ridden history very evident – there was only delight everywhere. It was as if they had all gotten connected to their source of happiness, hope and energy. The kids were ecstatic; spring in their steps, smiles on their lips, they were screaming at the top of their voices, and waving their hands vigorously. And only a few meters away, all the village ladies and gentlemen stood in a most disciplined fashion. The whole pathway was washed and decorated. From among the beautiful designs (created out of rice powder) that adorned the road brightly in white, one of them proclaimed “Welcome”. Yes, everyone was ready and revved up in the village of Locherla. Little girls waited with *Poorna Kumbham*, turmeric, *kumkum*, flowers, etc. – everything that is traditionally used in South India to welcome a special guest. The men, in this small hamlet about 25 kms from Puttaparthi, had hung big banners and cleaned up the entire premises; now, in fresh clothes, serene in disposition and joy on their faces, their eyes were searching for any sign of the arriving moment. For the entire hamlet and for folk even from neighboring settlements, it surely was an event of much cheer and much significance too. Was any special guest, a minister or a VIP, visiting the village? Or, were they heralding a festive occasion for the whole community? Or, was it that Swami was arriving at this hamlet physically?

Well, actually it was just a bus – a spotlessly white and big 15 feet long carrier, not with people, but machines inside, arriving at the rural milieu. For the villagers, nevertheless, it was no less than God. “But for this, by now, I would be dead,” says Rangappa. “The pain in the chest that morning, on December 30, 2006, was the worst I had ever suffered in my life. It was unbearable.” Rangappa had been playing the *nadaswaram* (a classical wind instrument) for a rural Muslim festival for the last three days, and in the process had blown his throat out.

#### **The Metamorphosis of Rangappa**

It was not the first time, Rangappa, originally a barber, had done this. In fact, *nadaswaram* has been his valuable supplementary source of earnings for years now. But never had he suffered so much for taking up the instrument taught by his father. Eight years ago, he had endured a similar predicament but it was not so severe. “This time, there was a burning sensation. It was too much to tolerate. The pain actually started on December 28 and a local health inspector I went to, gave me some pills. I swallowed them and performed again on the next day. This was it. The pain now was dreadful. My brother then immediately took me to Buggapalli, a nearby village where there was a

RMP (Registered Medical Practitioner). ‘Oh, it is only gastric trouble,’ the doctor said and gave two shots. The pain subsided, but only temporarily. It returned the next day and I tried injections, which again gave only momentary relief. But by January 3, nothing worked – no pills, no shots. I was clueless. I had never been through so much before. My chest was hurting too much and I thought I was not going to live.”

It was Rangappa’s darkest hour. Tensed and terrified, he wondered who would take care of his wife and only son. Like a drowning man desperate for a straw, his heart was crying for help. There was no way he could help himself. He was illiterate, and poor. He had never ever been to a city, did not know where else to go and whom to approach. He had no clue what he suffered from, and was there a cure, if any. “It was in this time of devastating depression that we heard of the Sai doctors who had come to the neighboring village, Kotlapalli,” says Rangappa’s brother Nidimamidappa. “They had come along with the bus just like they have come here to Locherla. We wanted relief, no matter who or what. In the next ten minutes we were there. The doctors were so kind and concerned. The white bus had all the facilities. On the spot, without any delay they did an electronic test on the chest (ECG) and gave a tablet to swallow right then and there. And then, with an air of urgency in their voice, told me, ‘You go and get your brother admitted at once in the Super Specialty Hospital in Puttaparthi’. I dashed to Puttaparthi with my brother on a motor bike, and when I showed the slip they had sent us with in the Puttaparthi Hospital, we were taken into the ICU instantly. Once admitted and medicines administered, my brother’s pain gradually began to subside. In four days, he was fine. I could not believe my eyes when my brother walked out of the hospital on that Saturday. He was a changed man.”

Till today, neither Rangappa nor his brother know what exactly happened in the ICU in those four days. They have no idea why they had to rush to the Puttaparthi Hospital on that fateful Saturday. What they do know is that ‘the doctors sent by Swami with the white bus’ is what gave them a new life.

“If we would not have seen him that day, maybe he would have never survived,” says Dr. Narasimhan, who examined him that morning. “Rangappa, in fact, had suffered an acute heart attack, though it was in the initial phase. While we had a suspicion that, maybe he was suffering from something more serious than gastric trouble or just chest pain, [we could confirm it immediately because of the instant ECG report. We, therefore, sent him right away to the Super Specialty Hospital.”

It was a sophisticated diagnostic clinic along with expert doctors’ right there at the patient’s doorstep in the village that saved Rangappa’s life that eventful morning. But what is more heartening is this: Rangappa, a nicotine-addict for years who would easily puff two-three packets of cigarettes a day, coming out of the ICU ward on January 6, saying, “I will never smoke or drink again in my life. The doctors and nurses here have taken care of me with so much love, and advised me to be clean and take timely food. And I am going to do just that. Swami has saved me. Now that I have chanted ‘Sairam’, I will never take



to any harmful practices again.” Hands folded and repentant, Rangappa’s sincerity was unquestionable. And till today, he has kept his promise.

Not only that, he has now become a sort of ‘good health ambassador’ in the village having dissuaded many from taking to unhealthy habits. “I was drinking from 1972,” he says. “I thought, drinking and smoking was normal as many people do it in the village. I never knew it was so harmful until I lost my brother only a few years ago, who drank himself to death. Even then, I could not quit the habit. But today, I have myself experienced how dangerously harmful these addictions can be. Swami has given me a new life and therefore, I want to explain to everybody in the village – teenagers and adults – to not drag themselves into destruction. I want to tell them to spend their energies and time in cultivating good habits, chanting Swami’s name and quietly doing their jobs.”

How Rangappa’s life has now become a ‘precious instrument’ bringing life-uplifting changes in many village folk is really stirring. And if we look at it closely there are many factors that have contributed to this wonderful metamorphosis in him. The doctors’ timely diagnosis saved his heart, the nurses’ care at the hospital softened it, and the Sai doctors’ love suffused it with divine love. He was revitalized physically, mentally and in the spirit. There was the aspect of curative and preventive healthcare along with spiritual well-being. And this is precisely what Swami had said when He started the Sri Sathya Sai Mobile Hospital more than a year ago in April 2006.

“The service that we offer should be holistic. It should be a fine blend of curative and preventive healthcare with a spiritual undercurrent.” Swami’s directions were very clear from the beginning to the ‘Sai doctors with the white bus’ And today, more than a hundred and fifty visits to the villages later, each Sai doctor has dozens of Rangappa-like stories to share. What do the Sai doctors actually do? And what is so special about the ‘Mobile Hospital’ bus?

### **Excellent Diagnostic Support – a Doctor’s Delight**

“Just as the name suggests, it truly is a moving Hospital,” says Dr. Narasimhan, the Programme Director of this service project. “It has all the sophisticated diagnostic services that a doctor would generally require. Be it an ECG machine, an X-ray machine with an automatic film processor or an ultrasound imaging system for Radiology; or, an auto analyzer, a centrifuge, a microscope, or a VDRL shaker, that any blood report would need. The diagnostic support is absolutely unique.” Having been involved with rural medical service projects for more than fifteen years, Dr. Narasimhan categorically states, “In fact, it is inconceivable that a medical service activity in a remote setting can have such an excellent clinical support.”

When the chikungunya epidemic (a rare form of debilitating viral fever spread by mosquito) was rampant in many villages around Puttaparthi in July 2006, every individual who had fever was believed to have contracted the disease. Though it was true for a number of cases, it was not the complete truth. “When we examined the blood samples of many of these villagers, we found

that a good number of them were actually suffering from malaria,” say the Mobile Hospital doctors. “And it was not the ordinary form of malaria, they were actually down with ‘falciparum malaria’ (commonly known as cerebral malaria) which is the most dangerous and life-threatening variant of this disease. Thanks to the Mobile Hospital which provided blood sample results in a matter of minutes in the village itself, we could avoid unsure diagnosis (and resultant wrong prescription) and prevent many lives from sure death.”

**“For the first time, we are able to diagnose at the patient’s door step” – Dr. Shyam Prasad**

“For the first time, ever in the history of any Voluntary Organization, we are now able to diagnose the disease in the village, at the doorstep of a patient. This is very amazing, and it is indeed a wonderful experience!” says Dr. Shyam Prasad, a Professor of Surgery in Andhra Medical College, one of the premier medical colleges in Andhra Pradesh.

“I have seen with Ultra Sound devices, a breast cancer, a cancer in the stomach, and something in the liver; we can now tell whether it is curable or not!” he adds.

Instances like this where excellent diagnostic support has spared lives are galore. Ramakrishna came to the doctors with complaints of frequent urination. When an Ultrasound test was done inside the bus, it revealed that the middle-aged gentleman was suffering from not one but four problems. “His problem is not only with his bladder,” said the Radiologist. “He has various levels of complications in his spleen, liver and kidney too.” We asked Ramakrishna, “Why did you not get checked up in another clinic till now?”

“I did,” he says. “I went to the nearby health centre few days ago but they gave me some pills without any examination, which did not provide any relief. There is no facility there to do such tests.”

**India’s Unhealthy Health Profile**

This is the malady of the healthcare scenario in most of the villages in India today. Quality healthcare is the privilege of only a small percentage of the population who has access to hospitals in towns and cities, while nearly 70 percent of India lives in villages. And most of rural India (which is 25% of India’s population, about 250 million) is poor and still below the poverty line; they struggle for food, let alone healthcare. Most villagers know only agriculture as means of livelihood and the vagaries of nature have made them cross the Rubicon. Every year they become poorer and poorer. People of the district of Anantapur in the state of Andhra Pradesh are one such lot.

Poverty is endemic in this region which receives an annual rainfall which is the lowest in the state and perhaps second lowest in the country, and is, therefore, known for perennial drought. In fact, 35 per cent of the villages in Anantapur fall in the high deprivation category (income of less than Rs. 120.03 per capita per month). Healthcare, in this scenario, is only neglected

or non-existent. Perhaps, it is for this reason that Swami directed the doctors of the Mobile Hospital Project to begin their activities in this district of Andhra Pradesh. The hospital needs to go to these people simply because they need it the most, and are either unaware, or even if aware, can ill-afford to visit a decent hospital. According to Dr. Narasimhan, "The Sri Sathya Sai Mobile Hospital project is a novel medical outreach programme which aims to provide quality medicare to people living especially in the remote villages. It is, in fact, a reflection of Bhagavan's untiring effort to provide '*vaidya*' (healthcare) free of cost to the poorest of the poor."

### **The Stirring Story of Hari**

And the results this program has achieved are moving. Just take the case of Hari. Stricken with Polio at the tender age of six, little Hari started walking with an unsteady gait. His grandfather gave him sticks to help him straighten his legs and not lose the habit of walking. The poor boy practiced and eventually even learnt not to depend on the stick, but still, he was as incapacitated as ever, or even more, because practically he was too weak to walk. Born with a condition, medically called edentulous, his teeth were conspicuous by their absence in his chubby face. And now Polio had taken away whatever little smiles or dreams he had. He could never eat with even an iota of contentment. Banana was the only fruit he would mash in his hollow mouth and swallow. There was nobody to make specialized food for him. If he was alive, it was enough for his father Narayanappa, a daily wage labourer, who struggled to keep his flesh and bone together.

Little Hari's body lost all shine, as days passed by. Severely undernourished, his colour changed. His abdomen had bloated like a football when the doctors saw him for the first time in Batalapalli village in June 2006. They were alarmed to see his hemoglobin levels at an abysmal 4 gm and immediately administered vital supplements to lessen his anemic condition. This was the first step. The second action the doctors started with quickened earnest, which was absolutely essential to sustain whatever they did to improve his vital health parameters, was to provide him with that which he had unfortunately lost due to his family's helplessness and the society's callousness. They took all the measurements required for dentures and soon Hari was cheery. After the 'new teeth' were fixed, in a few weeks, he regained all that he had lost – his colour, his enthusiasm, his energy, his innocent smile. The doctor today is moved to tears when he sees the little Hari, ever charged and ebullient, hopping towards him, folding his hands and saying an excited "Sairam". You ask Hari anything today and the first thing he does is flash a bright smile. His joy fills you with a rare feeling of serenity and happiness. Hari is back to school these days, thanks to the generosity of a Sai worker who has given him food and shelter in his own school. "What do you wish to be?" we ask Hari as he looks at us warmly. "I want to join Swami's school. Can you help me get admitted here?" he queries excitedly. "Why do you want to study?" we ask again. "I want to become a doctor." His face lights up. "I want to help all who are suffering." Whether he is going to become a doctor or not, we are sure he is going to gladden hearts and enliven lives, which he is already doing in his own tiny way. On the day we met him, he had

come to the medical camp to help in any small way he can as it was a Sunday. Hari, today, is an inspiration for others because of his mild manners and dedication to duty. Can there be anything more fulfilling than this?

### **Reaching Out - On Wheels With Love**

Such is the change the philosophy of 'reaching out to the villagers' of the Mobile Hospital program has brought about in the lives of many innocent folks. And everybody is included – men, women, children and the elderly. All kinds of diseases are covered – whether it is common ailments like fever, gastroenteritis, etc.; emergency situations; or chronic ailments like epilepsy, diabetes, hypertension, and the like.

Laxminarayana of Locherla village was a person in his forties but his energy levels were like that of man in his late sixties. A daily wage labourer, his life became a burden when a few months ago, his energy levels dropped precipitously. A strong man who used to easily put in eight hours of hard labour was for some reason unable to work even for two hours with ease. Afternoons, it would be impossible for him to persuade his body to do any job. And added to this was another discomfiting problem - frequent urination. "I was unable to sleep. Every hour I would get up to attend to my body's call. Extremely weak and fatigued because of sleeplessness, my life suddenly had become not worth living. I was unable to earn even fifty rupees a day. There was no way I could maintain my family," he says recollecting those terrible weeks.

The mystery was solved when the doctors performed a blood test during their routine visit. At 410 sugar level, Laxminarayana was highly diabetic. He had no clue what the disease was all about and what precautions he should take. But now after the doctors had counseled and started his treatment, he is a happy man. "I am much better now," he says. "No more hourly urinations. I take medicines regularly and follow all the instructions of the doctors diligently. My life is slowly getting back to normalcy. I am eternally grateful to the Sai doctors."

### **"Follow Up Care" – The Program's Powerful Feature**

But for Laxminarayana to return to his original energy levels, he has to be monitored at frequent intervals, either the dosage or the medicine changed, depending on his body's response, and be constantly guided to a new life style. In fact, this "follow up care" has been one of the most important features of the Sri Sathya Sai Mobile Hospital Project, apart from the excellent diagnostic support that it provides. And this is inherent in its design because the modus operandi of the program is to visit the same village on a particular day of every month.

The doctors, who come from various parts of Andhra Pradesh, travel with the bus on the first twelve days of every month. If it was the village Locherla on the April 5, it will be the same village again on June 5. This way, the treatment that is offered is not a 'one-off' prescription or solution to the patient's

problem. **“It gives an excellent opportunity to ensure complete treatment for the patient,”** says Dr. Ravikanth, a young ENT specialist. **“Most of the cases need recurring visits to the doctor and these patients never go to the doctor in the city even if we offer to treat them free because often they cannot afford the journey. In this scenario, doctors’ making repeated visits to the villages is the best solution. This way we are able to do full justice to the patient. It gives immense satisfaction to us as well as the villagers.”**

In fact, this is one of the important distinguishing features of the Mobile Hospital camps when compared to other Sai medical camps. “In other medical camps,” says Dr. Sreenivas, a young MD in General Medicine from Kakinada, who serves in these camps, “We typically go and prescribe some general medicines like calcium tablets, pain killers, fever medicines, etc. and return. We never have feedback to know whether the treatment we have offered has worked, or how effective or ineffective it was. We have no idea if a particular drug had any side effects. But the environment in this camp is an excellent opportunity for follow-up.”

Citing one example, he says, “On March 11, our team visited Janakampalli. When we visit the same village next month, that patient will have the slip that describes his BP and the medicine prescribed. So the doctor would get his BP checked and know if his BP is controlled or not, and provide appropriate prescription. In doing this small act of follow-up, we are, in fact, preventing many conditions. We detect high blood pressure and reduce it, and thereby reduce the possibility of strokes. We are saving a patient who otherwise would have been paralyzed in the next three or four months.

“This is a scientific wonder of sorts. We are reaching out to the patient! That is satisfying for the doctor and works best for the patient. It is principally a small step – giving a small examination and diagnosis – but you have saved a life. It is more of prevention.”

### **Prevention, Prevention, Prevention – The Project’s Primary Focus**

Truly, this is being pro-active, that is, to preempt the occurrence of the disease rather than cure it after onset. And it is this concerted focus on ‘Preventive Healthcare’ what has made the Mobile Hospital Project so special. **“In our service program, we have finely integrated the curative and preventive healthcare aspects and always deliver it as a common capsule unlike the work of the governmental agencies,”** explains Dr. Narasimhan. “In the programs of the state, the curative care is delivered by the ‘Primary Health Centers’ at the mandal headquarters (small administrative units comprising few villages) level while the preventive health education is done by what we call ANMs (Auxiliary Nurse Midwives) and Health Workers who visit the villages, at times perhaps not convenient for the villagers. It is for this and various other issues starting from functional discrepancies to motivational deficiencies that these governmental efforts have been successful only partially in some areas and completely ineffective in others.”

In the villages where the Mobile Hospital doctors visit, the love with which the doctors treat the villagers and look after the complete cure of their patients, has moved the villagers beyond measure. It has generated tremendous trust in them in what the doctors say, for each one feels: "Here is somebody genuinely interested in my welfare. This doctor has no ulterior motive; he does not expect anything from me. I must adhere to what he says. It will do me good." This spring of inner motivation in the hearts of the villagers propelled by the doctors' selfless service is what has made the Preventive Healthcare a success in most of the villages that are under the umbrella of the Mobile Hospital. Incidentally, there are 35 villages and small settlements from four mandals around Puttaparthi, [namely, Kothacheruvu, Bukkapatnam, C K Palli and finally Puttaparthi] that this project caters to. It is this universe of 50,000 people in these four regions that is now reaping the benefits of effective preventive health measures.

"I used to have pains all over my body. Sometimes, my limbs would become numb. I could not even sit for few minutes in one particular posture. If I got down working with the sewing machine, it would be a Herculean effort to get up. The pain so was intense that walking, even for fifteen minutes, had become practically impossible." This was Akkamma's condition when she first came to the Mobile Hospital Camp in Chandrayunipalli. She had not met with any accident or born with any organ malfunction or contracted any infection. Her bane was she was born and lived in the district of Anantapur which was infamous for high levels of fluoride in the ground water.

[Below 1 mg/l fluoride content in water is what is considered safe for drinking, but in this district the average range is 1.5 to 2.5 mg/l which goes up to as high as 4 mg/l in some of the food products. This ingestion of large amounts of fluoride via water and food is what has caused serious problems from discolored teeth (dental fluorosis) to aching joints, brittle bones, stunted growth and deformed limbs (skeletal fluorosis)]

When the doctors explained to Akkamma the harmful effects of drinking fluoride-high water and offered detailed instructions as to how to make the water safe for drinking (using alum and lime), she diligently undertook to follow the doctors instructions. Additionally, the doctors also advised her to take Sai Protein (a grounded mix of wheat, pulses, sugar and groundnut which can be easily made at home) to improve her resilience. **And today Akkamma says, "Five months ago, I was just 36 kilos but now in a space of few weeks I have gained more than 10 kilos! I feel so energetic these days. I do all my household work and have even started going to the fields. My husband is so happy. These doctors have taken such good care of us."**

"All my pain is gone," says Chennakeshava Reddy, another resident of the same village. One look at his teeth and you know how terribly concentrated fluoride is in the drinking water of their village. Though his teeth are still discoloured, he is a happy man. "I have been following all the steps of the procedure to free my drinking water of fluoride. It is three months since I am taking this water and I can see marked improvement in my energy levels.

These doctors have done immense help to us by coming to our village,” he says.

### **Ultimately, it is Only Love That Works!**

We can go on and on narrating instances of how preventive healthcare when offered by the same doctors who provide treatment to their villagers has brought about encouraging results. But this has been successful not because of the infrastructure available for curative care or right guidance provided on preventive healthcare. While these two have their own place, the most important and often ignored aspect, which is abundant in these camps, as mentioned earlier, is – the love of the doctors. Here the relationship between the doctor and the patient is beyond the ordinary, it is much more intimate. The doctor is their friend, guide and philosopher, for each patient knows for sure that - ‘The doctor here is my genuine well-wisher.’ He is God-sent, verily ‘Swami’, come for them. And perhaps it is for this reason that, apart from effective implementation of programs, cures have effected in these villages bordering on the miraculous.

### **Sriramulu’s Mysterious Inner Transformation**

A few months ago, for some inexplicable reason, Sriramulu suddenly went into severe depression. Once a very soft-spoken and courteous handloom weaver, now he would not allow anybody to step into his house! Let alone taking orders and weaving clothes, if anybody even came near the door, he just went berserk. He would not calm until he had chased the other person out completely, and on occasions even man-handled him, even if it was his next door neighbour of many years. “He used to beat even me,” says his wife, Saraswati. She had to send their only daughter away to another house because he did not spare even her. To convince him to eat had also become an impossible task. Some days he would cooperate but on other days he was absolutely unmanageable. What was worse, he never slept in the nights. “And on occasions, he would just get up and walk away somewhere early in the morning. I had to go and find him,” says Saraswati recalling those horrific days.

“Did you not take him then to any doctor?” we ask. “Yes, we did. We took him to the Neuro department of a hospital in Anantapur (the nearest city). Apart from few pills, the doctors there gave him electric shock too (Electro convulsive therapy - which can reduce suicidal tendencies in mentally imbalanced patients but at times could also lead to permanent damage of the brain). We spent Rs. 700 there but there was no improvement at all. Moreover, he never took the medicines regularly. He would take the pills according to his whims and fancies. And if I offered the pills on time, he would jostle me away. Then I tried clandestinely mixing the tablet in his coffee but he soon realized this, and one day in a fit of rage threw the coffee down. Thereafter he never accepted any drink in the house; he would go to an outside tea shop if he wanted to sip something.”

Such was the pitiable plight of Saraswati. With the help of her brother, she even took him to NIMHANS, a reputed hospital for the mentally ill in Bangalore, but all efforts proved futile because the problem was never with the medicines or the doctors, but with Sriramulu. He simply never allowed any drug to work; it was impossible to administer anything to him. It was during this time of utter helplessness, that she heard about the Mobile Hospital doctors coming to her village. With great deal of persuasion, she succeeded in getting him near the site of the Medical Camp, but Sriramulu, who was nice until a few minutes, suddenly went wild and ran away from the place to their home. It was then that the thoroughly dejected Saraswati came and presented her predicament to the Mobile Hospital doctors. It was January 7, 2007 in the village Cherlopalli, about six kms from Puttaparthi.

“We desperately wanted to help after hearing her sad story,” says Dr. Narasimhan. “But were apprehensive of what ‘treatment’ we would get if we visited her house. Nevertheless, we decided to go, chanting His name and invoking His blessings.” And when Dr. Narasimhan and his team finally stepped into Sriramulu’s house – it was 9 pm in the night - , they were in for a big surprise.

“I could not believe myself,” says the doctor. “Contrary to what I had been told, he was so nice. As soon as we entered, he proffered us chairs and even served us with water! I do not know what did the magic. Was it the loving and humble manner we approached him or the divine working within him?” The doctors then spent nearly half an hour with Sriramulu who was very gentle all the while and responded positively to the warm feelings they showered on him. Before leaving, they handed him pills which Sriramulu promised to take. And he did diligently, to the utter astonishment and joy of Saraswati. Week after week, he took the medicines meticulously, and in one month itself there was noticeable improvement in his mental condition. Another four weeks and he was getting closer to normalcy. At the end of three months, Sriramulu was smiling. The joy of Saraswati knew no bounds. “It is like I got a new life. I had actually given up all hopes,” says a cheery Saraswati calling up those days.

#### **“It was ‘sairam’ who prompted me”- Sriramulu**

The same Sriramulu who couldn’t care less about his medications earlier, how did he suddenly change? We wondered. “How is it that you took these medicines seriously?” we asked him. **He just smiled heartily and said, “It was ‘Sairam’ who sent these doctors. It was He who prompted me to take.”**

Whether it was a mysterious inner transformation or divine intervention or the power of the pure love showered by the doctors, Sriramulu, who has started weaving again, is a living miracle for all the villagers. Though there are huge loans to be paid running into tens and thousands, borrowed for their daughter’s marriage recently and earlier to buy the handloom set, Saraswati is still not too much worried because she knows with her better-half back, together they will be able to survive any severity.



Truly, what love can do even the best of medicines cannot.

**“We are propagating good qualities, not medicines” – Dr. Sreenivas**

“Today I saw tears in one patient’s eyes,” said Dr. Sreenivas when we met him after the camp on April 11, 2007. “She said she has headache, but I did not give her a paracetamol tablet, which I would have probably done in any hospital.

“I merely asked, ‘Are you tensed up? Are you getting enough sleep? Are you worried about something?’ She nodded. I told her, ‘Don’t worry about anything, leave everything for ten minutes and pray to God. Pray to Him in whichever Form you like, not only Swami. Chant His name. Just think you have no worries for ten minutes, you will experience great bliss and peace of mind. And God will work wonders from your heart.’

“I do not know what this did to her; I just said these few words and she started weeping. Probably no one had talked to her like that before!

**“This is an experience you can see only in these camps, only in spiritually oriented organizations where love is the backbone. This is the highlight of this program. What we are trying to propagate is good qualities, not only medicines!”**

**The Program’s Vital Core - Value Education**

This, indeed, sums up very simply the central focus of the Mobile Hospital project. Trying to infuse healthy habits and hygienic practices, apart from instilling human values in the hearts and minds of the villagers, has been the constant endeavour of the Mobile Hospital team right from its inception. In fact, every day of the camp begins with Dr. Narasimhan explaining to all the villagers in their local language the broad objective, inherent significance and Swami’s vision for the whole exercise with great love and concern. He addresses:

“Dear brothers and sisters, you are all indeed lucky. Swami has initiated this service project especially for you so that you can avail quality healthcare right at your doorstep. Many of you are farmers working in the fields who have no time to consult a doctor and get yourself examined. More often than not you are not aware of the origin and the immensity of the disease. Several among you do not have money even to meet the travel expenses to visit any hospital in the city or even come to Puttaparthi. If a few have money, there is nobody to accompany and guide them to the right place. It is for all these reasons that Swami has directed distinguished doctors to visit your village and take care of the health needs of you, your family, children and community.

“While on one side we have nearly 500 doctors from various corners of Andhra Pradesh who have made themselves available at your service; on the other side are you, dear villagers. With your cooperation, believe me; we can prevent 80 percent of the diseases. “In fact, we can eliminate many of them

once and for all from this environment and save lot of money and hardships. It is for this reason that we have been emphasizing cleanliness of the house, your surroundings, personal hygiene, ensuring pure air, water and food, and finally, abstaining from unhealthy habits like smoking and drinking.

“Through various means we have been trying to educate you in all these aspects. You have seen these charts displayed which clearly explain how not to throw the rice water which is very nutritious; how to prepare ‘Sai Protein’, the valuable nutritional supplement; how to defluoride your drinking water through a simple and inexpensive process which can prevent you from serious illnesses. Last night we sat in the homes of many families and discussed how to maintain a hygienic household. Please consider all these aspects very essential. Else, we cannot make this village disease-free. We, doctors, come and go but during difficult times, ultimately you will have to bear the brunt.

“Finally, another important aspect is – devotion to God. And devotion does not mean breaking coconut, offering incense or camphor, etc. at the altar, but filling our minds with good thoughts – thoughts of love, tolerance, unity and cooperation – and performing good deeds which includes speaking softly and sweetly, and chanting the name of the lord. We do not have to satisfy everybody, just like the story in Mahabharata where one grain of offering to Lord Krishna by Draupadi filled the bellies of hundreds of disciples of Sage Durvasa, if we please Swami, who is our inner conscience, it is enough. This village will prosper and this country will regain her lost glory. This is the glorious vision of this service project.”

Next Dr. Narasimhan gets down to the details of the particular camp informing all the people assembled about the specialist doctors who are part of the team for the particular camp. Typically, there are twelve doctors in every visit belonging to five specialties, namely, Medicine, Orthopedics, Surgery, Radiology, and Gynecology. While doctors of these disciplines are mandatorily present in every camp, additional specialists in ENT, Dentistry and Ophthalmology visit these villages once in every three months.

Once the doctors are introduced, Dr. Narasimhan then gives precise instructions about the locations of various clinics and the pharmacy, the procedure for consultation, the location of the Mobile Hospital bus where patients need to go for the diagnostic tests, the volunteers serving as ‘guides’ to help anybody who needs more clarification, etc. And in perfect order the patients queue up in front of the respective clinics. After that, of course, is the one-to-one interaction of every patient with their doctor, where the doctor listens to their problems with immense patience which ensures effective diagnosis and enduring cure.

### **Shyamala’s Sai Story**

Shyamala, mother of six year old Dinesh, was once a shattered woman. Sporadic and severe attacks of fits had converted her existence into an inexorable hell. If she was going somewhere, she would not know if in the

next minute she would be walking or suddenly fallen on the road. Every moment passed was a blessing and a curse. But the comforting factor was her considerate and cooperative husband. Though a daily wage earner doing masonry work, he tried everything in his capacity to help Shyamala. Most of the times, he did all of the household work. They did consult local doctors but their medicines only made her situation worse. "Those medicines never worked. It only made me weaker, and whenever I took them I had severe burning sensation in my throat," recalls Shyamala. "But after visiting the doctors at the Mobile Hospital Camp and taking their prescriptions, I am very happy. My fits have stopped! I feel so healthy and full of confidence." A hearty smile dances on her lips and then with more delight, she says, "You know, I am pregnant again. It is two months now. My husband is overjoyed. He has asked me to consult the doctors and follow all that the doctors advise for the safe growth and delivery of our baby. **And do you know what am I going to name our new child? 'Sairam'. Yes, it is all His grace. I am so grateful to Him. My life is so beautifully back on track.**"

Having got a complete cure for her chronic ailment, Shyamala is now all-out to abide by whatever instructions the doctors give for the healthy development of her baby in the womb. This is how implementing preventive healthcare becomes relatively easy in these camps. Moreover, the doctors never lose an opportunity to reiterate the different points of cautionary health and hygiene factors during their consultation with every patient. And this has worked wonders.

### **Lavanya Shines with 'Sai Protein'**

The little Lavanya, when born, was very cute. With big bright eyes and shiny chocolate skin, she looked pretty. But that was not why she caught everybody's attention; it was because she was born grossly under-weight. When her grandmother brought her to the Mobile Hospital doctors, she was a few months old, but no more a beautiful girl. Her colour had changed. One look at her and you knew she was sick. Her body had bloated. She was terribly anemic. Inadequate nutritional supplements had worsened her born-deficient body. Apart from few medications, the doctors advised her grandmother that she should be regularly given 'Sai Protein' (a nutritional mix of wheat, pulses, groundnuts, etc. as mentioned before). And she did so religiously. Today, little Lavanya has again become the centre of attraction in the village, not only for her adorable looks but also because of the 'miracle change' that has come about in her tiny being.

### **Persistent Preventive Healthcare – The Doctors' Passion**

The doctors in the Mobile Hospital team have left no stone unturned in trying to drill in tenets of preventive healthcare. You may be surprised to know that many doctors, after a hectic day of treating hundreds of patients, again visit the villages in the night only to reinforce all that they have repeated number of times during the day; but now, using a different and more focused approach. Dividing themselves into four or five groups, they presently visit different lanes, and bylanes of the village, collect four or five families together in one

house, and then in explicit detail explain all the principles and practices of proper health and hygiene using charts and other visual aids. The most important aspect is that these doctors and health educators point out to the villagers in their own surroundings the acts of omission and commission which lead to many common, and at times, chronic diseases. For instance, when they see food vessels in the kitchen not covered, they tell them how important it is to have lids on them given that there is a cowshed just beside the house where mosquitoes are breeding. To the kids, they explain how worms and harmful infections present all around the house could enter their bodies through the feet if they do not make it a habit to wear slippers. They make sure if the villagers are taking all steps in their homes to drink fluoride-free water, etc. If there are any queries, they clarify patiently.

### **Awakening the Village Youth**

In addition to doing all this, the doctors have also evolved another strategy to sustain the measures taken up by them on the preventive healthcare front, and that is – forming a team of inspired village youth. Indeed, it is these enthusiastic youth who have ensured that the health care initiatives do not lose steam after the doctors leave the village. “During the lunch or dinner time, we go to every house and remind them that they should not throw the rice water after the rice is cooked. Similarly, we see if they have purchased the water can, lime and alum – the three things required to defluoride water and if they have made it a compulsory practice in their home. Many a times, if a particular villager cannot afford any of these, then we pool resources and offer all these free,” say Ramakrishna and Diwakar, two spirited young guns who, along with others, have converted their village, Rachavarapalli, into an ‘ideal village’ in the respect of preventive healthcare. “We also discourage people from taking to unhealthy habits. On our insistence, and after hearing about Bhagavan’s love and compassion, couple of youngsters have quit smoking and become active Sai volunteers,” they eagerly add.

These village youth volunteers are there now in every village and among them there are a few, like the above-mentioned two, who in fact, travel to every village along with the Mobile Hospital doctors and help organize the camps, apart from taking active interest in educating their counterparts about disease-prevention measures. What motivates these youngsters to move from village to village educating people and helping doctors abandoning their profession? **“If we take one step, Swami is ready to take hundred steps for us,” says Diwakar, sincerity evident in his serene face. “Personally, what we experience while serving is bliss. If we engage ourselves in His work, He takes care of our needs. We believe in this and are convinced about it.”**

Ramanjaneyulu, a Sai worker, who works with these youth and inevitably makes himself available every day of the camp whichever village it may be, says, “Even though we have so much work at hand, we leave everything and come to serve in this camp. We bring old people from different villages who cannot go anywhere else. **We do not have much. We may not be rich, but we know we have Swami with us, and that is enough for us.**”

## Sevadals from Hyderabad – The Program’s Backbone

Their dedication and devotion to the lord is infectious; no wonder, this breed of inspired youth is only increasing in every hamlet. But there is another group which works very closely with the doctors as well as the villagers, and who are in fact, as indispensable as the doctors for the success of the camp. They are – the Sevalal Volunteers from Hyderabad, a group of dozen or more Sai workers who truly are the unsung heroes of this service program.

Generally on the 29<sup>th</sup> of every month (that is, two or three days before the actual commencement of the program) they arrive in Puttaparthi. Be it procuring medicines, arranging logistics, preparing the villages for the camp, looking after the comfort of the doctors (their food and accommodation), or training the village youth – they do everything with a great sense of dedication. In fact, they visit the village where the camp is to be held, the previous night itself, and supervise the erecting of the *shamianas* (temporary tents), cleaning of the school or any other suitable premises where the camp is to be held, setting up of clinics for various specialties, selecting a location for the bus to be parked, ensuring water and electricity points, etc. In short, they do all the spadework, working along with and guiding the village youth, and by the time the doctors arrive in the morning, a full-fledged make-shift hospital is ready at the site. The moment the doctors come, no time is wasted; they immediately get on with consultation after Dr. Narasimhan’s short introductory speech. Also, another moving service these volunteers do, which is a very salient feature of the Mobile Hospital service, is - going into the homes of the sick and the elderly, who are often neglected and least cared for, and carrying them to the camp site. For immobile individuals and senior citizens, they are God-sent. But for them, even if the Mobile Hospital was just a few meters away, they would never have been able to avail this unique opportunity.

It is also these volunteers who organize the big meetings held once in 2-3 months in every village. Held generally after 7 p.m. in a central location where almost all the villagers can be accommodated, these gatherings provide a useful opportunity for the doctors to get a pulse of the village as a whole. It is also a forum to consolidate and update the villagers on the health-status of the village as a whole, and inform them about the steps that have to be taken collectively [keeping the roads clean, using toilets in every household, wearing slippers, etc.] to make the village completely disease-free. From selecting the location to setting up the LCD projector – virtually every activity is coordinated by these volunteers.

Again, it is this group which maintains discipline and orderliness in the whole proceedings during the day by guiding the villagers at every step. While patients wait for their turn in front of respective clinics, some of these volunteers also double up as health educators and impress on the people the need for preventive health measures. “Are the villagers receptive to your narrations?” we ask Mr. S V Raju. “Many of these villagers are illiterate. Sometimes the receptivity is 30 percent, other times fifty. But this does not frustrate me. I go on repeating the salient aspects in different ways, and many

a times interlace with it stories from our ancient culture and heritage. This way, slowly, the message gets drilled into them. It is the same with Swami, is it not? He has been telling us the same things for so many years now; when He can do that so lovingly, who am I? I never get discouraged. This is a great opportunity for me and I love it.”

### **“When I serve, I am in Sai Kulwant Hall” – Sri S V Raju**

Does he feel sad that he does not get time to have Swami’s darshan though he is in and around Puttaparthi? **The 73 year old Mr. Raju, who looks half his age but double the inspiration of an average devotee, says, “Never. I feel I am in Sai Kulwant Hall when I serve in these villages. I see Him in my heart. He is always in front of my eyes. In fact, all I want ever is more and more opportunities to serve till my last breath.”**

And Mr. Raju is no exception, rather just a random sample. Mr. Hariharan, another volunteer from Hyderabad whose whole family travels from Hyderabad to serve in the camp, says, “My wife and sister-in-law everyday prepare food for the doctors, my brother-in-law runs the pharmacy in every camp, and I coordinate the logistics as well as help in setting up of the clinics.” At 69, does he not get tired working in the villages? “Oh no, I am very fresh when I am here for seva in Puttaparthi,” he says. **“Swami takes care of me. Three months ago when the chikungunya epidemic was rampant in Hyderabad, I too succumbed to it. I could not walk for four days. But believe me, on the fifth day I was fine!** While it took at least a month or two for others to recover completely, it was all over in a couple of days for me, even though I am just one year short of being 70. And on the 27<sup>th</sup> of that month, I could start, as scheduled, for the Mobile Hospital camp, thanks to His ever-protecting grace.”

If the Mobile Hospital camp is successful, efficient and delivering positive results, it owes a lot of it to these committed volunteers. Selfless service is the key to sure success, Swami has any number of times emphasized, and here is yet another example for all to witness. Even all the doctors who come for the camp, be it they distinguished professors of medicine, senior consultants at premier hospitals, reputed surgeons or junior doctors; be it they devotees, semi-devotees or non-devotees; whether it is their first trip or the umpteenth trip – all of them offer their services voluntarily and with great willingness. There are nearly 500 doctors from all over the state of Andhra Pradesh who have now associated themselves with this service project, and the story of how each one got connected with this program is fascinating.

### **HE Pulls the Strings in Mysterious Ways**

“The opportunity to come to the Mobile Hospital, for me, was simply a dream come true! It was totally out of the blue. It simply touched my heart,” says Dr. Sreenivas who visited the Camp for the first time in April 2007, though a Sai devotee for a good number of years.

Narrating how it all happened, on April 11, 2007 in the Radio Sai studio, he said, “I was just praying to Swami, every day for the past 10 days, saying, ‘Swami, please cut down my selfishness and provide me an opportunity to serve people.’ One of these days, I also wrote a poem, spontaneously in Telugu, telling Him that I wanted to see Him. I said, *Okka sari ninnu choosanniki avakasam kaliginchu Swami*, meaning, ‘Bless me with the opportunity to be able to see you at least once.’

“Though I wrote all this to Swami, I was not really prepared to come to Puttaparthi. I thought I would do it in July, as there were several things going on with my life. I am working in Yashoda Hospital in Somajiguda, Hyderabad, and this month I applied for leave as I was planning to prepare for my DM in a Super Specialty Hospital. To my surprise, I got an invitation to this camp from Dr Narasimhan. He came to know my name through my Professor Dr M. B. R. Sharma, who is a professor of medicine in Kakinada.

**“All this happened in just a span of two weeks. I am really overjoyed! I simply wrote a poem asking Him to grant His *darshan* just once. In less than two weeks, I have already seen Him! And He even looked at me couple of times in the last two days. He also gave me an opportunity to serve. Both my wishes are fulfilled.”**

**“I am ready to come any number of times!” – Dr. Ravikanth**

Dr. Ravikanth, another young doctor specialized in ENT, says, “I was very much impressed when I came first time for this camp a few months ago. Apart from the excellent diagnostic facilities present here unlike other camps, what touched me the most was the holistic approach. We follow up the patients here. We ensure complete cure of their ailments. And above all, there is so much sacredness in this environment. It gives immense fulfillment. I am ready to come any number of times, whenever I am required.”

Self-motivated doctors who work for nothing other than inner satisfaction is what has made the Mobile Hospital a shining beacon of selfless service to the whole world. “I never bother about my private practice whenever Dr. Narasimhan calls me for this camp,” says Dr. Sai Prasad, a reputed orthopedic surgeon from Machilipatnam. “Financial loss does not concern me. I do not even bother about train reservation. It does not matter if I have to travel in general compartment. I just want to be here on the day of the camp.”

**“He has inspired me to start SAI Project” – Dr. Sai Prasad**

Explaining what motivates him to join these camps, he says, “Working in these camps has influenced me a lot, I have changed for the better in so many ways. It has increased my patience tremendously. I do not mind explaining to the patient again, once or twice, even after my assistant has given all the instructions while handing over the medicines. And many times, when patients come with complaints which have nothing to do with Orthopedics, earlier I would just ask them to go and see some other doctor.

But now, I give them a patient hearing and offer whatever advises I can, using my MBBS knowledge, before asking them to visit another clinic.

**“But more importantly, it has inspired me to take initiative and help the poor and the sick in my locality. Now, with the help of a few other volunteers, I have started a program called ‘SAI project’ – Slum Area Improvement. We have adopted 80 families from the slums and want to take care of their entire health needs.”**

### **Dr. Shyam Prasad – The Sai Nightingale!**

Just like Dr. Sai Prasad, Dr. Shyam Prasad, a Professor of Surgery at the Andhra Medical College, is another inspired doctor who goes to a suburban area every night from 9.00 to 9.30 to serve the poor. **He says, “Sometimes after a long day, I am tired; but even then, I tell myself, ‘They are really the ones who are in need, they cannot come to me, I should go there and look after them.’** I do not miss a single day. I am the only civil surgeon to go to these underprivileged people and offer them help. It gives me lot of satisfaction. I receive my inspiration from Swami.”

Practically, every doctor who has come and served in the Mobile Hospital camp has become a change-agent – an ambassador of selfless service. Think about the 500 doctors who are part of this service (who come according to an intelligent roster managed by Dr. Narasimhan), and you know what silent but significant impact it is making on society. This is, perhaps, one of the most heartening spin-offs of this service project. And all this has been achieved because the emphasis in these camps has been equally on the ‘spiritual aspect’ of healing as much as on the physical aspect.

### **“99% of the diseases have their origin in the mind!” – Bhagavan**

“World Health Organisation [WHO], too, in the recent times has acknowledged the profound significance of the spiritual dimension in ensuring complete well-being of the patient,” says Dr. Narasimhan. “Mental health is closely associated with this spiritual aspect, which can be cultivated when we really accept, at least in part, the value system that Bhagavan is trying to teach us - the principles of Truth, Righteousness, Peace, Love and Non-violence. A sense of devotion to the lord, surrendering to His will and chanting His name – all infuse lot of positive vibrations within oneself. Swami says that 99 percent of the diseases have their origin in the mind. Therefore, we tell the villagers, ‘You will be physically healthy if you follow all these health and hygiene measures which we regularly talk about, but for your mind to be healthy, you really need to develop love for God, make Him a part of your lives.’ And to rekindle and reinforce these thoughts, we frequently organize cultural programs which include small skits, dramas, and video presentations, etc. – all based on the rich cultural heritage of India. In fact, these so called ‘entertainment’ evenings draw a large gathering of villagers and we use this opportunity again to emphasize on clean habits and hygienic surroundings. So this way, there is a fine integration of mental, spiritual and physical health inputs to the villagers.”



## The Lord Blesses Them In His Own Way!

But for this sublime dimension, the Mobile Hospital would not have been what it is today. Be it the volunteers, the village youth workers, the paramedics or the doctors, the common thread that binds all to work with sincerity and a great sense of dedication is - their love for selfless service and Swami. They seek no special reward from anybody. There are no expectations. And the lord blesses them in His own way.

“You know, one thing these doctors have mentioned many a time is that when they go back, they have good news waiting for them – it could be promotions, fresh appointments or better opportunities. In hindsight, they feel so happy to have participated in the camp,” says Dr. Narasimhan.

### Sai – Doctor Divine

This apart, there are many occasions when Swami has come to their rescue. Dr. Narasimhan narrates specific instances:

“A child was operated on the ear. Soon there was a post operative complication - a hole developed on the internal bone. It could not be operated, for, it involved a highly complex surgery, which if failed would damage the brain. **We were not ready to take this risk and so, we gave the boy a simple antibiotic and told him that the medicine should be applied only after chanting ‘Sai Ram’. To our surprise, the following month we found that the complication had cured miraculously.**

“Again, there is the case of Tulsidas. He had stones in his pancreas. Generally even experienced surgeons would hesitate to deal with such cases, because any post operative leakages can severely damage the internal tissue. However, we decided to go ahead with the surgery. Dr. Venugopal, a renowned Professor of Surgery from Hyderabad operated on the patient. But soon, he was shocked to notice the post operative complications. The patient had developed multi organ failure. The medical fraternity recognizes death as inevitable in such circumstances. But I was not perturbed. I was not worried about my reputation or unpleasant remarks from any quarter. ‘This is the movement started by God and I did not want it to have a failure,’ I said to myself. I would hold Swami’s photo and weep. In the evenings, I started chanting Sai Gayatri. **Then, one night Swami appeared in Tulsidas’ dream wherein He was delivering a talk. During that talk, Swami gave a compassionate look at Tulsidas. You may not believe this nor would any rational doctor, but Tulsidas was cured!** Even Dr. Venugopal was stunned at this miraculous turn of events.”

These doctors always feel the ‘unseen hand’ guiding them and guarding them. When Dr. Narasimhan was bedridden for nine months in 1996 because of a life-threatening back problem, Swami came in his dream, created Vibhuti and lovingly applied it on his forehead. Next morning onwards, he started

feeling better. And later, when he came to Prasanthi Nilayam, He called him near and blessed him profusely.

When Dr. Ravikanth inadvertently left the audiometry box (a diagnostic equipment) in the train while disembarking at Puttaparthi, the suitcase reached in time for the next day's camp, thanks to a series of amazing coincidences and help from unexpected quarters.

### **Dr. Narasimhan – Lovingly Hand-picked by Bhagavan**

Not only the doctors, every member of this team, constantly feel His presence and that is what motivates them to strive higher and higher in offering the best care to the deprived. Additionally, they also have the dynamic personality of Dr. Narasimhan who is a pillar of inspiration for all by his hard work, sweet words and infectious dedication to Swami's mission. In fact, serving in the rural areas has always been the passion for this gentle doctor who, in the last 15 years, has toured more than 60,000 kms doing Sai medical camps covering at least 300 villages in the state of Andhra Pradesh. But the 'turning point' in his life came, he says, in 1997.

"I came that year to Puttaparthi after completing a *Grama Seva* (Rural Service) project along with another friend who was a dentist. We had also brought along with us a group of handicapped children for Bhagavan's *darshan*. **When Swami came near, my friend got up and said, 'Swami, we would like to enact a drama with these handicapped children.'** Swami listened to him, walked ahead a little, retreated His steps and said in Telugu, *Drama kadu, Gram Seva cheyandi*, meaning, 'No need to do **drama** (a cultural program), undertake *Grama Seva* (service in the villages).' This really pepped my enthusiasm and from that day onwards, I thought I would focus all my energies solely on serving in the rural areas. Offering medical help in the villages is really a very powerful instrument, because through this one can solve the problems of the villagers and at the same time instill in them higher values of truth, love and unity."

In March 2006, when Swami asked him to be the Director of the Mobile Hospital, he was least expecting it, though it was the fulfillment of a word that Swami had given him many months ago. Eager to plunge into village service, Dr. Narasimhan had, in fact, taken voluntary retirement from the prestigious post in the public sector when he had another seventeen years of service! Having got his relieving orders, he had come to Puttaparthi and prayed to Swami to bless Him with an opportunity to serve at His lotus feet in the ashram itself. **But Swami then had said, "You serve so well. You serve there (in Hyderabad where he was stationed) and you are welcome here too."** So it meant he was to serve in both the places but nothing materialized for more than a year. And then on Ugadi 2006, the Mobile Hospital arrived and Swami immediately chose him to be the Program Director. **"So right now, I am here 15 days of the month with the Mobile Hospital and the rest of the month serving in Hyderabad – just as He had indicated,"** says Dr. Narasimhan, a serene smile blossoming on his lips.

## India, Truly, Lives in Her Villages

It was a perfect fit. The lord knows the right man for the right job. Villages have always fascinated Dr. Narasimhan. He says, "I have experienced what Swami means when He says: 'The rich culture of India even now exists only in the villages.'" Citing two specific instances, he says, "One evening, by the time we concluded the health and hygiene meeting, it was nearly 10 p.m. As the crowd was dispersing, I saw an old woman walking with her supporting stick and slowly coming towards me. **When she came near, she raised her hand and held out a small paper bag filled with puffed rice and some kind of mixture (snack), and said, 'Dear one, by the time you return, it will be very late. I can give you only this. Please have it. This might fill your stomach, at least a little.'**" I was moved beyond words, almost in tears.

"On another occasion, I was asked to visit a person's house to see a cancer patient whom we had previously diagnosed and even referred to a higher oncology center for treatment. This man was terminally ill in spite of the best treatment. It was an advanced stage of cancer and there was nothing I could do, except provide emotional and moral support. Around 10 p.m. in the night I went to their house. Normally when we, doctors, go to houses of patients who are sick, the members of the household are not in the mood to really ask us, 'Would you like to have a cup of coffee or a glass of water?' We understand their plight. But here was a situation where the members of the household had prepared dinner for us. That was really something surprising. The patient's father asked me pleadingly, 'Can you give him some medicine which will make him at least to swallow a glass of water?' But there was nothing that could be done.

"In a few days, he passed away and when we had our next month program 15 days later, you will be surprised to know that the father came to the camp along with his widowed daughter-in-law and grandsons to attend the *Bhajan* and meeting. Normally, when we lose somebody in our family, we start blaming God or our fate and lose interest in life. But this man was as our scriptures say 'equal-minded'. **He tried his best as long as the son was alive, but when he passed away ultimately, he accepted it with poise. Swami says that culture is refinement. And you will find this even today in our villages – their sense of gratitude and tolerance will humble anybody.**" And it is these precious virtues that get rubbed off on every person who works for and along with these innocent and unassuming village-folks. The doctors of the Mobile Hospital project being excellent examples of this phenomenon. Ask any doctor as to how did the camp help him personally, and he will say, "It surely has made me a more patient individual. I have greater tolerance and much consideration for the poor now."

## Demonstrating Unity – Distributing Love

And this transformation has happened not only in the doctors, but in every participant of the camp including people like the bus driver, the lab technician, X-ray technician, etc. "I feel so blessed to be part of this team," says Ravindra Kumar Pandit, the lab technician of the bus. "Earlier I used to work in Mumbai,

but there was no peace in the hustle and bustle of the big city. We struggle to earn but we do not take back anything when we leave this world. Here there is no commercial motive whatsoever, it is pure service. I am very happy for this golden opportunity.”

Blessan Alexander, who conducts X-ray tests in the bus, says, “This must be the result of meritorious deeds of many births. Not only do I get a chance to do fulfilling service, I also get the opportunity to see Baba everyday from very near distance. I feel so blessed.” Interestingly, after a Hindu to conduct lab tests, a Christian to handle the X-ray machine, the Mobile Hospital Bus has Moinuddin, a Muslim, as the driver. “When I first saw Swami in November 2005, I felt so happy within. I had come driving the bus from Belgaum (a town in Karnataka) to only deliver it in Puttaparthi and return. But they asked me to stay on for sometime and I started liking the place. Swami too showered so much grace on me. He even sent clothes for me. Now, I do not want to leave this place. It is so peaceful here and the work so rewarding – in every way.”

The Mobile Hospital, today, has become a ‘moving’ messenger of love, hope and happiness. True, a single project like this cannot solve the problems of all of rural India. But it can surely serve as a model – a demonstration of what is possible and what can be done if one has the will, determination and purity of purpose. In fact, it does not have to be duplicated entirely in the similar fashion.

#### **“This Project can be replicated in spirit, if not in scale” – Dr. Narasimhan**

“If only a few doctors and few inspired individuals come together, easily a free medical outreach program can be designed. It may not be on the magnitude of the Mobile Hospital, but can cater to the health needs of few villagers all the same.” Citing an example, Dr. Narasimhan continues, “Prior to taking up the current assignment, for the last seven years I was involved in a service program called “The follow-up medicare” in Hyderabad. This process of this service program involves firstly, conducting a medical camp and identifying patients with more morbid and serious problems which need further follow-up medicare (which could be a diagnostic procedure or surgical intervention). Secondly, transporting them in our own modes of transport; thirdly, lodging them in our own individual houses or in some designated halls; fourthly, getting all the diagnostic tests done, including surgical profile; and fifthly, getting them operated in any of the nine hospitals we have in Hyderabad. Devotees take care of all the physical, emotional and even spiritual needs of these patients in the best manner possible. And after their surgery is done, we give them small gifts like *dhotis*, *saris* (clothes) and then drop them safely back at their respective villages. You will be surprised to know that we have done about 1400 such surgeries of different varieties in the last seven years. And these people once they return to their villages, become silent ambassadors of Swami’s teachings. They not only follow all the preventive healthcare measures with great sincerity, but also goad others in the village towards a better and cleaner lifestyle. This way a lot can be done if there is purity of intention and an intense desire to serve.”

## **The Mobile Hospital - A 'Moving' Model**

Just like its colour – snowy white – the Mobile Hospital is a testimony to the world what purity, patience and perseverance can achieve. Swami says, with these three qualities one can become God. And truly, this special vehicle of service has become 'God' for nearly 50,000 people of the Anantapur district. When it arrives, it is Swami coming into their villages and homes. They worship it; take it in a procession, and offer incense and flowers to it - it is their source of hope, health and happiness. As a villager said, "It is not a Moving Hospital, but Sai Moving in our villages."

## **FEATURE ARTICLES**

### **IN QUEST OF INFINITY – Part 5**

By Prof. G.Venkataraman

Loving Sai Ram and greetings. In America while describing things extraordinary they sometimes say, “You ain’t seen nothin’ yet!” That very much holds true now, for you really must hold on to your seat as you get ready for what is to follow. In other words, I am now going to introduce you to exotic astrophysical objects called the *Black Hole*. The funny thing about Black Holes is that they cannot be directly seen; indeed no instrument can be designed to enable man to DIRECTLY see them, like one can see galaxies and stars. And yet, all astronomers and astrophysicists would swear that black holes do exist! Yes, sometimes truth is indeed stranger than fiction. So, get ready to hear something that might sound like pure spin but is actually God’s truth!

Before we start talking about Black Holes, we must briefly recap what we already know about White Dwarfs and Neutron Stars, which we discussed in the two earlier issues of H2H. If you recall, they both deal with the fate of stars that have ceased thermo-nuclear burning and start collapsing and shrinking due to the relentless force of gravity. We learnt that depending on the mass of the progenitor star, there are actually three different endpoints, with of course three different associated scenarios. For stars having relatively “low” masses, the endpoint is a White Dwarf. Next in order is the neutron star, and the last of this trio is the black hole, the subject of our present discussion. You might, by the way, look up the table I gave towards the end of the last article.

OK, so we have a defunct star, a progenitor star in our current jargon, with a mass exceeding say 15 solar mass. This star has ceased thermo-nuclear burning and has started collapsing. First on the way, the electrons try to stop the collapse by invoking electron degeneracy pressure but they are not able to; they therefore quit. Next, the neutrons try to put up a defence, but they too are unable to, this time because the mass of the progenitor is just too much; gravity relentlessly crushes the star more and more. What happens now? That’s what we shall now consider.

Crucial to understanding the existence of black holes is the fact that light can be affected by gravity. Soon after Newton came up with his discovery of the force of gravity, people believed that light could be affected by gravity. Accepting this view, in the year 1784, geologist John Mitchell in England suggested that if there was an object sufficiently massive and if it had the right size, then its gravitational force would be so strong that light emerging from its surface would be pulled back; indeed, it could not escape.

Mitchell’s idea is simple really. Suppose you throw a stone up; you know what would happen; it falls down, and that is why it is sometimes said that what goes up must come down. Not always! You see, it all depends on the velocity

with which the stone is thrown up. If this velocity is sufficiently high, then the object thrown up could actually escape from the earth. The minimum velocity needed for this is known as the escape velocity and even high school students these days know that it is about 11.2 km/sec. This fact is made use of by rocket scientists who want to send spacecrafts to the Moon, Mars, and so on.

What Mitchell said was: "Listen. If this object is just right, then the force with which it pulls light can be so high that light emitted from its surface could not escape!" I should add that Mitchell believed, as suggested by Newton, that light was made up of particles [which therefore had mass]. Developing this idea, Mitchell wrote a paper that he sent to the then reputed scientist Cavendish for publication by the Royal Society of London. In that paper, Mitchell said:

*If the semi diameter of a sphere of the same density as the Sun were to exceed that of the Sun in the proportion 1:500, a body falling from infinite height towards it would have acquired at its surface a velocity greater than that of light. Consequently, supposing a light to be attracted by the same force in proportion to its inertial mass, with other bodies, all light emitted from such a body would be made to return towards it by its own proper gravity.*

In 1796, Laplace in France promoted the same idea but it did not receive much notice because by this time, the idea that light was made up of particles was replaced by the theory that light was actually made up waves; and in the wave theory of light, light had no business to be pulled by gravity. So the idea of Laplace went up like a lead balloon as they say, and everyone forgot about these two people, Laplace and Mitchell.

Things remained like that for over a hundred years, until Einstein came up with his famous theory of gravitation in 1915. This was revolutionary and not only supplanted Newton's theory but introduced many daring new concepts. The most stunning one was that light could be deflected by gravitational pull. The story of how scientists detected the bending of light is an exciting one in itself, featuring by the way, Eddington whom you have met earlier. This story is told separately, partly because it is important and partly because it was this sensational discovery that gave Einstein almost a rock-star status!

Getting back to the main point, you might wonder: "Listen. Now Einstein's theory of gravitation is a classical theory; therefore there is no scope for light to have a dual status, namely as a particle and as a wave, a status that quantum mechanics confers [more about that in a later issue]. In classical theory, light is believed to be a wave, an electromagnetic wave in fact, as asserted by Maxwell, and as proved by so many experiments. Then how come a wave gets deflected by gravity, when that idea was rejected earlier?" Good question! You see, what Einstein's theory said was that space gets warped when matter is present.

And when light travels through warped space, it would get bent! That is how gravity affects light in Einstein's theory of general relativity. The rest of the story of how this incredible prediction was verified is presented separately. See end of the document for Eddington story.

Let us move on and see what special things happen when a progenitor with a mass of the order of say 15 solar mass starts contracting due to gravitational crush. As I told you earlier, first the electrons try to put up some resistance; they fail and then quit. It is then the turn of the neutrons; they too fail and they too quit. What happens now? Ah, that is where the story becomes interesting and in its later stages perhaps even weird! Consider light rays emerging from a point on the surface of an object of the type we are considering. Because of gravitational pull, the object will try to pull back the light, even as it tries to escape. Because of the pull, the light will "fall". For rays that are emitted nearly parallel to the surface of the star, they will end up falling back to the surface of the star. With a little bit of thinking, you can easily see that there would be a cone; light emitted inside this cone would escape while light emitted from outside the cone would fall back to the surface. This cone is called the *exit cone*.

Above we have a star, and have drawn the path of light rays being emitted from a point on the surface. As we know, the light will be attracted by the mass of the star. For rays that are emitted nearly parallel to the surface of the star, they will end up falling back to the surface of the star. We have drawn an *exit cone*; light emitted inside the cone escapes from the star, and light emitted outside the cone falls back to the star.

Keep this important fact in mind and let us follow through the scenario as the object under consideration shrinks to a smaller and smaller size. Now the mass of the shrinking object obviously remains the same throughout, but because the radius gets smaller and smaller, pull due to gravity at the surface becomes stronger and stronger, as the radius stands becoming smaller. This means that at some radius, the exit cone simply shrinks away; which means that all light rays leaving the surface, HAVE to fall back. In other words, no light can escape from this object. That is the important point I have been trying to get to, and it is an important point by the way. Please note, this can happen only when the progenitor star has a large enough mass; even for such an object, the exit cone does not vanish right away; it does so only when the radius becomes sufficiently small, as to make gravity really powerful and supreme. The radius of the object when the exit cone just vanishes is called *Schwarzschild radius*, after the scientist who first investigated this phenomenon. The outer boundary of such an object is called the *event horizon*.

Question: "What happens after the progenitor star shrinks to the Schwarzschild radius? Does the shrinking continue?" We think so and have no reason to believe that the shrinking process would stop. "Can we see it?" No! "Why not?" Simple! Light can no longer escape from that object and convey information to us, that is why! Which, incidentally is the reason why such an



object is called a *Black Hole*. As should be obvious, an event horizon is associated with every black hole. By the way, the term black hole was first used by Professor John Wheeler in 1967; prior to that these objects were called *dark stars*.

Let us continue with the “shrinking story” if I might call it that! The progenitor has just stopped sending light to the outside world and has shrouded itself with an event horizon. It is continuing to shrink – so we believe; no reason to believe otherwise. OK, what happens now? Does the shrinking go on forever? Obviously it cannot because at some point the object would have a radius of ZERO! What happens now?

That zero radius business became the embarrassing part of the whole story. Physical objects have a finite size; this is true of all objects we know, from galaxies to atoms, nuclei and objects even smaller. If an object with a finite mass has zero size, then its density would be infinite, and physicists simply cannot accept that kind of situation. Infinite density represents what they call a *singularity*, and singularities [of any kind actually] simply horrifies physicists; they just can’t stand it! For example when working with his gravitational equations, Einstein discovered that the Universe might have had a beginning from “nothing”, he was simply shocked; that is because he could not accept that God could have started off the Universe with singularity.

I mention all this just to drive home the point that when we start imagining what might possibly be happening inside a black hole, we end up with a situation where there might be a singularity. But that is not allowed [!] and so a lot of debate went on about how Nature could circumvent the singularity and so on. Before I come to that, I would like to present for you an excerpt from a lecture that Prof Chandrasekhar gave in Ahmedabad many, many years ago. He began with a question and then continued as follows:

*What happens to stars with a very large mass, say ten times the solar mass? This problem is of great theoretical significance. For such a star, the contraction cannot be arrested either at the white-dwarf stage or at the stage of the neutron star. It would contract further – so much in fact that the gravitational field becomes strong enough that even light cannot escape. And when light cannot emerge, nothing else can escape from it and consequently, it will become invisible. This is the so-called black hole.*

The manner in which the collapsing star “vanishes” is worth describing. Let us say there is a collapsing star that we observe from here on earth. We suppose that somehow, we have managed to put a friend on the surface of the distant collapsing star, which is rapidly shrinking in size. This fellow is giving a running commentary and we here are picking the signals and following closely the events. Let us call our friend as observer A and ourselves as observer B. Let us see how Chandra describes what happens. This is what he says [in his Ahmedabad lecture]:

*Observer A sends out signal to observe B at regular intervals of say, 1 second. Initially, observer B will receive the signals at approximately the same*

*intervals of time. But, as the collapse proceeds, observer B will find that the interval between successive signals begins to increase, and eventually, the increase will be exponential, i.e., every millisecond, the interval would increase by a factor of about 2.5; and within a minute the interval would be elongated very considerably. Thus, **strictly speaking**, as far as observer B is concerned, the process of collapse will take an infinitely long time.... Soon the object [collapsing star] would become invisible for all practical purposes.*

So we have lost our friend observer A! In practice of course, we cannot have an observer like A giving a running commentary. At best we can observe the star from here. Let us say we are looking through a telescope at massive star collapsing in this manner. Figure [below] shows schematically what one would see.

So what would an observer inside the black hole see? With our knowledge of physics, we can visualise what would happen to him. He would be subjected to what are called tidal forces. You must have heard of the high tide and the low tide on the seas, and how they arise. They are produced, for example, by the forces that the Moon exerts on the earth. Such forces would also act on our body due to the earth, and in principle, our bodies should also exhibit a stretching. Since our feet are closer to the earth than our head, the pull of the earth would be more on the feet than on the head. Essentially, we should be elongated a bit by the earth. In practice, this kind of elongation is negligible. However, for an observer inside the black hole, it is a different ball game.

To start with, since the forces are very strong, the effects too would be dramatic, as the sketch [alongside/below] shows. Meanwhile, the object itself is collapsing which means that our friend is also moving closer and closer to the centre. Eventually when the object collapses into a geometric point, our friend too would vanish into nothingness!

This brings us back to the issue of singularity, and the question now is: “Can the black hole end up as a singularity?” As I told you earlier, singularity is a “bad” word in physics, and many people simply could not accept that the final fate of a black hole would be singularity; “that would be so unphysical”, they protested. In 1965, Roger Penrose, a brilliant English mathematician and Stephen Hawking [whom you have met earlier], carefully examined the entire issue of singularities within the framework of Einstein’s theory of general relativity [on which his theory of gravitation is based]. They then came to the conclusion that if the theory of general relativity is correct – and we believe it is so at the classical level – then singularities are inescapable. In turn, this means that the black hole *must* end in a singularity.

Physicists were now caught in a quandary. Their gut feeling was that singularities had no place in physics; black holes simply could not end as singularities. On the other hand, Penrose and Hawking said, “We feel that way too but sorry. If you accept Einstein’s theory of general relativity to be correct and it sure is as of today, then singularity is inevitable.” This brought in

the idea of “cosmic censorship!” I do not know how it is in the movie business today but many years ago, we had a body called Censors. They would watch a movie before it is released to the public, and if they found some scenes that were, in their opinion, objectionable, then those scenes were simply cut off; that was censorship. People now said, “Listen, we really do not know what happens behind the event horizon. Who knows what really happens at the centre of a black hole when it becomes really small?” Thus, the event horizon was seen as some kind of a “cloth” that covered the undesirable scenario within the black hole! This is cosmic censorship!

Some years after Penrose and Hawking wrote their famous paper on singularities, Hawking examined the physics of black holes in another context, that of the entropy of the black hole. I do not want to go into all that technicality but the long and short of it is that Hawking had to invoke quantum mechanics to discuss that issue. So people now began to say, “Hey, wait a minute, maybe quantum mechanics can intervene and save the black hole from ending up in a singularity!” Apparently that is definitely possible, as seemed from Hawking’s work on the entropy of black holes. Physicists now began to heave a sigh of relief; and soon they began to argue, and with good reason too, that when one starts dealing with very small dimensions [as one has to do when considering a singularity], then classical physics would totally fail. In other words, the final state of a black hole simply cannot be discussed within the framework of Einstein’s [classical] theory of gravitation. Instead one would have to use a quantum version of it. A quantum theory of gravity is not available as yet, but people already know that space-time, which is the central aspect of theories of gravity, becomes spongy and discontinuous when one goes down to incredibly small distances, as one would have to, if one is to discuss singularities carefully. And at that stage, there might be no singularity after all!

Meanwhile, other amazing scenarios have been visualised that could save a black hole from encountering a singularity. In this scenario, the focus is on *space-time*, the fabric that forms the background to the general theory of relativity. This space-time can be visualised as a rubber sheet with rectangular grid lines on it, with equal spacing. When we talk of such a rubber sheet, we can have two kinds, an unwarped one and a warped one. An unwarped rubber sheet corresponds to spacetime that has not been disturbed, while a warped one represents spacetime that has been disturbed. You have already been introduced to this idea before in the context of the famous light bending experiment of 1919. Here we pursue some other aspects of that warping, with particular reference to how a black hole could avoid a singularity.

Suppose a black hole gets crushed to a geometric point, resulting in a singularity. In this case, the warping would be extreme as in figure (a). As I have told you, physicists do not like singularities and so they said, “Hey, wait a minute. Maybe when this extreme situation is approached, Nature would seek a way out as in figure (b). Here we have what is called a *worm hole* which actually connects Two different universes! So if we have observer A who is falling to the centre of a black hole, he would actually slip through the

worm hole and emerge in another Universe! Sounds like science fiction does it not? Indeed it does but these are some serious ideas that many cosmologists have studied mathematically! So, truth can indeed be stranger than fiction!

May be you do not like the idea of our observer A disappearing into an entirely new universe. No problem, we could keep him in our own universe through connectivities as in figures (c) and (d)! That is to say, our observer would vanish from one part of the universe and appear in another part. Worm holes have received some attention but in view of the fact that quantum gravity can offer a different bypass to [classical] singularity, one need not imagine that worm holes offer the only escape path. What you must understand is that there are remarkable mysteries in Nature the answers to which we would never know. But they are there for sure, and we must take time off to wonder about them.

A few questions remain before I wrap up this instalment. First question: How many types of black holes are there, if at all? It turns out that one might recognise three basic types. The super black holes, the normal black holes, and the mini [or better micro] black holes. Thus far, I have been talking essentially about the “normal” black holes, which result when dead stars with a mass around say ten solar masses or so start shrinking due to gravity. The super black holes form an entirely different category. They are expected to have masses **millions** of times that of our Sun. Why on earth do we have to “invent” such huge black holes, and if such super massive black holes do exist, where do they hang out? Let me start with the first question first.

It all started with the discovery of objects known as *quasars*. The word quasar is derived from *QUASi-stellar radio source*, the name by which these strange objects were first called when discovered in the late 1950s. The discovery was made using large radio telescopes, which had just come into existence. No one knew what these objects were but two things became clear: 1) Whatever they were, they sure were emitting a large amount of energy, a HUGE amount really. 2) Spectroscopic evidence suggested that these objects, whatever they were, were moving at fantastic velocities, something like a significant fraction of the velocity of light. Now that meant that something was happening out there that could not only generate huge amounts of energy but also cause these objects to move with a terrific speed.

The whole thing was mind boggling, and people had to come up with a really good story that tied all the different scientific facts together. That happened years later, and the currently accepted hypothesis is that in the middle of many galaxies, active galaxies actually, there must super massive black holes that act as the engine that drives the quasars. I am of course giving only the headlines and that should not make you think that I am presenting just a bunch of vague speculations. Actually, there is a fair amount good reason to believe in this hypothesis; otherwise, scientists, who are usually sceptics where revolutionary ideas are concerned [and ever eager to shoot down theories they consider to be wild!] would not toy with the idea of super

massive black holes acting as engines that drive the quasars. By the way, as of today over a hundred thousand quasars have been identified in the sky!

Let us return to the “normal” black holes we started with, namely those resulting from the gravitational crushing of stellar corpses with a mass around 10 solar masses. How do we know they exist? Is there any observational proof? Well, if the question is posed that way, then it should be obvious that by its very nature the black hole is very “secretive” meaning it does not allow information to flow from within or even its surface. OK, but is there really no way to catch a black hole? Fortunately, there is and that method exploits the fact that black holes can be greedy, very greedy in fact!

You must thinking I am kidding; no I am not! What sometimes happens is the following. It could be that in the neighbourhood of the black hole, there is another object [read matter]. For example, we have what are called binary stars; they are twins that sort of go round each other. Suppose one of this binary becomes a black hole. The gravitational force of the black hole being enormous, it would start pulling material from the neighbourhood into itself. In other words, the “hungry” black hole would start sucking matter towards itself. In the process an *accretion disc* is formed.

An accretion disc is a disc of diffuse matter formed around a black hole [by the way, even a neutron star could wrap itself with an accretion disc but here we are talking about the accretion disc formed around a black hole]. The material from the companion object that is sucked in by the black hole gathers into a disc because the black hole is itself rotating. Technically we say it is the result of the angular momentum possessed by the black hole. When material is pulled from outside into the rotating black hole, it gets accelerated and in the process emits radiation, often in the form of x-rays. These x-rays thus form a signature of the presence of the black hole, which is why many astronomers try to detect the presence of black holes by observing x-ray emission patterns out there in space.

OK, but anything like the smoking gun? That is not available yet but special detectors are being built that would one day provide incontrovertible proof for the existence of the black hole [whose existence is not in doubt]. What is the idea behind these detectors? Well, it is something like this: Black holes are not going to simply sit there and keep quiet; they would interact with other objects out there in space, via gravitational forces naturally. For example, one black hole might collide with another. Or we might have a situation where a black hole is just being born. Or else, it might be a case of black hole having its lunch! In every case, gravitational waves with characteristic signatures would be emitted. The details of these signatures can be worked out; today's theory is smart enough to do that.

Theory is smart, but what about the experimenters? Are they smart enough to detect these waves? Well, this is a tough job really but finally technology is getting so good that within a few years gravitational waves might actually be detected, almost a century after Einstein predicted that they exist. And, we could actually have very smart detectors hanging out in space which do the

detection. Finally, we might have the smoking gun! Would cost a lot of money, would it not? Sure would; modern astronomy and astrophysics do not come cheap!

We have thus far considered two types of black holes, the super massive and the normal. I have also briefly touched upon how black holes might be detected. What about the third type? These are sometimes called mini black holes and are incredibly small. How small? Oh it is difficult to say, but just to give you an idea I would say probably as small as an electron, which means really, really small!

Why at all did physicists come up with the idea of ultra small black hole? That is because, they believe that may be when the Universe was very tiny, that is to say soon after birth, many such mini black holes might have formed. They did not stop with such speculation. They said: "Listen, we can actually try and create such mini black holes in the laboratory!" And so, we are now on the verge of moving from the study of astronomical objects called black holes to the study of what might be called laboratory produced black holes!

How does one produce such mini black holes? Not easy, and as of now, there is only one lab in the world where this could possibly be done. And that is the CERN in Geneva, where, buried in the ground below is huge particle accelerator with a circumference of about 25 to 30 km! In this, electrons whiz around at the almost the speed of light, in the process crossing an international boundary between Switzerland and France! They do this millions of times every second. While electrons go round and round in circles one way, anti-electrons and positron similarly whirl around in the opposite direction. Naturally, they sometimes collide and when they do, all kinds of exciting things happen, which of course physicists study with great interest. Amazing things have been discovered in the process about which I shall say something later. Here I wish to say just this. Currently, this monstrous accelerator in Geneva is being upgraded so that instead of electrons and anti-electrons there would be protons and anti-protons going round.

Now protons are much, much heavier compared to electrons and when they collide, processes hitherto not seen or envisaged are expected to happen. It is speculated that some of these processes might include the production of mini black holes. However, they would be extremely short lived, and physicists would have catch them real quick before they vanish! And believe me they are smart enough to do that too!

Does all that leave you dizzy? I would not be surprised it did. You know, if you think about it calmly, there are two wonderful things about it all and one most puzzling aspect too. Amazing fact number one is the remarkable and mind boggling mysteries Lord God has packed into the Universe. Amazing fact number two is that man has been able to unravel so many of them. And in the case of astronomy and astrophysics, he has been able to do it without leaving the earth! May be he has put some instruments into space lately but much of the observation has been done from the earth and of course all the thinking has been done entirely on earth. That shows the amazing faculties God has

blessed man with. In fact, in the *Gita*, in the tenth chapter particularly, Krishna gives a glimpse into the many blessings He has most graciously conferred upon man. But man today has drifted so far away from God that he has begun to strongly doubt the very existence of the Creator. That is the puzzling aspect that I referred to just a little earlier.

I hope all this sets you thinking as to what exactly this Infinity is and where we ought to look for it!

Good luck with your own personal quest. All the best till we get together again. Jai Sai Ram.

00—00—00

### THE STORY OF LIGHT BENDING

The famous light-bending story began with a letter written by Einstein to Prof. Hale of the famous Mount Wilson observatory in California. The letter went as follows

*Zurich, 14 October 1913*

*Highly honored colleague,*

*A simple theoretical consideration makes it plausible to assume that light rays in a gravitational field experience bending.*

*At the edge of the Sun, the total deviation should be 0.84 arcseconds, and it should fall off like  $1/R$  ( $R$  being the ray's [closest] distance from the Sun's center).*

*It would therefore be of the greatest interest to know how close to the Sun fixed stars could be seen in daylight with the strongest magnification.*

*On the advice of my colleague, Professor [Julius] Maurer, I therefore ask you to let me know what you—with your rich experience in these things—take to be achievable with the best modern instruments.*

*Yours very respectfully,*

*A. Einstein*

At the time Einstein wrote this letter, his formulation of the general theory of relativity was not fully complete; as a result, the estimate that Einstein gave of the expected bending was half as much as what the correct prediction was; that came later.

To get on with the story, Hale wrote back to say that though the bending would be there all the time, during a normal day, it just cannot be seen because the Sun is too bright to allow that. However, said Hale, such an effect

could perhaps be observable at the time of a total solar eclipse. The rest of the story has become Einstein lore: A German team set out to measure the effect in Russia during an upcoming 1914 eclipse. But the outbreak of war intervened. In a sense, that was fortunate, because the team would have been comparing the measurement with Einstein's first, incorrect *prediction*.

Now in 1914, there occurred a total solar eclipse that was expected across the eastern part of Europe. Some German astronomers made plans to use that opportunity but lacked the funds. They tried hard to raise money and were only partially successful. Einstein was so keen on the experiment that he himself gave some money, though he could hardly afford. Anyway, the astronomers all went to a spot in Kiev in Ukraine, considered favourable for viewing the eclipse, due to occur on August 21. Unfortunately, history intervened: On August 1, 1914, Germany declared war on Russia, and the German astronomers were taken prisoner. Russian forces expelled the older scientists and held the younger ones as prisoners of war. Some Americans who had joined the German team were allowed by the Russians to stay back and observe, but unfortunately the eclipse day saw overcast skies and so that was the end of that!

The next year, at the height of the First World War, Einstein published his general theory of relativity. And Eddington in England read about it. Look at the irony of it. Here was Einstein, a German making a prediction, and Eddington an Englishman reads it. Politics separated Germany and England, that is to say, they were enemies fighting each other in World War I. But science bound these two scientists; what is more, both Einstein and Eddington were pacifists and refused to enlist as soldiers!

Eddington immediately grasped the significance of Einstein's prediction; it would be a great test of Einstein's theory of general relativity. A total solar eclipse was due in 1919, and on the prompting of Eddington, the British Astronomer Royal, Frank Dyson began plans to observe it. The eclipse of May 29, 1919, was to start near the border between Chile and Peru, then traverse South America, cross the Atlantic Ocean and arc down through central Africa.

Britain sent two expeditions, one headed by Eddington himself and the other headed by Dyson. While Eddington went to tiny island of Principe, nestled in the crook of Africa's Gulf of Guinea, Dyson was to observe the eclipse from Sobral, in eastern Brazil. Eddington's group arrived at Principe in late April and, amid the heat and rain, found themselves under such constant attack by biting insects that they needed to work under mosquito netting most of the time. The rain grew worse as May advanced, and the day of the eclipse began with a tremendous storm. The rain stopped as the day wore on, but the totality phase of the eclipse would start at 2:15 p.m. and last only five minutes. Eddington wrote:

*About 1.30 when the partial phase was well advanced, we began to get glimpses of the Sun, at 1.55 we could see the crescent (through the cloud) almost continuously and large patches of clear sky appearing. We had to*



*carry out our programme of photographs in faith. I did not see the eclipse, being too busy changing plates, except for one glance to make sure it had begun.... We took 16 photographs ...*

True nail biting experience. Anyway, to cut the story short, Dyson made the observations in Brazil and their team too had problems. Both teams then came back and poured over the photos checking and cross checking. Finally, it all seemed to be OK. Einstein was 100 % correct. The solar eclipse results fully confirmed Einstein's prediction. On November 6<sup>th</sup>, Dyson read out aloud the eclipse results at a rare joint session of the Royal Society and the Royal Astronomical Society. The Royal Society president and the discoverer of the electron, J. J. Thomson, called Einstein's theory, in a quote that raced around the world, "one of the most momentous, if not the most momentous, pronouncements of human thought." "REVOLUTION IN SCIENCE," the November 7 *Times* of London trumpeted. "New Theory of the Universe. Newtonian Ideas Overthrown." Papers in America also headlined the news, and instantly, Einstein became a world celebrity, enjoying I would say a rock-star status! It is fair to say that no scientist has ever since captured public imagination to that extent, except perhaps Stephen Hawking, who in recent years has achieved similar fame. But remember, Einstein received all that adoration way back in 1919, long before the advent of TV, internet, 24 hours news and what not! By the way, when Eddington and Einstein were making history, i.e., in the year 1919, Chandra was a mere nine year old kid! Some fifteen years later, he was to clash with Eddington who was in fact his hero. That story you have heard earlier!

Jai Sai Ram.

## **FROM LORD BUDDHA TO LOVING SAI**

**By Mr. Ananda Perera**

*Mr. Ananda Perera, is a retired Director of News and Public Affairs, Singapore Broadcasting Corporation (SBC), and founder president of the Buddhist Youth League, Singapore. During his tenure at SBC, the company won many international broadcasting awards and he received commendations from the Prime Minister of the country. He is currently working as a free-lance media consultant to several prestigious companies. He has been coming to Bhagavan Baba for the last four decades.*

It is Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba who made me a better Buddhist today. I come from a family of several generations of Buddhists, who have aspired to follow the teachings of Lord Buddha through many centuries. I was myself wanting to be a renunciant but karmic influences made me a happy family man and eventually reach the top of my profession.

I am called Ananda (meaning, bliss) and I try to remain true to my God-given name for this *deha* (body). I lost my father when I was barely 12 years old and he was only 47. It is this and many other adversities which made me an adult overnight filled with responsibilities to look after my widowed mother. We became instantly poor. All siblings after me died young and I was so ill that when people attended their funerals they expected to see me in the coffin!

My late parents used to tell me that I was always a very happy soul hardly caring even for food. When they insisted on feeding me, I kept on telling them that some blue coloured angel was always feeding me as I slept and that is why I was not hungry. Now I know who protected me in my childhood. Just before I was born, my mother was given a lottery ticket by a vendor who left it on her tummy saying that the baby will bring her luck. As fate would have it, the next day, on the day of my birth, my mother struck the first prize. With that, the first thing she did was to buy the nearby Buddhist temple building which was used on a rented basis by the monks and donate it to the Sangha. Then she bought the hotel which we were renting, with which we were then able to make our living.

### **Kept Alive Through Grace**

As much as I was deemed to have brought 'good fortune', I also troubled my parents being born with a hole in the heart. Thank God it was not in the head! During war years, with scarce medicines and doctors, it was Baba who kept me alive, considered by all an impossible feat. I am also eternally grateful that my beloved parents never gave up on me. I continued to have many health complications: heart surgeries, stomach surgeries, eye surgeries, spine problems, but these never dented my joyful state. Why? Each time Bhagavan Baba stood by my bedside before and after surgery. And He was ever present in my thoughts although I was under heavy sedation: I would hear Him say "Cured". I realise now why I have had all these plethora of medical problems: I

have always prayed to make this my last birth. So I understand this fast-paced Karmic clearance by Bhagavan Baba.

The most significant spiritual awareness was kindled in me, when I came to the Feet of Lord Sai in 1967. It was Swami who personified the Great Love of Buddha, much more than I ever realised before. Bhagavan Baba, in His magnificent Divine Discourses, exemplified with characteristic simplicity, the greatness of Lord Buddha. For example, Bhagavan once related how Buddha always spoke from a sense of righteousness and justice. Swami highlighted this by relating the following story during a Buddha Poornima Discourse in 1999:

### **The Way of the Buddha**

"Once Buddha entered a village along with His disciples. A lady approached Him and requested Him to have lunch in her house. Buddha blessed her and accepted her invitation. Seeing this, many villagers, including the village headman, warned Buddha, saying, "O Buddha, You are one of wisdom and have renounced everything. The lady, courtesan-dancer Ambashali, is not a woman of good character. It is not proper for You to have food in her house. Buddha smiled and asked the village headman to come forward. Buddha, holding firmly the right hand of the headman, asked him to clap. The headman said it was not possible for him to clap since one of his hands was in Buddha's hold. Buddha said, 'True. It is possible to clap only when two hands come together. Likewise, it is possible to clap only when two hands come together. This lady cannot turn bad by herself unless there are men of bad character in the village. The men of this village are the root cause of her bad character.'

The villagers realised their folly, fell at Buddha's Feet and sought His forgiveness. Through His teachings, Buddha instilled sacredness and wisdom in people. Buddha's teachings are highly sacred, with profound inner meaning."

Buddha's view of life is like that of a doctor. He provided individual solutions according to circumstances of those who came to Him for help. For example, when a distraught woman came to Him carrying the corpse of her son, asking him to give it life, the Buddha said that He could do so only if she found the necessary medication. When the lady exclaimed that she would search everywhere for this elixir of life, Buddha asked her to find a mustard seed from any house where none have died. She immediately started running from house to house but to her dismay, everyone told her that they had experienced at least one death in their family. Finally it dawned on her that death is inevitable! This is how Buddha taught self-realisation.

### **Buddha's Prognosis and Panacea**

To help His followers attain wisdom and liberation, He offered a diagnosis through the Four Noble Truths. They are, (in Pali):

1. *Dukkha* (suffering)
2. Samudaya (the arising of suffering)
3. Nirodha (the cessation of suffering)
4. Magga (the Path leading to the cessation of suffering).

The word *Dukkha* is one of those Pali terms that cannot be translated adequately into English by one word. 'Suffering', 'ill', 'anguish', 'unsatisfactoriness' are some favourite renderings. The words pain, misery, sorrow, and so forth, are also used. The word *Dukkha*, however, includes all this and more. In Buddhism, awakening from ignorance to full knowledge always implies the comprehension of the Four Noble Truths.

The Enlightened One is called the Buddha (the Awakened One) simply because he understood the Truths in all their fullness. The whole of His first discourse (Sutta), given to five ascetics at Saranath, is devoted to the formulation of these Truths; for they are the very essence of the Buddha's teachings.

Without a clear idea of the Four Noble Truths, one cannot understand what the Buddha taught for forty-five years. To the Buddha, the entire teaching is just the understanding of *Dukkha*, the unsatisfactory nature of all phenomenal existence, and the understanding of the way out of this unsatisfactoriness.

Our beloved Bhagavan in a Divine Discourse on 30 May 1989 said:

"Buddha was born in this sacred land of Bharat (ancient India). He declared to the world *Ahimsa paramo dharma* (non-violence is the greatest of dharma). He undertook penance for several years, met many noble souls, listened to spiritual discourses, and studied various scriptures. But He was not satisfied. Man aspires for bliss, but how can he attain it?

Where there is faith, there is love. Where there is love, there is peace. Where there is peace, there is truth. Where there is truth, there is God. Where there is God, there is bliss. The path of spirituality starts with faith and ends with bliss. Bliss cannot be attained from materialistic pleasures or from people of the world. It can be experienced only when the five senses are put to proper use."

### **The Human Condition**

What the Buddha taught during his ministry of over four decades embraces these Truths, namely: *Dukkha*, suffering or unsatisfactoriness, its arising, its cessation and the way out of this unsatisfactory state. One who thinks deeply will interpret these Truths as the goal of man's life, his final deliverance; that is the sum total of the Four Truths.

What we call man, in the ultimate sense, is a combination of mind and body, or the 'five aggregates of clinging' (through the senses and the mind). On the human plane *Dukkha* does not and cannot exist independently of man, his

mind and body. It therefore becomes clear that *Dukkha* is nothing else but man himself. So the first Truth is suffering, as the Buddha said: 'The five aggregates of clinging are *Dukkha*'.

Then we know that the second truth is *Tanha*, Craving or Thirst, which is the arising of *Dukkha*. Now where does this Craving arise? Where the five aggregates of clinging are, there this craving arises.

The third is the Stilling, the cessation of this Craving, *Nirvana* - the final deliverance. This, too, is not external to man. The last and the fourth Truth is *Magga* or the Way out of this unsatisfactory state, this repeated existence or *Samsara*.

In this life, the man who enjoys pleasures of the senses is not liberated from *samsara*. As long as his craving and attachment are not extinguished, he clings to the aggregates and to things pertaining to them. The liberated one, however, experiences the bliss of Nirvana here and now; for he does not cling to sense objects; his craving and attachments have ceased and therefore, for him, there is no more continuity of aggregates, no more repeated existence, or *samsara*.

### **The Practice of the Noble Eightfold Path**

This last and the fourth Truth is what is referred to as the Noble Eightfold Path (Arya Ashtanga Marga).

In the Four Noble Truths, as you may have realised, the Eightfold Path is the only aspect which deals with practice. Whatever there is to be cultivated in Buddhism, comes within the scope of the Eightfold Path. This Path is a summary of the means that enable one to get out of this tangle of *samsara*, and realise Nirvana which is the only unconditioned Dhamma (ultimate truth) in Buddhism. Hence, it is necessary to bear in mind that the Path does not function as the cause and condition of Nirvana. It is only a means to it.

Buddha recommended a lifestyle which followed all these eight principles:

1. Right Understanding or Vision
2. Right Thought or Feelings
3. Right Speech
4. Right Action
5. Right Livelihood
6. Right Effort
7. Right Mindfulness
8. Right Concentration

Bhagavan Baba explains that Right Vision is the first and foremost step, without which nothing can be achieved. Right Vision or Right Understanding is to look at every situation with a *Dharmic* view. In a Divine Discourse on 5 Feb 1998, Swami said:

"...Hence, Buddha declared that the first requisite is *Samyak Darsanam* (Having the right vision). The implication of this statement is that, having been bestowed with the great gift of eyes, man should use them for seeing sacred objects and holy beings. But on the contrary, by using his eyes to look at unsacred objects and evil persons, man fills himself with bad thoughts and becomes prey to evil tendencies.

What one sees, influences the feelings in the heart. The state of the heart determines the nature of one's thoughts. The thoughts influence one's life. Hence, to lead a good life, the first prerequisite is pure vision. Man has to cultivate a sacred outlook. As a result of looking at cruel, ugly, and wicked scenes man leads an animal existence.

The first inquiry one should make is to ascertain what is pure, edifying, and godly that he should see. Whatever he sees leaves its imprint on man. Few realise the effects of this."

### **Cultivating the Ennobling Path**

As this Noble Eightfold Path is the only aspect of the Buddha's teaching which deals with practice, one has to focus all their attention on this practical teaching, for, theories and speculations are of no avail to one genuinely bent on practising the Dharma.

There are no short-cuts to real peace and happiness. As the Buddha pointed out in many a Divine Discourse, this is the only path which leads to the summit of the good life, which goes from lower to higher levels of the mental realm. It is a gradual training, a training in right thought, word and deed which brings about true wisdom culminating in full enlightenment and the realisation of Nirvana.

It is a path for all, irrespective of race, class or creed, a path to be cultivated every moment of our waking life. As our beloved Swami exhorts, "All are One, be alike to everyone."

Swami said in a Divine Discourse on 5 February 1998:

"Buddha emphasised goodness in action (*samyak-karma*). The mark of good action is harmony in thought, word, and deed. When there is no such harmony, the action belies what is said or thought. Buddha went on to declare that good action is conducive to good spiritual progress (*samyak-sadhana*).

Good deeds constitute genuine spirituality. Mere formal worship or ritualistic practices do not constitute spiritual striving. These religious practices are good in a way but they do not constitute spiritual sadhana. True spirituality consists in the unity of thought, word and deed in all their purity and sacredness. Buddha declared that when spiritual striving of this nature has been completed, there is *samyak - jivanam* (leading a pure life)."

The Buddha, the Compassionate Teacher, is no more, but He has left a legacy, the sublime Dharma. The Dharma is not an invention, but a discovery. It is an eternal law; it is everywhere within each man and woman, Buddhist or non-Buddhist, Eastern or Western.

As Swami exhorts, the Dharma has no labels, it knows no limit of time, space or race. It is for all time. Each person who lives the Dharma brings it to light, sees and experiences it himself. It cannot be communicated to another, for it has to be self-realised. The Buddha Gotama discovered the Dharma, as did his predecessors, the Buddhas of the past. Mere rejoicing and inspiration cannot lead them to the desired goal. Hence the need to cultivate the Path:

"Be loving and be pitiful  
And well controlled in virtue's ways,  
Strenuous, bent upon the goal,  
And onward ever bravely press.  
That danger doth dalliance lie;  
That earnestness is sure and safe;  
This when ye see, then cultivate  
The Eightfold Path so shall ye touch,  
So make your own, the Deathless Way ....."

-Psalms of Early Buddhists, The Brethren.

In a Divine Discourse on 5 Feb 1998, Swami stated:

"Buddha stressed the need for Samyak Vak (sacred speech). *anudvegakaram vakyam sathyam priya hitham cha yat*. (One should speak only those words, which cause no annoyance to others and which are truthful, agreeable and wholesome).

Whatever you speak should not cause any disturbance to others. It should be truthful as well as pleasing. You cannot always oblige but you can speak always obligingly. Under any circumstances, do not let your speech be tainted by harshness. Never become agitated. When you understand that all are one, there will be no chance to get angry. All bodies are like mirrors, showing your own reflection in them. How can you be angry with your own reflection? You should speak with love. There is no divinity greater than love. When you fill your heart with love, your thoughts, vision, words and deeds will be suffused with love."

### **Throw Away the Teaching!**

To explain the idea of all these sacred principles that are meant to lead to the ultimate goal, the Buddha used the simile of a raft. Let us listen to Him:

"Using the simile of a raft, monks, I teach the Dharma designed for crossing over and not for retaining. Listen and attend carefully to what I say.

Monks, man sets out on a journey and comes to a vast stretch of water. The near bank is dangerous, the far bank is safe. But no boat goes to the further shore and there is no bridge. He thinks: Vast indeed is this stretch of water, the near bank is unsafe but the further one is without danger. I had better collect grass, leaves, branches and wood to make a raft and with its aid, using my hands and feet ferry myself across to the further shore.

Having crossed, he thinks: this raft has been very useful, for with its aid I have reached the further bank safely: I had better carry it on my head and go wherever I want to.

What do you think, monks, if he does this, is he acting rightly about the raft? Suppose that man who has crossed over to the further bank should think: This raft has been very useful, with its aid I have reached the further bank safely: I had better beach it, or let it float down the vast stretch of water, and then go wherever I want.

If he acts thus, monks, he would be acting rightly about the raft. Even so, monks, using the simile of a raft have I taught the Dharma designed for crossing over, and not for retaining. You, monks, who understand the Dharma taught by using the simile of a raft, have to give up good things (Dharma); how much more the evil things (Adharma)."

Therefore, it is very significant to understand that the noble Eightfold path that the Buddha so passionately preached is never the goal. It is only a means to the goal.

In the Buddhist texts one can find so many verses which beautifully portrays the path one treads towards the goal in Buddha's own words:

"Irrigators direct the water,  
Fletchers fashion the shaft,  
Carpenters bend the wood,  
The wise control themselves."

-The Dhammapada

"Declared is the straight path  
Walk along, falter not;  
Let each admonish himself,  
And by stages reach Nirvana."

- Theragatha

"This is the path itself,  
For none other leads  
To purity of vision:  
If you follow it and so confuse  
King Mara (Yama), all suffering will end.  
Since I have learned how to remove



The thorns, I have revealed the path.  
You yourselves should always strive,  
Thathagatas (Buddhas) only teach.  
Those who walk in meditation  
Free themselves from Mara's bondage."

-The Dhammapada

"Hunger is the greatest malady,  
The aggregates are the greatest ill,  
Knowing this as it is, the wise know  
Nirvana, the Bliss Supreme."

-The Dhammapada

In a very revealing discourse that Bhagavan gave in February 1998, He dwelt in detail on this "Bliss Supreme" that the Buddha was a personification of, and then recounted His last moments before leaving this physical realm. Swami said:

"In His last moments, Buddha summoned His stepbrother Ananda to impart to him His final message. ....Placing His palm on the head of His younger brother, Buddha said: 'My dear child! I came to the world to teach the Truth. If anyone asks, 'Where is God?' The answer is: 'He is everywhere.' Truth is God. Speak the Truth. Do not harm anyone. Recognise that the highest dharma is non-violence, Ahimsa."

I am truly blessed to come under our most Beloved Swami's Grace for He has made me understand the supreme pure Love of Buddha. Swami has made me love Lord Buddha more. Buddha Poonima or Vesak is considered a thrice blessed day by Buddhists. It is the first full moon night of May. Significantly, the Buddha was born, attained Enlightenment and passed away on a Full Moon day in May.

### **Gratitude to God**

The first value Buddha taught the world is Gratitude. After attaining Enlightenment, the Buddha gazed at the Bodhi Tree for seven days with Loving Kindness. He was showing his gratitude to the Tree which provided Him shade, shelter and protection from inclement weather helping Him to realise Enlightenment.

Similarly, how much more should we be ever grateful to our lovingly merciful Swami for all the love, healing and protection He continually bestows on His devotees? Baba says that He spends every moment of the day and night thinking how best to serve His devotees!

I am alive today because Swami is always with me, above me, in front of me, behind me and next to me, constantly guiding me with His Divine teachings

and healing me from multiple health problems. I was born with a hole-in-the heart. In spite of surgery, the heart murmur still persists to this day, at 68 years of age - but I gladly convert it to keeping rhythmic *Namasmara*n (chanting his name). Even my doctors are surprised that I rebound so fast from various operations. Do they know that it is my Lord Sai who keeps me going? Swami acknowledged this in an Interview He granted me on Thursday August 19, 2004.

### **He is the OM**

He is there physically all round as He emphasises always – “I am there in you, around you, above you, below you, behind you, all round you”. For me Baba is Buddha-Sai returned to salvage mankind. I constantly feel His presence. Even in office as Director of News and Public Affairs of the Singapore Broadcasting Corporation, I had an altar in front of me with two large pictures of Shirdi Sai, Parthi Sai and a Buddha statue.

Each time I worked on a project, I would do prostrate before Baba's altar and ask for guidance. Is it a wonder that the programmes I offered at Bhagavan's Lotus Feet won the most number of International Awards for Singapore in major competitions which had the leading nations of the world lobbying to win these accolades? Almost a hundred nations vied for some of these coveted prizes.

He is my *Swas* - my very breath. I had the divine opportunity of thanking Him for all His Divine Guidance and Protection in His Holy physical Presence. He smiled and blessed me with *Abhaya Hastha* - raising both His Holy Hands! Last year, he gave my wife and I the divine privilege of doing Arathi on Gurupoornima day. Again, this year, I had the opportunity of singing at Sai Kulwant Hall and also tasted the holy vibhuthi just manifested by His most Divine Hands!

On both occasions it was significant that we were with the group of Tibetan Buddhist monks who came at the invitation of Swami. Capt Ong and Sister Meng Meng made all the arrangements to visit various Tibetan temples and ensure that the monks would come on the scheduled dates given by Bhagavan.

Of course, He revealed that He is the OM - Omnipresent, Omnipotent and Omniscient when He revealed certain aspects of my life which only my physical mother knew - but my Divine Mother knew it all and more. He encouraged me to sing bhajans. I am doing so at least three times a week regularly, sometimes accompanying myself and others on the tabla (percussion instrument). I did not play the tabla for over 40 years. All my fingers were affected by arthritis and I had them all operated with the medical advice not to stress them. But when requested to play the tabla as our bhajan centre was badly in need of one, I repaired the tabla, placed it in front of Swami's altar, prayed and played. Immediately, my fingers outstretched themselves in holy glee to provide rhythm for the bhajans. I felt His Divine presence the moment I hit the first note. Baba had earlier made me a child

artiste on TV and Radio singing in all five languages: my mother tongue Sinhala, Tamil, Hindi, Malay, English and Chinese.

Isn't Baba ever present in our lives? I used to place a chair in front of the altar in my office room - to place all important assignments for Baba's Guidance. Inevitably, the next morning the answers over-flowed. I breathe, live, eat, sleep with thoughts of Bhagavan in Constant Integrated Awareness. Given my many health problems, I almost had a Permanent Resident status in the Singapore General Hospital (SGH)! I never realised how much SGH would mean to me during the past 6 years, as I know now that SGH means Sai Global Harmony Radio which to me is the constant umbilical cord to God.

### **Maithree Buddha is Already Here!**

And I am eternally grateful to my Beloved Master - not only for the continuous healing but also for teaching us how to be in the Joy of Constant Integrated Awareness! We Buddhists are indeed very fortunate to celebrate Buddha Poonnima in the Divine Presence of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba. Many Buddhists await the arrival of Maithree (Compassionate) Buddha. As for me, as I mentioned in an Interview on Radio Sai Global Harmony, Maithree Buddha is already here. "My three buddha" is a combination of Shirdi Sai, Sathya Sai and Prema Sai!

Let us make the most under His Divine Guidance and Protection. *Sabbe Sattha Bhavantu Sukitatta* (Pali) that is, 'May all sentient beings be well and happy!'

Sairam.

## TEACH CHILDREN THE JOY OF GIVING

By Mrs. Rita Bruce

*Bhagavan Sathya Sai Baba called Mrs. Rita Bruce and her husband for two interviews to guide them with the publishing of a new manuscript. When the manuscript was complete, Bhagavan said, "Call it Sathya Sai Parenting; it is for all my devotees". 'Teaching self-discipline to children' is a chapter from the book*

*'Sathya Sai Parenting'. It is about the importance of inculcating discipline in children. In this interview Bhagavan stresses on the need for morality-based education and discipline-based parenting.*

### Character Through Example

Have you ever thought that if we don't tell our children, "No," how will they ever learn to tell themselves 'No'? Stop and think about this, it is very important. Swami says, "Parents have the primary responsibility to mould the character of their children." The character is moulded through our example, instruction, love and discipline. The subject of discipline has been continuously emphasized by our Beloved Baba. He says, **"Ninety percent of the blame for spoiling the behaviour and character of children, go to the parents. They show too much unintelligent affection and give too indiscriminate a freedom to them."**

### Apply the 'Brake' of Self-Discipline

Why is discipline so important? Because we would not even get out of bed in the morning without discipline. It is the function of the conscience that tells us to 'Stop'. To stop sleeping too long, eating too much, crying too long, etc. It is the conscience mechanism that controls our behaviour. Would you put your child in a car without a brake? Can you imagine yourself driving a car without a brake? It is the same with our behaviour; discipline is the brake. The car is our body, our action, our personality. As of now, the children are driving their bodies without using the brake of discipline. They are out of control. Their behaviour is not in accordance with Swami's teachings.

Now, what we are seeing in the Western culture is children who control their parents. In a way, the children are ruling the parents, instead of the parents governing the children. This is not a correct situation. Sai says, **"The parents are to blame for three-fourths of their children's behaviour. When parents allow the children to go astray, sometime or other they will suffer the consequences. It has become fashionable in the Kali Age (present times of value degeneration) to let the children have their own way. The parents give a free rein to the children instead of controlling them."**

## Materialism vs. Morality

In my opinion, our generation has seen the greatest "annihilation of morality." We have experienced the great revolution of immorality. Many of the values that existed for our parents are non-existent today. We have had to emotionally and psychologically accept what is, while longing for our memory of family values that once existed. Divorce was the rare exception and only for extreme cases. Swami says, "When materialism goes up; morality goes down. When morality goes up; materialism goes down." This is our dilemma. Our society has lost its moral fibre because of its focus on enhancing our physical life with more and better products, as well as pleasing ourselves, fulfilling desires, regardless of spiritual expense. What has happened to the moral strength gained by the struggle to overcome difficulties which sustained the pioneering spirit of the older generation? We live in such physical comfort that our children are pampered into indolence. It has cheated and impaired their spiritual character. Spoiling them has made them weak. They do not know how to fight for survival. We have certainly failed them.

Because of the industrial and technological age, we became consumers of comfort and pleasure. We wanted our children to have everything. We watch the commercials on television, followed their advice, and bought and purchased and consumed *ad nauseam*. We discovered that happiness couldn't be purchased for ourselves or our children. You can't buy happiness, period. The children only want more.....why? Because we did not teach them or ourselves how to apply the brake of self-discipline. We are programmed to be consumers. We have bought into the marketing strategy, hook, line and sinker.

## The 'Me' Generation: A Subconscious Conditioning

We work, work, and work. Why? To have a higher standard of living? Do we really need as much as we have? When we keep purchasing goods, we are teaching our children by our example to continue the same behaviour. The manufacturing companies love it. **Swami says, "Waste of money is evil, teach children not to receive anything for nothing. Let them earn by hard work the things they seek."** Love and discipline have been replaced by purchasing power. We buy items to tell our children how much we love them. We reward our children with gifts if they study, do a chore, or correct a negative behaviour. We are controlling them with rewards, physical rewards, not teaching them the self - discipline that rewards the child by building their self esteem. It is the inner reward that counts. People need character to sustain themselves. Just think about yourself. Don't we all want to earn our own way? We seek independence, not dependence. Often, people find receiving more difficult than giving. But we are not teaching our children to give, thus we have a "me" generation, with very low self-esteem.

One night, Swami gave me an insightful dream. I was struggling to understand the cause of the "me" generation. In the dream Swami told me that my generation, the first to raise children with television, was unknowingly, subconsciously programmed by the commercials on television. All of the

commercials were targeted for parents who had the money to buy items for their children and family. For example, only the best detergent for diapers, the best baby food, the best products for cooking, etc. Every household had been subtly programmed to create parent peer pressure, in addition to the peer pressure created for our children. If the neighbour's child gets a Barbie Doll that was advertised on television, the other parents in the neighbourhood feel obligated to do the same for their child. The same peer pressure is extended in countless ways. For example: birthday parties, dancing lessons, sports events, etc. Rarely on television are the children programmed to give to the parents.

In previous generations, children were trained to help. The parents taught the children to support them and to be grateful for their parents. They learned to help them grow crops, take care of the small children, do chores, assist in the family business, etc. The emphasis was on the children helping the parents. In this modern age of material comfort, the emphasis is on parents doing everything for the child. Very rarely do you see anything on television, in the commercials, films or sit-coms that addresses the issue of children helping and respecting their parents? How are they to learn? How do we stop this avalanche of self-centeredness instead of selflessness?

**Swami says, "Apart from educational programs, do not look at television at all, especially while taking food. Concentrate on the work at hand, whether it be eating or anything else."** Since parents are responsible for developing the character of their children, it is our duty to teach them the joy of giving to others.

### **Parents Must Take Back Responsibility**

Few are going to teach them in our western society. We parents must take the reins. How can we do this? When the children are very young, we talk to them about the joy of giving to others. The small child can bring the newspaper for dad to read, the diaper for the new born member in the family, the napkin for grandma's lap, the cookie for a friend. This is character development.

The emphasis is on the child helping first its parents, then its family members and friends which eventually extends outwardly into society ending in service to God, and service to man is service to God. The husband and wife set the example by giving to each other. The child will observe and learn. But example is never enough. Teaching must also be there; speak Swami's truths and use discipline to influence the behaviour that is desired. If the child will not bring a napkin to the grandparents, then you tell them why they need to help others. **"We can only give love through serving others," says Swami. It is the joy and love that we extend to others that brings true happiness or union with God.**

Now a small child may not understand what you are teaching, but you are planting seeds to programme his sub-conscience with Swami's wisdom; you are creating and developing his future behaviour. **If your emotions express joy while you are explaining, the child will respond to the emotion. If the**

**child does not comply, you will need to correct the behaviour with some form of discipline. Swami says, "Discipline means the observance of certain well-designed rules. Without such regulation it is not possible to maintain humanness."**

*Dear Reader, did this article help you? We invite you to send your responses concerning the positive influences your parents had on your life: the sacrifices they made for you; the love and discipline with which they cared for you; and how they molded you by their example. Alternatively, if you are a parent, who is following Swami's teachings in bringing up your child, we would also like to hear and learn from you. Please contact us at [h2h@radiosai.org](mailto:h2h@radiosai.org). Thank you for your time.*

## **SERIAL ARTICLES**

### **SHIRDI SAI PARTHI SAI - Part 29** (Continued from the previous issue)

#### **ACT VII - SCENE 2**

##### **SCENE 2**

*Young Sathya used many methods in order to turn people towards the spiritual path. One of these was to form a Bhajan group for boys. Sathya led the boys in singing Bhajan songs that were in praise of Vittala, one of the names of Lord Krishna. One day, these boys arrange a special Bhajan programme for the benefit of the villagers. The event is a great success. Everyone is filled with bliss. Easwaramma is especially proud of her son. When Satya returns home, she performs a small ritual that was supposed to ward off evil and jealous eyes.*

SATHYA: Mother, why do you have to do all this? No evil eye can touch Me!

VENKAMMA: You sang *Bhajans* so well, and everyone was closely looking at You. Some of them might have had evil eyes, and mother is doing this to cancel the bad effect.

SATHYA: Everyone looks at the idol of God but nothing happens to the idol.

EASWARAMMA: That's different. People look at idols with love and devotion. Here, people could be jealous. I don't want You to be affected by evil eyes.

SATHYA: When sparks of jealousy fall on the waters of Divinity, it is the fire that gets extinguished! Nothing happens to the water, does it?

KONDAMA RAJU: How well said, Sathyam! These are the words of One who has digested the whole of spirituality!

VENKAMA RAJU: These are words far beyond Your age! That's why we are anxious to shield You from evil eyes!!

EASWARAMMA: Enough! All of you come now for food!



### SCENE 3

*Kondama Raju is getting on in years. One day, he calls all the members of his family together, and announces his intention to divide his possessions among his four sons. The scene is Kondama's house.*

KONDAMA RAJU: You all may be wondering why father has called you. Your father is becoming old. And there are still some duties to be performed. All along, I have been managing the ancestral property of the Ratnakara Family, and my own finances. You, my sons, have families and the responsibility of bringing up your children. From now on, you will do the managing. Your eldest brother Venkama [Raju] who is like a father to you all, will explain all this in detail.

VENKAMA RAJU: You have heard what father said. His view is that the property has to be divided some time or the other. The details of the division have been recorded by him personally on these papers. .... *[hands out the papers]* Read them, and convey your response to father. *[to Kondama Raju]* If you leave everything to us, what about yourself?

KONDAMA RAJU: Why do I need any property? Are not all of you my property? What do I need? Just some food, that's all. That I'll cook myself.

SATHYA: Grandfather!

KONDAMA RAJU: Venkama, I have a small request! .... Give me your son Sathyam; that's enough! I will be as happy as if I have received all the traditional eight great forms of wealth.... Well, Venkama?

VENKAMA RAJU: Sathyam is your grandson. Why ask me?

KONDAMA RAJU: That word is enough! If any of you have any doubts about the property division, ask me.

ONE OF THE SONS: We have no doubts.

ANOTHER SON: We have never questioned your decisions!

THIRD SON: Let things proceed as you wish.

KONDAMA RAJU: Good! Venkama, prepare the formal documents and have the property divided. Sathyam is my property now, and also my everything!

#### SCENE 4

*The ancestral property of the Ratnakara family has been duly partitioned among the four sons of Kondama Raju. Kondama now moves into a small hut and lives there along with Sathya. One day, Kondama is cooking. The smoke irritates his eyes, and tears come out.*

SATHYA: Grandfather, why are you crying?

KONDAMA RAJU: These are not tears of sorrow, my grandson, they are tears of Bliss! Also, these onions are adding to the tears!

Sathya now takes over the cooking. After a while, .....

KONDAMA RAJU: Sathya! Oh, what a wonderful aroma! Serve me quick!

SATHYA: Wait grandpa! The cooking is not yet over!!

When the cooking is over, Sathya serves food to His grandfather, and both start eating.

KONDAMA RAJU: It's very nice, very nice! .....[to Sathya] How is it?

SATHYA: Very nice!

KONDAMA RAJU: It's Your cooking!

*At this stage, Easwamma enters the house, bringing some dishes that she has prepared at her home.*

EASWARAMMA: What! Grandfather and grandson are already eating?!

KONDAMA RAJU: Yes!

EASWARAMMA: But I have prepared food and brought it!

KONDAMA RAJU: No my dear. Sathyam has already done the cooking for today. Do you know how tasty His cooking is?

EASWARAMMA: What?! Sathyam did the cooking?

SATHYA: Yes mother!

KONDAMA RAJU: Cooking is one of the sixty-four arts. Is there any art that my grandson does not know?!

EASWARAMMA: Very good! With that wonderful cooking of the grandson, grandpa's stomach must be nearly full! Now that you have finished food, let me serve some pudding as dessert!

KONDAMA RAJU: Go ahead my dear!..... Now tell me grandson, how is mother's cooking?

*(To be continued)*

## GITA FOR CHILDREN - Part 30

(Continued from the previous issue)

### Chapter 14

1. Arjuna says, 'Krishna, the scriptures describe You as the One without a second. But when You project Yourself onto Creation, we see only diversity. Why is that?'
2. Krishna replies, 'That, Arjuna, is entirely due to the play of the *Gun*as. I have earlier mentioned *Gun*as in passing. I shall now tell you more.'
3. 'The word *Guna* means tendency or characteristic. There are basically three *Gun*as, *Tamo Guna*, *Rajo Guna* and *Sattva Guna*. The characteristic that I mentioned pertains to body functions as well as those of the mind.'
4. 'At this stage, I must clarify that God has deliberately built *Guna* into the scheme of things where the Universe is concerned. There is a purpose behind God's action, as always! At the same time, man must watch out and make sure that he does not become a slave to the *Gun*as.'
5. 'A few words now about the basic nature associated with the three *Gun*as. *Tamo Guna* is related to inactivity, *Rajo Guna* is connected with vigorous action and *Sattva Guna* with calmness.'
6. At the purely bodily level, when a person is sleeping, he is under the spell of *Tamo Guna*. When he is vigorous and active, for example while playing, he is responding to *Rajo Guna*. And while praying or doing service, he is exhibiting *Sattva Guna*.'
7. 'All this is a broad-brush description, and I must now supplement this with some details. Firstly, you must understand that not only every human being but in fact every being is a composite of the three fundamental *Gun*as in some proportion or the other, with one particular *Guna* dominating over the others.'
8. This mixture of the *Tamo*, *Rajo* and *Sattva* can be done in innumerable ways, and that is what leads to the extra-ordinary diversity that one sees in Nature.'
9. 'Later, after the war is over, try out an experiment in mixing colours. Start with red, green and blue, and mix them in different proportions like red = 10 %, green = 60% and blue =30%; red = 5%, green = 15% and blue = 80% and so on. Obviously, this kind of mixing can be done in an infinite number of ways, with each mixture leading to one particular composite colour. It is the

same in Nature, except that what is mixed are the three fundamental *Gunas* that I mentioned earlier.'

10. Arjuna asks, 'Krishna, you say each person corresponds to one particular mix of the basic three *Gunas*. Agreed. Does this composition remain unchanged throughout the life of that person or there can be changes and fluctuations?'

11. Krishna replies, 'Good question! The average value, if I might say so, generally does not change, unless there is a compelling force exerted either from outside or from inside. However, daily fluctuations there could be and indeed do occur. Thus, a person may be generally *Sattvic*. That means he would generally be calm. However, once in a while he could get angry too. And anger rises from *Rajas*. Thus you have here an example of the deviation from the norm.'

12. 'However, despite such fluctuations, it is possible to characterise a person as basically of the *Tamasic*, or *Rajasic* or *Sattvic* type. From now on, you must understand that whenever I refer to the *Guna* of a person, I am referring to his average nature.'

13. 'The characteristic of a person basically reflects his mental attitude. Thus, a *Sattvic* person is gentle, usually calm, often smiling, generally helpful, soft-spoken, etc. There is a distinctive aura about such a person. I suppose you get the general picture.'

14. 'A *Rajasic* person is restless and itches for action. Sometimes, he is even hyper-active! Of course, it is ambition and desire that drive his activity and make him dynamic. Naturally, such a person can get agitated, can become angry, feels disappointed when he fails, and so on.'

15. 'The *Tamasic* person is at the bottom, being a personification of dullness, sloth, inertia, laziness, and what have you. He is totally devoid of initiative, and a confirmed work-shirker! Well, that gives in a nutshell, what the three basic types of people are.'

016. Arjuna asks, 'Krishna, a person is *Tamasic*, knows that he is so and wants to change. What is he to do?'

17. Krishna replies, 'On account of his very nature, it is doubtful if a *Tamasic* person, would, of his own accord, want to change. Yet he may feel the urge, on advice from a noble soul. In such an event, laziness must be eliminated with activity; in other words, *Tamas* must be conquered with *Rajas*.'

18. Continuing, Krishna adds, 'While *Rajas* is certainly preferable to *Tamas*, one must not forget its undesirable aspects. In fact, *Rajas* has a strong tendency to get amplified. Hence, before much damage is done, *Rajas* itself must be vanquished with *Sattva*. So *Tamas* first with *Rajas* and *Rajas* then with *Sattva*.'

19. 'I have told you how *Rajas* is to be used for overcoming *Tamas*. Likewise, *Sattva* is invoked by avoiding bad company and seeking only good company. By the way, don't imagine that good company means only good people; a good book also can be a good companion. In this context, the scriptures must be given priority number one.'

*(To be continued)*

## WINDOW TO SAI SEVA

### **PIONEERING SAI MEDICAL CAMP AT ALIKE**

Alike is a picturesque village in the coastal district of Dakshina Kannada (also called as South Kanara) in the southern Indian state of Karnataka. This tiny hamlet, about 50 kms from the city of Mangalore, is nestled in the lap of nature. Surrounded by hills and covered with greenery and beautiful flora, Alike is amazingly serene. But it is not for this reason why it has caught everybody's attention. What was moved eyeballs here are striking blossoms of a different kind – the shining students of the Sathya Sai School of Alike. It is a wonderful school and we will bring you a comprehensive story on this later this year, but for now here is the account of a riveting medical camp that was organized in the Primary Health Centre attached to this school in January 2007.

Between January 28 to 31, more than 11000 poor people were served and treated – all for free, in this school. While many doctors came from UK, and nurses and other support staff joined from local medical colleges, the bulk of the work was done by the students who acted as volunteers. It was a grand show of love in action, where Bhagavan's grace was very evident. We interviewed four professionals who participated in this camp and are happy to share their experiences with you, which were recorded in the studio of Radio Sai in February 2007. The interviewees were:

**Dr S K Upadhyay**, MBBS, MRCOphthal Honorary Professor of Ophthalmology, who works as a Consultant Ophthalmologist in London. He leads teams of doctors, nurses and volunteers in medical camps around the world.

**Dr Suresh**, a neurosurgeon serving in Swami's Super Specialty hospital in Bangalore, who was instrumental in organizing this medical camp and liaising between the chairman of Alike and Dr Upadhyay.

**Dr. Deepak Shah**, a professional photographer and a key member of Dr. Upadhyay's team who has arranged equipment and done the groundwork for many medical camps all over the world.

**Mr. Sergey Korchagin**, a professional optician from Voronez, Russia who has worked with Dr Upadhyay for the last five years at medical camps in Russia and India, carrying out eye-care service.

**H2H: Please could you tell us how you were able to organize this pioneering medical camp in remote Alike?**

**Dr. Suresh:** Sai Ram to everyone. I was in UK for some time and during that time I had participated along with Dr Upadhyay going to a couple of countries on medical camps. Somehow, I developed a feeling for Alike. It is in a remote place and the hospital has been started only a few years ago.

I thought it would be a very good idea to have the Medical Camp in Alike because it has a good infrastructure. The only missing thing was a link between Dr Upadhyay and Alike, and I thought I could play that role. As you know Swami took over Alike in 1977 (which was started originally in 1963 by Sri M Narayana Bhat, a visionary educationist and great devotee of Swami) and the Sathya Sai Hospital there started only a few years ago which has three doctors working there now.

When I initially proposed to the Chairman of Alike, Shri Gangadhar Bhat (whom we affectionately call Gangadhar Anna), about the camp, he was a bit shocked. I proposed this a couple of years ago and I don't know how serious he was about it. I was in UK then.

Later, I mentioned this to Dr Upadhyay in passing. We wanted to take this up last year, but I was coming to India to take up a job in Swami's Hospital in Bangalore, so I was very occupied. Someone was needed to be a link and organize the local aspect like transport, and reassuring other participants. It is easy talking it over phone; doing it locally is a different ball game, and initially people were a bit perturbed and not convinced.

In fact, one of the local surgeons who was a guest at the valedictory function had said, "You won't get even 200 or 300 patients." After the camp was over, he remarked, "I am sorry. I back my words."

To get started, we had a preliminary meeting about four months ago for which we invited a couple of local doctors as well as a few old students of Alike who are working in a Medical School and Hospital in Mangalore. Eventually, there were around 20 of us in the organizing team.

We decided that the specialties would be: General Medicine, Surgery, Gynecology, Pediatrics and Radiology. We already had in the hospital the basic laboratory, Pharmacy, Ophthalmology, ENT, and Dentistry.

We contacted all the old students of the Alike School, distributed in the various parts of Karnataka. Some of them said they can come for four days, some said they can come for one day and so on. So we prepared a database and formed a timetable for doctors' availability.

A local well-wisher, who runs a Nursing College and is in very good terms with Shri Gangadhar Bhat, said he will send a full bus load of nurses who will work for the four days freely. The Chairman of the Medical School in nearby Mangalore offered to send the required number of doctors for the Camp. So, the doctors comprised of old students, friends of doctors working in Alike, as well as the doctors who had come from different parts of Karnataka, apart from the many Doctors from the Medical School. The total strength was 18 from UK. The minimum number of doctors we had was 73 and the maximum number was 102 serving on each day. The entire support structure needed was organized: Doctors, Pharmacists, Nurses and 1,000 students from the campus who served as volunteers.

For a villager going to a big city means fear; he doesn't know the place; he has to pay for auto rickshaw; there are many other problems including language barriers. But here, as many specialists could speak the local language, the villagers were very happy. The next thing is the referral and surgery. Usually when a Medical Camp is done, it runs for one week, and the last day when everything is over, there is no more contact with the patients. This was not the case here.

We are running another four Sundays for the refraction and prescription of glasses and then we have listed around 1000 patients for further consultation, investigations and surgery. I think that is a unique feature of this camp. We have a register where all the addresses and details are for us to contact them and batch by batch they will be processed.



**Dr Upadhyay:** Dr. Suresh had become the link for the Alike camp. They had been preparing for it for quite some time. I was not sure what we are going to do in Alike. I had a small team and I was very worried when they told me there will be 3,000 patients every day. That was beyond my imagination. I kept telling him "Swami wants quality, not quantity". And he kept telling me "Dr Upadhyay, there is a need for this." When Swami's instruments are working, it is their faith in Swami. Swami is working through you. If you just keep the ego away, Swami's love flows through you.

## **H2H: What were your first impressions when you saw the camp?**

**Dr Upadhyay:** When we went there, I was taken aback. I had never seen a camp of that magnitude, and it was done in such a grand manner. They had thought of everything. There was a huge board for people as they walked in to guide them where they were going to.

The School was converted into a temporary make shift hospital. They had ECG, blood testing and a pharmacy and we brought some equipment from Sri Sathya Sai General Hospital. We had with us a pharmacist whom we brought from London. She runs a huge hospital called Barnet General Hospital - it is one of the biggest in London. She was amazed when she saw the layout of the pharmacy. It was designed to cater to 11,000-12,000 people.

The most important factor is the service that they gave. It was real *Madhava Seva* (Serving God in man). The students were sitting under the trees and waiting with nice cold water for patients who came there in the hot sun. When the people got down from the bus, every 100 yards there was a water point and the students were sitting there happily serving water. Thousands of patients were fed every day with breakfast, not just *sambar* and rice, but five types of different dishes.

Swami says that one should see no difference between a patient and a doctor. The patient should be treated like God. The students of Alike opened our eyes! They were really like *Hanumans* (valorous devotee of Lord Rama), doing everything so beautifully with such great love! 11,000 people were seen in the four days.

**Mr. Sergei Korchagin:** After an hour's journey through the narrow and curving mountain roads in the night, the amazingly beautiful Sathya Sai Hospital of Alike appeared in front of us among the palm trees.

In the morning out of our guesthouse window we could see the Sai School for boys which was surrounded by nature and mountains. After getting to know the team of doctors from England over breakfast, we entered the treatment room and began to work.

As usual we would hand out ready-made glasses to the patients after Dr Upadhyay and his team had checked their sight. The first problem we had was the language barrier. The local people speak four dialects. Here the students of the Sai School came to our aid. Five or six boys grouped around each doctor and gave all the necessary translations and any other help. Their little hearts radiated so much love!

They were a clear example of the divine tenderness and care inspired by Bhagavan's love. Deeply absorbed in their service, the boys quickly got to know all the techniques of selecting the right glasses. After only one day they were able to read out the prescriptions written by the doctors, choose the right glasses, check how the

patients reacted to the glasses, and correct them, if necessary. The elder boys even learnt how to check people's eye-sight and relieved the work of the doctors.

**H2H: How did you feel as the camp progressed? What struck you about the quality of service and patient care that you saw?**

**Dr Suresh:** There was *Narayan Seva* and more than 12,000 meals were served and as Dr Upadhyay said, the dishes were similar to what we ate.

On the first day we had 2,595 patients registered. The maximum was 2,750 on the third day. On the last day, we restricted the registration because we realized that may not be able to see them.

In fact, for the next four Sundays after the camp concluded, local people came for screening and examination only for the eyes, not other specialties. We have already seen 11,141 - now another 300-400 were seen in the month of February.

Out of the 11,141, nearly 10% (1,112 patients) have been registered for outside referrals and surgery. So these will be worked on further and they will be sent to local private medical schools for further tests and surgery. For the patient, everything is free of cost.

Until now, the overall cost of the camp, including surgery, is nearly 23 lakhs of rupees. On an average we spent about 2000 rupees per person. 90% of the glasses procured from Bangalore were brand new. They were in fact, imported from Korea via Chennai. Swami says that what you give to people should be of good standard; quality is most important and we were always mindful of this.

**Dr Deepak Shah (camp photographer and cameraman):** I reached the camp on the second day at 10:15 a.m. I went straight to Dr Upadhyay's desk and asked for my duties to be allocated. He simply said, "Try and cover everything." It means that A to Z, nothing to be missed. So, I first went around, had a general view of how to conduct the shooting and how to make a documentary to share it with everybody. So I was going through all the departments, interviewing the doctors, get their inputs, and then I approached all the local people. Without the knowledge of Kannada, it was getting difficult.

At this time, we had the golden angels with us – the student volunteers. I got very attached to them, there are no words to express my appreciation. I think 80% of the work was successful, thanks to the students. It wouldn't have been a success without them. That is the first thing I observed.

The doctors were doing fantastic job. We were going from place to place, just looking through the camera, looking at the people waiting patiently for their turn to come - everywhere you saw only peace and happiness!

We saw the joy in the eyes of the people as they were treated; the proficiency in the way they collected their medicines; everybody being guided to the right place and we

felt happy that they received so much already without taking any medicines! Why? Because the whole atmosphere was so serene, there was love everywhere.

Food was being distributed, medicine was being served and the doctors were viewing or screening the patient with such humbleness and politeness.

As soon as I entered the camp I saw a queue which was at least a quarter of a mile, right from the hilltop to where they were enrolling the patients. After about hour and half, the queue was all finished! You could see with what great efficiency they must be working. They had a row of computers there, taking all the medical histories and the students taking them to the right places, and by four o'clock, the mass which had come had almost gone home. That was very surprising!

It could not have happened without such efficient work by all the people involved in the camp. They knew exactly what is to be done. They knew exactly where to send the patient next and I take my hat off, this was one of the most wonderful Medical Camps which I have seen.

**Mr. Sergei Korchagin:** My best experience from this camp, was working with the boys. I felt that these boys are, truly, our teachers. They teach us *Bhakthi*, devotion to God, and *Karma*, good action. I don't know how many lives they must have prayed in their heart! How they shared His love with every patient was moving. They were excellent volunteers.

In the last day, we worked until 4 pm and then went to the valedictory function. We didn't say good bye to the boys. After the meeting, we had dinner and my wife, Galina said, "I am sorry, I didn't say good bye to our small children." After 2-3 seconds, these boys ran to us and were saying goodbye with tears in their eyes - we were deeply touched. It was a wonderful experience of love.

And this was not all. Each evening, the boys performed a cultural programme such as a *drama* or gymnastics or bhajans for the local people and camp participants. There were also talks on spiritual matters. We were given this incredible blessing of participating at this great Seva *Yagna* (sacrifice) through Swami's grace.

**H2H: Were the patients from the nearby area? What was their economic background? And did they have any medical facilities to help them back home?**

**Dr. Upadhyay:** The majority of them were from 30-40 km distances, who actually wanted to have a second or third opinion. Some of them knew their medical condition but could not afford the surgery. Because this was advertised in newspapers and radio they came purely for surgery. Some had come for Cardiac and Neuro specialties and we gave the address of Swami's Bangalore Hospital for further work.

I would say the majority of them were from very poor social backgrounds. Many of them who could not see anything, could not afford to buy glasses. In the camp, we distributed almost 2,000 glasses. We may have to distribute another 2,000 in this month of February.

And these cases that are listed for surgery have been classified into urgent, early and elective. Urgent will be worked on first. They have been again classified into

Pediatrics, Gynaecology, General surgery, Orthopaedics and the like. Although the camp is over, the work will continue for another 3 or 4 months.

**H2H: Did you get any chance to speak to any of the patients who came to the camp?**

**Dr Deepak Shah:** Yes we did, we talked with many patients who came there. We could feel the love and joy they experienced to be seen by such professional doctors. That you should experience to believe it! It is not easily conveyed in words.

**Dr. Suresh:** Let me share one anecdote: one man had just received his food, but he was not eating, he was crying looking at the food. I asked him what happened. He said, "My son or my family could never serve such dishes and I have been given this with such great love." A student was standing near the old man with buttermilk because his hand was full of food, and asking him to sit down and eat comfortably.

The sun was hot and swelling. Each and every inch was covered with a *shamiana* (a large cover to give shade) so that people are comfortable. What happens during Swami's birthday (large *Narayana Sevas*), it was duplicated here. Everybody could feel that it was Swami's love which was flowing. In that man's words, "My own son would not have done this for me." And 12,000 people were fed the same breakfast and lunch.

**H2H: Did you get a chance to talk to the old students of Alike?**

**Dr. Suresh:** Lots of old students have never been connected to Alike. One student came from Canada to be in the camp for a day. He was completely taken aback. Like this, lots of people came to Alike for the first time after leaving the school. They were stunned to see the new buildings, to meet old friends. Whenever I met them, I requested them to make a sort of an annual commitment for this camp, because we want to run this annually and it could be something like a homecoming for them.

**H2H: Did you get to speak with Mr Gangadhar Bhat, the Chairman?**

**Dr. Deepak Shah:** Yes, I had a small interview with him. "Baba is even more with you in England than there with us here," He said and mentioned that it was an honour for him to serve in the medical camp. He was absolutely thrilled the way the camp went.

**Dr Suresh:** I want to add two things to what Dr Deepak said. Everyone appreciated the Doctors. First of all, I would like to comment on the Chairman, Sri Gangadhar Bhat. I spoke to him after the camp concluded and he said that the villagers are extremely happy because they haven't received so much care from specialists at one place. He also stated that it was a unique experience for the whole campus, where the teachers, staff and various workers felt very delighted. For students, it was a undoubtedly a 'only one of its kind' experience.

**Dr. Upadhyay:** When the camp started, I was worried about the number of the people coming everyday. He noticed that I was tensed about a number of things, so he called me and said, "Nothing will go wrong, because Bhagavan called me before the camp and gave something in my hand and then closed my palm. He said everything will go fine."

So, Dr Upadhyay, do not worry. "If God has said, you do not have to worry," he strengthened me. Instantly, all my worries disappeared.

Last day he asked me again the same thing. He was great source of support and inspiration. He really is realized that we were just nimithas (instruments). Swami showed that even without us He could have done all this. He just wanted to give the credit.

Second thing that I want to say is that - In many of the countries where we work, we cannot close until 11 or 12 o'clock midnight. People come from long distances and no way could we not see them. And this is, generally, very taxing for the doctors, but this was not the case here. Everything happened with so much precision and efficiency; we were able to see greater number of patients than we usually do, in less time.

**H2H: You have shared so much with us. Are there any concluding thoughts?**

**Dr. Upadhyay:** Swami has given so many opportunities to travel from East to West, North to South. What you see is so much joy in the medical camps - joy, love, it is wonderful!

**H2H: Please come back and share with us your experiences serving in Russia and other countries. We would very much enjoy them.**

*SaiRam and Thank you very much!*

## **PRASHANTI DIARY**

### **“Daivam Manusha Roopena”: A drama by Higher Secondary School students on 29 March, 2007**

The students of Sri Sathya Sai Higher Secondary School, Prasanthi Nilayam had the good fortune of performing a play, *Daivam Manusha Roopena* in the Divine Presence of Bhagavan Baba in Sai Kulwant Hall on March 29, 2007. The play depicted the glory and message of Sri Sainath of Shirdi. Divinity descends on earth and takes a human garb so that mankind can feel and experience the compassion and sweetness of God. Focussing on a few selected incidents, the sixty minute play brought out the divine facets of Shirdi Sainath. These incidents, apart from establishing the divinity of Sai, also remarkably conveyed His sterling qualities of compassion, mercy and pure love.

While introducing the play the narrator mentions how Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba proclaimed on May 23, 1940 that He was Sai Baba of Shirdi come again to shower grace and compassion on His devotees. The two Avatars are, in fact, one and the same, he asserts.

The first scene unfolds the humility and Divinity of Sainath. Nanavalli, mistaken by the people of Shirdi to be a bully, comes to test Sai Baba's Divine virtues. He enters Dwaraka Mai (Sainath's dwelling place) and expresses a desire to sit on the throne on which Sainath is seated. Sainath willingly vacates the throne and occupies an ordinary seat. Sainath, then, reveals His omnipresence by answering the questions posed by Nanavalli. Completely transformed, Nanavalli now prostrates at the feet of Sai Baba and seeks His forgiveness for testing Him. When he finally leaves the place, Sainath reveals the true nature of Nanavalli and says, "Many think that Nanavalli is a madman, but he is not; he is a great Avadhoota!"

The second scene depicts the compassion of Sainath of Shirdi. It shows how the despised and the downtrodden came to Baba and found succour at His feet.

Smitten by leprosy, Bhagoji Shinde finds that he is unwanted in his own home. He overhears the conversation of the members of his family expressing their disgust for him. He is wounded deeply in the heart and now prays to God for help. The kind-hearted Sainath of Shirdi not only listens to his prayers, brings him to Shirdi and cures his humiliating malady, but also keeps him at His Lotus Feet till the end of his life

The third scene portrays how the compassionate Sai draws people to His Lotus Feet. Ganesh Nath Dattatreya Sahasra Buddhe was a police constable who nourished a deep desire to carve out a distinguished career in the police

department. When he goes to Shirdi, in the company of the district magistrate and Chandorkar, to visit Sainath, the Lord advises him not to join the department. But swayed by his worldly ambition, he disobeys the Divine Master. And on his job takes up the task of spying on the dreaded dacoit Bil Kanhai.

But, tragically, Bil Kanhai traps him and decides to kill him. At this point, the intense prayers of Dattatreya Sahasra Buddhe effect a change in the mind of the bandit. He spares his life with a stern warning that he will kill him if he finds him spying again. Dattatreya Sahasra Buddhe, overwhelmed by the compassion of Sainath, comes to Shirdi quitting the job in the Police department. The merciful Sai forgives him and christens him as 'Das Ganu' who goes on to become a famous *Kirtankar*, a poet and a singer who spreads the glory of Sainath far beyond the precincts of the village of Shirdi.

The last scene, in a moving sequence, depicts the infinite love of Sai which prompted Him to make 'out of the body' journeys to save His devotees. The scene portrays how the people of all religions felt deep seated love for Sainath who was the embodiment of infinite compassion and universal love. The play ends with a colourful dance celebrating the glory of Sainath.

Bhagavan, immensely pleased with the play, blessed the students posing for a group photograph. That was enough benediction for the boys who had staged the play amidst annual exams for their Lord with sincere love.

Swami also materialised a chain for Sukesh Aman, a XI class student of Sri Sathya Sai Higher Secondary School, who enacted the role of Shirdi Sai.

Everyone present could see Bhagavan visibly moved as the play went on, perhaps remembering His previous incarnation which, just as now, was one of infinite mercy and sacrifice.

#### **'Vishu' Celebrations: April 13, 2006**

Vishu is a festival held in the state of Kerala (and adjoining areas of Karnataka and Tamil Nadu) around the first day in the Malayalam month of Medam (April – May). This occasion signifies the Sun's transit to the zodiac Mesha (Aries) as per Indian astrological calculations. Vishu is also considered as the Malayalam New Year day and thus this day occupies a special place of significance to all Malayalees (people of Kerala origin) regardless of their religion or sect. In addition to thousands of devotees, about 1,300 school students, 400 parents and 200 Bal Vikas Gurus too had come from the state of Kerala, to spend their New Year day with Bhagavan.

The celebrations this year at Prasanthi Nilayam commenced on the afternoon of April 13 with traditional *Nadaswaram* and *Panchavadyam*. These classical instruments resoundingly announced the beginning of the holy event. Amidst the veda chanting Bhagavan entered Sai Kulwant Hall at 3.05 PM to bless His devotees.

After reaching the stage, Swami, in all His Infinite Mercy and Compassion, went among the children and devotees. To some He talked, to some it was a raised hand of assurance, to some it was a glance of acknowledgement, for some it was a smile of His omniscience and for all it was endless joy and infinite love. Amidst those innocent faces of children He spotted a 'chosen one', called him and from the thin air came a gold chain as His sign of

blessing and love to this fortunate child.

The programme in the afternoon began with instrumental fusion by Sri Kuzhalmandom Ramakrishnan and party from Kerala. The notes from *mridangam*, *edaykka*, *chenda*, *ganchira*, violin, and flute all merged into beautiful rhythms and tunes like *Vathapi ganapathim...*, *Entharo mahanubhavulu...*, *Anandasagara...*, *Samajavaragamana...* and enthralled one and all. Devotional music by Sri Kavalam Sreekumar which included Malayalam compositions in praise of Bhagavan Baba and some traditional hymns of Kerala followed this programme in a befitting manner.

Then the Bal Vikas children of Kerala in all their simplicity and innocence offered to their Lord melodious Bhajans that filled the ambience with a special vibrancy. As Bhajans were in progress Bhagavan came near the front rows and graciously distributed *Vasthram* (clothes) to all singers and members of the Bal Vikas Bhajan group. Their beaming faces, wide open eyes and infectious smiles conveyed all. They were being blessed by God on their New Year day! Bhagavan then called master Hari, the boy who played harmonium for the Bal Vikas bhajans and materialized a chain for him. It felt to everyone that Swami amply rewarded his talent and hard work that conquered his handicap in vision.

After the Bhajan, Swami asked Sri Kavalam Sreekumar to continue, who immediately came out with a Meera Bhajan and a traditional hymn. After this, the students of the Sri Sathya Sai University presented Sai Bhajans and devotional music. The programme came to a conclusion with Mangala Arathi.

### **Vishu Morning – April 15, 2006**

Early in the morning of 15th, Sai Kulwant Hall appeared aesthetically decorated for the occasion with *kuruthola* (tender coconut leaves) and fresh flowers. A traditional *vishukkani* (a floral design) was arranged before Bhagavan's throne - consisting of the sacred lamp, *nirapara* (rice), konna flowers, clothes, grains of the harvest, fruits, etc.

The auspicious tones of *Nadaswaram* lent a holy ambience, after which *Panchavadyam* (traditional band) began, creating an atmosphere similar to that of the temples of Kerala. Bhagavan, in all His Grace and Mercy, arrived at Sai Kulwant Hall at 8 am amidst Veda chanting. Bhagavan occupied His throne and the proceedings of the morning commenced. The Bal Vikas children of Kerala offered a song specially composed for the occasion. It had stanzas in Malayalam, Telugu and Hindi and ended with the chorus with all children singing, "O Lord, kindly come to us; grant us Thy Holy Feet."

Bhagavan then graciously permitted two Bal Vikas children to speak in the Divine Presence. The first speaker was Master Pratyush. He began with his impressions and experiences regarding the divine abode of Prasanthi Nilayam. He said that we are all fortunate to be the Avatar's contemporaries and to have Him as our Father, Mother, Guru, Guide and Friend. He reminded us that Vishu is the day to forsake all selfishness and to strive to keep our



thoughts, words and deeds pure. He concluded his speech by saying, "There is only one Name – Sai. There is only one God – Sai. There is only one goal – Sai."

The second speaker was Master Vishal who began with the verse "Twameva Matacha..." He said that it is a rare privilege to be a Bal Vikas student, being part of Swami's vision of '*Lokavikas* (welfare of the world) through Bal Vikas'. This is possible only by putting into practice Swami's teachings; only from Swami can we derive inspiration in this regard. He narrated an incident where Bhagavan enquired of the teachers of the Sai School as to what subjects they were teaching - the Lord finally declared, "My subject is discipline; make that the most important topic." He concluded by reminding all Bal Vikas children to utilize the best this glorious opportunity to blossom into beautiful flowers in the garden of Sai.

Next Sri T. S. Radhakrishnan presented some melodious musical offerings. After a Ganesha prayer, he sang the couplet "Kani Kanunneram..." signifying the arrival of Vishu. A song describing the beautiful form of Krishna followed. The next song described the infinite compassion of Bhagavan Baba. He concluded his performance with the song "Hey Shamasundara..." which all devotees enthusiastically followed. Bhajans by the Kerala devotees followed this musical concert and the programme came to a happy conclusion with Mangala Arathi to Bhagavan at 9.40 am.

### **Vishu Evening – April 15, 2006**

The evening programme commenced as Swami came to Sai Kulwant Hall at 3.25 pm. The Bala Vikas children of Kerala presented a dance drama entitled "Sathyameva Jayathe". It was based on the life of King Harischandra, whose names in Sanskrit connotes "the one of golden splendour".

Harishchandra had two unique qualities. The first being that he kept his word and never went back on what he uttered as a promise; and the second was that he never uttered a lie in his life. Sage Vishwamithra decided to test Harishchandra's adherence to truth. Thus the king, his wife and son were made to sustain tremendous hardships. Harishchandra, with no money in his hands, had to sell his wife and son to a Brahmin Grihastha (householder) to pay for the *Dakshina* (offering to the spiritual preceptor). When the money collected still did not suffice for the purpose, he sold himself to a guard at the cremation ground, who was in charge of collecting taxes for the bodies to be cremated. The king helped the guard cremate the dead bodies, while his wife and son were used as household helpers at the house of the brahmin.

Once, the son had been to the garden to pluck flowers for his master's prayer, when he was bitten by a snake and he died instantly. His mother, having nobody to sympathise for her, carried his body to the cremation grounds. In acute penury, she could not even pay the taxes needed to cremate him. Harishchandra hearing her wails came to her and recognised her as his wife and was stung by pangs of agony. But, Harishchandra was duty bound by his job to perform the cremation only after the acceptance of the tax. So she was sent to the town to get the required amount. There she was caught by Royal guards for stealing the money and the king ordered her execution. It was Harishchandra's duty to execute her. As he drew out the sword to behead her, Lord Vishnu, Indra, all the Gods and sage Vishwamitra manifested

themselves on the scene, and praised Harishchandra for his perseverance and steadfastness and granted back all that he had lost hitherto.

This inspiring story depicting the glory and supremacy of truth was aesthetically presented through a beautifully orchestrated and professionally choreographed dance. The powerful poetical dialogues, soul-stirring music and fine costumes elevated this depiction to admirable heights.

Bhagavan graciously materialized a gold chain for the little girl who played the role of Harischandra's son. Then Bhagavan called all the children to Him and in all His Love and Compassion, posed for photographs with them. Swami appeared visibly very touched by the entire presentation.

**Later in the bhajan hall Swami narrated the entire life story of the King Harishchandra to His students and said, "Boys realize this - Truth alone is victorious (Satyameva Jayate), not merely victorious but it is triumphant (Satyameva Vijayate). This land of Bharat that propagated this ideal is the teacher to the whole world. In fact, not a teacher alone but a headmaster."** The evening programme concluded with Mangala Arathi at 5.35 PM.

#### **Tamil New Year Day: 14 April, 2006**

Tamil New Year Day was celebrated with suitable gaiety in the divine presence. All the assembled hearts were thrilled when Swami's arrived at 8 am this morning. Hundreds of devotees from Tamil Nadu that had gathered at the lotus Feet were filled with delight as Swami came on to the stage. The programme for the morning session commenced with the divine assent to the Convener of the Tamil Nadu Trust (who is the Chairman of Sundaram Finance), to introduce the proceedings. On behalf of the people of his state, Shri Raman expressed his deepest sense of gratitude for His benevolence and the compassion that quenched the thirst of Chennai residents through the Sri Sathya Sai Drinking Water project for Chennai. He expressed the firm resolve of his people to carry out the directives prescribed by Swami in His Ugadi discourse for rural upliftment.

Three speakers then followed him, Dr. S.P.Thyagarajan being the first. He is an eminent educationalist, former vice-chancellor of Madras University, and a medical micro biologist with 325 research papers to his credit out of which 4 have attained patents. One of his discoveries was a special drug for Hepatitis-B. He eloquently quoted passages from Swami's various discourses and opined, "As one of the senior educationist of this country, I was agonizing as to how the youth of India can be brought to realize the heights of Swami's students and teachers as present in Prasanthi Nilayam. After having seen, heard and experienced the ambience that is prevailing in the Sathya Sai Institutions, I believe the same should prevail all over the nation. This can be brought about only by Swami. On this eve of New Year, I pray that Swami would make another land mark resolution to remould the students and teachers of this country. This will fill our mother land with all round prosperity."

The next speaker for the session was Sri K. Balachandar, an eminent director

in the Indian film industry. He is considered as a father figure for bringing human values from the world of reality into the realm of films. He was conferred 'Padma Shri' for yeomen service to the movie world. He said, "How I became a devotee is a short story. It was in 1986, and I had just completed the film *Sindhu Bhairavi*. There were many anxious moments that I had gone through. Seeing my condition my son-in-law got a framed picture of Sai Baba and hung it on the wall of my office room and told me that Bhagavan would take care of the film. I never took it seriously. The film came out in flying colours and I felt Bhagavan's presence many a times during my work. I was initially skeptical about the completion of the Chennai water project but the subsequent events proved me absolutely wrong. Bhagavan is not an individual, He is an institution by Himself. He is a phenomenon. He is the ultimate."

The third speaker was Justice V. Ramasubramanyam. He is a lawyer by profession, now elevated to the Bench. As of today he holds the rare privilege of being the youngest High Court judge and was a balavikas student for nine years. He said, "That I am a judge today is of little significance but it is significant to be in His divine protective care since childhood. Parents today want their sons to be good doctors, good engineers, for, this will enable them to earn a lot of money. Alas, when these same parents end up in old age homes they realize that they converted their sons into mere ATMs but not good individuals. Swami wants us first to be good citizens - then we can be good lawyers, engineers and doctors. In this direction He has established educational institutions and the impact of this contribution to humanity is immeasurable."

This was followed by Bhagavan's Divine discourse. In a short but moving discourse, Bhagavan conferred unexpected blessings on the people of Tamil Nadu when He said:

"Embodiments of Love! As mentioned by the speakers just now, I provided water to Chennai both for drinking as well as for cultivation purposes. But the repair work of the canal was done up to the border of Andhra Pradesh, without any problem. It was done in such nice way that not even a drop of water is allowed to be wasted. However, the part of the canal on the Tamil Nadu side was not repaired. This work was required to be done by the Government of Tamil Nadu, but somehow they did not do it. Up to the border of Tamil Nadu, the water of the River Krishna reached very smoothly without any wastage. But as the water entered the Tamil Nadu border, there was some wastage. The cost of repairing the remaining part of the canal amounts to 30-40 crores. Since the Tamil Nadu Government did not provide necessary funds, this work could not be done. But the people are worried as the work has not been completed. The length of the canal to be repaired towards Chennai is about 25 kms.

**Since Swami has already done the repair work of the other part of the canal without wasting a single drop of water, He alone can take the responsibility of completing this task. As per the request of Karunanidhi,**

**I will undertake to do this work (*loud applause*). There is no need for you to depend upon anybody else. It is enough if you pray to God. Very soon, I will complete this work so that water reaches the people of Chennai in full measure.**

Within the next day or two I will send the engineers there. As there are breaches on the other side of the canal, a lot of water is wasted. After the repair work is done, adequate water will reach Sathyamurthy Sagar. **Thus, Sathyamurthy Sagar will be filled with Sathya Sai Water (*loud prolonged applause*). I will do this work. This will ensure permanent supply of water to Chennai.**

Sai can do this work, which nobody else is able to do. The remaining part of the canal will be nicely repaired with cement lining. You have seen for yourself how much water is being wasted now. Water is not anybody's property; it is God's property. People are fighting with each other for water, which in reality is the property of God. But they have no right to fight. Water is God's gift to man. Everybody has equal right over it. Hence, God alone can complete this task.

The name of this year is Sarvajit. What is the meaning of Sarvajit? It means victory in all fields, viz., business, agriculture, education, etc. Hence, we will also be victorious in our work. **I will complete this work so that you have no inconvenience henceforth.** I am prepared to spend any amount of money. The five elements are the gift of God; water is one of them. It is in the hand of God. You need not approach anyone else. You may inform Karunanidhi also that I will surely do this work. Convey this good news to the people of Chennai also in this auspicious Sarvajit year. May you all lead a happy life! Constantly contemplate on God. It is total protection. How can people have any problem when they have this sacred protection? Why fear when I am here? (*loud applause*) In this Sarvajit year, I will give water for Sathyamurthy Sagar. Therefore, you should have no worry. **Have faith that God will not only provide food and water to you, but He will look after you in all respects.**

Today is the sacred New Year day. It is an important day, both for the people of Kerala and Tamil Nadu. The people of Kerala and Tamil Nadu are recipients of My grace in full measure (*loud prolonged applause*). Hereafter you will have no obstacles. Enjoy good health by drinking this sweet water and lead a blissful and happy life without any problems. For a long time small children have been suffering from many ailments by drinking polluted water.

All of you who have come here should go back happy. You will have no dearth of anything in life. **I have great love for Chennai.** Where is Chennai? Where is Puttaparthi? Did anyone come here and pray to Me? No. Sai Himself has come to you and provided water. My love for Chennai cannot be described in words. May you all enjoy a good health by eating good food and drinking pure water."

After this elevating discourse, the hall was filled with melodious bhajans sung by the devotees from Tamil Nadu. The session for the morning ended with prasadam distribution and Mangala Aarathi at 10 a.m.

In the afternoon, Swami arrived in the hall at 3.30 p.m. The evening was scheduled with a drama by the Balavikas children of Tamil Nadu. The drama portrayed the theme of five *maha yajnas* (sacrifices) that an individual has to perform in his lifetime.

These *yajnas* include *deva yajna* - worship to the Lord. This theme was brought out through the story of Prahalada. Hiranyakashyapu was a demonic king who strived to establish his supremacy through his knowledge. But his son Prahalada considered Lord Narayana as the supreme. Enraged with his son's behaviour Hiranyakashyapu questions the very existence of Narayana and in an attempt to disprove his son's belief breaks a pillar. Maha Vishnu emerges from the pillar in a grotesque form of half human and half lion, named as Narasimha. The Lord tears apart the villainous Hiranyakashyapu and blesses Prahalada profusely.

*Pitru yajna* - service to our parents was conveyed through the story of Shravana Kumar. He carried his parents on his shoulders to all the pilgrim centres of India. Thus, he served his parents with diligence and unmatched devotion. Once, on the request of his parents he goes into the wilderness for water to quench their thirst. As he fills the bowl, the gurgling sound of the river water misleads King Dasharata to believe that a tiger was drinking the water. He shoots an arrow which kills Shravana Kumara. On learning this news from Dasharata, life ebbs away from the old parents too.

*Athithi yajna* - service to the guest was expressed through an inspiring incident in the life of Sri Adi Shankara. When Shankara was requesting for alms, a poor lady adhering to the dictum of 'Guest is God' offers the only gooseberry she has. Touched by her devotion Shankaracharya prays to Mother Lakshmi, the goddess of wealth. In response, the goddess showers golden coins on the poor lady.

*Bhoota yajna* - service to the living creatures was beautifully communicated through the sacrifice of King Shibi. Gods, wanting to test the compassionate nature of King Shibi, take the form of a hawk and a pigeon. The pigeon chased by the hawk falls on King Shibi's lap seeking his protection. The hawk argues that the pigeon is its food, but Shibi offers to compensate with his own flesh. Finally he offers himself to be eaten, it is at this point that the Gods show him their true form and bless him.

*Rishi yajna* includes activities devoted to the study of scriptures. This was well depicted through the story of poetess Avvaiyar. Her father coerces her to marry the king of the region, who was interested in her. In despair, she turns to her Lord Ganesha and requests him to remove this beauty that had become such a burden and a distraction for her spiritual life. The god responds by aging her into a crone overnight.

Her subsequent wanderings were a source of great education and inspiration for her, and she had developed a social consciousness in her poetry long before such things were understood. She saw the lives of simple people and their suffering at close quarters and did not see any reason why it must be so. Her love for the common man and their simple affection and respect, her disdain for the pretensions of the rich and miserly, her indignation at the injustice of the caste system are so simple and direct that they have not lost a whit of their relevance even today. These independent incidents were well portrayed through a conversation between sage Narada and a *Gandharva* (angel).

Swami posed with all the actors for a photograph then lovingly called all the actors and gave away watches. Their outstretched hands, their credulous contours expressing immense joy at the unexpected outpour of divine love were a fulfilling experience to the onlookers.

At the conclusion of the performance Swami blessed the actors with a photo session. Their innocent jubilation and emotional sobs spoke of the unique feeling that the children's hearts experienced in the presence of the divine. The evening session came to an end with Mangala Aarati.

### **Swami Leaves For Kodai Kanal - April 26, 2007**

The month of April, this year in Prasanthi Nilayam, was special. Departing from the usual practice of leaving for 'Brindavan' (the Ashram in Bangalore) or Kodai Kanal by late March or early April, Swami this year stayed on for more than three weeks in Prasanthi Nilayam even though mercury had gone above 35 degree celsius. On the 26th, Swami boarded an Indian Airbus A320 along with a small group of students and few elders for this year Kodai Kanal trip. We will bring you stories of what happened in Kodai Kanal in our next issue.

On the whole, it has been an inspiring month: as devotees celebrated two regional New Year days we were able to witness Bhagavan reassuring us again that this year, *Sarvajit*, would indeed be extremely auspicious, especially for truthful and holy undertakings. It was only last month on 20 March that Bhagavan stated the glorious qualities of the coming year. And to thrill us all the more, and particularly those from Chennai, our Lord has graciously declared to take up whatever more is required to provide uninterrupted supply of water to Chennai free of cost. It is really a time to rejoice and be glad that we are in His care. With Sai everything is possible. We have even been able to see the fulfilment of Bhagavan's statement on Ugadi when He promised sufficient rainfall in the form of thunderstorms in the local region.

So, till next month when we bring you more uplifting news and pictorial views from Prasanthi and maybe Kodaikanal, keep smiling and remembering Him at all times. Jai Sai Ram!



## **SWAMI AND ME**

### **THE WONDERFUL MOTHER THAT I HAVE**

**By Mrs. Geeta Mohan Ram**

*Mrs. Geeta Ram comes from a family which has been associated with Swami for the last four generations. Her great grandfather, Mr. Seshagiri Rao, came to Swami in 1943 and was the temple priest of Prasanthi Nilayam for many years. Her father, Dr. Padmanabh is a familiar figure in Swami's ashram in Bangalore. Having come to Swami at a tender age, her life is full of exciting and illuminating experiences. Below is the transcript of a talk delivered by her during a Sai Retreat on May 13, 2006 in Atlanta, USA.*

My *Pranams* (salutations) at the Lotus Feet of our Ever-Present Swami and Sai Ram to all of you on this wonderful day – a holy day of Buddha Poonima, with Mother's Day coming up tomorrow.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to do my *Namasmarana* and place my respects at Sai - my Mother who has been a part of my life since the day I have come into this world. So I thank you all for bringing me here and giving me the opportunity to think of Him, re-live my experiences with Him and share His Love with all of you.

To speak of Swami is a huge responsibility. To speak of many subjects, you can prepare, you can read books, and you can have references, but when we speak of Swami, we are looked at very differently by the eyes of the people who look at us. They look at us and wonder and say: "They have had the association of this Divine Being – how has their life changed?"

So when you speak of Swami, your life changes. When you enter a Sai Center and start sitting down here for the bhajans, for the study circles, your life changes – it should change, otherwise we would be very poor representatives of this wonderful Mother that we have!

#### **My Multi-Faceted Beloved Swami**

For me, Swami has been many things. I have seen many facets of Swami and I still discover more as the years go by. He has been my Mother – a very loving Mother – corrected me like all Mothers do with their daughters. He has been a strict Father pointing out my poor marks on several exams. He has been a strict teacher and has not forgiven if I have made the same mistake twice – even after having been corrected.

But He has also been a very good friend! These are all things that a Mother has to be with their children – you have to be a loving mother when your child is very young; you have to be a strict parent to inculcate discipline and devotion; you have to be a teacher by example – I am sure many parents will



agree with me. And you have to be a friend too with your child. And Swami has been those many things to me.

### **When The Lord Becomes Your Guest...**

My earliest memories of Swami has been that as a child - a very sweet one - when He used to come and stay with us in Bangalore in my parents' house – in those days the Brindavan building was not there. So when He came, He used to stay with devotees, among them my parents.

And I remember as a child that He would stay with us for several days. And when Swami is with you, you know that everybody is very much focused. Even when we have a guest in our house, the housewife knows that she will be focused on the room, the bedroom, and the food – whatever that you want to make to give the guest a pleasant stay.

But imagine having Swami staying with you! You will have this wondrous feeling of when He is going to walk into the kitchen and I remember my mother would constantly be cleaning the kitchen never knowing when Swami would walk into the kitchen!

I remember my father who never lifted the newspaper and put it away, constantly putting away the newspaper so that Swami wouldn't find it on the sofa in our living room! I remember my brother making his room exceptionally clean – which never was – when Swami was around because you never knew when He would come in. And I remember hiding my story books behind Sathya Sai Speaks so Swami wouldn't know what I was reading!

This is my experience that whenever Swami would come, suddenly the look of all the book shelves would change. The books – whatever the current craze was growing up in school; I think as a child I read Enid Blyton; as a teenager I probably read Barbara Cartland and Mills and Boon - but they would all go behind and in front of them there would be a second row of Sri Sathya Sai Speaks, in the hope that Swami would think that I was reading that!

### **You Can't Trick The Lord!**

The thread that ran through my life that whatever I did, Swami knew everything – He was Omnipresent and you could never really trick Him – even though, for a while He pretended and played the game along with us.

I remember once He came into our room, He would actually eat in my room because we always had the food separate for Swami, and then the other devotees who came with Him were fed, and He would walk into the room a little bit ahead of time while my parents and aunts were setting up the table. And then He would stand in front of the book shelf and look at all the books.

So you know, your heart is pounding and you hope that He would just look at the books in the front. **Then He would look at the books and say: "Oh! Prema Vahini!" Then He would look and say: "Oh, is this the new one**

**that has come out at the Sathya Sai book store now?” And He would very sweetly remove two books and say: “Oh! Barbara Cartland! Is that what you read?” and put the Sathya Sai Speaks back right where it was!**

### **The Ecstasy and Agony of Experiencing ‘That Omnipresence’!**

So the thread of Omnipresence ran through my life. Sometimes as a child I would wish that ‘that Omnipresence’ was not reminding me all the time that He was with me because I wanted to be like any other child and read what I wanted to read and do what I wanted to do!

But as I grew older I remember what a wonderful sense of security it gave me – because wherever I went, I knew that Swami was with me! It was very easy for me to say: “No” when my other friends said “Yes” to things - because I knew that when I went back on the weekend, Swami would be asking me where I went last Wednesday or Thursday!

I remember once when I was in College, and I met a good friend – an old friend from my school on the side-walk while I was walking to the bus-stop. We hadn’t seen each other for a while and were very happy to see each other – it was just an unexpected meeting. We both were standing in front of a sugar cane stall. So we both were talking and decided to buy a glass of sugar cane juice. We brought the sugar cane juice on the foot path on the side walk of the street and we drank and we chatted there for quite a while and we went home.

The following weekend we were in Brindavan. And as in the early days with no sevadal there, we were the sevadals, we were also the bhajan singers, we were the cleaners – we were everything there. So all of us had jobs to do and when I went to Brindavan my job was to clean the altar where Swami did bhajans inside in the evening sometimes. And there were pictures of Swami in different poses and Shirdi Baba – and I was cleaning that. Swami would be walking around the building and He came up to me and looked at what I was doing and then He said: “What time did you go home last week from College?”

I couldn’t quite remember. I said, “Swami, after college I went home in the evening.” But He named the day – Wednesday. He said, “What time did you go home last week on Wednesday?” I still couldn’t remember! He said, “You went home late because you missed the bus!” Then I remembered and I said, “Yes Swami, I missed the bus.” He said, “Why did you miss the bus?” I said, “I met a friend of mine and we were talking.”

**He said, “Three mistakes. Missing the bus because you were talking to the friend on the street; second mistake – not telling your mother that you would be late or why you came late; third mistake of drinking on the street out of a dirty glass that fellow gave! Three mistakes in one day!”**

So this Omnipresent Swami – sometimes you wonder: “Swami, please! Why don’t you go and get behind somebody else’s back instead of me all the time!”

But He was the loving Mother – He reminded me that there were certain ways that one behaves and if you don't follow the norms of the society at that time, you are bound to have problems with it.

### **“Life is a Game – Play it!”**

So coming back to the times of the childhood – of sweetness though - there were times too when He would be in the house and we children would be banished to the rooms because they didn't want us to make any noise! They would say: “Swami is talking in the living room; so stay in the room, read a book, do something. But don't appear here and make noise!”

So I remember my cousin and me – we were almost the same age – we were constantly being banished to the room to do something with ourselves. And those were not the days of TV's and the X-boxes, and Play stations – and even if it was, I am sure we wouldn't have gotten one in our home. And we would go there and the game that we would constantly play was snakes and ladders or lido – we would constantly be playing and I remember on one occasion when Swami knocked on the door and walked in because we had closed the door.

And I remember my cousin and I were playing snakes and ladders. **So He came in and said: “Oh! You both are playing over here while I have to go and talk to those devotees – not fair! You guys are having fun here! Can I please play with you?”** We said: “No!” because we had already had an experience of playing with Swami and we didn't want Him to play with us!

So we said: “No!” He said: “Why not?” We said: “Because, every time You roll the dice, You always get the number You want! So we don't want You to play with us!” So He said: “No! No! I will play like you people!”

So He sat down and sure enough He rolled the dice and we rolled the dice and the game was progressing quite nicely – sometimes He went up the ladder and came down the snake too! So we thought this was pretty good. But by the time one of us had gotten to all the way to 98 or 99 or whatever – and by that time the snake is waiting to bring you down, **Swami rolls His dice and within three moves He reaches 100 and says: “Useless people, you don't know how to play!” It was not fair; you know! He used to say: “What is this? A game isn't it? You shouldn't cry when you lose a game!”**

You know Swami doesn't do anything without a reason! And I never forgot the lesson He taught us with that snakes and ladder game. He said: “Life is like a game! As long you have Swami as the dice of God in your hands, it will move you along – sometimes you go up the ladder; sometimes you come down the snake – it's okay! But as long as you have the dice with you, you can keep playing and you can keep moving forward. That's the important thing you have to remember – what is the use of playing this game; reaching 100 and starting again from number 1 – day after day!”

So He was a friend and He played; He joked and He looked at the books that we were reading – so He was a wonderful Mother in many different ways!

### **Swami - The 'Micro-Manager'**

I remember when He got me engaged to my husband – the wedding was still a month away – it was the global *akhanda* bhajan going on in Puttaparthi. And at that time my parents and aunts and I had to go to Puttaparthi because the wedding was going to be in Puttaparthi – Swami was going to conduct the wedding. He had asked us to bring all the details of the wedding – He wanted to see the saris, the invitations, the guest-list, the food menu – He wanted to see everything!

If Swami is anything – He is a micro-manager! There is no other word for it. He will check everything 25 different times. So He wanted to check everything. He even wanted the paper sketch of the *rangoli* that was going to go from Swami's building to the wedding hall!

So, armed with all these things, we arrived at Puttaparthi and the bhajans were going on – it was very crowded. At that time they would allow you to take all these things and, of course, the sevadal people knew that the wedding was coming up. So we sat there like a store – with saris and jewelry and everything that we had to show Swami.

Just before going for Darshan, I had worn a very simple synthetic sari because the moment everybody in Puttaparthi saw you there with all these things, they knew there was a wedding and they would ask 'who is the boy?' etc. I didn't know anything about the boy – Swami had fixed the wedding. So I had no answers to their questions.

I didn't want to be the center of attention. So I wore a very simple sari and was sitting for Darshan. As we left our room, my aunt (an elderly person) said: "You know, you are the bride; you are getting married in a couple of week's time. You shouldn't be wearing such a simple sari. You should wear a silk sari – something festive!"

I said: "Well, the wedding is a month away. I am not going to start looking like a bride for the next thirty five days. I am certainly not going to wear it because all those ladies at the Darshan keep looking at me!" So we had a little bit of a discussion and I still didn't change and we went.

Sure enough, after Swami had gone inside the bhajan Hall and He attended the global bhajan, He came out and called us in. He had told us to come that day; so we knew He was going to come to talk to us.

So we went loaded with all these things and as soon as we entered, He first looked at the invitation – the draft – and approved that. He looked at the guest list, added a few names, deleted a few – we don't know why! He looked at the menu and said: "Oh! This is not good, that is not good!" – And chose different

things. And after all this discussion, He said: “Why didn’t you bring the bride? Why isn’t the girl here?” And I am sitting right there in front of Him!

We all look at each other thinking: “Okay. So He is getting on with some fifty-plus years; He is not recognizing the bride who is sitting right in front of Him! He has known me since I was born – He should know me!”

We all think He should know us – really undeserving! Why should He know us? That’s the question to ask ourselves. He knows us; but why should He? Do we do anything at all that deserves His attention? I leave that question to think about!

So He said: “Where is she?” So my aunt said: “She is sitting right here!” So He looked at me and said: “This one?” You know, He can really bring your ego down! She said, “Yes Swami! Why are you asking that?”

**“Be Conscious of All that You Do!”**

**Then He looks at me and said, “Didn’t your aunty tell you to wear a different sari this morning? Two mistakes!”** He is always pointing out mistakes! And He loves to number them. So it is very clear in your head.

“Two mistakes! One – you didn’t listen to an elder when she told you something. Big mistake! Second – bigger mistake! Because all the people here know that you are getting married; Swami is getting you married; Swami has fixed the wedding; Swami has found the boy and the family! And you are sitting there looking like you are not interested in getting married! So everybody is thinking that maybe the girl doesn’t want to get married and Swami is forcing her. Maybe she doesn’t want to get married and her parents are forcing her because he is a Sai devotee. Third; maybe the girl wants to marry somebody else! By your one gesture and the way you behave, you can create many ripples. So always be conscious of what you do. If you are getting married, behave according to the time and place. Be happy if you are happy! If you don’t want; tell me now and it’s off! But if you’re happy and you want to get married then behave accordingly – appropriate to the time and place – not out of place! Don’t draw attention to yourself by being out of place. Merge with it!”

What a lesson He taught me! As a mother, whatever we do, it doesn’t just reflect on us - it reflects on our parents, it reflects on our families, it reflects on Swami. So He said, “Be conscious in your life whatever you do! How you stand, how you sit, what you say, because it first reflects on Him!”

That’s why I said, the minute we say we are Sai devotees, our very action, and our speech is judged by everybody. If you are just a regular person, nobody will bother with what you do. But if you start attending a Sai center, they will say: “Oh! you know what? Every Sunday they go and sit for two hours and sing some Sai bhajan but they are worse than us!” That will be the remark if your behavior is not up to date.

So that was the Mother Sai who taught me how one has to dress if you are at a certain place or at a certain occasion.

I love to share this incident. I am sure many of you have heard it – I don't know what I say. I was telling my friend this morning that whenever I have to speak about Swami, it is a very scary experience because it is like I am going to a place without a road map – I don't know where I am going; I don't know which road I am taking; I don't know the exit number! I am just driving and I am hoping that somehow the place will appear before me. So that is how it is when I speak of Swami. I don't know what I am going to say and what He wants me to say. Sometimes I repeat the same things in four of my different talks – the same incidents!

Once I said, "Swami! I have been speaking the same thing in every retreat for one and a half years! Why don't you make me speak something else?" He said, "No! They need to hear it. You have to talk about it. When they are ready to change, I will give you a different story." And then very sadly He made this gesture: **"Look at Me! Fifty years I am saying the same thing! Does anybody hear? If they hear, do they listen? And if they listen, do they practice? You are complaining of one year of speaking the same thing!"**

What a statement! How we must bend our heads in shame. So I repeat and this is another one that I love to repeat because I love to tell you about the mistakes that Swami has caught me in! Because like I said the thread is His Omnipresence - constantly showing me His wonderful Divinity.

***"I am always with you, behind you, beside you..."***

I was speaking at a retreat in Texas. It was in the afternoon. I went and sat in the morning – Brother Jagadeeshan was speaking in the morning and I love his talks; he is such a wonderful narrator. Even though they had very sweetly offered me a seat, as a child I dared not – Swami being much elder to me – so I sat on the floor. In the afternoon I had gone back to my room but I had not changed – I went for my afternoon talk. And Swami's picture was just the way it is now but my podium was way forward – because the stage was very big.

I went and stood and started talking – that was it! This was in the month of September. In June I went to India. In July Swami called me for an interview. He asked me, "Where have you been speaking?" I said, "Swami, I spoke in Texas." He said, "Yes, I know you spoke in Texas and brother Jagadeeshan spoke too, is it not?"

**Then suddenly out of the blue He asked me, 'Don't you pack your clothes properly when you go on your trips?'** That was completely unexpected – it had nothing to do with my talks! So I said, "No Swami! I packed my clothes well." Then I am racking my brains – did I wear something that was not appropriate? Did I wear a salwaar-kameez at my talk – which I don't. I always wear a sari. My mind is churning: "Why did He ask me?" I am trying to place why this question came because you know, Swami does not ask these questions for no reason – very specifically: 'Do you pack your

clothes properly?’ Such an unexpected question! Again He asked me. I said, “I don’t know Swami what have I done?” That’s the best way – ask Him a question back.

**He said, “You know, in Texas you wore that blue sari – cotton sari?”** He named that sari – blue cotton sari! He said: “All day you sat on the floor and then when it was your turn, you went and stood there, your cotton sari was all crumpled – gone a little high. I am the one who has to see your ankles – because I am behind you! When you go and speak somewhere and especially if you have to sit for a long time, you should wear a proper silk sari, they don’t get so crumpled.” Can you imagine? What a lovely motherly advice!

But remember this, in every Discourse He says: ‘Don’t worry! All of you go back to your homes safely!’ He says: “I am with you, behind you, beside you – all the time, all the way, wherever you go!” We forget that He is behind us, that He can see your ankle, we forget that He is beside us and can hear us; we forget that He is in front of us and He sees which path we you are taking – we forget all these things. A simple example of a sari tells you that He is there with you all the time.

### **“Sai, My Mother, Who Notices Everything!”**

I was in the summer course once and suddenly out of the blue they asked me to do the summarization of the day’s activities. You know, in the old days, the summer course was for everybody – from all over India they would have students selected and I was in one of the summer courses in the beginning years.

They had chosen me and one other boy to read the summary of what had happened in that day’s lecture. It was a wonderful opportunity to be chosen to come in front of Swami – it had been drafted, checked and rechecked by 25 adults to make sure that the right things were written and I came. Swami was sitting in a chair and we were behind the screen. The boy came and read his part. And as I came to Swami to take my *padanamaskar*, He said something and I didn’t quite catch it.

Swami very sweetly dropped His handkerchief deliberately on the floor! So I bent to pick it up and as I got closer to Him to give Him the handkerchief, He said: “You must put your heels down at the back of your sari when you stand up to pull it down!”

Can you imagine that? The ladies will certainly understand it if the men don’t get it – “Put your heel down to the back layer of your sari when you get up to pull it down.” So obviously my sari was a little folded in the back and before I turned around to face the audience and come to the stage, He was making sure! And the way He said it with a smile - *Kaalu kinda pettukoni cheera eedchuko* (in Telugu), meaning, ‘put down your foot and drag the sari down’

**Everybody thought He was giving me some beautiful blessing – with a sweet smile. But He was pulling me up on my bad sari-wearing techniques!**

Sai my Mother, who notices everything! Sai my Mother, who has taught me everything! Sai my Mother, who has shown me up-most love!

I don't know what I am saying today – these are my very personal experiences. If they give you any lesson out of this; I don't know! All I can tell you is that we are all born at this wonderful time where we have this wonderful Mother pouring His love to all of us and it is for us to absorb it and to understand it. And if we don't, then we miss out on a chance. And each of you I am sure feel His Love in his or her own way otherwise we wouldn't be sitting here listening to some unknown woman come from Maryland.

So He has been a part of my life with wonderful miraculous ways He has shown me too. To me, those miracles are wonderful but the little things are far more wonderful - because I see His love in the little things much more than in the big things.

Now you see His love for humanity in a huge way. His Motherly Love by that wonderful Super Specialty Hospital where thousands of people with no money are treated – free of cost. We have the University, we have the Music College, we have the water project – it's in such magnitude now.

But the little things that happened to me were small things – but it was the same essence of that love. But again He reminds us how many times - much later He said: "Lying is not just telling a falsehood! Keeping something from your mother is also a lie. She may not know, but I know!"

### **Problems are Blessings**

So He has been that Mother who constantly teaches us that if you have decided to take this path of spirituality then there is no shade of grey! It is black or it is white. And if you want Him, it has to be white.

You can't try to find loop-holes in your behavior. You can't say: "Well this might work for today!" There are no loop-holes – He is going to pull you up! If He doesn't do it physically, He will do it in some other way – He will bring some big problem along to remind you – that's what He said: "Problems are there to remind you that you are forgetting Me!"

Swami always loves to quote that famous prayer of Mother Kunti, after the whole war of Mahabharata is over, Lord Krishna says: "Now that everything is over and your sons are kings, now what do you want? Ask and I shall give." She said, "Always give me troubles; because when I have troubles, You come to me!"

Swami says: "When you have troubles, you come to Me, troubles remind you of Me." So He reminds us that He is there; and He also reminds us that He is



a good friend. I don't want to make Him so serious that you have to wonder: "Oh my God! I can't step out of this building without worrying." He can be fun too!

### **His Awesome Sense of Humour!**

I remember once in Puttaparthi Laalgudi Jayaraman - a famous violinist in India was coming to Puttaparthi to play the violin there in front of Swami in Prashanti Nilayam. My father used to always go from Bangalore to Puttaparthi on the weekends. And my father being a doctor also would always want to come back on Sunday night so that Monday morning he could attend to his patients.

And Swami in those days would say: "Stay one more day!" And my father would say: "No Swami! I have given appointments and my patients will come so I have to go." "Stay one more day Padmanabh!" "No Swami, I have to go!" So this was a constant thing in our childhood.

So on one particular day when we had gone, Swami said: "Today in the evening, Laalgudi Jayaraman is going to come, why don't you all stay for the concert and go tomorrow morning?" - This was in the morning Darshan line to my mother.

My mother said: "Swami you know my husband, he is not going to let us stay! He will say he has to go to see his patients." He said: 'No, He will stay!' She said: 'No Swami, he won't stay.'

Sure enough after the morning Darshan my father said: "We are packing up, let's leave!" And in those days we always used to leave during daylight hours because the roads were so bad that in fact, Swami used to say: "Before it gets dark, you have to cross those 22 miles first from Puttaparthi." So he said: "Pack up!" We said: "Please, can we stay?" He said: "No! Pack up!"

So my father got ready to put away things in the car - for those of you who have been to Puttaparthi, you know the Ganesha statue that is there – that is where we used to park our cars in those days. And there were only about 10 or 15 rooms and we stayed in those rooms. So, my mother and I were bringing out all the bedding and we were rolling it out on the sands under the eucalyptus tree there.

Swami was in His room and suddenly when we are rolling the thing, my mother and I were talking: "I wish for once daddy would agree and stay!" Because we were very fond of the violinist – he was a very famous Karnatic Music violinist and I wanted to hear!

Suddenly, while we were talking, we heard somebody calling us making a sound: "Shh! Shh!" We look around to see who is making that sound? This was around 12 – 12:30 when Swami has already retired to His room! **Suddenly we look up and there in His balcony with His bedroom door open, Swami is standing in the balcony and gesturing to us to not make**

**a noise!** Because all the devotees will come running if they know that Swami is standing in the balcony!

He gestured: “Don’t pack!” We said: ‘But Swami we have to go now!’ He said: “No! Don’t pack!” And He showed us with gestures that the car tire has a puncture. Flat tire! We can’t go! Because the 22 miles ride from Puttaparthi to Pennukonda was the worst road. If anybody had a flat tire, Swami had a rule – you had to get the flat tire fixed and only then can one leave.

Because if you put a spare tire and are carrying the flat tire and if you have one more flat tire on the way, then you were totally stuck. There was nothing between Puttaparthi and Penukonda and you were stuck with the anti-villagers who didn’t really like devotees coming to Puttaparthi.

So we understood. We happily put away our bedding inside and went. My father came and asked: ‘Why are you people sitting?’ We said: “Yes, we are getting ready.” So he takes another bunch of things to the car and he comes back and says: “You know, there is a flat tire! We can’t leave.” We said: “Aha!” We knew about the thing but we didn’t want to say anything! He said: “We can’t go now so I am going to take a lorry and go to Penukonda and get the tire fixed, you people be ready. If I can get it fixed, we will go today, otherwise we will go tomorrow.”

So my father went back and sure enough, you can’t go to Penukonda and get the tire fixed and come back in a few hours – it’s a question of quite a few hours. So while my poor father was getting the tire fixed, we were happily listening to Lalagudi Jayaraman’s music!

After the music got over, Swami got up from His chair and asked: “Where is Padmanabhan? Has he gone to Penukonda?” We said: “Yes, Swami! He has gone to Penukonda.” He said: “He will come back at ten o’clock, you go to bed! Wasn’t the music good?” **Then He smacked my cheek and said: “See! You wanted to listen to the music, so I sent your father to Penukonda!”**

So He would play along with us too, you know! You couldn’t help but love Him so much – even when He scolded you, you enjoyed the scolding though you knew that you couldn’t make the same mistake twice like I said.

So this Swami – He is there for all of us.

Sai Ram.

## A MOTHER LIKE NO OTHER

By Mrs. Mallika Desu

*Mrs. Mallika Desu is a former student of the Anantapur campus of Sri Sathya Sai University. Actively engaged in various community service activities in the USA, she is the former president and current vice-president of SSS Centre, Amherst, Massachusetts.*

Without Swami, Parthi felt like a lifeless place. I was staying in the Anantapur students' dormitory in Prashanthi Nilayam, along with a few other girls waiting for Swami's return to Parthi from Whitefield. At that time, my family lived in Assam in Northeast India. I had chosen to stay in Parthi for the short winter vacation instead of traveling all the way to Assam where the political climate was highly disturbed at that time.

### The Un-Nerving News...

Soon a telegram arrived at the girls' dormitory, addressed to me. It bore a message that sent a chill down my spine and made me feel sick to my stomach. I was so scared and confused. I learnt that my mother had been involved in a fire accident. She had suffered severe burns. The telegram read that my mother's condition was "precarious". Being a young student, I was unnerved beyond capacity and had to ask my friends what exactly the word meant. On realizing the gravity of the situation, I prayed to Swami to help her and my family in this crisis. Soon another message was received of her being airlifted to New Delhi, the Indian capital, for better treatment. I was gripped with fear and felt very lost. At that moment, I needed Swami more than ever. In the confusion that followed with regards to the news of her condition, Swami arrived in Parthi. He gave a fleeting *Darshan* and retired to the Mandir.

I so much wanted to tell Him the state of my mother and plead with Him to save her life. However, before I could even get to the *Darshan* ground, the news of my mother's passing away arrived. Needless to say, I was devastated. I felt so helpless and miserable. I was 18 years old, all by myself in Parthi. My Dad was in Delhi where my mother had passed away and my two younger sisters were by themselves in Assam during this moment of intense grief and loss. As a family, we were scattered and shattered by the shocking death of my mother.

### Only a Divine Mother Can Understand!

Finally, a long, sorrowful night ended and I sat for *Darshan* in the first line, close to the Mandir, right off the verandah on the ladies side. It was the morning *Darshan* of November 11 in 1982 and a *Darshan* I will never forget. Looking kind and compassionate, Swami started the morning round by coming straight to me. Our Professor of English, Dr. Zeba Bashiruddin spoke to Swami about my loss the previous day. I was too shell-shocked and grief-stricken to verbalize anything. My mind was numb with sorrow. Swami looked at me with His eyes filled with compassion, and spoke to me very kindly. He

said “Yes, yes, *life dene se bhi prayojan nahi. Eye sight bhi nahi hai*” (‘Even giving life was not an option...she lost even her eyesight’). Those around me later told me that while I was weeping inconsolably at that time, Swami paused several times and gave me many opportunities to control myself, in my own time, so that I could listen to what He had to say next. Then with the patience and calmness that only a Divine Mother can display, He explained to me that my Mom was in such agony that even if I saw her, I would have thought that it was better for her to pass on than to live such a life of misery. He waited again for me to finish another round of crying. This was the only time anyone had spoken to me about the situation or given me some details about it. My entire information was based on the couple of telegrams with one-line messages. He understood my need to deal with such chilling details, which were later confirmed by my family.

### **“You have Mother Sai, don’t cry”**

My sole refuge, my dearest Swami, was standing in front of me and all I could do was to cry harder. And He let me do so, since I hadn’t had a private moment to grieve till then, staying as I was in a dormitory with other girls from our college. Finally Swami gave me an assurance that has become my *maha mantra* for life, my ray of hope, my pillar of strength, my sole refuge and my personal beacon of light. He said to me: “*Kya ho gaya, ek ma gaya, to thousand mother hai. Sai Mata Hai. Don’t cry.*” (‘What is the matter, one mother is gone. You have a thousand mothers. You have Mother Sai. Don’t cry’).

He then materialized vibhuthi and gave it to me, followed by a *padnamaskar* where I washed His feet with the tears of my pain. After that, He just walked away to continue His usual *darshan*.

Even though He had given me complete attention for several minutes, when He resumed *darshan*, I was stunned. For me, my whole world had changed and nothing at all seemed normal with the world. How could He just walk away and resume His normal routine? I wanted everyone and everything to come to a stand still. Life around me had to stop, just as mine had.

### **Most Important Lesson - Devotion to Duty**

Swami always says, “My life is My message”. After consoling me, when Swami walked away from me and resumed His usual *Darshan*, He imparted to me the priceless lesson of equanimity and devotion to duty, both of which constitute the value of *Dharma* or Right Action. Bhagavan always says pleasure is an interval between two pains. We should treat both dualities with an equal calmness. Moreover, ups and downs in life need not bog us down and are not an excuse to stray from the path of righteousness. Often times, even though I recall these lessons in hindsight or simply struggle to remember them at critical moments in my life, Swami never fails to deliver His promises.

Soon, both my younger sisters arrived from Assam and we grieved together. Being the oldest, I felt very protective of my sisters. **A few days later, I**

**pleaded with Bhagavan, “Swami, will you protect us?” The Divine Lord assured us “Yes, I will always protect you.”**

During subsequent weeks, Bhagavan allowed me to continue staying in Parthi, even though college had reopened in Anantapur. He gave me much attention in terms of materialized *vibhuthi*, *prasadam* and *padnamaskars* till I felt ready to return to college and hostel.

The entire experience of grieving such a deep loss at His Lotus Feet proved to be a profoundly life altering experience, a lesson that has come to my rescue many times ever since. His promise to be my Sai Mata or Divine Mother, equivalent to a thousand mothers and the assurance of protection, have always both come true for me.

### **Any Danger Can Be Averted By Her!**

After completing my education at His University in Anantapur, I got married and moved to the United States of America. It was in the summer of 1986 when my husband and I were driving on a highway at 80 miles an hour. A nail punctured the tire, sending the car out of control at very high speed. In panic, I started shouting ‘Sai Ram’, ‘Sai Ram’. The car spun a complete 360 degrees and finally stopped on the shoulder (unused part of the road), out of harm’s way. Amazingly, while our car was spinning out of control at such high speed, no other car came in our way or hit us. Everyone managed to somehow avoid us or stop in time. Soon, someone helped us out by mounting a spare tire. Such a close tryst with danger left us shaken but safe. It also served to remind me of Swami’s assurance to always protect us.

Sometime later, I developed acute abdominal pain and was rushed to the emergency. Tests revealed an ovarian cyst, which needed to be removed surgically, given its size. The entire procedure called for a week of hospital stay. I was scared and nervous as there was no one with us, in terms of family or friends for support. As always, I prayed to my Sai Mother, my thousand mothers, to come to my aid.

No sooner had the doctors taken me to the operation theatre than my cyst burst and a simple procedure was enough to deal with the situation. I was allowed to return home the next day. Doctors were puzzled at the sudden turn of events.

### **Sai Maa Keeps Her Promise Again!**

Again, on July 24<sup>th</sup> 1990, I was expecting our second child, my daughter Suma in Blacksburg. Other than my husband, there was no one else, such as a motherly figure around to calm me during labour. It had been 22 hours since I had started to experience contractions but was still not ready to deliver. Moreover, I felt very weak from such a prolonged labour. At this point in time, the doctors determined that I should consider taking the epidural. The very thought of having to endure that big needle on my spine in addition to the

terrible labour pain I was already undergoing was highly distressing. I was so tired, upset and fed up by now that in my anger, I yelled at Swami and most sarcastically reminded Him of His Sai Mata promise. **I blamed Him for depriving me of my mother as well. Immediately, at that moment, in the maternity ward of the Montgomery County Hospital, I beheld a clear vision of Swami and my mom standing right beside me, on either side of my bed. Immediately, almost without any effort, our daughter arrived.**

The delivery happened so fast that my husband had to rush to get the nurse. Everyone was amazed as only a few moments ago, the gynecologists had determined that the delivery was still a fair bit away and since the labour was not progressing too well, I needed the epidural. My Divine Mother had arrived, along with my own mother in an astral form to reassure me and help me tide over the crisis miraculously.

Over the years, as I struggle to cope with the many challenges as a wife and a mother of two teenagers, I find my solace in the awareness that no matter what, I always have a Mother, an eternal Mother who is ever ready to help me, guide me and comfort me, right here, with me. She transcends the limitations of time, space and mortality. She is the most compassionate, forgiving and all accepting. She is the coolest Mom in the universe. She is my Sai Mata and I am Her darling daughter! What a privilege and an assurance! I can never be grateful enough for this blessing of Unconditional Divine Love and acceptance. My world makes a lot more sense when I see it as an expression of Sai Mata's Divine Will and accept life's challenges, knowing that with Her by my side, I can deal with just about anything.

*currently graduated with a Bachelor's degree in 1984 from the Anantapur campus of the Sathya Sai University. After moving to USA, she has been serving the community as a volunteer, helping new mothers and their babies, working in soup kitchens, adolescent shelters, survival centers and old age homes. She has served the SSS Centre, Amherst, Massachusetts as President and is currently the Vice-President. She also works as a part time teacher in the public school system.*

## **H2H SPECIAL**

### **“HE IS MY SWAMI!”**

#### **Part- 1**

This is the transcript of the conversation between Mrs. Padma Kasturi, daughter of Sri N Kasturi, and Ms. Rajeshwari Patel, a former student and faculty member in the Anantapur campus of Sathya Sai University aired on Radio Sai a few weeks ago. The dialogue begins after a few words of introduction by Ms. Rajeshwari Patel.

Who has not heard of Prof. Kasturi – the famous translator of Bhagavan’s Discourses and biographer of the Divine life-story of Bhagavan Shri Sathya Sai Baba? Professor Kasturi’s style was inimitable and un-matched. He brought to life for millions of Bhagavan’s devotees’ the thrilling, exhilarating accounts of those early golden years.

One feels as if one is present on the occasion when one reads Swami’s biography *Sathyam, Shivam, Sundaram*. He had a special Kasturi-touch – literally. It would be impossible however to bring Prof. Kasturi to the studio of Radio Sai! But we have a very special person with us today; one who has inherited his precious legacy – maybe not like that of the inheritors of the Tata’s, Birla’s (Popular business families of India) and such; but something richer and more enduring - Divine Grace and proximity.

Smt. Padma - fondly referred to by Bhagavan as Padmamma - is the privileged daughter Professor Kasturi. Less well-known by people generally, she has made her quiet presence felt in the Prasanthi Nilayam ashram for several years now.

Rajeshwari Patel (RP): Welcome Smt. Padmamma to Radio Sai Global Harmony.

Padma Kasturi (PK): Thank you Rajeshwari.

RP: Let us begin first by talking about your father. When did your father come to Bhagavan and how old were you then?

PK: We saw Bhagavan in 1948 in Bangalore; I was just 14 years old then.

RP: Tell us a little bit about your father’s early life – before he came to Bhagavan.

#### **Early Years and First Meeting of Prof Kasturi**

PK: He was born in the state of Kerala, in Tripunittura which is in Ernakulam District. He was from a very deprived family – he had lost his father when he was just four years old. His education was very poor and his grand-father

wanted him to attend Vedic classes because he couldn't afford him any English education.

But my grand-mother insisted that he should go through the English Education; so with the help of her brother, he studied up to the high school, and there he got his scholarship and thus he could graduate with Bachelor of Arts (B.A). Then he got a job in Travancore and he was married when he was just 14 years old!

RP: But his English is so excellent! I mean, the language in *Sathyam*, *Shivam*, *Sundaram* and in *Sri Sathya Sai Speaks* is marvelous!

PK: Yes. Then he came down to Mysore for a job. When he was 21 years old, he got a job in a high school as a teacher; then he was taken to the University and he continued there, and after his retirement, he came to Swami and settled here – he stayed in the ashram for 40 years.

RP: So in which year did he come to Bhagavan?

PK: We met Swami in Bangalore in 1948, and in 1947, I had lost one of my brothers – he had a typhoid attack. My father was then very attached to the Ramakrishna mission. When he was in high school, one of his teachers was very impressed by Swami Vivekananda and used to talk a lot about him, from then on my father had become very attached to Sri Ramakrishna Pramahansa.

RP: Now, who did not get influenced by Swami Vivekananda at their younger age!

PK: My father served as secretary for the Mysore Ramakrishna Ashram for 25 years. But then, after he lost his son, he was very depressed. My mother was a very ardent devotee of Lord Venkateswara of Tirupathi, but they lost all hope.

### **How The Divine Prepared His Blessed Destiny...**

After three months of my brother's death, he met one of his old friends who was a devotee of Sai Baba. That person had come here for Dasara celebrations. After the function, he came down to Bangalore and gave us some *prasadam* and said, "There's some Sai Baba in Puttaparthi. Why don't you go there?" You will get some solace and peace.

But my mother didn't like it, and rejected it saying, "No Sai Baba is going to help, because nobody helped me – not even my Tirupathi Rama! How can Sai Baba help me?"

But after that, somehow, my husband – Balachandran – was then a student, studying for IAS and used to come for tuition in the University with my father.



He was a distant relative and used to come there and they were already devotees of Sai Baba. So whenever he came, he used to talk about Swami. My father got little inquisitive and said, "This young man is saying so much about Sai Baba; let's go and see!" Swami had come to Bangalore and so we went and visited Him there. In the very first visit, Swami gave an interview to my father!

RP: In the very first visit? Were all of you called?

PK: My mother, father and I had gone but we didn't know if we should also follow him for the interview. He had called my father, so he went alone. And He said everything – about the death of my brother and his working in the college, and then He asked him, "After your retirement, you must come to Puttaparthi and settle down here."

RP: So, after that first interview, what was his first impression of Swami? Did he come and tell you anything about how he felt? This was a command of settling down after retirement...

PK: He felt some Power; but he didn't feel that Divinity then; because at that time Swami was too young - He only 22 years old!

RP: Yes. He was only 22 then!

PK: So he said there is something wonderful in this young man. That's all he felt.

RP: Did he get that solace for which he had gone?

PK: No. Not in the first interview. It all happened only after my marriage. Because when Balachandran was coming to our house from the University tuitions, my father and mother felt that it would be nice if we give our daughter in marriage to him – because he was very mild mannered.

***"This is My agya!"***

So they went and asked his parents but they were not willing. But through them, they made another alliance! It was almost certain that they would be coming. There is that formality procedure that they had to go through.

So one day – it was a Thursday – my father went to their house. All this was arranged through the Balachandran family. He asked them to bring the other family to our house to see the girl. But that time, Swami was in Bangalore and on that Thursday morning, He came in the dream of my father-in-law and told him: "Come to see Me immediately; I have arranged your son's marriage!"

RP: So before this meeting could be arranged with that other boy, Swami had already changed it!

PK: Yes. My father-in-law took leave from work and went to see Swami. Swami said: "See, we have arranged for your son's marriage. For the past six years they have been asking you but you have been rejecting it! She is a very

good girl and you must go and get him married with that family. Her father is a Professor and their house is near Wilson Garden..." and He gave all the details! And then He said: "This is My *agya* (command)!"

RP: His command!

PK: Yes. So when my father went to their house, they said, "Swami has already arranged, so we should get them married!" My father was very happy when he came home. And the next day both our families went to Him - Swami was staying in Mrs. Nagamani Purnaiya's house. We all went there and Swami called both - my father and my father-in-law - and said: "This is a very good alliance and you should get these two people married. The marriage will be celebrated here in Puttaparthi itself. You can fix up some date and come to Puttaparthi."

RP: You had never been to Puttaparthi?

PK: No. So He asked my father to come once to visit Puttaparthi and see the place.

RP: So did he retire after your marriage?

PK: He retired in '54. We got married in '50.

RP: And since then he has been in Puttaparthi!

PK: Yes. My father and mother came to Puttaparthi and saw the place then.

RP: But in the intermediate period, before his retirement, did he have any meetings with Swami?

PK: No. Nothing.

RP: So even when Swami came to Bangalore he just went for Darshan?

PK: Yes, just for Darshan – not for any interview. It was only after marriage which was celebrated here.

RP: And of course it coincided somewhat with his retirement too.

PK: Yes. He came in '54 and then he went back to Bangalore because he was appointed in the All-India Radio as an Assistant Producer. He came back in '56 because the *Sanathana Sarathi* (Ashram magazine) had to be started.

RP: Then he passed away in '87...after practically 30 yrs of retirement!

PK: Yes, after 30 years.

### **Divine Intimacy At Its Best**

RP: Now, what was the relation between your father and Bhagavan like?

PK: It was very, very close – I could say like a father and son; and even friends. Swami used to like him very much. He would give him good food and would ask him to eat with Him, and also would take him with Him wherever He went on His tours.

RP: He was a translator in those early days as far as I remember – he went with Bhagavan to East Africa too; because that's where I saw him!

PK: Yes, he went to East Africa and he followed Him on almost all the tours!

RP: And he was a really good translator too!

PK: Yes.

RP: You were saying that he was born in Kerala, then how did he learn the Telegu language?

PK: He learnt Kannada too and after coming to Mysore he wrote so many books in Kannada. And after coming to Andhra Pradesh, he learnt Telegu too.

RP: And he was so proficient that he could translate. He could easily translate Bhagavan's poetic language too!

PK: Yes, it was a gift for him from Bhagavan!

RP: So pertaining to that intimate relationship, do you have any experiences that you could share with us?

PK: They were very close! When Swami had that paralytic attack, it happened when my father was there and my father was with Him through that entire episode. Also, when Swami was in Goa and had that appendicitis operation, father had to go to Ceylon (Sri Lanka) and had booked everything for Swami to go with him!

RP: He was a witness to many of these momentous events in Swami's life. He was very fortunate to be so close to Him and that is why he was such a good biographer too because he saw everything with his own eyes.

PK: Yes. Actually, when he came to Puttaparthi, Swami told him: "After retirement, you come and stay here and write my biography."

RP: Oh! So He had commanded him already! So had he started taking notes then?

PK: Yes. Swami told him: "I will help you and will tell you who you must interview. The biography was ready but I think, it was published in 1964."

### **Prof. Kasturi - A Heart of Gold**

RP: Now what about your relationship with your father?

PK: Since my father was a teacher, he was a guide too for us. Because my family was with Sri Ramakrishna, and since he had liked all those villages and *harijan* (deprived) colonies, he used to take all of us and the students to serve in the villages – like what Swami does - *Grama Seva*. At that time there was no feeding but he used to teach them about cleanliness and health all that. Also, if there was any dispute in the villages, he would help.

RP: Oh, so he used to go around door to door talking to them about health and hygiene?

PK: Yes. And he used to ask us children to play with those children so that they would keep themselves clean and the next day their mothers used to give them a bath and keep them neat so that they can play with us! Sometimes he used to bring the villagers and the people of the *harijan* colony to see the Mysore city!

RP: You were just saying that it was after your marriage, that your father virtually, physically came to Swami – even though he knew Swami since 1948. But do you think that it is your father essentially who brought you all to Swami then? He was already in the Ramakrishna Mission and he was very deeply involved with all those activities so it was a very natural corollary to that, that he should actually come to Swami!

PK: Of course! It was there.

RP: So what sort of an influence did your father have upon you?

PK: My father never liked these *japam*, *dhyanam* (chanting, meditation, etc.) and all those things because Swami was very much for these social services and feeding the poor. My father liked that because in the Ramakrishna Ashram too they did these *Daridra Narayana Seva* - Swami Vivekananda was very much for that too.

RP: So your father was very drawn to that ‘upliftment of the oppressed’.

PK: Yes. He liked those teachings of Swami a lot and was very attracted to that.

RP: So your mind must also have been shaped in that way.

PK: Yes, of course.

### **Divine Mystery Drowns the Professor in Bliss**

RP: What were your reactions to some of the experiences that your father had with Swami? Did he come home and tell you about them? I have heard of an incident, in which Prof. Kasturi was asked by Bhagavan to get properly

dressed for a photograph that Bhagavan was to take Himself – apparently for a newspaper article!

We were talking just a while back about the intimacy between the two of them; so anyway, as it turned out that it was a trick that Swami had played on him; because the camera was just a toy one! And Bhagavan had a hearty laugh at the discomfiture of Prof. Kasturi. Were you present then? Did he come home and talk about it?

PK: No. I wasn't present here, I was in Bangalore.

RP: Any other incidences that you can tell us?

PK: Yes. I can tell you another incident. Formerly, Swami used to go in trance and give Darshan to some in some distant places.

And after He used to come out of the trance, He used to tell us all that happened there. But father was not very much satisfied – he was not very sure about all that Swami had said after coming out of the trance.

RP: Whether it was authentic or not?

PK: Yes. But once, when father was there in Swami's room, Swami suddenly fell and went into a trance, and *vibhuti* came out of His mouth and hands. And after He came out of the trance, He said: "I had been to Dehradun because one Dr. Krishnamurthi – who is coming here to Puttaparthi – his mother had passed away and she was asking for My Darshan and at her last moment, I went and gave her Darshan."

Then He started telling him who else was there and my father got interested and asked Swami if he could take down notes? Swami gave him a slip of paper and father took down notes as to who else was there and all that happened, etc.

Then Swami said: "A letter will come after 3-4 days and then you can bring your list and tally it!" Then after 4 days a letter came but He didn't open it however! He sent word for my father.

RP: He knew all along that Professor was not very convinced!

PK: Yes! Then my father went up and He asked him to read both – the letter and the notes - and it was exactly the same!

RP: It exactly tallied with what Swami had told him!

PK: Yes! So my father was very much excited and came running home from the mandir shouting: "*Anandam! Anandam!*" (Bliss! Bliss!) I was there but I didn't know what had happened to him! He said: "Oh! We have got Bhagavan! How fortunate we are! Bhagavan! Bhagavan!" He didn't take any food – he was so excited!

RP: He was himself in a state of bliss!

PK: Yes! My grandmother who was there was very worried: "Oh! What has happened to my son?" When we offered him tea, he didn't want that either! He said: "No! Bhagavan is here! I don't want anything when our Bhagavan is here! We have got Bhagavan! Why do I need anything else?"

In those days, during the evening bhajans, Swami used to come in people's houses. He passed our house and asked my grand-mother: "How is Kasturi? What is he doing?" She cried: "Oh Swami! He is not taking any food! All he is saying is: 'We have got Bhagavan!' I don't know what has happened to him!" Then Swami said: "When the Truth is revealed, that's what happens. So don't worry! I will make him alright."

Then after bhajans, He called him upstairs to His room and He joked with him and gave him something to eat and then He brought him down!

RP: Back to the plane of earth!

PK: Yes. That was a really great thing.

RP: What does it feel like to be Prof. Kasturi's daughter?

### **Being Kasturi's Daughter...**

PK: Of course, I am very proud. My father led a very saintly life and everybody liked him and loved him; there was nobody who said anything against him. So to keep it up – as Kasturi's daughter – it is very difficult. Because as soon as someone says: "She is Kasturi's daughter!" everybody looks at me in a different way!

RP: Of course, they would! I think some of the nobility has rubbed off on you too. Now, what are your feelings of some of the changes that have occurred in recent years - what Bhagavan was then, and what He is now? Swami is no longer very accessible to us – He was so very accessible to all of you then – does this change hurt?

PK: Yes. Sometimes it hurts me – because I can say that for the past 25 years I didn't get an interview or anything like that. But I am very proud of it; I am very happy about it – because the whole world has come to Him and they have all realized that He is God.

At that time, the intimacy was so much that I can say – at least for myself – that I didn't feel the Divinity in Him. The relation was different then. He was like a family member – He used to come home and talk to us and play with the children...

***"He is my Swami!"***

RP: And yet, He was closer than a family member!

PK: Yes. But now, even though that intimacy is not there, just the way the whole world is craving to have a glimpse of that Darshan; that makes me proud – because He is my Swami!

RP: Who is being worshipped now by so many people!

PK: Yes. Sometimes I do feel bad that He is not accessible and that those days are gone. I do feel: “Won’t He call me ‘Padmamma’ once more?” I want to hear that sweet voice but it is not there! But I have to satisfy myself...

RP: How do you sustain yourself then? I mean during this period when you know that He is not accessible to us as He was to you – from what do you take strength then?

PK: You just remember all that happened and are happy with those memories.

RP: So you have a lot of memories, isn’t it?

PK: Yes. I have not forgotten those things even though I lived with my father for 19 years. I have forgotten so many other things, but with Swami – from all the interviews that I have got – I have a lot of good memories of all that. I can remember everything and even narrate everything.

***(to be continued...)***

## **GET INSPIRED**

### **THE STORY OF KISAGOTAMI**

*The following story is found in the Dhammapada, a Buddhist scripture which recorded episodes from the life of Lord Buddha and His teachings.*

While residing at the Jētavana Monastery, the Buddha spoke this verse, with reference to Kisagotami.

Kisagotami was the daughter of a rich man from Savatthi; she was known as Kisagotami because of her slim body. Kisagotami was married to a rich young man and a son was born to them. The boy died when he was just a toddler and Kisagotami was stricken with grief. Carrying the dead body of her son, she went about asking for medicine that would restore her son to life from everyone she happened to meet. People began to think that she had gone mad. But a wise man seeing her condition thought that he should be of some help to her. So, he said to her, "The Buddha is the person you should approach, he has the medicine you want; go to him." Thus, she went to the Buddha and asked him to give her the medicine that would restore her dead son to life.

The Buddha told her to get some mustard seeds from a house where there had been no death. Carrying her dead child in her bosom, Kisagotami went from house to house, with the request for some mustard seeds. Everyone was willing to help her, but she could not find a single house where death had not occurred. Then, she realized that her's was not the only family that had faced death and that there were more people dead than living. As soon as she realized this, her attitude towards her dead son changed; she was no longer attached to the dead body of her son. She left the corpse in the jungle and returned to the Buddha and reported that she could find no house where death had not occurred.

Then the Buddha said, "Did you not get the single pinch of mustard seed?" "No, that did I not, Venerable. In every village the dead are more in number than the living." Said the Buddha, "Vainly did you imagine that you alone had lost a child. But all living beings are subject to an unchanging law, and it is this: The prince of death, like a raging torrent, sweeps away into the sea of ruin all living beings; with their longings still unfulfilled. Gotami, you thought that you were the only one who had lost a son. As you have now realized, death comes to all beings; before their desires are fulfilled death takes them away." On hearing this, Kisagotami fully realized the impermanence, unsatisfactoriness and insubstantiality of the aggregates and attained sotapatti fruition.

Soon afterwards, Kisagotami became a nun. One day, as she was lighting the lamps she saw the flames flaring up and dying out, and suddenly she clearly perceived the arising and the perishing of beings. The Buddha, through supernormal power, saw her from his monastery, and sent forth his radiance and appeared to her in person. Kisagotami was told to continue meditating on



the impermanent nature of all beings and to strive hard to realize Nibbàna (nirvana). She reached higher stages of spiritual awakening.

It is from this incident that the Buddha was promoted to utter the following verse which forms part of the Dhammapada scripture:

**A single day's life of a person who sees the state of deathlessness is far greater and nobler than the hundred-year life-span of a person who does not perceive the deathless state.**

## **BE THANKFUL**

One day, the father of a very wealthy family took his son on a trip to the country with the express purpose of showing him how poor people live. They spent a couple of days and nights on the farm of what would be considered a very poor family.

On their return from their trip, the father asked his son, "How was the trip?"

"It was great, Dad!"

"Did you see how poor people live?" the father asked.

"Oh yeah," said the son.

"So, tell me, what you learned from the trip?" asked the father. The son answered: "I saw that we have one dog and they had four. We have a pool that reaches to the middle of our garden and they have a creek that has no end. We have imported lanterns in our garden and they have the stars at night.

"Our patio reaches to the front yard and they have the whole Horizon. We have a small piece of land to live on and they have fields that go beyond our sight.

"We have servants who serve us, but they serve others. We buy our food, but they grow theirs. We have walls around our property to protect us, they have friends to protect them."

The boy's father was speechless. Then his son added, "Thanks Dad, for showing me how poor we are."

Isn't perspective a wonderful thing? Makes you wonder what would happen if we all gave thanks for everything we have, instead of worrying about what we don't have.

Swami says, "Contentment is the most precious treasure... He who has greatest satisfaction in life is the richest man. He who is filled with desires is the poorest man in the world."

Illustrations: Sai Aditya, SSSU

Adapted from

## **RIGHT ACTION, RIGHT REWARD**

It is said that Narseva (service to man), is Narayan seva (service to God). A rich landlord was organizing a 'langar\* i.e. community feeding, in a temple. Basically it was meant to be for poor people. They were served rice, dal, vegetables, rotis and last of all, a mango each. Hundreds of people lined up to eat. The landlord had plenty of food prepared by the cooks and was very much at peace with what he was doing.

His son was part of the team that had been given the job of serving the people as they came and sat cross legged on the jute mats laid out on the floor. The son noticed some people who did not look poor, eating amongst the others. He told his father, "Father, look at those three men there in the second row, they seem to be quite well to do. Why don't you ask them to leave? We are feeding the poor, why should we feed these people?" The father chastened the son saying, "We're doing our duty. Let them do what they think is right. Our only concern is to do what we think is right. You are not to utter another word on this."

The son did not like what his father had said; but he had no option but to serve the men. As the day was getting over, there was a knock on the door of the landlord's house. He was surprised to find one of the three men pointed out to him by his son, standing in the doorway. He said, "Sir, I am an unemployed person. I am lazy by nature and do not like to work. This morning I said to God, 'God, if you can get me a good meal today, without having to do any work, I promise I shall start working.' At noon when I crossed by the temple, I saw that you were offering free food. I had a hearty meal. But I have to fulfill my promise to God. Can you give me some work?" The rich man was much surprised by this declaration and decided to employ the boy straight away.

Next day, the landlord went to the temple and was surprised to see the second man holding a 'poor-feeding' just as the one he had done yesterday. He went up to the man and asked him, "My friend if I'm not mistaken were you not eating here yesterday? How come you are serving the poor today, please explain, what you are doing!" The man smiled sheepishly and said, "I have always been one for eating free food wherever I find it. Actually I am a very rich man but I am quite a miser. Yesterday I saw you serving food to the poor; I thought what a shame it was that I have never shared my prosperity with the lesser fortunate. You inspired me to do this!"

The landlord entered the temple. He was startled to see the third man offering prayers to the deity at the temple. He was even more taken aback when this man came up to him and said, "Sir, I am so glad to see you. In fact I was hoping I would be able to meet you and tell you that till yesterday, I was a staunch atheist. A friend of mine said to me, 'What would you have God do, to make you believe in Him?' I said to him in jest, 'Well if I get a mango today, free of cost, I shall believe that there is God!' As a matter of chance I joined the line to eat food here yesterday. When I was given a mango just before leaving, I knew that God had sent me His confirmation. So here I am, thanks to you!"

The rich man shed tears of joy. He said, "Thank God, I didn't give in to my son. For, if I had rebuked these three men yesterday, they would not be doing what they are today!"

Swami says, "To attain divinity, you have to cultivate purity." Whenever we have purity of purpose and dedicate the fruits of all our actions to God, the outcome will only be beautiful and most fulfilling. Any number of service projects done by Sai devotees and others stand testimony to this.

## TEST YOUR SPIRITUAL QUOTIENT

### MULTI-FAITH QUIZ

1. What is the special name given to the monthly serials that Bhagavan wrote for the magazine 'Sanathana Sarathi' from its inception till 1984?

- a. Vahini
- b. Prema Dhara
- c. Divine Gems
- d. Sai Speaks

2. What does the word 'Islam' mean?

- a. Faith
- b. Submission
- c. Joy
- d. Love

3. What is the missing word in this sentence from Swami?

*The spiritual guide (acharya) is ten times worthier than the teacher of arts and sciences. The father is ten times worthier than the spiritual guide. The \_\_\_\_\_ is thousand times worthier than the father.*

- a. Guru
- b. Avatar
- c. Mother
- d. Lord

4. May 2<sup>nd</sup> 2007, is Buddha Poornima, or Vesak, the most holy day of the Buddhist calendar. Which of the following is **not** remembered on this day?

- a. The death of Lord Buddha.
- b. The birth of Lord Buddha.
- c. The enlightenment of Lord Buddha.
- d. The occasion when Lord Buddha preached His first sermon.

5. In the Ramayana, the childless King Dasaratha was advised by sage Vashishta to hold the *Puthrakameshti Yaga*, prescribed for those desirous of begetting a son. Accordingly he did so, with the priest Rshyasrnga presiding

over the sacrificial fire, and offerings. What emanated from the fire at the successful culmination of the *yaga*?

- a. A beam of ethereal light enveloped Dasaratha's three queens.
- b. A divine person appeared from the flames.
- c. Sacred chanting was heard, replete with blessings for the queens.
- d. Lord Ganesha was seen amidst the flames, giving His blessing to the queens.

6. 27<sup>th</sup> May 2007, is the celebration of Pentecost in the Christian church. What does this festival day commemorate?

- a. The ascension of Lord Jesus to heaven.
- b. The baptism of Lord Jesus.
- c. The descent of the Holy Spirit on the disciples.
- d. The betrayal of Lord Jesus by Judas.

7. What was the name of the serpent that the young Lord Krishna subdued in the poisoned pool by the Yamuna River?

- a. Kalpa
- b. Kaliya
- c. Kalusa
- d. Kaltra

8. 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2007, marks the Jewish festival of Shavuot, which commemorates the occasion when the five books of the Torah, which constitute the first part of the Hebrew Bible, were given to Moses on Mount Sinai. Which of the following is **not** one of the five books of the Torah?

- a. Psalms
- b. Genesis
- c. Exodus
- d. Deuteronomy

9. On Ugadi, (Telugu New Year day which fell on 20 March, 2007) Bhagavan stated that the name of this coming year is Sarvajit. What did Bhagavan say are the qualities of this year?

- a. Special progress in agricultural matters.
- b. Danger to planes and other modes of travel.
- c. Good progress in limited areas of Science and medicine.
- d. Success in all fields.

10. Which people practise the Bon religion?

- a. The Germans
- b. The Tibetans
- c. The Greeks
- d. The Brazilians

## ANSWERS

1. ANSWER A: Vahini

For a detailed look at how Bhagavan gifted the Vahinis to the world, their significance, and the order in which they came, please see our cover story of February this year.

[http://media.radiosai.org/Journals/Vol\\_05/01FEB07/03-coverstory.htm](http://media.radiosai.org/Journals/Vol_05/01FEB07/03-coverstory.htm)

2. ANSWER B: Submission.

A follower of Islam endeavours to submit to the will of Allah and surrender fully to Him.

3. ANSWER C: Mother

The full text is as follows:

*The spiritual guide (acharya) is ten times worthier than the teacher of arts and sciences. The father is ten times worthier than the spiritual guide. The mother is thousand times worthier than the father. This is the declaration of Manu in the law text Manusmrithi. This law text is the binding text for all scriptures on dharma (dharma sastras); it is the very basis. See what a great honour it pays to the mother!*

(Dharma Vahini, chapter 9)

4. ANSWER D: The occasion when Lord Buddha preached His first sermon.

Vesak is the major Buddhist festival of the year as it celebrates the birth, enlightenment and death of the Buddha on one day, which is commonly the first full moon day in May (except in a leap year when the festival is held in June). This celebration is called Vesak which is the name of the month in the Indian calendar.

Bhagavan commented on Buddha Poornima in the following way:

*Embodiments of Love! We are celebrating today Buddha Poornima, or Buddha Jayanthi. What does Poornima (full moon) signify? It signifies wholeness. When the mind is filled with love, it achieves fullness.*

5. ANSWER B: A divine person appeared from the flames.

We can learn about this momentous episode from Swami, who was there as the very same Rama.

*From the fire that was scripturally fed, there arose before all eyes, a Divine Person who shone with the blinding splendour of a sudden stroke of lightning! He held a bright vessel in his hands. At this, the vast concourse including the priests were petrified with wonder, awe, fear and joy. They were overwhelmed by the sudden onrush of bliss and mystery. The King and Queens shed tears of joy. They cast their looks upon the Divine Person and prayed to Him, with folded palms. Rshyasrnga continued the formulae with undisturbed equanimity, as the texts prescribe, offering oblations in the fire. Suddenly, a Voice as on the Day of Mergence, resounded from the dome of the sky. Rshyasrnga sat aghast and sought to listen to the Message from above. "Maharaja! Accept this Vessel, and give the sacred 'payasam' food brought therein in appropriate shares to your three queens," the Voice announced. Placing the vessel in the hands of the King the mysterious Person who had emerged from the flames disappeared into them.*

*The joy of the people, princes, pundits and priests who witnessed this great manifestation knew no bounds. Soon, the final rituals were completed and the Maharaja returned in procession to the Palace, with the sacred vessel gifted by the Gods in his hands.*

(Ramakatha Rasavahini p, 38)

6. ANSWER C: The descent of the Holy Spirit on the disciples.

The day of Pentecost is regarded as the birthday of the Christian church, and the start of the church's mission to the world. At that time, the Holy Spirit overshadowed the twelve disciples and enabled them to speak in various languages. Many local people came to hear this and the disciples then told them about Lord Jesus and His saving grace. On that day 3,000 people were baptised and joined the church. Please see the Bible, book of Acts, chapter 2 for the biblical account.

7. ANSWER B: Kaliya

Swami tells us about the last stages of the fight that the Lord enacted in view of all the villagers:

*Meanwhile, Krishna caught it by its tail and whirled the serpent pretty fast. He beat the surface of the water with its body. This forced the serpent to hang down its heads, but with great effort it struggled to keep them erect over the waters. Then, Krishna jumped upon it and holding the tail in one hand, He decided to dance upon the line of hoods! The serpent could not bear the weight of the Lord, stepping merrily from hood to hood. It was bleeding profusely from nose and mouth. It whined piteously through pain and shame. It could scarcely breathe. It was about to die ... He pardoned the monster, Kaliya. He released him, with the admonition: 'Henceforth, do not inflict injury*



*on anyone, without provocation, be Sathwic in nature. I bless you that no one will harm you and provoke you into vengeance. You carry on your heads My Footprints and so, even your natural enemy the Garuda eagle, will not harm you any more. Go and live in peace.'*

(Bhagavatha Vahini p, 318-9)

#### 8. ANSWER A: Psalms

Genesis is the first book of the Torah, which begins with an account of God's creation of the world, and Adam and Eve. The text goes on to relate events surrounding the building of the Tower of Babel, an account of Noah and the great flood. Exodus is the second book of the Torah, and concerns the departure of the Hebrew slaves from Egypt under the leadership of Moses. Deuteronomy, is the fifth book of the Torah, and consists mainly of three discourses delivered by Moses to the Israelites a short time before his death. The Book of Psalms is not a part of the Torah. It is divided into 150 Psalms, each of which constitutes a religious song or chant, many composed by King David.

#### 9. ANSWER D: Success in all fields.

During the discourse Bhagavan stated that:

*This year Sarvajit is very significant to realise the divinity latent in a human being. A human being has several desires and aspirations. The year Sarvajit fulfils such desires which are truthful. The year will see significant progress being made in the moral, physical, righteous, spiritual and scientific fields. A truthful desire will always result in fulfilment. One has, however, to hold on to the Truth with steadfast faith. Sarvajit year will bring victory in all possible ways. It is the most important year in all these sixty years. 'Jit' signifies victory. Sarvajit means victory in all fields of human endeavour. If one were to progress in life, one has to cultivate truthful desires in this Sarvajit year. I have not seen a single person who cultivated such truthful desires and failed in his life. Hence, I exhort you all to cultivate truthful desires and aspirations and lead a life full of happiness and bliss in this Sarvajit year.*

(First Ugadi divine discourse 20 March 2007)

#### 10. ANSWER B: The Tibetans

The ancient roots of Bon religion derive from a profound respect for nature and emphasize the healing of the physical and spiritual realms. As Indian Buddhism was being established in Tibet, many native Bon elements were incorporated into the incoming religion, resulting in a distinct religion known today as Tibetan Buddhism. In turn, Buddhist influences are abundantly evident in Bon religion as it currently exists. Although they trace their origins to ancient times, Bonpo practice a living doctrine dedicated to perpetuating the teachings of their founder Tonpa Shenrab, who occupies a pre-eminent position in Bon culture. Tonpa Shenrab's teachings are collectively known as

Yungdrung Bon or the "tradition of Eternal Wisdom" and include the Nine Ways of Bon that outline the laws of cause and effect on the path to spiritual liberation. According to a recent survey there are 264 functioning Bon monasteries, found in the more isolated parts of northern and western Tibet. The current leader of Bon is His Holiness Lungtok Tenpai Nyima.

## **QUIZ ON HEART 2 HEART**

*We are now bringing you a new quiz to test your recall power from reading Heart2Heart. Please refer to the old issues to find out the full stories.*

1. In our last issue we carried an article on a book - *A Guide To A Happy Life For Young Children*. This had inspiring examples of how children should behave in respectful and helpful ways towards their parents. Which country's culture did this book talk about?

- a. Indonesia
- b. United States of America
- c. China
- d. Italy

2. In our cover story *A Child Among Children*, from 1 Aug 2004 issue, we learnt how Swami came to see an exhibition put on by the students. One boy had created a burglar alarm which went off when someone put his hand across the beam of light. Swami approached this device...what happened next?

- a. The alarm bell mysteriously made a different sound than normal, much to the boys' amusement.
- b. Swami refused to try it out saying that He was not a thief.
- c. Swami put His arm across the beam but the alarm did not ring.
- d. Swami made an alarm sound with His voice which made the boys laugh.

3. In *Unforgettable Moments With Sai* of our June 2006 issue, Mr Chidambaram Krishnan describes how in the old days of the early 1960's a priest named Brahman invariably would give a talk on the Ramayana or Mahabharath in Swami's presence during the afternoon. How would Swami follow the talk?

- a. Swami used to materialise idols of main characters from the epics.
- b. Swami would recount unheard of incidents from the epics.
- c. Swami would ask Brahman questions on the scriptures.
- d. Swami used to sing sweet bhajans for about an hour.

4. Swami's memorable visit to East Africa was remembered in our June 15th 2004 cover story when we brought Kasturi's reminiscences of this glorious time to the pages of H2H. In which year did Bhagavan make this voyage to African continent?

- a. 1968
- b. 1972
- c. 1963
- d. 1984

5. In our February, 2005 cover story we informed you about the marvels of the Chaitanya Jyoti Museum: how Swami was involved at every step, His interactions and visits, and the building process. We also took you on a tour of the multi-cultural architectural features. Which culture's architectural style is not represented on the museum building?

- a. Greek
- b. French
- c. Moorish
- d. Roman

### ANSWERS:

1. ANSWER C: China

The article contained extracts from the book detailing the approach to child rearing from ancient Chinese culture and depicted several cases of exemplary relationship between parents and their offspring.

To read the full account

[http://media.radiosai.org/Journals/Vol\\_05/01APR07/04-chinese.htm](http://media.radiosai.org/Journals/Vol_05/01APR07/04-chinese.htm)

2. ANSWER C: Swami put His arm across the beam but the alarm did not ring.

This playful incident goes as follows:

*In 1983, there was a small exhibition organised by the students in Brindavan. After looking through the various displays, Swami then came to the last item, which was a burglar alarm. There was a beam of light and when it was interrupted, the alarm went off. So one of the students said, "Swami, please put your hand across the beam". Swami did that. But nothing happened. The boy thought that something must have gone wrong with the equipment and just to check, put his own hand. The alarm rang. Perplexed, he requested Swami to put His hand again and Swami lovingly obliged. But the alarm did not ring! The boy was dumbfounded. The students there looked at each other. Everybody was clueless and helpless. Swami then smiled sweetly and said to the boy, **"I am not that kind of a thief. I am 'Chittachora' – the stealer of Hearts."** What a way to reveal Himself!*

For the whole cover story, full of delightful anecdotes

[http://media.radiosai.org/Journals/Vol\\_02/15Aug01/02\\_Cover\\_Story/cover\\_story.htm](http://media.radiosai.org/Journals/Vol_02/15Aug01/02_Cover_Story/cover_story.htm)

3. ANSWER B: Swami would tell unheard of incidents from the epics.

Mr Chidambaram Krishnan's relates that:

*Swami intervened and said, "You will not understand what this man is saying. I shall explain it all." So saying, Swami started giving a Discourse. During His Discourse, Swami narrated many incidents that are not recorded in the published versions of the Ramayana. Brahman therefore asked, "But Swami, one does not find these incidents reported in the Ramayana." Swami simply said in reply, "I am Rama, I was there and I know what exactly happened!" Mr. Brahman was stunned and feebly asked, "Are You really Rama?"*

To read the whole article :

[http://media.radiosai.org/Journals/Vol\\_04/01JUN06/unforgettable.htm](http://media.radiosai.org/Journals/Vol_04/01JUN06/unforgettable.htm)

4. ANSWER A: 1968

Here is an extract from the write up:

*When preparations for the African safari were being made, divine mother Easwaramma became rather anxious. Not much was known about Africa in those days, and she was deeply concerned because she had heard that Africa was full of wild animals and savages. When someone gently pointed out that this was not really true, and that even if true, nothing would happen to Swami because He was God, Easwaramma shot back, "I know Swami is God, you know He is God, but do those wild animals and savages know He is God?"*

Does this whet your appetite? For the full version :

[http://media.radiosai.org/Journals/Vol\\_02/12June15/02\\_Cover\\_Story/cover\\_story.htm](http://media.radiosai.org/Journals/Vol_02/12June15/02_Cover_Story/cover_story.htm)

5. ANSWER B: French

Here is an extract from the cover story describing the various cultural influences on the Museum's design.

*The building incorporates architectural styles from all over the world and thus embodies in its very design Swami's teaching on the Unity of Humanity. There are Roman arches; Gothic windows; a Singapore designed fish pool; Moorish domes; Japanese roofing (for the lift shaft); a Greek inclusion on the roof; and Indian religious figures. Of course the majority of the influence is from China. Witness the unforgettable roof, the largest outside China. It is laid with ceramic tiles glazed using traditional methods. There are Chinese dragons, religious symbols, and decorative designs to be seen all round.*

To read our double cover story on this eternal masterpiece :

[http://media.radiosai.org/Journals/Vol\\_03/02FEB01/cjyothi.htm](http://media.radiosai.org/Journals/Vol_03/02FEB01/cjyothi.htm)

[http://media.radiosai.org/Journals/Vol\\_03/02FEB01/making.htm](http://media.radiosai.org/Journals/Vol_03/02FEB01/making.htm)

## **THE HEALING TOUCH**

### **HE STEALS HEARTS WHILE HIS HEART HEALS...**

**By Ashwin V**

Heart disease can be very cruel. Ask Little Rishi. Barely into pre-school, his little heart struggled to keep up with the little bundle of energy he was. His teacher noticed him cough and sniffle frequently in class. His mother noticed that he fell ill and caught infection easily. His friends noticed that he wasn't as big built as most of them, and barely stood one round in friendly brawls. And so "Chotu" was born.

Chotu came to our hospital in a bright red T-shirt, clutching a little toy in his hand. His mother had a hard time containing him in the outpatient department. As soon as she let him go, he would happily scamper away to the playroom. I first noticed him near the aquarium, tiptoe, sticking his nose against the glass, his fingers busily pecking at the school of fish he saw inside. He looked adorable. I bent down to strike a connect.

Which fish did he like?

The red one, of course.

Why did he like red so much?

He flicked his little head away impishly, as all bemused children do.

Rishi had a Ventricular Septal Defect (VSD), a small hole in the heart, and like most children with this condition, was totally oblivious to it. Small VSDs rarely present with severe symptoms. He perked his ears up and looked confused when he heard the blood rush from one chamber to another on the heart scan, and his anxious mother was told that it was a relatively small defect and immediate surgery may not be required. The child was asked to return after six months for a review. My last few moments with chotu on that visit were by the fish tank again.

What are the fish doing?

They are 'playing' in the water!

Does he like to play too?

A frown that told me that was a stupid question. He scuttled across the corridor to his mother, and with a hurried wave, was off.

It's hard to let go when a child has captured your heart so much, but its one of the tougher lessons learnt here. Children come. They are treated. They leave. We meet. We share His love. We part.

Six months passed but no sign of Rishi. A year and then six months. His infectious smile faded, with the likes of a hundred others, into a distant happy memory.

When I least expected to see him, there he was again. The unmistakable red outfit scurrying about the fish tank. "Rishi," I gushed delightedly. His mother happily related how his health had substantially improved. He was doing well at school, and his newfound appetite showed. But better news lay waiting for them at the heart scan.

There was no hole in his heart.

In a remarkable play of providence, a structure adjacent to the hole had gradually plugged the opening, leaving Rishi with a normal heart. Some call it chance. Doctors see it as natural coping. Some, as divine intervention.

Rishi seemed unfazed by all the celebration. Towards the end of the day, the child was seen at his favourite spot, watching fish at the aquarium.

"The red fish has grown," he beamed happily.

And very playfully, unaware of the profundity of what would follow, added, "I won't call him chotu any more."

## YOUR SAY

### **Responses to April issue's Cover Story - *Resurrection And Reincarnation Born, Not To Be Born Again*:**

Thank you for this wonderful article. My English is not very good but I could understand everything. I needed to cry during my reading. Feelings of deep love touched me.

Thank You Swami, Sai Ram, Bernd Svetnik, Austria, Klagenfurt

Sai Ram,

Thanks for the very good gospel about Jesus, John, Elijah and not to be born again. It was a jewel for me, much awaited and looked for. The story reminds me about a Tao Te Ching stanza: 'nothing will be done and nothing is not done.' (Everything is done). They call it also *wuwei* - nothing and the enlightenment. This feels not like a heavy burden, actually no burden at all, only the oneness - the taste of truth, the pure being, *sat*. I guess it is also *chit* and *ananda*, but one notices this only afterwards when the worries are back.

So I try to jump over my shadow and the trouble grows worse. The separation is an idea, no idea means no separation. Accept everything as it is as a gift, total integration, no separation, no pain. Smile in the hearth, sunshine in the world! Be happy, do not worry!

Best regards, Jukka Oranen, Veikkola, Finland.

I found this month's cover story truly enlightening and inspiring. I don't know much about Christianity and have always been interested in finding out more about various religions. I really appreciated the depth of detail that would otherwise be difficult to locate from a reliable source and encourage more cover stories relating to other religious figures, festivals and their practical application in today's world. The final few paragraphs dedicated to overcoming the mind were insightful and extremely refreshing and I could relate to the simple straightforward suggestions put forward. Overall it was an extremely worthwhile read!

Sai ram! Harshini

Dear H2H team,

The cover story resurrection and reincarnation – born not to be reborn – was most inspiring for me and some friends whom I gave copies of this article. I am very grateful to you for your wonderful and soul-elevating contributions – reading H2H is like digging in a treasury case – you always feel very enriched afterwards.

May Swami always bless you and your wonderful task.



Dagmara, Switzerland.

Sai Ram.

This article was a masterpiece. I enjoyed it tremendously. I used some of the concepts in my Easter message in my Church and Sai Centre.  
God bless, keep up the good work.

Karen Lee

Dear Friend:

Thank you! I've just completed the Cover Story. The story of John the Baptist has always made me wonder. Thanks a million for illuminating my darkness and eventually putting my mind at peace. (I am 67). Not to mention, the sheer brilliance of interweaving it with other spiritual texts and teachings on this auspicious occasion.

As I read this beautiful message - the likes of which I've never heard explained like this before – it evoked from me involuntary spontaneous joy and laughter, filling me with delight. (Surely, many spiritual texts are written according to the science of correspondence!) As a "neophyte", I intend to read this magnificent piece over and over again so as to gain more pearls of wisdom. Because I know from experience, I can only get from these teachings what I bring to such golden texts. If it pleases you, may I suggest a similar rendition of The Sermon on The Mount, for a future Cover Story.

Thank you!

Sincerely Yours in our Heavenly Father, Peace & Love, Gebre Kedan

Thank you very much for this article. It was just what I needed - while reading it I was thinking that God must have read my mind. It gave me some of the answers I wanted.

Sylvia, Bulgaria

Om Sai Ram:

This is a very thought provoking article. Beautifully presented, interwoven with Christian and Hindu religious anecdotes, it is so refreshing that I have it saved to be read again!

Thiru Thirumalai

## **In Response to the Article, Madras Memories**

Dear Sir,

I am extremely pleased to go through all you have published (not withstanding the nice and excellent photographs of Swami) on the Athirudra at Chennai. I have been seeing this very early in the morning at 2.30.A.M. and found it very informative and interesting. You have done a great service by bringing in vivid details of Swami's visit to Chennai.

Sairam to all of you. G.Sugunakar, Bangalore.

Sai Ram,

The Article "Madras Memories" brought with it my own sweet memories of the city. Just that the writer had mentioned about a period that was about five decades earlier than mine. Thanks Swami first of all for giving me a chance to read this nice article. Though, I am not one of the lucky ones who got to see the Yagna of such massive scale, I indeed feel very happy that my city and citizens got their share of Swami's divine physical presence and blessings after such a long gap, not in small measure but in a very magnanimous proportion.

The article also confirms the efficiency of a *Madarasi* (of-course) compounded even further by their faith and love for Swami. It was indeed because of the residents' good karma that they all got to witness this Yagna conducted by the Avatar himself for full 11 days.

Jai Sai Ram, Sudha Ram, Singapore

## **In response to the Healing Touch article, *From Lifeless Existence to a Living Inspiration ...the Riveting Story of Mr. George Melkay***

I would like to share my joy and admiration on reading about the miraculous way Swami saved the life of Mr George Melkay. Swami's love helps for His true devotees in distress is unlimited & unfathomable. He is a beacon of light in these dark days for millions! The daily "SAI INSPIRES" items presented by H2H are wonderful and valuable.

C.V.KUMAR

## **In response to the article *Love My Uncertainty* by Sri Sanjay Sahani**

Om sairam

Yes, it did inspire me a lot and enjoyed reading it. Please do send more. Swami's students are just so lucky! Last night I had the task of giving the youth from our Sai Centre a motivational talk on becoming active youth members...wish I had this article before then, as I could have used some quotes. Anyway thanks a million.

Lots of love, Vanessa Govender, Durban, South Africa.

Sai Ram.

This article gives a graphic description of how the Kaliyug Avatar gives the basic lessons in spirituality so lovingly and patiently. His uncertainty gives rise to introspection and prayers in our hearts. His ways are so mysterious and loving that each of the millions of devotees feels as if the Avatar has come exclusively to take care of him.

Such an article gives courage to others who feel as if Baba is not listening to their prayers and find Baba's uncertainty difficult to bear. Most of us are actually not able to trust Baba when it comes to facing our problems in life. And yet He is the all knowing and is always with us as has been so beautifully brought out in the article.

The article turned out to be most timely as it helped me crystallise my thoughts on certain issues arising in my mind at the time. So my thanks for all that, Loving Sai Ram.

Virendra Singh, Noida, India.

Sairam!

That was a wonderful article indeed and so very inspiring to a depressed heart and mind. I am presently working in Bahrain and am facing all the odds against me. I read this article and my dying hope got rekindled once again.

Dr.Shobha

Sai Ram,

I just wanted to say this article really touched my heart. In it I felt the true spirit of faith and Love for Swami, it was so beautifully depicted how Swami looks after the little details of everything. Many a time, one tends to wonder with the fickle mind whether what one does is right or wrong, only to realize that everything truly is His Will, as it happens, when it happens and how it happens... and all we need to do is constantly have unshakable faith and surrender, to hold on to His Lotus Feet all the while, because always and all ways, he takes care.

Sai-Usha Daswani, Hong Kong.

**In response to the article *Guide to A Happy Life For Young Children – The Chinese Way*,**

Aum Sri Sairam,

It was really a sincere effort by H2H to give an insight into the Chinese way .It is difficult for us here in India, to get such references .We are indeed grateful for introducing us to such unknown books and areas .May Swami help to bring out more such books into light to the ordinary readers like me .

With loving regards and Sairam,  
Subhadra bhaskaran, Kaloore, Kerala

**In Response to the Sunday Special of 1 April**

Respected members of the H2H team, Sai Ram to you all!

I just wanted to express my sincere gratitude to you all for this Sunday's article on the four states of consciousness. It was highly philosophical and inspires one to strive to reach that fourth state so that we can gain Union with our Lord Sai. I'm a student of Vedanta and when I get to read such high and profound philosophy from the H2H team, it really inspires me on my journey to Sai! Certainly I would love similar articles.

Thank you all once again,  
With warm regards, Rishi Kewalramani.

Hello,

I would like to write a short note on this nice article about the dreams and logic. It is surely mind opening. It gives me a clear point of view from which I can strive to understand Swami's "illogical" sayings. My mind often stops me short by its frequent iron logic. I notice it and then I try to stop it, because I know that logic too often diverts the perceiver from the truth because it searches for logic, but in this very process loses Truth. Thank you for the wonderful little article that is like a little light bulb turned on in my mind. I will approach my dreams and my perceptions in this light from now on. I realize how important is the fact that all states of existence are different states of the mind and the one we happen to be in is not the only one and is not the only true one, and if we want to expand our consciousness we should pay attention to dreams and other 'illogical' experiences because they may be possibilities for our expansion and understanding.

Thank you, Sai Ram,  
Enikő Galbács, Transylvania (Romania)

Sairam,

This is a beautiful explanation of the states of consciousness which is truly very complex. It appears to me that the most important state of consciousness, especially when trying to help transmute evil traits into good, is to experience the state of *Turiyaavastha*. Therefore it seems that for change to take place the person her/himself must experience *Turiyaavastha*.

Thank you and warm regards, Yours sincerely, D. Govindasamy

Sai Ram!

I think Chandran's dreams and his subsequent understanding of their meaning surely must have granted him a great sense of relief or freedom.... a sort of freedom that one experiences every time one is able to see clearly through a word or a pun or a phrase or a sentence that Baba had spoken. It leaves one with a sense of peace. I, too, learned from it.

I am really grateful every time when a story like this from one of Baba's students gets published here. I have learned a lot from the experiences of His students. They have lot to say and we here (I am in Canada) have a lot of enthusiasm to hear them. So if you can print more and more of their stories that would be awesome.

Thank you, Sai Ram, Mahesh

### **In Response to Sai Inspires**

Dear H2H Team,

Loving Sairam to all of you, I have complete appreciation for the job your team is doing. It is very nice to receive Swami's message in the morning and start my work. I made it a habit everyday that I should read what Swami said first thing in the morning before I start my work and follow His directions in every aspect of life. The messages I get from H2H are a valuable treasure of knowledge. I never delete these messages; instead I save them to a separate folder for me to have a look at them any time. I wish Swami's will grace your team with blessing to continue this service for long time and to many people in the world.

Sairam, Raju Nanduri, Richmond BC, Canada

I wanted to express thanks and say how much the message helped me today. I have been struggling with my mind now for over a year, and I have just realized that God has been trying to get my attention and finally got through today with your message. Thank you and I am now surrendering my mind sevenfold to the will of God.

Many blessings, Sai Ram, Diane Alca

Dear Friends,

I just want to thank you for your daily inspiration. I don't have time to take it in every day, but still the regularity of your e-mails remind me of God knocking on my door every minute, reminding me that love, confidence and bliss are not just sometimes, but are always the basis of life.

Thank you. Om Sai Ram!  
Monique & Mark-Jan den Hartog