

HEART 2 HEART

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BETWEEN YOU AND US

It was only a couple of weeks ago, on August 15, when the world's largest democracy, India, was reveling in music and gaiety. The country was celebrating her 60th year of independence. For the more-than-a-billion people of this nation, whose civilization is more than 5,000 years old, it was truly a moment of pride and festivity. The nation in the last one and half decades has crossed many critical, and hitherto insurmountable, thresholds. Today, it is the world's second fastest growing major economy. Her prowess in Information Technology and other high-value services has raised her stature to a level in the global arena where no nation can afford to ignore her. But the fact still remains that even after six decades of popular governance, more than 6 out of every 10 Indians are illiterate. The infant mortality rate is an appalling 60 deaths per 1000 live births and 45 percent of Indian children under five are malnourished. Other social problems like naxalism, communalism, unemployment, etc. make the picture only gloomier.

And this is the case not only with India. Take the case of the world's most developed nation. One survey has showed that the wealth of the US millionaires at US\$30 trillion is more than the GDPs (Gross Domestic Product) of China, Japan, Brazil, Russia and the European Union combined! But at the same time, 36 million people in this country still live below poverty line. And with Vice-Admiral (ret'd) John Scott Redd, the Head of the National Counter Terrorism Center, saying recently "Another attack on America (by the same perpetrators of 9/11) is inevitable", there is only fear and insecurity in the air. Why are the people of the most powerful country in this world not so free to pursue their dream of 'life, liberty and pursuit of happiness'?

According to figures released by UNICEF, in the world today, 11 million children die before their fifth birthday and 800 million people go to bed hungry everyday going by the World Health Report. And what is sadder, every minute a woman with no medical care dies in pregnancy or childbirth, and one billion people in the world have no access to clean drinking water. The problems seem so overwhelming. But why is the world in such a sorry state in spite of mind-boggling advancements in various disciplines from science and medicine to communication technology and psychology? Does the answer lie in generating and allocating more resources through elaborate programmes? Can increasing our defense budget and placing spy satellites free us from the fear of terror? We now know that, at best, these measures can only tackle the surface of the problem, but never address the root of the malaise. If not more resources and advanced technology, what can really solve the problem? Is there a magic formula which can eradicate all poverty, global warming, terrorism and conflicts?

We say, "Yes, there is one prescription which truly can solve all the ills of the world." And it is simple, in fact, very natural to man – Love. Many may dismiss this as totally impractical in the modern world, but what if we show live examples of how this has really made a phenomenal difference to millions

and accomplished what successive popular governments for sixty years, or the United Nations could not achieve.

But mind you, this is not the 'love' how the world generally understands it. "I love my family, I love my children," one may say. But that is only an iota and, in fact, a tainted picture of what true love is. Love gives by giving and forgiving. "Expansion is love," Bhagavan Baba says. But how do we expand this love so that it really transforms the world? That is what the grand exhibition "Prema Jyothi" staged in the Poornachandra auditorium during the Guru Poornima celebrations was all about. Visitors were so touched with this presentation that two out of three said, "You must have this in different states of India and move it to all countries of the world." Well, that is what we are doing in this issue. Now it is available online for anybody anywhere to see it.

When you read the cover story, you will know what tremendous triumphs Love, in its purest form, can bring about. Can you imagine one person from a rural hamlet single-handedly providing drinking water to one million poor and neglected people, absolutely free? Think about offering treatment to ten lakh people – including complicated surgeries for many - with no charge. In the Healing Touch section of this issue, you can read how a small government worker from Orissa, who had lost all hope and happiness in life because of the exorbitant amount his son's cardiac ailment would need, found a new lease of life and joy when he arrived at the Super Specialty Hospital in Whitefield. He now says, "It is unbelievable. It is a miracle we received such wonderful treatment at no cost."

But this love is not about providing free food, water or healthcare. That is only a small part of the whole equation. What is more important is what it does to individuals. Few people know that most of the patients and their relatives who have visited Swami's Hospitals are so touched that they long to come to this 'Temple of Healing' to serve voluntarily. Many take up service activities in their region. It is the same with every Sai service project.

In the Sai Seva section of this issue, you can see how the Sai Youth of Andhra Pradesh have reached out to the unlettered and downtrodden fishing community of Giripuram, a forgotten village in coastal Andhra Pradesh, and have replaced their 'school' under the shade of the trees with a fine and compact building, and also brought to the homes of these villagers sweet drinking water who, till a few months ago, had only salt water to bathe, cook with, or grow their crops. And this is the most beautiful part of pure love.

If we look at Swami's Life in the last eight decades, it is only a saga of Pure Love. It fills us with great optimism and confidence. It unravels to us the magnificent potential of this simple virtue. Today man knows how to unleash the power of the atom, but sadly does not try to understand or rely upon the Power that has powered the protons and electrons inside the atom. The problems of today's world cannot be solved with the grand United Nations Millennium Development Goals; it can be solved, as Swami says, by Unity and Purity, the basis of which is Pure Love, which is nothing but Divine.

Mr. Stephen Post, a Bioethicist from the Case Western Reserve University states, "It is abundantly clear people who live generous lives also live happier lives. Giving is the most potent force on the planet ... and will protect you your whole life." And this giving, he says, must be heartfelt, and not mechanical, for only then does it 'light up' the area of the brain which will keep us healthy.

Whether we look at it scientifically, philosophically, economically or politically, the only sustainable solution for mankind today is not tracking and taxing carbon footprints, or developing innovative technologies to handle global war against terror or poverty, it is making every man realize that he is a spark of the Divine sustained by Love. Only when we visualize this light of love in our hearts, this "Prema Jyothi", and share it with all, will we be at peace, within and without - just like a lamp which placed at the door illumines the interior as well as the exterior of the house.

Let's shine with love and share it with every being around. Let's make this Earth reverberate with Divine love. We would then have achieved prosperity along with abundant tranquility.

Loving Regards,
H2H Team.

SPIRITUAL BLOSSOMS

SATHYA SAI SPEAKS

Seeking Bliss – Uninterrupted and Unlimited

Eternity extends before man; space too is horizonless; but, life is short and very unsure. Therefore, man has to make the best use of the years allotted to him in this world, and try to become one with the Absolute, so that these entrances and exits may end forever. That is his *Dharma*, the duty he has to do for himself. Know that *Dharma* and live according to its dictates - that is the meaning and purpose of life.

So, the Almighty who has made creatures evolve unto human beings comes down as man, whenever that creature forgets or ignores this basic duty towards itself. The sages of India, through the process of purifying their intuition, discovered this fact and sensed the message the Divine Incarnations bring, the *Avathars* carry. Many times in human history, *Avathars* have come and awakened man. But, the animal past, and the demonic delusion drag man into the mire, where he foolishly revels in sensual, physical and transient trivialities.

The Real Ananda

This is a splendid chance to fulfill your human existence. The *ananda* (Bliss) that you hope to derive from kith and kin, from wealth and worldly fame, is but a pale shadow of the *ananda* that resides in the spring of your heart, where God dwells. Try to contact that spring; go to the very source; be centred in the *Athma* or God within. Few seek real *ananda*; many are led away by the *pseudo-ananda* of the senses, the intellect and the mind. Real *ananda* springs only from Truth (or *Sathya*). And, *Sathya* is the *Dharma* or duty of each to himself. Seek Truth, serve Truth, be Truth.

Truth will reveal itself when the heart is saturated in Love. Man's nature is fundamentally Truth; his breath is fundamentally Love; his blood is fundamentally Tolerance. Falsehood, hatred and faction are characteristics of beastly or demonic natures. They are acquired from society, or ignorance or greed. Today, man is shaped by the head, rather than the heart. It is cleverness that is admired, that pays. But, peace and joy emanate from the heart not the head. The heart teaches compassion, awe, reverence, humility, equanimity, sympathy - qualities that bind men in love, and turn them towards righteousness and the source and sustenance of the Universe, namely, God. The pursuit of property and possessions cannot uplift the heart into the heights of Bliss. You are contemporaries of the *Avathar* come to guard and guide; you have the capacity to catch the message and canalise it into action and activity. Make the utmost of this chance.

The Message can be grasped only by those who yearn to know the Duty, to which they have to be loyal. Or else, it will sound hollow and mechanical, like the prattle of a phonograph record. But, if the heart is ploughed by that yearning and made ready for the seed, the harvest will certainly follow.

How to Pursue Perennial Joy

Arjuna was the brother-in-law of Lord Krishna (in the epic Mahabharata); he was a close companion of the Lord, for many decades! Krishna, mind you, was 84 years old at the time of the Kurukshetra battle, when He served Arjuna as a non-combatant charioteer! Yet, it was only on that battlefield that the Message of the Bhagavad Geeta was imparted to him! Why? Arjuna developed the requisite attitude for the reception and retention of the Message only then.

First Arjuna was puzzled about his duty and was tremendously anxious to get light thrown upon it. He was torn between two paths, and in spite of all his discrimination and detachment, he was at a loss to discover what his *Dharma* was. Second, he surrendered his judgement to God, and declared, out of the deepest recesses of his heart, in indescribable agony, "I am your disciple; I dedicate my entire being to your Will; tell me what to do and I shall obey."

Arjuna is also called Paartha - a name applicable to all men, for, it is derived from *Prithvi* (earth). It means earthly, earthborn. So, this situation is a reminder to every man on earth. If only you cultivate a deep yearning for guidance about your appropriate *Dharma*, and if only you surrender your will, your intellect, your emotions, your impulses to God, He will lead you to Himself and endow you with Supreme Bliss...

Every deed must take man nearer the goal; it must be a step in the pilgrimage to God. It must cleanse the emotions, correct the attitude, clarify the path and co-operate in the consummation. This has to be the constant care and vigilance of every seeker and aspirant to Bliss.

- *Divine Discourse in Prashanti Nilayam, July 1970*

CONVERSATIONS WITH SAI – Part 36

(Continued from the last issue)

In the car with Baba, Mr. Srinivas and Mr. Radhakrishna. We had gone to the Sai School at the foot of the Nandi Hills. A beautiful and peaceful setting, with a hundred-acre campus including orchards, dairy, and farm crops. There was a grand reception for Baba by the boys and the faculty. Two students spoke at the meeting after the reception and Baba gave a discourse. One of the speakers broke down in tears. During His discourse, Baba would stop for a moment and question some of the small boys to see if they were paying attention to what He had been saying.

SAI: What did you think of the first speaker?

H (Hislop): He tried and was doing fine, but then dissolved in tears.

SAI: It was his first talk in front of Swami. He won a Lion's Club award for speaking. But that little boy whom Swami asked - how fast he replied - even before Swami finished asking! What attention and concentration on what Swami was saying!

H: All the little boys were totally silent and absorbed. I was watching them. They were not even restless.

SAI: The parents of these boys, although they need the help of these children, tell the sons, "No, stay in school. It is good for you." Often there is only the mother living, and even in such cases the mother insists on the son staying in the school. **Where the mother has nothing but the son, Swami takes care of the mother.** These mothers stay at the girls' school near Mangalore and work in the kitchens and dormitories. There are 300 acres there and the boys' school is on the same land. The boys' school has 80 instructors and this school here has 60 instructors. Now, it is vacation time with the high school and junior college students away. **All the teachers are unmarried, and no teacher takes any salary.**

H: Swami! 140 teachers and all work without salary? It is unheard of. They sacrifice marriage so they can do seva for Swami without need of salary! This is the most extraordinary situation. Why is it not known?

SAI: Swami thinks it best to carry on such activities without fanfare.

The True Devotee

H: Swami, this is a big puzzle. In discourses, Swami says that he is looking for a true devotee, but does not find that devotee. How could that be? What wonderful devotees are these teachers. How is it that Swami can say he has not found a devotee?

SAI: *(He laughs and says)* **That is a different category. The true devotee is the same inside and outside.**

H: Then it seems that the status of that sought for devotee cannot be reached!

SAI: Oh, yes. It can be reached.

H: Swami, Rama and Krishna must also have been searching for a true devotee in those times.

SAI: Yes, every Avathar is searching for a true devotee. Rama was not regarded as God. Would they have sent Him to the forest as God? He was looked upon as a King. He acted so. Only a very few sages knew his Divinity. Krishna also was a king. As God, would He have been put to work as the driver of a chariot?

H: But in the Bhagavad Gita, Arjuna calls Krishna "Divine".

SAI: But still there was the body view of comrade, friend and relative. Only after Krishna left the body did Arjuna realize that Krishna was God. Even in their status as kings, only the residents of their respective cities gave Rama and Krishna homage and worship. **The Sai Avathar is the only such where His Divinity is known to all peoples of all religions. Never has there been that before. With Krishna, only the gopis were aware of him as God - but they were rishis.**

H: They were rishis, Swami? As rishis they took birth as ignorant villagers?

SAI: Yes, they were great rishis before taking that birth. When Krishna died, the *gopis* stopped taking food, and they discarded their bodies in that way.

H: Swami, the matter of a true devotee in this Avathar is still a big puzzle. Swami has said that in this very lifetime there are men fully liberated from delusion. Would not even they meet the test for a true devotee?

SAI: **A life fully liberated would meet the tests of a true devotee as set by Swami.**

H: Then for those who would seek that status?

Srinivas: They should do perfect Sadhana.

SAI: Sadhana! No! That is physical. It is a matter of love. Confidence comes first. Where there is love, there is peace. Where there is peace, there is truth. Where there is truth, there is bliss. Where there is bliss, there is God.

(Note: Swami's words were translated only when he was talking with me. The rest of the time he was talking in Telugu to Mr. Radhakrishna who was driving and to Mr. Srinivas.)

Money in the Sai Organisation

H: Swami, in this matter I am not clear. Swami says that money should not be a part of spiritual matters, that money should not be paid. I accept this and have been strict about it to the extreme in the American Sai Organization. But I do not understand the

principle. It seems to me, and it does to most Americans, that almost no value is given to that which is free. Whereas, when money has to be paid, care is given, attention is given, and what costs money is valued.

SAI: Yes, at first that is the case. But it does not last. The value given is sudden and, like fireworks, it rises fast. But, like fireworks, the fall is also fast. With the payment of money there is no love or appreciation. You go to the shop and pay for what you want. Why thank the seller, or have any appreciation? You paid in full and that is the end of it.

A guru will start a philosophy, a method of sadhana. Money will be charged and paid, interest will rapidly expand, and people will think they must join and take part. Then, in a few years, where is it all? A recent example is the young person, (name deleted), was that his name? The world over, people gave money to receive instruction. Where is he now? There is no word of him.

Swami does not do like that. He builds slowly, but it is firm and sound and it continues. You remember Prashanti Nilayam fourteen years ago, and now you see the slow but solid growth of Swami's work.

Spiritual matters must occur only in a context of love. When advice and instruction and help is given in compassion, in love - and not for money paid, there will be some feeling of appreciation; and in the context of appreciation and confidence there will be some spiritual benefit. Moreover when the actions are done in love and not as part of money-raising, money comes anyway.

An example: Here is a coconut palm tree. (*Baba raised his arm in an upright position*). And up here (*touching his wrist*) are the coconuts. This tree has a shadow which extends for a distance on the ground. Now, a man who wishes to secure the coconuts climbs up the coconut tree. At the very time he is climbing the tree, his shadow may be seen climbing the shadow tree. And, when he plucks the coconuts, his shadow may be seen plucking the shadow coconuts. The man who climbs the real tree secures the real coconuts and, at the same time, his shadow self climbs the shadow tree and plucks the shadow coconuts. But if the man does not relish the task of climbing the real tree, and instead limits his action to the climbing of the shadow tree, he will not get satisfaction from the shadow coconuts.

The shadow tree represents the world, and the shadow coconuts represent worldly prosperity. The real tree represents spiritual life, and the real coconuts represent the fulfilment of life. Thus, the person who devotes his life and energy to spiritual values will automatically get worldly benefits.

H and Srinivas: Swami! What a wonderful example! What a wonderful way to convey Swami's teaching that one should do his work in the context of love and not for money! Automatically, the worldly needs are cared for.

SAI: It is a good example?

H and Srinivas: Swami, it is a perfect example!

Becoming Free of Body Attachment

H: Swami, a puzzle in daily life is this: Daily life is a continuous sequence of small choices, and we select the option which gives the best pleasure or comfort. In this way, our entire life is directed to comfort and pleasure, and such a life cannot take us to "Liberation". What to do?

SAI: The principle which Swami teaches is to like that which we have to do instead of doing that which we like. Every action should be done for Swami, every action dedicated to Swami. Then, duty, discipline, and devotion are the guides for action. So long as you take the body to be yourself, action will be for comfort and pleasure. Realize that you are not the body, and be free of the need for pleasure and comfort.

Doing One's Duty

H: This question will sound silly to Swami, but it is serious to me.

SAI: What?

H: I write many letters to Swami about activities, problems, and accomplishments in the American Sai Organization. But often I think it is silly to describe problems and events, since I know from my own direct experience that Swami is omnipresent and knows all about the events.

SAI: There is much nonsense about Swami being omnipresent and omnipotent! People start to think they need do nothing, that Swami will do everything! Then they do not bother to do even their daily duty.

In spiritual life, the relationship between you and Swami is heart to heart. But in worldly life, Swami has given you work to do. This requires work in the world, activity in the world. You are required to do your duty to the very limit of the task. So far as writing is concerned, the writing of letters to Swami is for your satisfaction.

H: For my satisfaction, Swami?

SAI: Yes, for your satisfaction. You write to Swami, and your mind is then free of the matter. It is not that Swami does not know. Suppose you withhold some troublesome point, you then have a guilty feeling. But you tell Swami, and there is no guilty feeling. Do your duty fully and completely in the work which Swami has given to you.

(To be continued)

CHINNA KATHA

Sound Is Sacred

One teacher, having about ten students, was teaching them some good things. To such an ashram came one who had some position and power. This teacher did not go to the door to welcome and receive him. This man who came there, because he had some position and authority, felt somewhat hurt and he went right into the class and asked the teacher, "Why is it you didn't care for me? You have not come and received me. What are you doing?"

The teacher said, "I am busy teaching the children some good things." The person who came in asked, "Just because you are teaching them some good things, are the hearts of these children going to be changed and become more sacred?" The teacher took some courage and said, "Yes, of course, there is every possibility of their minds changing by my teaching." The intruder said, "No, I cannot believe it," and the teacher replied: "When you cannot believe it, it simply means that you have no faith in it. Because of that, I cannot give up teaching these boys some good things."

Then this person, who felt somewhat important, started arguing and said there is no possibility of changing a mind merely by words. The teacher who was clever and who had known these things, asked one of the youngest boys to stand up. In the hearing of this visitor, the teacher told the young boy, "Look here, my dear boy! You just get hold of the neck of this visitor and throw him out of the door."

Immediately on hearing these words, the visitor became completely excited and his eyes were red. He was very angry and he came to beat the teacher. Then the teacher asked, "Sir, what is the reason for your becoming so angry? We did not beat you, we did not throw you out, the only thing that has excited you to this stage of anger is the word which I conveyed to this young boy. You, who said that you do not believe in changing the mind by mere words, what is the reason why these mere words which I have uttered to this young boy have changed your mind so much that you are so excited? So it is very wrong to say that with mere words you cannot change the mind. With mere words you can cause any excitement. With mere words you can cause any amount of affection. With mere words you can earn the grace of anyone else."

So, if in this world you want to promote friendship, you can do so by using sweet words, by talking in a very sweet manner and by speaking about sacred things. On the other hand if you use harsh words, you are not going to promote friendship in this world.

COVER STORY

PREMA JYOTHI – A CELEBRATION OF PURE LOVE

The story of 'Prema Jyothi' has to be shared with all, for, it is no ordinary parable. It is, in fact, an unparalleled tale in the history of Prasanthi Nilayam. It is the story of the Glory of the contemporary *Prema Avathar*, the Incarnation of Pristine Love. It is a tale that touched the hearts of thousands engulfing it with a new joy, a novel peace and a bliss that surpassed everything they had experienced before. "It moved me to tears all the way...what a magnificent exhibition of Love!" said Regina from Belgium. Lutchia Rao from Australia was overwhelmed. "The photos were vibrating...I could experience love. I nearly cried. Thanks for this loving memory which will stay with me forever."

Svetalia from Russia was ecstatic; unable to contain her joy, she said, "This exhibition is excellent! It just opens our heart and pours love." There was not a single soul that did not feel elevated witnessing the myriad facets of Divine Love that were so delightfully depicted in the exhibition. As Sukan, a devotee from South Africa said, "It was an awe inspiring exhibition; an insight into the great mystery of 'Pure Love'."

Yes, truly, it was nothing but love. It was Pure Love that was framed into beautiful panels, wrapped into enlightening messages, constructed into digital videos, shared over the radio, embedded into the internet, and displayed masterfully not only to confer joy but also to cajole every visitor's conscience and connect them to their own source of perennial peace. As Sriram R, a student of 1st year MBA at Sri Sathya Sai University said, "In one word, it was just 'bliss'." And why would it not be, when it is in its every part and particle only telling the story of the "moving, motivating and magnificent manifestation of our Beloved Swami's Love," as Dr. Kanwaljeet Anand from the USA put it.

Thousands left the holy precincts of the Poornachandra Auditorium, where the exhibition was staged, enthralled, during the twelve days it was open. All devotees and youth from many countries who had gathered in Prasanthi Nilayam for the International Sai World Youth Conference were touched and transformed, but they were still only a microscopic minority of the world wide Sai family. Two out of every three devotees suggested sentiments like R Sathyavonidh from Tamil Nadu who said, "Please keep this exhibition forever, so that it will always help devotees to know Swami." Maja Maria Matekjan from Croatia excitedly expressed, "This is very inspiring. It should go around the globe to make people aware of the problems of today's world." A devotee from Trinidad and Tobago, Mr. Derek Devanand Ramdatt had a different idea. He suggested, "This is simply excellent. Why do not we make a digital format to spread it to all countries?" One of the principal reasons we are having this cover story is to respect the overwhelming number of such requests, and of course, to share with every single individual on this planet, through this incredible medium of the internet the unsurpassable power of Pure Love.

You will now be on a journey of love, nay, an unforgettable spiritual odyssey because we are going to make it even more special for you. We are going to take you through every inch of this exhibition hand in hand... not with us, but with the One who was vibrating in every visible and invisible speck of this glorious presentation. Yes, it is a journey of Sai, with Sai! And here, we begin...

THE UNFORGETTABLE ODYSSEY WITH SAI BEGINS...

It is 7.30 am on the morning of July 20, 2007. The whole of Poornachandra auditorium which was abuzz with activity till the wee hours of the morning is now silent. The entire interior looks colorful and enticing – it is inviting, but all is calm. In fact, there are only a few ‘men in whites’ attending to some jobs which called for last minute fixes. Somebody is adjusting a flower here, another is giving a proper rounded shape to the wick of the lamp and the third is checking if the camera has the right battery. But no one seems to be in a great hurry, they seem to be preparing for the ‘event’ just in case it happens...

And ten minutes later, the whole place is as if come to life! The ‘news’ – most prayed for but least expected – comes! Swami can be expected any moment now! Soon, the hall is filled with everybody who has to be there, all in their right positions, and in a matter of five minutes, on the western side of the stage of the Poornachandra Auditorium, the curtain parts. As the ‘The Striking Orange’ emerges out of the red and blue frontal draping of the stage, all the former students and other volunteers working in Prashanti Digital Studio, are striving hard to conceal their excitement and joy. They have worked tirelessly for the last four weeks for this moment, and now as they see their ‘dream’ becoming a reality, their every cell is filled with a new-found bliss.

As Swami comes onto the stage, He casually drops a glance at the entrance of the exhibition and the next moment He is absorbed with what He sees. Now, His face resting on His arm as He keenly gazes at the grandeur of the 150 by 16 ft work of art that covers the whole width of the Poornachandra Auditorium. The huge entrance inspired by 12th-century ornate temples that decorate the ancient town of Belur and Halebidu (built by King Vishnu Vardhana of the Hoysala dynasty) in the State of Karnataka, embodies within itself the sublime and surreal imagery of ancient South Indian architecture. The auditorium literally looks like a grand temple.

Swami, then slowly, descends the stage and as He is proceeding towards the entrance which is richly bedecked with flowers of various hues from yellow to deep pink to green, He stops on the way as He sees five former students, who are now His staff, waiting with white jasmine blossoms in their cupped palms. The Lord looks at them, touches their offerings and as they bow down to place their fragrant feelings of love and gratitude at His Lotus Feet, He blesses them. What a beautiful sight it is to see the Lord’s Feet surrounded by soft and supple white flowers!

Swami moves on now towards the grand entrance of the exhibition and for a change, there is no conventional ribbon here, it is simply a string of soft flowers. He slowly takes the scissors, gently cuts the flowery thread, and the till now silent hall, instantly reverberates with "Om". As Vedic chants fill the air, Bhagavan moves into the precincts of the display area and first graciously accepts the candle and lights the golden lamp. As the lamp glows brightly, each one's heart is set aflame with joy.

And then Swami presses on a switch and wow (!) - a big 10 by 7^{1/2} ft panel lights up. It is a marvelous painting of Swami as young Sathya when He was barely fifteen years old sitting on a rock in Urvakonda. One is reminded of the amazing incident connected with this picture. When a photographer came to click young Sathya's image way back in 1940, a small boulder that was lying in front of Him had then transformed into the idol of Shirdi Sai Baba, His previous Incarnation. It was the time when Swami had decided to declare to the world that "I am Sai Baba." And from then on for all the devotees, His life has been only a *Prema Dhara*...a life of Pure Love, and this is exactly what is inscribed in big bold letters below this beautiful art work: "Prema Jyothi – A Celebration of Pure Love in Human Form."

I. THE EFFULGENCE OF PURE LOVE

Swami keenly sees this striking welcome panel of the whole presentation and then turns right and there awaits Him another stunning back-lit panel. It is the picture of a resplendent sun rising majestically and filling the whole firmament with glowing colours of yellow, orange and white. On this is written "The Effulgence of Pure Love." Now, a former student of Bhagavan's University currently working in the Book Trust comes forward and explains, "Swami, this is how Your love has spread to every inch of this Universe." And the Lord sweetly exclaims, "Oh!" This is the introductory panel for the first section of the exhibition, and Swami now moves inside.

The first panel He sees has images of His childhood and His parents. "Swami, You chose Your parents," the student explains, and then pointing to the picture of Swami as a small boy giving away His clothes to the poor, says, "Right from childhood, Swami's heart always melted for the poor and the needy... and then in a short while, Swami declared His Avatharhood and commenced His Mission with the bhajan 'Manasa Bhajare Guru Charanam...'" At this point, Swami is visibly moved and before the nostalgic emotions overtake Him completely, He wants to move on to the next panel.

Next, He sees pictures which portray the evolution of the Prasanthi Mandir and the now splendourous Sai Kulwant Hall. When Prof. Venkataraman points to a picture of the old Mandir and adds, "Swami, it was such a small place

then, way back in 1947,” Swami, lost in the picture, says, “Yes, it was just a shed.” Then Swami looks at beautiful snapshots of Darshan in the early fifties and sixties. The student, in his eloquent Telugu, goes on, “Swami, though everywhere devotees visit the temple to see the deity and offer their prayers, in Prasanthi Nilayam it has been always the opposite. Right from the beginning, the Lord Himself went to the people, moved among men, stretched His hand to collect letters, craned His neck to listen to their prayers...” “*Bas, bas* (enough)” Swami says and stops the commentary. He is too pleased. Prof. Venkataraman points out the old video stills which show how people in the early days of the ashram used to live under the trees and did not mind any physical hardship because the bliss they derived would more than make up for it.

After the brief history of the evolution of Prasanthi Nilayam, next Swami sees the early days of the Brindavan ashram – the old Sai Ram shed under the huge banyan tree which was the focal point of Brindavan till the new Sai Ramesh Hall was constructed in the early nineties. Swami nods interestedly when Prof. Venkataraman points out how Swami used to appear on the balcony of the ‘old bungalow’ (which gave way to the current ‘Trayee Brindavan’ in 1986) to delight His devotees in those days. Next are pictures of Swami’s travels to many places in the early years of His Avatharhood. “Swami could have pulled all the devotees by His mere Will, but He took the trouble to visit as many places as He can to confer the bliss of His Darshan,” the student-guide explains, and Swami is keenly looking at the black and white snaps of His agile and energetic Self. “We cannot even identify all these places,” Prof. Venkataraman submits. “One or two are from Your visit to Trichy, but the rest, we do not know. Swami, from then till now, has always been on the move eager to confer bliss to His devotees.”

Swami, now, moves on and sees scenes of festivals celebrated in His presence right from the early days, be it Dasara, Krishna Janmastami or His Divine Birthdays. After that colourful collage, there is another panel in black and white, and this time it is of Swami delivering His discourses with fiery zeal in different places across the country. Swami points to the central picture of the panel and identifying a person in the picture, says, “That is Mr. Savant, a minister then. It was in Mumbai, and yes, that is Kasturi.” The Lord is too pleased to see the pictures of His dear devotees. He never forgets those who have truly loved Him.

Swami has now seen the first row of panels and now turns to His right, and there awaits Him another huge panel. It is back-lit, bright, full of colour, and says, “Sai Leelas”. “Swami, these are scenes from Your early life as narrated by Mrs. Vijayamma,” the student explains and continues, “This is how You had blessed the devotees then with the Divine vision of the Third Eye. And this other scene is that wonderful incident where water from the River Chitravati had reached the Mandir, and Swami, the all-knowing and powerful Lord, told everyone to offer coconuts, flowers, etc. and worship Her revealing that it is the River Ganga come to pay Her obeisance. And soon after Swami blessed the River, the water receded, instantly obeying the Lord’s command.”

Prof. Venkataraman adds, “Just like in the Krishna Avatar, in this Avatar too the childhood *leelas* of the Lord are most magnificent.” Swami listens with great interest and gazes at the paintings done with professional finesse. It is thrilling to see the Lord ‘captivated’ by His own miracles - all for the joy of His students.

As Swami turns, now there is not another panel, but a television. A scintillating video footage of Swami sitting on the sands of Chitravati in the days of yore and materializing out of the sand one object after another - idols of deities, lingams, etc. - is being played continuously in a loop and Swami watches this for more than a minute, without batting his eyelid even once.

The next panel is another mix of ten timeless pictures again in grayscale depicting how distinguished individuals flocked to His Lotus Feet when He was in His twenties and thirties. Pointing one of the pictures out, Swami excitedly says, “That is Venkatagiri Raja.” The pure personality of the Lord is so child-like! It fascinates us and at the same time befuddles us. The noble king of Venkatagiri who was an epitome of devotion and surrender is etched in His mind forever. There are old images of Swami sitting down and lovingly speaking to Vedic priests. One close devotee standing nearby exclaims, “Swami, here You are sitting on the ground just like the other devotees.” The Lord says, “Yes” and He is touched. He turns His palm submissively and innocently says, “There were no chairs then.”

The next panel has scenes of large numbers of Vedic scholars gathered at His feet in the early days of His Avatharhood. “Once Vedic pundits realized that the very source of all the Vedas has incarnated on earth, they flocked to Your Lotus Feet.” Swami hears this explanation and gently nods. “This Vedic tradition has continued even to this day. We have now even the small children of the Primary school chanting vedic hymns so proficiently,” Prof. Venkataraman adds, and the Lord is very pleased.

As Swami moves onto the next three panels, there are images of Swami’s travels to the historic shrine of Badrinath in the North to the scenes of His visit to the State of Kerala in the South. Swami sees a series of interesting pictures which show how He climbs onto the top of a car (!) during a procession in South India to grant much coveted Darshan to the teeming crowds. There are also pictures of His visits to various cities in Tamil Nadu. Sri V Srinivasan points out, “Swami, this is the elephant procession they accorded You in Udumalpet in 1958.” He observes that picture and remarks, “These are very old pictures.” Swami then shifts His focus to His more recent trips to Delhi, the Capital of India, in 1999. “Here Swami is performing *bhoomi puja* for the Sai International Centre in Delhi,” Prof. Venkataraman explains showing a picture, and continues, “Swami, this is the helipad they had made for You specially during Your visit to Latur in 2001.” Swami glances at all the thirty-odd pictures spread over three colorful light boards with great attention before proceeding further.

Reminiscences Having finished one enclosure of the exhibition, Swami now turns and moves to the next set of panels on the same continuing theme of "The Effulgence of Pure Love." A set of captivating pictures await Swami. These are enchanting images which show how when God dons a human form He behaves just like one of us in every way. Mr. V Srinivasan points out a picture of Swami Himself taking a picture with a Polaroid camera, and slowly a sweet and cute smile blossoms on His lips. There are pictures of Swami casually glancing at an almanac, blissfully reading a letter, excitedly talking to small kids inside a classroom, bending His body and lovingly, like a mother, pouring water from a tiny container for a small boy to wash his hands, and what is more exciting is a picture of Swami stopping His ambassador car in the middle of a lonely road on a highway and giving Vibhuti out of the blue to two surprised motor-cyclists. There are images of spontaneous compassion too. Swami in prisons, spastic homes, vocational training centres and medical camps – everywhere the Lord visits, the joy is immeasurable. Then there are pictures of sweet intimacy. He is reciting the Gayatri Mantra in a boy's ear, performing the marriage of a young man and presiding over the house-warming ceremony of a dear devotee – all so precious and profound.

And then there are a series of pictures in sequence which show Swami showing His empty hand as if saying "See! There is nothing" and then the next moment there is a beautiful chain in His hand and Swami raises His hand and flashes a benedictory smile as if conveying "Everything is in this Hand!" As Swami watches all these pictures, the student comments, "Swami, You are the basis for the creation of the cosmos. You come down to the level of man so that we may feel kinship with You and aspire to become Divine." Prof. Venkataraman adds, "Swami, we know God is not in some high heaven up above; He is here and now and behaves as one among us only to teach us, guide and protect us." The Lord listens to these short commentaries but His eyes are still fixed on the pictures.

The next panel is a collection of stills of spectacular miracles – the grand *Vibhuti Abhishekam* and Lingodbhavam. Marking out a series of four pictures, Srinivasulu explains, "Swami, this is how the incessant flow of Vibhuti from the upturned vessel in those good olden days stunned everybody. The copious stream of Vibhuti used to change into turmeric and then again into vermillion - the flow never stopping even for a split second - to everybody's wonder." Swami's eyes shine as if lit up seeing those priceless pictures. He gently nods as the commentary goes on and Prof. Venkataraman takes the opportunity to draw His attention to a photo of Lingodbhavam taken in the seventies.

Then there are stunning pictures of the Athi Rudra Maha Yagnam that was held first in Prasanthi Nilayam and later in Chennai in January 2007, and Swami lingers looking at these pictures for quite some time. The next collage is one of its kind. It is full of glimpses of Swami's historic visit to Africa. As the Lord keenly scans these images, the student explains, "Swami, many devotees wonder why does Swami not go abroad often, but Swami has given the answer - it is the ants that come to the sugar candy and not the other way

round.” Swami immediately responds to this explanation and nods affirmatively as if saying “Yes, that is right”. Then Prof. Venkataraman takes Swami through every picture – His welcome at Nairobi, the Wildlife safari in the National Park, the Guru Poonima celebrations in Kampala, the blissful Darshans, His boat ride over the Nile and a rare picture of Swami with Idi Amin too. The student commentator summarises the whole episode saying, “Swami, You lit the lamp of love in the dark continent.” Swami, even for a second, does not take His eyes away from the carefully chosen pictures. Isn’t it beautiful to travel to all these places again with Swami!

Next Swami scans a panel on the Bal Vikas movement in India, and moves on to another collage which depicts His Love for all religions. There are scenes of the construction of the Sarva Dharma Stupa which today stands majestically just beside His residence. The student points out a picture of the mosque that Swami Himself had built in Puttapparthi for the Muslims many decades ago. When he shows Him the pictures of the Inter-Faith Conference that was held in Prasanthi Nilayam a couple of years ago, and narrates how religious leaders of all faiths had gathered at His Lotus Feet then, Swami looks at the pictures with interest and nods affirmatively. Unity-Purity-Divinity is so central to His life and message, and the Lord makes it evident once again.

As Swami moves on to the next displays, which are professional paintings of profound and historic events of Swami’s life, the Lord is absorbed in the art work that recreates those moments. One is the landmark 1963 incident when Swami took upon Himself the paralysis of a dear devotee and at the conclusion of the ‘drama’ declared to the world that He is Shiva-Shakthi Incarnate, and the other is the famous ‘Goa incident’ wherein Swami’s body suffers from appendicitis and after a battery of eminent doctors give up all ‘hope’ whatsoever, Swami then stuns the world by standing up and giving His promised discourse to the thousands of devotees for over forty minutes gathered in Goa with His usual elegance and elan. The student states to Swami the significant declaration He made to the world on that occasion – “No illness can ever affect this body. If it suffers, it is only someone else’s problem that is taken over.” And Swami nods immediately in acknowledgement of this profound revelation. “This body is not Mine, it is yours,” Swami has mentioned on many occasions and one is awakened into how great an honour and a responsibility it is when Swami acknowledges the student’s comment.

“To reveal to the world His authority over all matter and elements, Swami revived the life of Walter Cowan way back in 1971 and here are a few glimpses of that momentous occasion,” elucidates the student-guide to introduce the next panel to Swami which is also another story portrayed in paint skillfully. Swami keenly watches all the scenes depicted – the passing away of Walter Cowan in Connemara Hotel in Madras, the declaration by the doctor ‘dead upon arrival’ in the hospital, the early morning surprise visit of Swami and the subsequent resurrection of Walter Cowan, and the doctors’ utter disbelief the next morning. “Swami, these are pictures of the spiritual

remarriage you performed for that blessed couple,” Prof. Venkataraman mentions and points to the array of images below the painting.

At this point, there is a small interlude as Prof. Venkataraman introduces to Bhagavan the eminent artists, Sri Kamalesh and Sri Chandranath Acharya, the men behind the delightful artworks that Swami just saw, and the kind Lord blesses the twosome with a loving smile and a Hand raised in blessing. After granting *Pada Namaskaram* to the artists, Swami moves on to the next two panels and sees moving pictures of how devotees crave for His Darshan.

“These are scenes from Your recent visit to Chennai,” Prof. Venkataraman explains, and pointing to an old beggar-woman standing amidst the multitude and craning her neck for one glimpse of the Lord, says, “Swami, Your love binds everyone like no other.” There is also another picture of a lady ecstatic after having seen the Lord and the bliss she reflects in her smile is heart-filling. Swami also watches with interest another series of pictures concerning the same Chennai visit wherein He goes onto the road and out of the crowd picks up a small boy and blesses him with a golden chain. All these scenes of eternal bond that exist between God and His devotee delight the Lord. For, without this exchange of love, what else is worth living for in this world!

The next panel has only three images – a big picture of Lord Krishna delivering the immortal Bhagavad Gita to Arjuna; a photo of a poor old woman, wrinkled and weak, holding a packet of food and a new saree with gratitude; and above this, a nice image of Swami delivering a message. As Swami sees these images, the student explains, “Swami, in Your previous incarnation as Krishna, You commanded Arjuna to lift his bow and do his duty. And now, day in and day out You instruct us to do our duty which is to serve the poor and reach out to as many grief-stricken as possible.” Again, Swami nods as if accepting the explanation in its entirety and gently moves His hand in air in His own characteristic way. In these moments, you can see the curtain of illusion part and the Divinity encased in the human form being apparent to every onlooker. As He moves further, Swami is now on to the final panel of the first theme of the Exhibition.

There is again a picture of Krishna and Arjuna, but now a cosmic form of Lord Krishna, and beside it images of Swami speaking and also diligently writing. “Lord Krishna declared to the world that Avatars come to protect the devout and establish dharma, but Swami has added another dimension, and that is giving all a taste of that Supreme Divine Love,” explains the student. Swami’s attention now moves to an exquisite piece of art carved in wood placed right next to this panel depicting the *Vishwa Rupa* (cosmic form) of the Lord. Swami innocently asks, “Where did this come from?” And a close devotee thanks the Lord for His kindness, for it was Swami who had sent this masterpiece to adorn the Exhibition hall just the day before.

At this point, Prof. Venkataraman draws Swami's attention again to the last panel and says, "Swami, in a historic letter to Your brother in 1947, You declared three main objectives of Your Avatarhood - 'To foster all mankind and fill them with bliss; to lead all who go astray back to the path of goodness; and finally, to remove the sufferings of the poor and grant them what they lack.' Swami, all the rest of the display in this Exhibition only shows how You have been incessantly at work keeping up all these grand promises." The Lord listens to every word very keenly.

As He turns and moves on, Swami again stops and looks at the marvelous statue which is carved on both the sides. On one side is the Cosmic Form of Lord Vishnu and on the other side are the Lord's ten incarnations according to Hindu mythology. After spending a few seconds transfixed at the beauty of the masterpiece, Swami proceeds to the next lap of the Exhibition.

The Pure Joy of Prema Jyothi – 1

Dear reader, what you saw just now was not even 15% of the whole Exhibition. It was only the beginning and the rest of the presentation shows how this Pure Love of the Lord has today touched the lives of millions across India and the globe in many diverse ways making a lasting impact on their life, thinking and attitude. But before we proceed further, we would like to share with you some of the feedback that many devotees penned in our "Feedback Diary", touched by this Exhibition after it was opened for all on July 21, 2007.

"It is a lovely exhibition...I feel His presence, His love is present in each picture, in each word, in each place...in truth, this is Darshan." – Adrian, from Spain.

"We are indeed happy to view such rare photographs and I was taken back to the good olden days in Puttaparthi. For me, it is a wonderful journey through time with my Mother, Sai Mata, by my side." – Dr. S Kanaka Durga, from the Anantapur Campus of Swami's University.

"This was a wonderful exhibition in which we were taken back in time to all the wonderful things that have happened to this world since Swami came on this earth. Going through this exhibition we could relive all those moments from the late 60's and early 70's that have occurred in Prashanti Nilayam. It shows us how much mankind owes Bhagavan for what He has done. It makes you feel so humble and indebted to God and that your life has become purposeful because you have seen Swami's Glory in all the wonderful things that have happened on Earth since His Advent. I hope this exhibition will be taken all over the world and will fill the hearts of millions who will be watching Him and His Glory." – Dr. Ravi Kumar, from the Brindavan campus of Swami's University.

"After spending four weeks with Baba and a life time of knowing Him, I am still left in awe of His majesty and His love. Today (24th July, 2007) is my 27th

birthday, dear Swami, You have managed to show me once again how blessed and graced I am. Thank u from the bottom of my heart.” – Yaveshni Naiker from South Africa.

“It was a novel experience walking down the lane of history. It is almost you can feel His presence even when you are not there. The photos and videos were revealing in exquisite beauty.” – Sai Shakthi Prasad, a student from Swami’s University.

“The exhibition has taken me years back and I, along with Swami, travelled through the years! My joy is boundless and I am at a loss to express my delight.” – Madhu Sarangam, a devotee.

“By Swami’s Grace I have seen various exhibitions and this is something that is so unique that I have yet to see anything comparable. From Swami’s childhood forward, all the aspects and projects have been covered. It is amazing - especially the visual representations that we carry away with us. Even a layman who does not know anything about Swami will come to know that He is God incarnate, as nobody else but God can achieve such wonderful feats.” – Sri Veda Narayan from Swami’s Higher Secondary School.

“For me, the exhibition was simply like a Darshan.” – Naveen Ramesh, from Germany.

The number of moving feedbacks we received was overwhelming and as we go along, we will share with you more. But now, before we resume our journey, we would like to submit that from now on, we will move faster, otherwise it will be impossible to accommodate this Journey with Sai in the framework of this cover story, precisely due to the massive scale of the exhibition. Nevertheless, you will get all the highlights of this excellent work.

II. THE RADIANCE OF DIVINE COMPASSION

As Swami moves over the few inches of elevation and turns to His right, a 6 by 4 feet beautiful back-lit panel welcomes Him. There is a picture of Vibhuti pouring out of Swami’s Divine Hands into many eager palms and it reads “The Radiance of Divine Compassion.” Now, another former student who is currently working in the Sri Sathya Sai Medical Trust, has the honour of giving a commentary and he explains, “Swami, Your deep compassion for humanity, Your untiring efforts to alleviate their suffering, has so many moving facets. Here we have the story of one such aspect – Your Super Specialty Hospitals.” Swami watches the well-designed and lighted panel for a while and then moves on.

The first panel in this section is a picture which reflects the flip side of the Indian Healthcare system. The student explains, “Swami, for the rich who can afford to pay lakhs for an operation, there are many hospitals in India, but for

the poor spread in millions of villages and small towns in this country, who live in poor living conditions, there is no hope.” Swami nods in agreement as He sees pictures of the poor living in the slums and eating on the streets but cannot step into the multi-storied hospital which stands beside them.

The next three panels show how Swami shocked the world when He announced that He will set up a free Super Specialty Hospital in Puttaparthi during the 65th Birthday celebrations. The student refers to the photo of Mr. P V Narasimha Rao, the then Prime Minister of India, who had come to inaugurate the Hospital and says, “Swami, on the first day itself, four operations were performed.” Swami keenly watches the pictures as if reminiscing the whole episode. And there is a second trip down memory lane as Swami sees images of the inauguration of the second Super Speciality Hospital in Bangalore, this time the ribbon cut by another Prime Minister, Sri Atal Bihari Vajpayee. This is followed by beautiful pictures of the interior and exterior of both the Hospitals and beside it is an image of a majestic cathedral in Ireland. As Swami moves His eyes over these scenes, the student-guide explains how every one who steps into these Hospitals always feels as if they have entered a “Temple of Healing’. It is no different an experience than entering a place of worship. “Swami, it is Your design and Grace”, he submits and the Lord pleasantly nods.

Next is a moving picture of a poor couple holding their small baby and standing in the Hospital corridor. “Swami, more than 90% of the people who come to our Hospitals are people who do not even earn Rs. 50 a day,” he again explains. The Lord’s heart is touched seeing this picture and Mr. V Srinivasan adds, “Swami, ours is the only Hospital with every department except the billing department.” It is so amazing to see the Lord, who is the architect of all these true wonders of the modern world, pretend as if He is pleasantly happy to hear all this heartening news. The Lord enacts any role to give joy to His students and devotees. Is there anything that we know that He does not know!

Swami then moves on to a few panels which depict various processes of the Hospitals – registration, consultation, diagnostics, etc – and finally comes to an image of a cardiac operation in action. The student says, “Swami, such well-equipped and sophisticated operation theatres in India are rare, and it is because of such facilities that our Hospitals are able to perform many complicated cases.” Swami gestures as if saying, “Yes, right.” There are more images of the heart-lung machine and complex brain surgeries being performed in the Bangalore Hospital. And then comes an image of Hospital staff tenderly caring for an infant and Swami stays at this picture for a few seconds before moving on to see more pictures of the spacious ICU, the squeaky clean wards, and any number of patients smiling their heart out having found so much peace in the environs of the Hospital. The Lord scans through all these images and stops at a panel which has the statistics of both the Hospitals. “Swami, in Cardiology alone, more than ten lakh people have been attended to in both the Hospitals till now,” he explains taking only one figure, and Swami listens with great interest.

Next, Swami sees several pictures of Sevadals serving at the Hospital with great love, and comes to a panel where there are pictures of dignitaries visiting the Hospital. Sri V Srinivasan points out, "Swami, this is the delegation from the British Parliament in the Bangalore Hospital". "This is former President Abdul Kalam inside the ICU in a surgeon's attire," shows Prof. Venkataraman and Swami looks keenly at all these images.

Then there are precious pictures of Swami inside the ICU, with the Hospital Staff, blessing the patients and comforting a small child. The student now submits, "Swami, You are the sole inspiration for every activity in these Hospitals" as the Lord's eyes rests on these pictures. Swami, next, stops at an important picture which has a newspaper scan which reads, "World's Defense Budget crosses trillion dollar mark," and here the guide says, "Swami, people world over say it is not feasible to run free hospitals as it will cost a lot of money, but in reality, year after year millions of dollars are spent in making weapons which only harm mankind." There is a small half-smile on Swami's face and when he continues saying, "Swami, in reality, it is only the Poverty of Love", Swami agrees and nods as if saying, "Yes, that is right." For how many decades the Lord has been emphasising on this point!

In the last item of this section, Swami stops in front of a TV monitor. He sees a video which features patients expressing their new-found joy and bliss having discovered and been treated in these Hospitals. The Lord is palpably much moved. When a poor man from Karnataka breaks down sharing his joy saying, 'These tears are not out of sorrow... they are of supreme happiness', Swami is too overwhelmed. You can see, His eyes are full and quite spontaneously come out of Him only one word - "*papam*" meaning, "So sorry." The Lord's Heart is too tender to be able to cope with the suffering of the poor.

The Pure Joy of Prema Jyothi – 2

We take a small break here, dear reader, to give you glimpses of what impact these panels had on the visitors who thronged Poornachandra Hall morning and evening during the Guru Poornima Celebrations.

"It is said that a picture is worth a thousand words. The eighty plus years of the life of the Avatar are impossible for any human being to digest, but through the means of these beautiful images a humble effort has been made with a powerful impact to capture Swami's life and His Mission on earth. If we can carry with us even one thought that has touched our hearts it may prompt and goad us to some action in our own life and then we can definitely find fulfillment. The entire message of Bhagavan has been very beautifully

captured in this wonderful exhibition.” – Sri Sanjay Sahani, Principal, Brindavan Campus of Swami’s University.

“I felt that I really saw the power of love and I wish that more people could see this exhibition in other countries, such as in my country.” – Mr. Janhis Leyas from Greece.

“I extremely loved this exhibition. Even though I am twelve years old, I could understand everything because it has been portrayed in such a simple manner with lots of pictures. Overall, I must say that I learned a lot from this exhibition.” – Nilisha Amalsadia from Canada.

“It was truly amazing and completely inspiring. It justifies the name given to it as the photos, captions, videos and structure has beautifully captured Swami’s Love. I found it a very touching exhibition of Swami’s Love and has filled me with gratitude.” – Ms. Sapna from Australia.

“This exhibition is a display of our capabilities as One. If we unite together, we can all do what Swami has led His life to be. Thank you for such an inspirational, encouraging and beautiful display of pictures.” – Ms. Lashanthy from Australia.

We return to our Journey with Sai now...

III. PURE LOVE AS SELFLESS CONCERN

Soon Swami moves to the next section which welcomes Him with a back-lit panel which is an exquisite picture of a drop of water and says, “Pure Love as Selfless Concern.” Here, the commentary is taken over by another former student currently working in the Central Trust.

He explains the first two panels which show how 70% of the human body is made of water and the earth is three-fourth’s water, but at the same time, only 3% of this is fresh water. But again more than 75% of this 3% is locked up in icebergs leaving only a fraction for actual practical use. The third panel highlights the acute water scarcity in the country in spite of two monsoons through heart-touching images of dried wells, thirsty throats and parched earth. Next starts the story of Swami’s Drinking Water project for the Anantapur District.

The student explains, “Swami, this is the infiltration well on the River Chitravathi for the Anantapur Project.” Prof. Venkataraman adds pointing to another picture, “Swami, this is the huge summer storage tank in Anantapur.” And Swami keenly watches as more images of the construction work are shown. “The piping alone extended to over 2500 km,” he says. “Swami, that is the equal to the distance between Kanyakumari and Kashmir (head to toe of India),” Prof. Venkataraman adds. And the Lord scans the images carefully and nods gently. The Lord, you can see, is only responding and reflecting the

joy that people around Him are expressing. Otherwise, what is there for Him to know!

Next are pictures of the poor in the villages of Anantapur district partaking Sai water gleefully, and the student states, "Swami, over 900 villages and more than a million people now have access to safe drinking water, thanks to Your Grace." Swami sees more images of 40-acre area summer storage tanks in Anantapur, and how in 1997, He gifted away the whole project to the Government of Andhra Pradesh in the presence of the Chief Minister. The student-guide next shows Swami pictures of the collection well located 100 kms from Puttaparthi which supplies water to this holy town.

As Swami moves on, starts the story of the Drinking Water Project to the city of Chennai. There are newspaper clips which say "Reservoirs Go Dry" in Chennai and depict the suffering of the bustling metro population. The student points to the previous Canal which was totally defunct, and narrates how Swami announced, out of the blue, in Bangalore in the year 2001 – "I have made a resolve. I have decided to bring drinking water to the people of Madras, no matter how difficult or costly the task is. My wish will succeed without fail." Next there are a few panels with absorbing pictures of the Canal lining work and when Swami reaches the photo depicting the first release of water into the new Canal, Sri V Srinivasan points out and says, "Swami, here they are doing bhajans welcoming the Sai Ganga water." The Lord sees all these pictures with great interest.

Next is a very colorful panel showing glimpses of Swami's visit to Chennai in January 2007 and scenes from the Chennai Citizens Conclave. The student submits, "Swami, the people of Chennai are so happy and express their gratitude to You as they get regular drinking water now." Swami listens and nods in assent. What remarkable change has come now to this historic city! When He Wills, there is nothing that is impossible.

Swami, next, sees very recent pictures of the work that has started on His directions in Ugadi 2007 in the part of the Canal that is in the State of Tamil Nadu. And Swami, again, is pleased to see the progress of the work.

The Lord now turns and moves on to another enclosure and sees in pictures the unfolding of another flow of His Pure Love, the Sri Sathya Sai Water Project for the districts of East and West Godavari. The whole story is captured, in brief, in four panels but is supplemented amply with a moving video clip. The Lord watches the short video with the interest that a child would take when watching the TV screen for the first time in his life. And when Swami spots the lady who has donated an acre of land to built the water treatment plant in the tribal district, He immediately identifies her with a pleasant smile on His face and looks at Prof. Venkataraman and another student standing near by, both of whom had gone to these areas a couple of months ago to capture the mood of the people on video and digital stills. And

as the presentation ends with the tribals gleefully shouting “Bolo Sathya Sai Baba Ki Jai!” , the Lord sports a beautiful smile. All He has strived for all in His years on earth is to fill others with bliss, the same bliss that He is a personification of.

The Pure Joy of Prema Jyothi – 3

So, here we are with another break before we go on to the fourth section of this ‘guided tour’ with Swami. When you read the responses of people below, you will know what permanent change ‘Prema Jyothi’ brought in the lives of many people.

“A tour around the exhibition has inspired me to do something for the poor. When I grow up and get stabilized in my career, I will get involved in projects that eliminate poverty.” – Ms. Revathy, a student in the Anantapur Campus of Swami’s University.

“No language of appreciation can match the height of excellence of this exhibition projecting Divine Glory in the form of Love in action. I feel unspeakable joy in my heart as well as inspired...I hope this will be organised on every festival occasion.” – Mr. Nihar Kanti Pal, State Coordinator , Education, West Bengal.

“The exhibition is exceptionally beautiful. I remember one thing to take home and that is - having Swami in our life is endless hope, else it is hopeless end.” - Ms. Chandra Chetty, South Africa.

“The exhibition is beyond human comprehension because the human mind really cannot comprehend such great works done with such speed – by, shall we say, one man, as looking at Him, He looks like one of us - showing the power of Love that is more powerful than the entire United Nations. He is bringing about a transformation of our individual lives and also the world setting examples that we can follow, like this exhibition that is especially suitable for the youth to see. It will enable the young people to see that there is purity here that they cannot get in the world. It will draw them closer to Swami, to the organisation and to one another.” – Mr. Victor Kanu from Zambia

“It not only gives the complete picture of Swami’s wonderful activities but also guides every individual to understand and practice His message in day to day life to be a perfect man. Then only can we be instruments in His Divine hands.” - Mr. Pravat Malini Dubey from Noida, India.

“As far as a take home message applies for my country I would say that the water theme is very relevant to Australia, as there is a water shortage in many parts of the country. As I went through, I felt Swami’s Love coming from every picture and image, from His childhood up until now, encapsulating all that He believes in. It would be very profound and have a huge impact if we showed

something similar back home, just to show what Swami believes in and what is possible throughout the world.” – Mr Abinash from Australia.

“It is so beautiful that we will certainly come back and take a look at it again and again – every morning, one part. It is almost hard to believe that one person can do so much good, life-saving things, this gives inspiration to everyone of us because we have this capacity inside.” - Ms. Sara from Slovenia.

“It has been very nice to see this - through from Swami’s childhood to medical care and it is an eye-opener especially to beginners so that they can know what is going on. It is difficult to choose which area impacted me most, as each had their own story to tell regarding Swami’s message to the world. It would be especially useful to show back home for those who cannot come to Prashanti.” – Mr Vivek from Hong Kong.

“Right from entrance till exit, such a wonderful scheme and systematic presentation gave a highly thrilling experience. The photographs are perfect match and depiction. I am personally deeply influenced by the water project as it gives a true picture of what suffering people are going through.” – Mr Krishnan, a student of Swami’s University.

We move on now with Swami to the next theme...

IV. LOVE SHINING AS THE SADGURU

Swami now moves on to the fourth theme of this Exhibition. As Swami looks at the introductory panel which is a striking picture of the hands of a potter shaping the raw earth into a shining and useful shape, kneeling next to the panel is another former student of His University serving currently in the Central Trust. He says, “Swami, we now have panels which show how You have shaped young minds in Your model educational institutions.” The first panel shows pictures of Swami’s University along with other Universities and he explains, “Swami, ours is the only University where the Chancellor of the Universe is the Chancellor of the University too.” Swami is too pleased and lovingly says, “Very happy.”

Next Swami sees a panel which has pictures of a preceptor with disciples and beside it the photo of Albert Einstein writing an equation on the board, to convey how secular and spiritual educations need to be blended. And as soon as Swami sees this poster He says, “There, that is Einstein.” Truly, there is nothing sweeter than seeing the child-like nature of the Lord! He captivates you instantly.

The next four panels show how man is a composite of body, mind and soul, and how one turns into an animal if body-feeling dominates his personality and into a demon if mind rules his actions. “Our University provides integral education catering to the body, mind and the spirit,” the student explains.

In the next panel, Swami sees the inauguration ceremony of the first edifice in Swami's Educational Mission – the college for women in Anantapur. Prof. Venkataraman points out Sri V V Giri, the then President of India, who had presided over the function and then the student-guide draws His attention to the significant message He had given on that occasion. He says, "Swami, You had said that Indians should not imitate other cultures blindly and must preserve their own roots and strengthen their own values. You had also declared that this college is only a seed which will, with time, sprout and spread providing shade and security to all." Prof. Venkataraman adds, "Swami, Your boys have done this. They are sharing Your Love with the world." Swami seems very pleased and says, "This is done very nicely." Though, till now, Swami has seen only half of the Exhibition, the hearts of the students who are behind this Exhibition are brimming with joy. Their effort has already found fulfillment.

As Swami moves on, He sees images of the inauguration of the college in Puttaparthi, the establishment of the University in 1981 and then the opening of the Administrative block. Identifying the dignitary on that occasion, Swami says, "That is Mr. Gundu Rao, the then Chief Minister of Karnataka." How many millions Swami has blessed in the last eight decades of His life! And what an honour for those who have been fortunate to be directly part of His Mission!

Next is a beautiful collage of the Chancellor's room in the Administrative block and now the student says, "Swami, though it is the Chancellor's room, You never go there because You always like to spend all Your time with us, guiding us and blessing us with Your proximity." Swami looks into the eyes of the boy and listens keenly. Next He sees the early days of the forming of the University when He used to chair Academic Council meetings, talk to visiting professors, attend seminars, etc. "Swami, Your involvement has always been comprehensive and complete," mentions the student again and the Lord nods gently in agreement. How many precious hours of His time Swami has given to this University and His students! And how beautiful it is to see them grow, straight and strong, as role models and responsible members of the modern society!

As Swami moves further, He sees snapshots of boys engaged in literally every activity in the hostel. "The hostel in its every aspect is run by the boys," the former student explains showing photos of boys doing carpentry, electrical maintenance, gardening, plumbing, dining hall serving, etc. The next three panels are collages of the sweet intimacy that exists between Swami and His boys. "Swami, it is this proximity with the Divine which is the most salient aspect of our University," he stresses as Swami sees pictures of His sessions with boys in Trayee Brindavan, Kodai Kanal, and the Hostel dining hall.

In the next two panels, Swami sees colorful and exciting scenes of Sportsmeet performances of the students. Pointing out the spectacular feats

that boys do on these occasions from bungee jumping to motorbike stunts to aerial acrobatics, the student says, "Swami, it is the strong faith and confidence that the boys have at Your Lotus Feet that inspires them to do such dare-devil acts." Swami again looks at him and nods as if saying, "Yes, I know." How the Lord protects every student like the eye-lid that protect the eye is a story that the Lord knows; many a times even the boys are unaware unless He reveals it Himself.

Swami, next, sees scenes of two other important aspects of the University – the Summer Course held at the beginning of the academic year and the Grama Seva programme held during Dasara celebrations in the middle of the year. He keenly watches as Prof. Venkataraman shows how boys go to remote areas, where even roads do not exist, to serve food and clothes. Swami keenly watches these pictures with pleasure.

The next panel awaits with grand pictures concerning the Annual Convocation of the Institute. First are the scenes from the dramas that the boys do every year in front of Him. There are pictures of Swami guiding the boys behind the stage, sitting through their rehearsals, deciding their costumes and finally granting them group photographs after their performances on the D-day. "Swami, You are the director, actor and the chief spectator," Prof. Venkataraman adds. And then there are impressive pictures of the Institute Convocation and Swami pleasingly nods in acknowledgement when the student says, "Swami, it is only in our University that, come what may, the academic year starts every year on June 1st, convocation is held on Nov 22 and the session closes on March 31." Swami is very happy.

The next two panels are about the service being done by the alumni of the Institute along with scenes of their annual 'reconnect' with the Lord in Prasanthi Nilayam. Swami watches with interest how the former students of His institution are serving selflessly and reaching out to the world.

The focus in the next panel shifts to the actual message for mankind concerning education. It shows the globe at the centre and depicts how recent times have lead to mind-boggling advances in Science and Technology, concurrent with a widening gap between the rich and the poor as the world is enveloped with problems like poverty, conflict and global warming. Referring to the subsequent panel, the former student explains, "Swami, the principle of Educare as taught by You is the only way man can free himself from the clutches of desires, greed and hatred." As Swami moves on to the next panel which depicts a cycle with two wheels, he continues, "Swami, You always emphasize the balance between knowledge and compassion - the head and the heart - and that is what can make us useful and responsible members of the society and the world." The Lord lends His ear keenly to every word.

And next there are pictures of boys in the classrooms as well as with Swami in the garden, and Prof. Venkataraman says, "Swami, this University is most

blessed to have the *sadguru* (Supreme Preceptor) as its founder, master, and mentor.” As Swami moves on, He comes to the final picture on this theme of Education, and this panel has one big picture of Swami, His hand raised in benediction and beside it are three important messages for mankind. The student explains, “Swami, You always stress on character development as the most worthwhile product of education. Secondly, You always emphasise on good teachers because without good teachers there can be no good society.” Swami nods His head affirmatively at this point, and then the boy continues, “Another important aspect which Swami has demonstrated is that education should always be offered free to everyone without any discrimination whatsoever.” Swami listens with interest to all these explanations and looks very pleased. These have been the main thrust of His education system right from the time He established the first college in 1968 and the Lord is happy that the panels portrays all these aspects clearly and powerfully.

Swami now turns and moves on to the fifth section of this Exhibition. It has been more than an hour since Swami arrived into the Exhibition hall, but the compassionate Lord does not seem tired or ask for rest. For everybody else, it is like Swami arrived just a few minutes ago. When one is with Swami, time, truly, becomes still.

The Pure Joy of Prema Jyothi – 4

Here is a short break again, with more feedback from students and devotees all over the world.

“The exhibition was really heart touching which has made us aware of many issues which our Beloved Swami has undertaken with so much Love and Compassion. Somewhere it has left a deep impact within my heart. I too want to follow and lead a path shown by our Bhagavan.” – Ahisti Pradhan from India.

“It has touched my heart and has also inspired me a lot...I just felt Swami’s Love, and His care for us while seeing this exhibition. It was very inspiring.” – Dr. Sai Lalitha from the Anantapur Campus of Swami’s University.

“I saw so many things done by Swami and I am inspired a lot. I will certainly do something for this society to the expectations of Swami.” – Ms. V Archana, an undergraduate student from the Anantapur campus.

“This has been an enjoyable, enlightening and invigorating experience. The best thing I could have done today is come here and go through this brilliant exposition. It has been masterfully structured in sequence to cover the expanse of Swami’s unspeakable contribution in service, healthcare and drinking water and the redemption of humanity. Thanks immensely for this exhibition. – Sri C Sreenivas, from Bangalore.

“This gives us an idea how much God does for us and how much do we need to do to become God. Life is a University and we have to go on learning throughout our lives. This exhibition gave me very simple, down to earth ideas of serving and being an instrument of Swami.” – Ms. Geeta Sardana from Jharkand, India.

“This is the first time that I experienced such an awesome exhibition. I have now learnt values and I thank Swami.” – Mr Priyant Sundas, a student.

“This is wonderful as it tells you about Swami’s Mission in practical terms. A great effort has been made to put it all together and I feel that it should be available in all states of India and all countries of the world. I found I learnt many details of the Chennai water project that I had not known before.” – Dr. Patel, General Hospital, Prasanthi Nilayam.

“The exhibition on Baba is a glimpse and needed drop of Divinity allowing us to attain a view of the Divine work and His accomplishments on this Earth and Universe. It is heart moving and encouraging, living up to the ideals and realities of the Divine within our hearts. Thank u Swami and to those who organized this comprehensive and love filled exhibition.” – Susana Castillo from USA/Peru.

We return now to our blessed Journey

V . LOVE SETTING EXAMPLES THROUGH SELFLESS SERVICE

The Lord is now in front of a very touching, back-lit and bright, panel. It is the image of a mother bird dropping a little particle of food into the mouth of her baby, her eyes gazing into the eyes of her little one. Swami’s vision is fixed on this photo as another former student working now in the Prasanthi Digital Studio, explains, “Swami, just like this mother-bird, You have filled us with Your Pure and deep selfless Love and taken care of us with the Love of a million mothers by taking upon Yourself the role of a Universal Mother.” The glowing text on this panel reads, “Love Setting Examples Through Selfless Service.”

And next are pictures of Swami Himself serving during the large Narayana Sevas that He used to organise in the Hill View Stadium and also during Service camps in Brindavan. “Swami, You have always demonstrated and then directed others to do. And now inspired by Your example, Sai workers, all over the world, serve with enthusiasm and love.” The student expresses his feelings.

Next are scenes from the devastating earthquake that rocked the state of Gujarat in 2001. As Swami sees the next panel which has trucks – small and large - packed with relief material and lined up, and the Lord giving directions, he adds, “Swami, it was You who sent lorries full of items – blankets, food,

provisions, etc. – catering to their every need.” “These tents too were given by Swami,” continues the student. “The sevadals in Gujarat served all the items that Swami sent personally to every individual. While other NGOs visited only towns and cities, Sai inspired sevadals went to every remote village and offered the items with love.” The Lord carefully scans every picture as He keenly listens to the commentary. The all-knowing Lord, so kindly gives the precious chance to show Him what He has done! He has been always giving right from the very beginning and now He is giving His invaluable time – just to fill the student with bliss.

Next are scenes from the terrible tsunami when three hundred thousand people were washed away, and pointing to the panel of Sevadals doing work, the student elucidates, “Swami, nobody came forward to render the kind of service that the sevadals did. They cleared dead bodies which were scattered all around.” Swami’s attention now moves on the panel which has images of sevadals making neat boxes of all items sent by Him in the temple complex of Sundaram in Chennai. “Swami provided every item from clothes and food to buckets and stoves,” the student adds, and next are scenes of actual distribution to the poor in the tsunami-affected areas which Swami scans through and stops at another panel which has scenes from Indian villages.

“Swami always says villages are like my eyes,” the student explains and shows how Swami has visited many villages to encourage and inspire them. Prof. Venkataraman points out, “Swami, these are pictures of Amagondapalem that You had visited years ago with many students,” and Swami watches them with keen interest. How much Swami loves the poor in the villages and admires their unsophisticated life and culture! In fact, all His mammoth service projects are principally for this section of the society. The world may have forgotten them, but not God.

Swami now moves on to a panel which has pictures of classes for small children being conducted on the side of a road. The former student tells Swami that these are pictures taken on the Chitravathi road in Puttaparthi and shows in the next panel how Swami has built spacious schools for them out of His immense compassion. The Lord’s eyes are fixed on the pictures of small children studying with interest and enthusiasm. Nothing captures His attention more.

As Swami moves on, He sees pictures of the red water tanker that Swami sent all through the summer this year (2007) to supply water to the villagers in distress. “Swami, this tanker has become a Temple for them,” says the student and shows how the villagers first worship the vehicle with flowers and incense before accepting water. There are more pictures of the happy villagers walking away with pots full of water on their heads and in their arms, and when the student says, “Swami, these villagers say ‘Swami alone is our refuge, this water for us is truly nectar’,” the Lord is overwhelmed with emotion. Swami, is the perfect man walking on earth. His Pure Will and determination is indomitable, at the same time His Heart is most supple.

Swami next sees images of another moving miracle, the Mobile Hospital, and the student, again, explains passionately, “Swami, when the bus arrives, for the villagers it is as if Swami has come to the village! They perform bhajans and offer worship, and only then consultations begin.” As Swami looks at the various facilities that are available inside the bus, he points out how every kind of complex diagnostic procedures are possible inside the bus. “This is an ultrasound machine,” points out Prof. Venkataraman. And later as He keenly watches the doctors and volunteers at work, the student mentions, “Swami, all the physicians and Sai workers in this project repeatedly emphasise on preventive healthcare and guide the villagers.” And Swami listens with keen interest and then there are a series of pictures which show how sevadals go into the homes of the old and sick and carry them to the bus for consultation and examination. The Lord is absorbed and moved seeing these images.

The last image in this section is a huge picture of Lord Hanuman that Swami has erected in the Hill view stadium. When the former student says, “Swami, You always advise us that Hanuman is our true ideal, whether it is devotion or service” a small smile blossoms on His lips. The Lord is pleased and at this point, when another boy comes forward and offers Swami a tumbler of water, He beautifully smiles and puts a drop in His mouth with His one finger in a loving gesture and moves on. The Lord is not tired; for the sake of His students, or His devotees, He can go to any length.

Swami, next sees a small video loop on the Mobile Hospital in which Dr. Narasimhan, the director of the programme, says, “Many distinguished and very eminent doctors visit all these villages and serve in this service project; they say it is their way of expressing their love and gratitude to Swami.” As Swami listens to his words and sees the poor villagers being treated and comforted, He is overcome with emotion. Compassion comes as naturally to the Lord as fragrance comes to the rose and warmth to the rays of the sun.

The Pure Joy of Prema Jyothi – 5

Before we proceed, dear reader, here is another break. We are trying our best to give you the whole tour of this Exhibition along with Sai, and we hope you are enjoying it. For you to know and feel what so many people who visited this Exhibition felt, here are some more responses -

“I really have no words to express myself. The exhibition is so wonderful. I must say breathtaking. So many things we take for granted. I really feel it is a way to remind ourselves that God has come to show us the way. He is doing so lovingly and as His children it is high time for us to follow His steps.” – Ms. Sandhya

“This experience has been very nostalgic because being associated with the Organisation for nearly three decades, one gets amazed as one contemplates

on the body of work accomplished by Swami that is being shown in the whole exhibition. I think the greatest impact for me has been the mass of service that Swami has shown as an example to mankind. Be it a famine or a tsunami, or narayana seva or the miracle projects, it is amazing to learn that Swami has given us so much by way of personal example of how we should be. It makes us contemplate on what humanity could achieve if we all joined together and how much more we could all do if we were united. Going through the exhibition you get an understanding of what Love is, what Love in action can be. My hair is standing on end in awe that I could be a part of all this.” – Sri Nimesh Pandya from Mumbai.

“This is the most heart-felt experience I have ever had in my life about service and Pure Love. It seems to transform my heart towards the path of service, service and service alone.” Mr. Surender Barik from India.

“This wonderful exhibition made me cherish Swami’s all-encompassing Care and Love. As I worked 23 years in village development in various countries, I had a little skepticism about the depth of Swami’s work in the villages, which this exhibition has totally erased. Moreover the balance of heart, mind and body was an important reminder for me personally, as well as the practice to treat the element water (as well as other elements) as Divine. Last but not the least, Swami’s Divine presence in and through the exhibition was overwhelming.” - Ms. Maria Christine from Germany.

“It is really wonderful and of great intellectual quality which went into the sequence of photos. I think this is really wonderful and everyone must see this.” – Prof. Viswanath Pandit from Puttaparthi Campus of Swami’s University.

“In my 20 years of my journey with Sai, I have never seen anywhere an exhibition like this. When I go through the exhibition I feel peace and feel compassionate love to all mankind.” – Mr. A Satyanarayana from Orissa.

“This day, 35 years ago, my biological mother left me. Today I saw her in Swami, in every frame.”- Ms. Neeta Banerjee from India.

We now return to our journey and see the sixth section of the presentation with Swami...

VI . THE MATCHLESS GLORY OF PURE LOVE

Swami now turns and moves on to another section of the Exhibition and stops in front of a large back-lit panel which has the mystifying picture of the Cosmos with flashes of bright light dazzling through the glittering night sky. An alumnus now working in the Prashanti Digital Studio, standing next to this, explains, “Swami, we have now instances of the “Matchless Glory of Pure Love” which was shining out brightly And the Lord says, “Good, good.”

The first panel that Swami sees in this section has a picture of the Sun and Earth rotating around it, but inside the earth is the shining face of Swami; and next to this image is the picture of former President of India, Dr. Abdul Kalam speaking in the Divine Presence in Prasanthi Nilayam. The student explains, "Swami, when the President was here, he said the Earth is shining brighter than a thousand Suns because of Swami's Love. Unlike the earlier Avatars, where only a few could recognize their Divinity when they were in human form, in this Avatar millions have experienced Your Pure Love." The Lord is visibly touched listening to these words.

The next poster is a collage of many precious pictures of Swami on the sands of Chitravathi in the olden days, and as Swami keenly watches these black and white pictures, the student continues, "Swami, right from early days, You gave all Your time to devotees and they understood and experienced what true Love is." There are more pictures of early days in Brindavan and also huge crowds now in the spacious Sai Kulwant Hall. "Swami, even if it is a small festival, now devotees come only in thousands and lakhs. None have been sent invitation but by the magnetic power of Your Love, multitudes gather at Your Lotus Feet with enthusiasm and joy," he explains ardently.

As Swami moves on, He sees an ethereal picture of Himself giving Darshan through the silver door on the first floor of the Prasanthi Mandir. "Swami, we can never forget those very special Darshans You used to give on Christmas days," the former student says with excitement and joy. As Swami moves, He sees more scenes of Christmas celebrations in Prasanthi Nilayam and again he explains how devotees gather from the world over at His Lotus Feet as they long for that perfect peace and love which only Swami confers. Next are glimpses of a Youth Conference held in Prasanthi Nilayam a decade ago. "Swami, just like the current Youth Conference, in the earlier International Youth Conference too, You shared so much Love with the youth and inspired them," the student says as the Lord keenly watches those stills.

As Swami moves, He sees a panel full of fascinating pictures of very eminent musicians performing in the Divine Presence. Swami keenly scans these images and looks at a picture of U Srinivas as a small boy with Swami, and says, "Yes, that is Mandolin Srinivas." The Lord is so pleased and then points out Smt. Subbalakshmi too and looks at all the pictures with interest. Whenever Swami identifies somebody in the pictures and remembers him or her fondly, it is truly a joy for the people around. For, in these moments the sweet human side of the Divine is so enticing.

In the next two panels, He sees glimpses of Buddha Poonima and Chinese celebrations and the student-guide narrates how people of different faiths and cultures gather at His Lotus Feet to bask in His Love. This is followed by another poster which has images of sportstars from different countries who had assembled in 1996 to play the International Unity Cup in Swami's own stadium. As Prof. Venkataraman points out the various players, some of

whom had come from Pakistan and Sri Lanka, the Lord watches the pictures with interest. The next one too has eminent personalities, but now political leaders and administrators from India and abroad. The student explains how these highly-placed personalities have returned to His presence time and again for comfort, guidance and love. "Swami gives attention to everybody, irrespective of their financial and social status," he adds, as Prof. Venkataraman points out a picture of Jayprakash Narayan (a widely known freedom fighter and political leader of India) with Swami.

Swami, now, comes to a panel which has glimpses of the inauguration of the Prasanthi Digital Studio which is also the office of the Radio Sai Global Harmony, the powerhouse behind this unique exhibition. As Swami keenly watches these images, the former student submits, "Swami, in Your infinite benevolence, You opened and blessed the Radio Sai Studio on August 22, 2002." The kind Lord listens and gently nods. As He moves on to the next panel which has images of radio and video interviews and other recordings being done in the Studio, Swami watches the activities with interest. "Prof. Venkataraman points out video stills of interviews with Mr. James Sinclair and Swami sees the images with great attention. The day Swami had inaugurated the Studio, He had spent more than an hour talking to the boys and now the boys from the same Sai-suffused office had come out with this wonderful Exhibition. The Lord, obviously, was very satisfied.

The next panel is a photo of Swami on the screen of a laptop and in the background is the flow of 1s and 0s surrounding the globe. "Swami, by Your Grace, through the internet we have been sharing Your message and Love," the student explains. And there are more examples of this in the coming panels as Swami sees how 'Sai Inspires' (Radio Sai's daily inspirational service) is touching the lives of thousands. Prof. Venkataraman adds, "Swami, there are twenty thousand people receiving these enlightening messages every day, which includes people even in Antarctica." And then the student excitedly tells Swami about Heart2Heart, our own e-journal. At this point, another student comes forward with two copies of the journal and Swami sees keenly the 'Sai Geetha' issue (Jan 2007) as he turns the pages of the cover story. The very mention of Sai Geetha fills the Lord with deep emotion. Swami, next, looks through the first few pages of the May issue of H2H which had the cover story on the Mobile Hospital. This magazine which is touching the hearts of thousands across the world with the Lord's Touch now became only more reinvigorated to spread His matchless Message and Love.

As Swami moves on, He comes to a 'Radio Sai Booth' and there listens to the live Radio Sai channel on a digital radio. There is a talk going on by Mr. B N Narasimha Murthy, the Warden of the Boy's hostel in Bangalore, and for half a minute the Lord hears the speech intently. Then Prof. Venkataraman tells Swami that it can be heard on the internet too. The volume on the Radio set is reduced now as Swami listens to the same programme, now on the internet. The Lord is pleased and the staff of Radio Sai, palpably, are thrilled. He is the inner inspiration and has motivated and guided at every step of the

blossoming of this Institution; now, to offer everything back to Him is the greatest opportunity for them. You can see this feeling so amply reflected on everyone's face.

Swami, now, moves on to a picture which covers the whole 6 by 4 feet panel. It is the crowd of devotees that convened in Prasanthi for His 75th Birthday celebration. The following image is even grander; it's the 80th Birthday celebration. As the student says, "Swami, way back in 1940, nobody ever imagined Puttaparthi would be like this today; but You knew it and had even mentioned it to close devotees. You had said that in times to come, devotees can see Me only as a red dot in a teeming multitude and that is what is happening today." The Lord is touched seeing the large congregation and listening to the commentary. Prof. Venkataraman adds, "Swami, we do not know what more wonders the future holds for us!" Swami is now in front of another television set and for a few minutes sees video clips of these grand birthday celebrations on a TV screen, before moving on to the next theme of the Exhibition.

The Pure Joy of Prema Jyothi – 6

You have just seen the penultimate theme of the exhibition and it is time to have a break and cherish all that you have seen and felt. To know what many people like you who visited the exhibition felt, read below -

"It is the greatest collection of the world...these are not just photos of the marvelous Incarnation but a brief glimpse of the life of Baba which He spent and is living only by sharing Love to humanity. These pictures tell us what exactly we are supposed to do." – Mr. P Nandan Kishore from India.

"It has been an eye-opener even for us who have seen so much of Swami's activities. The span Bhagavan encompasses is mind-boggling and we do not really come to know all that is taking place. We hear about certain activities but we do not get to see them. Here you have covered almost the entire gamut of Swami's activities. People usually associate Swami's activities with bhajan, but that is square one and we cannot stay on in kindergarten; we have to proceed further and His thrust is on seva: 'Love all, Serve all'. That is what has been brought out here in a graphic way and that is what really matters. It is a nostalgic journey to see things from the past that we will never see again. " – Colonel Bose,
Director of Chaitanya Jyothi, Puttaparthi.

"I am from Kashmir (the crest of India) and that is the place where heaven is, they say. Unfortunately, that is an illusion. After witnessing this exhibition, I can now say that God lives here and Puttaparthi is heaven on earth." - Mr. Jagjeet Singh Rana from Himachal Pradesh, India.

“Thanks a lot for this inspiring and wonderful exhibition. What miracles? The greatest miracle is that He is standing here with us, now!” – Ms. Rabsch Anna Hara from Germany.

“I would like to congratulate all who have been involved in putting up such a fantastic exhibition. We all know there is only one God. We all know there is only one Sathya Sai Baba - and to demonstrate His grandeur I feel there is only one exhibition - this exhibition. It is the best exhibition I have ever seen.

I have known Bhagavan for fifty years and I find His effulgence since the time I have known Him in 1958 has been growing and increasing from strength to strength. I am so happy that you have started with Swami’s Effulgence of Pure Love where it takes you down memory lane: those days of Parthi Mandir and I was very moved to see all the old devotees who have been captured for all eternity, each one of them eminent in their own field... Future generations will definitely benefit from such an exhibition. How young people can go inwards and realise the God within has aptly been demonstrated through various activities that you can undertake. I really appreciate the people who designed the exhibition into seven themes and arranged it all with DVD input and I am so happy that I have been able to be a part of what is depicted here in the Institute, Hospital and the Grama Seva but I am more proud of the boys, some of whom I have taught and we are all indebted to them. “ – Mr Sudheer Bhaskar from Puttaparthi Campus of Swami’s University.

“This is my most heartfelt feelings. Swami wants us to be His instruments. A few model instruments have been exhibited here. Before viewing this exhibition, it was just a Water Project or a Hospital for me. But this exhibition has unraveled the feelings that these projects are made of, the love, and the selflessness that is Swami. I only hope people transform on seeing this and make this world a better place. The role of Radio Sai is particularly central for this.” – Mr S Arun Kumar, a post graduate student in Swami’s University.

“No words to express Swami’s Love to all of us. Only to feel very deeply in our hearts and follow His example to serve all and to connect us with Him.”- Ms. Eliel Berra from Argentina.

VII. PURE LOVE IS THE ULTIMATE PROTECTION

As Swami turns, there is a blue back-lit panel showing the globe held by a Hand in the orange robe and beside it the message reads, “Pure Love is the Ultimate Protection.” Now another former student, he too serving in the Prasanthi Digital Studio, kneeling next to this panel, explains, “Swami, the following panels are on this theme of ‘Protection’; it explains how Swami’s Love is the only secure safeguard for mankind.” The Lord listens, pleasantly nods and asks him to go ahead.

The first panel is an award-winning picture where a teenager stands against a dark wall on which is neatly scribbled in bold 'We Want Peace'. The student says, "Swami, everybody in this world cries for peace, but few do anything to alleviate the suffering." The following panels show how man is surrounding himself with as many gadgets and conveniences as possible without sparing a thought about the strain on the planet's resources as the population rises exponentially. There are pictures of acute poverty in Africa, blatant abuse of the environment, pollution and mindless violence leading to inner depression, restlessness and lack of peace. But the answer lies in the Heart.

The fourth panel in the series states: "The Heart alone can solve the massive problems of today for the Heart is the source of Pure Love and Pure Love shines as Prema Jyothi." And this message is demonstrated in this panel through pictures of selfless service being done by Sevadals and Sai students. Though it is more than 80 minutes since Swami lit the lamp of Prema Jyothi, the kind Lord scans through all these images and browses through the significant messages that they convey.

There are more as Swami turns and pointing to a panel which depicts a cell, an organ and the complete human body, Prof. Venkataraman explains, "Swami, this is what You always advise us – 'The proper study of mankind is man.'" Swami interestedly watches the graphics and illustrations. The next one shows the "Triangle of Life' with images of an individual, society, nature and then a beatific picture of Swami, as the student explains, "Swami, this is the depiction of Vyasthi (man), Samasthi (community), Srishti (creation) and Parameshthi (God), which You often emphasise." As Swami moves on, there is a picture of Swami bending down and serving a poor man and the student, again, says, "Swami, the solution to all the problems of the world is, in fact, very simple, as you have so beautifully said, 'Love all, Serve all'."

Swami looks at the boy with interest and affection as He listens to his commentary. Next is a picture of Swami's Hand raised in blessing, followed by another precious picture of Swami walking among the crowd and the panel reads, "Incarnations of God in human form are extremely rare. God is now here with us and clearly, this is an opportunity we simply cannot afford to miss."

Swami now comes to the final panel of this theme which has the picture of a majestic peak, but it draws one's attention more because of the message than the picture of the mountain. It says, "Faith can move mountains. With full faith in Swami, let us all march forward in unison, spreading His Love and bringing comfort to a troubled humanity." At this point, the former student kneels and submits, "Swami, with faith at Your Lotus Feet, anything is possible," and the Lord is very contented and pleased.

As Swami turns, there is the last back-lit panel of the whole presentation which has the serene Feet of Swami on a beautiful white lotus, and it says, "Swami, blessed are we to be in Your Divine presence. Expressing our deepest gratitude, we pray that You shower Your Grace on us so that our lives become Your message." The student now folds his hands, moves closer to Swami and expresses these feelings to Him. The Lord listens kindly and intently, and then gestures to him as if saying, "There are people waiting here for My blessings." The Compassionate Lord is never drained out when it comes to His devotees.

The Pure Joy of Prema Jyothi – 7

Dear reader, your journey is now complete, almost. There are still few more beautiful moments with the Lord, but before that, take a look at the feelings that this presentation evoked in different people from all over the world. We are sure few of them echo what is going on in your heart now.

"This exhibition brings so many emotions to the surface. Mainly it is truly inspiring. As always, Swami's work is carried out to perfection. There is only one thing to do now, do more work in our own countries" – Mr. Manimaran R from Malaysia.

"The exhibition made me sensitive to the suffering and problems of world and gave me an opportunity to ponder over how I can do my bit to reduce this, rather than running behind petty things." – Mr V Gokul, a Student in Swami's University.

"This exhibition required a lot of skill and power to project ideas that are already in our minds or in books. They have been projected excellently well - even for a layman to understand – on how to use the ideas put forward in our daily life. It is a great effort to portray these themes here as we know that sometimes spirituality is not described very practically. But here we can learn things and use them for the benefit of humanity. This exhibition has taken this line of practical spirituality by the examples shown, emulating them and putting them into practice. My congratulations to the organisers." – Mr. Chiranjeevi Rao from Puttaparthi.

"I am so overwhelmed by everything. There is not enough time to see everything. I want time to stop so that I can take everything in every pore of me. The exhibition is just superb taking us on a whole journey. I love it, it is very educational, emotional and just Pure Love...my life is worth living." Ms. Yahoda from USA.

"I think this exhibition is second to none. I have been to many exhibitions around the world. The portrayal of Swami's Divinity and the calamities around the world are all correlated with Swami's teachings. You do not see only the miracles or Swami's life history, but also the reality of the world today – bombings, people's sufferings and how the Sai Organisation moves in so fast

because of one thing: and that is Swami's Love. I think that we should have this exhibition around the world as it shows how Swami is changing people's hearts; especially the youth as some of them are from very wealthy backgrounds and they do not realise the suffering or the other side of the world. I believe that this exhibition is very educational and I have been in the right place at the right time to see it." -

"A superlative visual miracle that touches the body , mind and the spirit ...tears flow...we wonder what we can do to help humanity...selflessness is what we learn." – Ms Aakansha and Meenaski Verma from Delhi, India.

"This exhibition was extremely moving. Love is, as Swami says, the key to solving the world's problems. Thus the exhibition outlining all of Swami's work is a tremendous reminder of the Power of Love." Ms. Puja from USA.

"This exhibition cannot be described in words. It is par excellence and has captured Swami and His Love in a nutshell. Thank you for this nectarine Love." – Ms. Rachana Bhagwani from Qatar.

And now, we are into the last few sweet moments with Swami...

POURING PURE LOVE...

Swami now turns and with a gentle smile on His face blesses all the people who have worked for this exhibition – the electricians, carpenters, tailors, and other assistants. They touch His feet and their joy knows no bounds. An English volunteer, shows a tray of key chains and the Lord lovingly blesses them all. Another enthusiastic volunteer from England, next offers a rose which the Lord accepts with a smile and gratefully he touches His feet and covers his face with his blessed hands.

More blessings follow as Swami accepts another rose from an elder working in the Studio; blesses the three employees of SN Informatics, Bangalore who have helped immensely for the Exhibition in the designing of the panels as well as the big welcome wall and the back-lit panels. Now another elder prostrates at His feet and Prof. Venkataraman adds, "Swami, he is a retired air force officer serving in the studio." The Lord blesses this dedicated volunteer who has toiled hard for this Exhibition.

The Lord is now pleased and is surrounded by His boys working in the Studio. Expressing immense happiness, Swami says, "From the beginning till the end, the whole arrangement is nicely done." "Swami, it is all Your Grace," the boys reply in unison. The Lord sports a satisfied smile on His face and Prof. Venkatarman adds, "Swami, it is the effort of Your boys to make You happy." Swami, then, says, "Yes, but right leadership too is very important." And immediately the boys say, "Yes, Swami it is because of the guidance of Prof.

Venkataraman that all this was possible.” The Lord is happy and there is a gentle and loving smile on His face.

IMPRESSIONS FOR ETERNITY

It is more than 90 minutes now since Swami arrived, even now the Lord looks resplendent like a fresh rose, and finally asks for the arathi. As the camphor is lit and “Om Jai Jagadesh...” fills the air, Swami is still smiling and blessing everybody on the way as He moves out of the Exhibition area and ascends the stage of the Poornachandra auditorium to retire to His abode... And thus, ends, dear reader, this unique journey with Sai. How did it make you feel? What are your feelings now we do not know, but what we do know is what many devotees, who came to see this Exhibition after it opened for the public the next day (July 22, 2007), wrote and said.

“Tears rolled down seeing the clippings... Till now I only had heard of Swami’s projects, but today I have witnessed them all. Thanks a lot for the awareness. I promise to help the poor in whatever way I can,” said Ms Iffath Sultana, a student from Anantapur.

Dr. Bhima Bhikajee from Mauritius expressed, “I have been reading about Educare, Medicare, the water projects and other Seva being done by Swami, but this exhibition has overwhelmed me. As a medical practitioner in Mauritius, I have been doing Seva in the form of free consultations for the needy, but today I realize how infinitely small my contribution has been. I shall make it a point to do much more.” Elisabeth Losch from Germany was just ecstatic. “Wonderful pictures, Wonderful teachings!” She said. “Blessed are we to have the chance of seeing what love can do to humanity. To be a little spark of this message I would be happy for all time to come.” Another lady from the same country, Tina Nowack, wrote, “The most inspiring thing for me was to see how great Divine Love is for all her children. I felt touched by that indescribable love. There is an important message for me: We cannot wait for people to ask us for help. We should just go out and see how we can serve.”

Reflecting similar feelings Indranee Cumareshan from the United Kingdom said, “This exhibition has shown that the Lord is very much within us. We are just His instruments to serve the society. With the Lord’s name on our lips, love in our hearts, we can change the world to be a better spiritual place to live in. This has given us ideas and motivation to help one another wherever we are.”

The impact the Exhibition had in the hearts and minds of people is to be seen to be believed. Suffused with Pure Love in its every inch, it opened the flood gates of compassion and selflessness in every heart. As Mr. Shyam Kanagala from the USA said, “The message depicted here by numerous examples from Swami’s life and works is very clear. With His Grace, I pray that each and everyone becomes a shining lamp of love in this world. For my part, I promise to be one hereafter at least by leading a life of pure unconditional love. “

Undoubtedly the impact was lasting as it was a never-before experience for many who walked through the 22,500 square feet display area. There were many requests to keep this presentation permanent and move it to different cities like Nicky Beedanand, a Sai Youth from Mauritius, who said, “The exhibition is excellent, mind-blowing. I thank Swami and pray that this goes worldwide from country to country.” Another gentleman, Sri P Yellappan suggested, “Why don’t we send this marvelous and inspiring exhibition to all the cities of India through a special train?” Sri Keshava Rao from Orissa wrote, “I was filled with bliss seeing this exhibition. I request you to show this in every state of the country.”

It is because of hundreds of such requests and also direct directions from Swami that the Exhibition is planned to move to different cities in India. To begin with, it will be in the city of Chennai, in the same huge area where the Athi Rudra Maha Yagna was held in the January of this year.

If this Exhibition displayed the power of Pure Love, the commencement to conclusion of the whole endeavor was itself a potent demonstration of what love and purity of purpose can do. As with any noble task, there were many challenges too – some Herculean and some tiny – but in the end, what won was Love. When love is there in our hearts, we have all the strength of the Universe with us because God is in us, active, agile and encouraging. Let’s keep this faith solid and firm in our hearts so that the ‘Prema Jyothi’ – the Light of Love that is there in our hearts, is always resplendent, reinvigorating and re-charging us with Divine Energy.

THE 'PREMA' BEHIND PREMA JYOTHI

If the “Prema Jyothi” was ‘Pure Joy’ because of the Pure Love that was suffused in every speck of the presentation, the making of this unique Exhibition was an equally euphoric experience. Truly, the whole exercise embodied the spirit that was portrayed in every inch of the giant presentation. Nearly 180 graphic panels, 10 back-lit light boards – some large and others very large, six TV loops, the Radio Sai booth, the colossal ‘temple welcome wall’ and the attractive floral decorations were all blended together to create a lasting impact in the heart of every visitor. And this is what everybody saw, experienced and enjoyed; but what very few are aware of is how this glorious manifestation of love actually materialised. The behind-the-scenes story of this unique endeavour is truly as stirring, if not more, as the actual presentation. And this was because it was in its every facet and fabric, inspired and implemented entirely by His Love. His “Prema” was what made every seemingly impregnable obstacle evaporate just at the right time; He was constantly at work, as always.

A devotee Sarah Banfield from UK, wrote, “Wow, the exhibition is a true example of extreme hard work, devotion, passion and love.” Yes, it was that, and more. It brought together a range of talents from carpenters to computer designers, from artists to artisans and from planners to panel fixers. Everyone worked flat out for a number of weeks, which had become a race to the finish line after getting a rather late ‘all clear’ to stage the exhibition during the Guru Poornima celebrations. And to top it all, the venue was never confirmed until a few days before the actual day of inauguration. But nothing deterred the students and volunteers working in the Prashanti Digital Studio (PDS) under the inspired leadership of Prof. Venkataraman.

How the Masterpiece Materialised

The first – and the most crucial part – was conceptualising the whole presentation. The ideas took shape in Prof. Venkataraman’s mind and Swami was later shown a brochure which had the basic framework of the flow of the entire theme depicted tastefully with graphics. With the concept sealed and permission granted to stage it during Guru Poornima, now came the execution at break-neck speed, as there were only four weeks left for the festival.

This second phase of the work required enormous physical and mental stamina as well as quick decision-making. All the pictures had to be chosen from the archives maintained at the PDS and mind you, it is not an easy job to portray the mind-boggling glory of Swami in a few pictures. Some of the best and significant moments from the entire life of Bhagavan had to be picked for the first theme entitled “The Effulgence of Pure Love.” The next four themes after this concentrated on service projects, which was a relatively easier task to complete. But, for the remaining two themes selecting the right pictures was again a complex task. “The Matchless Glory of Pure Love” and “Pure

Love as Ultimate Protection” needed in-depth research and careful thinking to do justice to the potent ideas they intended to convey.

As the picture-selection was going on under Prof. Venkataraman’s direction, the text for each panel was also being readied by him. Once the English text was ready, it then had to be translated into two other languages - Hindi and Telugu. Every panel had an additional board with captions in these vernacular languages along with English which was in the main panel. And all these tasks were going on in parallel. It was like a multiple assembly-line production being done by a handful of dedicated workers.

God Sends Help Through So Many

Once the pictures and text were ready, now came another important task – designing. This was completed with the help of three committed employees from SN Informatics, a Bangalore based software company, which has partnered the Prashanti Digital Studio in almost every endeavour right from its inception. But the speed with which they worked this time along with Swami’s students in the studio, in not only designing but also in making the necessary pre-processing before final printing and overseeing the whole operation of printing, was really commendable. It was as if everyone was possessed....His love reverberated in everybody’s veins.

Once the printing was finished in Bangalore, there was another group that came in now, by His Grace, to render their services – the energetic Sai youth from Bangalore. It is this group that handled the logistics of shifting all the panels and the metal supports carefully to Prashanti Nilayam. But more than the panels, the most challenging task was printing and transporting the huge 150 width ‘welcome wall’ which was a show-stopper for every visitor. Also in the meantime, the large number of panel frames and supports were being designed in Bangalore while the wide wooden bases for the back-lit panels were being fashioned by carpenters in Puttaparthi. And then, there were many other issues to be sorted out from proper lighting, planning the best layout possible and establishing internet connectivity, to floral decorations and designing the Radio Sai and “Leelas” Booths.

With every individual in the studio multi-tasking night and day, soon the printed panels, the frames and the front wall arrived and they were stored in a spacious hall inside the ashram. When the complete set – panels, frames, supports, etc. – for one theme arrived on July 11, the students arranged the panels as a trial in a spacious hall inside the ashram and requested a few respected elders of the Ashram to visit and give feedback. Everybody who saw them said, “This is spectacular. You must have this Exhibition in Poornachandra Auditorium so that maximum people can benefit from this during the Guru Pournima celebrations.” Till now, the Exhibition was on a sticky wicket as far as the venue was concerned. Therefore, buoyed with the feedback from the elders, the idea came, “Why don’t we show Swami this one theme? And then pray for further guidance from Him with regards to venue, date, timings and the term of the presentation.” Everybody agreed it was a great idea and the kind Lord too consented to see the trial on July 13. The excitement in the studio now was now on a new high and the panels depicting

Swami's water project were shifted to the Poornachandra Auditorium without delay.

Direct Encouragement from the Divine

As promised, the Benevolent Lord arrived at the auditorium soon after evening bhajans on Friday, the 13th, and quite contrary to people's belief about this day, it turned out to be a blessing for the Studio boys in every way. When you have God with you, can you in anyway be unlucky? Swami, most kindly, saw the panels in great detail and listened with interest to every line of commentary that was offered by a former student (now a staff in Prasanthi Digital Studio). The Lord spent more than half an hour seeing not only the 23 panels which depicted the full story of Sathya Sai Drinking Water Projects but also a few samples of other themes. He seemed so occupied and interested.

When a 3D model for the layout, done in cardboard, was brought to Swami, He looked at it too and blessed it. And then there were printed copies of all the themes in the form of spiral bound volumes and Swami spent more time browsing through some of these volumes with interest. The happiness and satisfaction on His face, which was so evident, was all that was needed to pump more confidence and energy into the Studio team. The boys now knew they can only expect good news and that's exactly what happened. The venue for the Exhibition once and for all was now sealed by Swami. It was to be in Poornachandra Auditorium.

The work, now, shifted into a new gear. Two days before the Inauguration, with the help of Sevadals, everything was moved to the Poornachandra auditorium using tractor-trailers. The next operation was one that demanded intense physical work.

The carpenters began to drill holes in the panels for fixing them to the supports; a job which required great skill as the panel material (which are called sunboards) was rather delicate. At the same time other skilled artisans were busy fixing the back-lit panels to their wooden bases. But one important task remained, and that was lighting up the huge hall in such a way that every panel shows up bright and clear. And it is here that students from the maintenance department of the boys' hostel made all the difference.

His Amazing Army in Action – The Students

When three boys from the Hostel were requested to help in the erection of the big metallic 'light tower' and asked to be in the Poornachandra Auditorium at 5 am in the morning of July 18, the group that arrived on time early in the morning from the Hostel was a shocking 30-strong! The whole maintenance department, very unexpectedly, was present to help in anyway they can. And the work they did was stupendous! In the words of one of the maintenance boys, "Erecting the tower is a challenging task. It is 30-feet high when arranged but essentially consists of three main parts - the side supports, the

main column and the base. After securing the base with the help of ropes we raised the column and then sealed the structure with nuts and bolts. Whenever we erect this structure in the ground for the sportsmeet and other functions, it usually takes 2-3 hours, but that morning, unbelievably, the whole operation took only 25 minutes! Not only this, even the position was perfect. Had it been a few metres away we would have damaged the art work on the ceiling. The way the entire process was executed with perfect precision, made us feel it was purely His Grace.”

And this was only one of the many tasks that the boys enthusiastically undertook. Apart from climbing 20-30 ft high and fixing the 400 watts halide lights on the big towers, they also helped in the making of the welcome wall, drilling holes in the panels and setting up the Radio Sai and “Leelas” Booth.

Most of this work happened in two days and it was a time of hefting, lifting, banging, sawing, fastening, and tired muscles – but, the best part, all wore smiles at the shared comradeship and joy at the noble goal ahead.

It was difficult laying out the nearly 180 panels in two nights. But thanks to a 3-D colour-coded model done by one of the students working in the Studio (and which Swami had blessed), the work could proceed at fast pace without any confusion.

Each panel needed two persons to carry them with ease and all the work involving fitting the panels, sticking labels on them, moving them manually to their respective places and re-adjusting them to fine-tune the layout was done by the students with the help of volunteers. “It was sheer physical work now after weeks of heavy mental exercise,” recalls a student. “But I enjoyed it a lot. The very thought that we were staging it just next to His residence itself, in the Poorna Chandra Auditorium, used to fill us with renewed energy and inspiration.”

And what is more, Swami Himself sent for the exhibition an exquisite Vishwa Rupa statue (cosmic form of Lord Vishnu) which was a masterpiece in every way. The Lord was guiding the whole set up in His own mysterious way.

The Final Test...and His Grace

On the last night before inauguration, if you looked at the hall, you would be forgiven for believing that the inauguration was at least 2-3 days away! Because the whole place looked so unfinished – the carpenter was still making holes and fixing vernacular panels, the flower decorations had just started, the welcome wall was still work-in-progress and didn’t seem to be ready by the night, the boys from the hostel were busy painstakingly decorating the big lamps with serial lights, there were chunks of saw dust and sand everywhere (they could not be cleaned as work was still going on) and

what is worse, the whole place suddenly became dark at 2 am. Power supply was gone.

But when you saw the hall at 6.30 am in the morning, it was nothing short of a miracle. It had the perfect ambience to welcome Swami – all the flowers arranged beautifully at the entrance, tall oil lamps adorned with lights, neatly placed flower-pots to delineate the pathway for Swami, hundreds of incense sticks alight and a serene silence pervading the whole atmosphere. Few know how a big band of women sevadal volunteers enthusiastically entered the premises at 4 am in the morning and got busy like an army of angels. When they left after an hour, the whole area had been transformed.

And this is not the only extraordinary thing. In fact, there were instances of inexplicable coincidences and unexpected help in literally every activity. Take for example, the flower decoration. Though the students had contacted one person in Bangalore, another volunteer who was an experienced hand in this kind of job, came forward without invitation and literally took over the whole responsibility of the work. He worked the whole night cutting and placing the garlands at the right places and once the work was done by early morning, quietly returned to Bangalore without even informing anybody. That He could be missing the beautiful opportunity to be in the hall when Swami comes in the morning, did not bother him a bit. He was just too satisfied to be part of it in some way.

Similarly, when a sevadal suggested in the final night that it would be good idea to put flower pots at different places inside the hall, no one knew how to procure them at 10.15 pm. Phone calls were made and amazingly so many things fell in place, from securing permission from the official concerned, to tracking the watchman of the place, to finding a tractor late in the night. And then the band of boys took over in placing the flower pots in the right places. Unmindful of the time, they worked ceaselessly till the early hours of the morning. In fact, one of them – a post graduate student - had an exam that morning at 9 am and he was in the hall helping in flower decoration and lights till 5 am. Such was their dedication and love for Swami! No wonder, the Exhibition was a huge success and everybody who entered the premises of the presentation felt only love everywhere.

Swami's Boys...His Pride

No effort ever goes unnoticed or unrewarded by the Benevolent Lord. Only, He has His own time and His own way. After Swami returned to His residence, having inaugurated and seen the whole Exhibition, the Lord was so happy with the work of His boys that He called Prof. Venkataraman near and said, "I did not imagine my boys can stage such a grand Exhibition!" And immediately, Prof Venkataraman responded, "Swami, it is Your love. With

Your Grace, they can do even greater things.” Yes, the Exhibition and the making of it – everything, was actually Pure Love at play.

Sharing Love...Joyfully

But the boys and volunteers work did not stop after the inauguration. They were busy for all the rest of the 14 days giving guided tours to primary school students, elderly members of the ashram, Youth contingents and, of course, the large number of devotees from India and abroad who visited the site every day. In the Radio Sai booth, there was always a student explaining to every visitor how they can listen to the Radio on the internet, read Heart2Heart on radiosai.org and receive daily messages from Swami by subscribing to Sai Inspires. In fact, hundreds of devotees subscribed to this service then and there.

But the most moving experience for every student was watching the response of every visitor and listening to their words. Suchita Thakur from India said, “It is my first trip to this holy place and I am absolutely speechless. I am thankful, blessed and grateful for everything Swami has done for me as a person and humanity as a whole.”

Premadayalam Chetty, a devotee from South Africa, wrote, “What a wonderful display of the works of Sathya Sai, our Lord. When everything around you seems to be falling apart, only the inspiration of Sathya Sai and Prasanthi Nilayam sets your heart aflame.”

Another devotee, Sushanth Karanth from Karnataka, said, “This is absolutely fantastic. I have decided to serve Him, and serve Him in all respects. I only wish and hope to be in service under Him in His organization.”

Responses like this were innumerable, and you might have read more in the cover story, still what we have offered you is only a glimpse, because we have volumes after volumes filled with reader responses. Everybody who left the Exhibition was a different person – some were in ecstasy, others in tears; several spellbound and many delighted and determined. And for every student and volunteer to be in some way part of this whole experience was not only humbling, but also a most fulfilling feeling.

Reliving and Reflecting His Love

The sweet and sublime memories of this whole exercise were so alive in the minds of Students of the hostel as well as boys working in the Prashanti Digital Studio that nearly three weeks after the Exhibition concluded they decided to get together to reminisce those moments and relive that joy. And so, on July 18, all of them got together for an evening of celebration in a small

corner of the Hill View Stadium. Prof. Venkataraman too was present on this night and he, in fact, gave specially printed "Prema Jyothi" T-shirts as a token of love to all the students of the Hostel after congratulating them for their selfless spirit and efficient workmanship. The Warden of the Hostel was present too and made the whole atmosphere lively with his presence and comments.

For the students of the Hostel and the student-staff in the Studio, it was the reinforcement of the mutual love they have for each other and the cementing of the intimate association between them to spread His glory together, with joy. And this joy emanated from the flame of love, the "Prema Jyothi" that Swami Himself has lighted in their hearts, and which shines brilliantly reflecting only His Love, the Purest Love.

FEATURE ARTICLES

IN QUEST OF INFINITY – 08

G.VENKATARAMAN

Loving Sai Ram and greetings from Prashanti Nilayam. In the last instalment, I tried, for the first time, to link up the macro and the micro; I hope you recall all that I told you. Today, I would like to take you further into truly amazing territory. But first, I would like to take you up in the sky and gaze into the Cosmos, the way some people have been doing. Basically, it is all connected with catching some signals that are coming to us from “out there” from “a long time ago.”

Cosmic Radiations

I hope you recall the story of the discovery of the so-called Cosmic Background Radiation – I discussed this in part two, in the February edition. Way back in 1960, two scientists accidentally discovered that we are constantly receiving a weak but steady dose of electromagnetic radiation from all around us. At first there was uncertainty about what exactly this mysterious radiation was and where it was coming from. But soon all those questions were settled, and since then, astrophysicists have been intensely investigating this cosmic background radiation as it is called. For accurate study, one has to send satellites into the sky with the ability to see in the infra-red and in all directions. This has been going on for some years now, and as a result of all these studies, the following is now known for sure.

- There was a Big Bang, and this happened about 13.8 billion years ago.
- The Universe was tiny when it came into existence but has been expanding ever since.
- In the beginning, matter [such as it was at that time] and radiation were tightly coupled with the result that the Universe was opaque. In other words matter was like a fog that prevented light from being propagated freely.
- When the Universe was about 300,000 years old, radiation and matter became decoupled. Thereafter, the Universe became transparent, allowing radiation to propagate freely – this is like a fog lifting, allowing light to be propagated freely. Radiation then began to fill the Universe, and even as the Universe expanded, the temperature of the radiation also began to fall. This radiation, which now fills the whole of the Universe, is what we refer to as the Cosmic Microwave Background or CMB for short.

What Went Bang?

How do we know all this? Largely through studies of the CMB. In recent years, the CMB has been the focus of intense studies, and I shall soon refer to some of them. But first, I would like to address the question that has been

sometimes asked: “What was it that banged?” This is a sort of rhetorical way of asking some sharp questions about the so-called Big Bang.

You will recall that when the CMB was first discovered it was found that it was isotropic, that is to say, the same intensity was found when the observing telescope was pointed in different directions. True, some minute fluctuations were discovered later on – and these fluctuations, by the way, are very important for the consequences they produce! – but, the fact is that by and large, CMB is uncomfortably homogenous and uniform. How come? Now why one earth should that be a problem? Because, of one important technical hitch called the horizon problem.

The Horizon Problem

The details are a bit complicated to explain here but in brief the problem may be stated as follows. Let us go back to a long long time ago, say one second after the Big Bang. Based on the currently observed rate of expansion of the Universe, the Baby Universe when it was about 10^{-35} second old must have been a ball of radius about 1 cm! Incredibly small is it not?! Let us consider light emitted from some point on the surface of this ball having a radius of 1 cm. In 10^{-35} s, this light can travel only a distance of 3×10^{-25} cm. That means, for light to cross the Baby Universe, it would take an awfully long time; but in that time, the Universe would have expanded a good deal more. If you reflect on all this carefully, you would soon find that because of the rapid rate of expansion of the Universe, radiation within would have a hard time filling it up UNIFORMLY. But experiments show that radiation is indeed filling the Universe uniformly, apart from some important fluctuations, which, however are very minor in size [something like one part in 1000 or even less]. So how come radiation is filling the Universe so very uniformly?

This figure, which please note is not to scale [!], shows schematically the Baby Universe when it was 10^{-35} s old. Thanks to expansion, the radius of the Baby sphere is 1 cm at this point of time. If we consider a typical point on the surface of the sphere like A, for example, light originating there at birth would have travelled only 3×10^{-25} cm. This distance, shown by AB, is clearly much, much smaller than the radius. That means that the region shown shaded would be optically unconnected with the rest of the Universe. Thus, mixing of radiation across the Universe, essential for uniformity of CMB, is not possible.

The inflationary model of Guth solves this by saying the following. At time $t = 10^{-35}$ s, the radius of the Universe was very small, so small that radiation everywhere could freely mix, making uniformity possible all across the Universe. At that instant, the Universe suddenly “blows up” or inflates enormously. The radius now becomes 1 cm, and thereafter, radiation mixing is not possible; but no problem, since equilibrium has already been established and that status quo is just maintained! Clever, is it not? But the beauty is that this daring conjecture has actually been substantiated by experiments!

What I have outlined above may be called problem number one; it is called the *horizon problem* [for reasons we need not go into here]. There is one more problem, problem number two, which I shall now describe briefly. To explain this problem, I would first have to recall what I said earlier [see SFI – 02] about the three possible scenarios concerning the expansion history of the Universe. I pointed out in that instalment that Alexander Friedmann in Russia figured out three possible ways in which the Universe can evolve, these three scenarios being decided by the value of a parameter called Omega Ω .

Searching for the Value of Omega Ω

Current studies suggest that Ω is close to unity. Fine, so it is, and that is the way God has decided it should be. However, this value of 1 for Ω creates a headache for cosmologists. According to them, if Ω is almost 1 now, it must have been that way a long time also [there are strong technical reasons for so arguing but those I have to skip]. If Ω has to have a value 1 a long time ago, and we are talking of real small times here, then there is a problem. What is the problem? Simple! Ω equal to 1 means the Universe is flat [see figure in SFI – 02]. Now it is easy to think of the surface of a huge sphere like the present surface as being flat but the surface of a bubble of radius one cm? Can one describe that as being flat? Not really! In which case, how was Ω almost equal to unity a long time ago? This difficulty, by the way, is called the *flatness problem*.

So there were these two headaches, the horizon problem and the flatness problem that were spoiling the party so to speak. Everybody believed in the Big Bang or wanted to believe in the Big Bang, but if that was true, how to explain away the horizon and the flatness problems? These two knotty issues were got rid of in one masterly stroke by Alan Guth in 1981 via what is now called the Guth's Inflationary Model. Guth said: "Look, you guys, let us start with the Universe when it was 10^{-35} s old. It was very small then; we all agree on that. You know what happened then? I'll tell you! **There was an enormous and astronomical expansion that occurred in the incredibly short time span of 10^{-32} s.** In that time the expansion was all over; and do you know by how much the Universe expanded during that 10^{-32} s? It expanded 10^{50} times!" This enormous and sudden expansion is called the *Inflation of the Universe*.

Hyper Inflation

This figure captures the essence of the Guth model for inflation. Suppose we start with the radius of the Universe as we know it to be today and work backwards based on the known expansion rate of the Universe. We would then get the curve labelled BBM [Big Bang Model]. The Guth model says that the Universe actually started off much smaller but suddenly blew up, in an incredibly short period of time – this is what inflation is all about. Why such a "crazy" model? So that two knotty problems explained in the text can be got rid off. OK, the model solves the problems all right; but is there any shred of

experimental evidence that such an inflation actually occurred? Yes, and that is what the Nobel awards of 2006 for Physics imply! OK, but is Guth 100% correct? Any alternatives? Sure, but that story comes later!

I know it all sounds pretty crazy but that is not the way Guth put forward his theory! He did it via systematic and professional arguments of course, but the gist of what he said was: Before the inflation, the Universe had a radius of only 10^{-50} cm or so, small enough for radiation to mix and fill it up uniformly. After the inflation, the Universe was too big as in earlier models but that was no problem any more because the Universe had already become filled uniformly. Guth's inflationary model also took care of the flatness problem neatly and so there was much relief amongst cosmologists – two nasty questions had been settled; or so it seemed!

Science always progresses this way, in fits and starts. First there is a problem; then there is a fix, and things seem, fine; but soon it turns out that things are not all that hunky dory because when one looks at the fine print, there are problems again. So back to the drawing board; a new model, and relief once again; but closer scrutiny and bugs again! This, however, does not dishearten physicists because there is always work to do, exciting work! That is why Feynman once said that when a theory works, physicists then become busy demolishing that theory by finding faults! What I am driving at is that Guth's model also has problems of its own! But that is a different story.

The 2006 Nobel Awards for Physics

Let me now cut to Stockholm, October 2006. That is when the Nobel Awards are announced, and the announcement was made that the Physics awards went to two people associated with the exploration of CMB. They are: John Mather of NASA and George Smoot of the University of California, Berkeley Campus. Using the COBE [**CO**smic **B**ackground **E**xplorer] satellite, they got a fantastic mapping of the CMB all across the sky. Their results were path breaking. On the one hand, they showed how uniform the radiation was all over; and yet, when seen with a "microscope", there were small but very significant variations that tell their own tale.

One can understand all this in the following manner. Let us say you are in a spacecraft and coming towards the Earth from outer space. As you approach, the first thing you would notice is that the planet is spherical. As you draw closer to the Earth, you would see the surface divide into continents and oceans. You would then begin to see that the Earth's surface is not absolutely smooth but has ups and downs, connected with the presence of mountains, cities, forests and deserts that cover the continents. It has been the same way with the study of CMB over the years. When astrophysicists first looked at the microwave sky, thirty years ago, they noticed it was nearly uniform. As observations improved, they began to detect various features associated with CMB. Finally, in 1992, the COBE satellite made the first detection analogous to seeing "mountains on the surface of the Earth": it detected cosmological fluctuations in the microwave background temperature, as they existed when

the Universe was about 380,000 years old. This thus represents data going back a very long time, to a time much earlier than possible from earlier experiments.

The implications of the study carried out by Mathers and Smoot are many and we certainly cannot go into all that here – the very fact they were given the Nobel is enough to show that their findings are of far-reaching significance. I am drawing attention to the COBE because one of the things it has given strong support to is the idea of inflation; so inflation is not mere speculation any longer, but something that definitely seems to have happened during the early history of the Universe. [That does not mean Guth's model is the last word! There are many other equivalent scenarios, but all rely on some form of inflation – that story would come later maybe.]

This figure, produced by the COBE science team, shows three false color images of the sky as seen at microwave frequencies. The orientation of the maps are such that the plane of the Milky Way runs horizontally across the center of each image.

The way to understand these figures is as follows. Now the actual temperature of the CMB is 2.725 degrees Kelvin or Absolute. Electromagnetic radiation with this temperature would be in the microwave region. Suppose the detector observes all radiation within a band ranging from 0 degrees Kelvin to 4 degrees Kelvin. This would be a wide window, and on this scale, the data shows uniformity [figure a], that is to say, the CMB appears uniform all across the Universe. Narrow the detection range now to the band 2.721 to 2.729 degrees Kelvin. The data now shows temperature fluctuations of the type seen in figure b.

After some data processing to eliminate unwanted signals, the data appears as in figure c. Here one can see a lot of structure in the temperature fluctuations, of the type predicted by the inflation theory. It is this fact that makes the COBE results very important and of great significance. Of one thing you can be sure; the people in Stockholm handing out Nobel Prizes know how to pick real winners, at least most of the time!

The Discovery of Dark Matter

From the exciting studies on the fingerprints left by the early Universe via the CMB, I now turn to physics at small distances. There has been hectic activity in this area, and many amazing discoveries have been made, with a bearing on Cosmology. In fact, one can see the manner in which Cosmology and particle physics are influencing each other. Here is an example. Some years ago, astrophysicist Vera Rubin began carefully studying various galaxies in the Universe. Her studies lead her to conclude, that many galaxies actually had much more mass than the light emitted by them would allow us to conclude. You see, when we look up in the sky and see something, we say, "Ah ha! There is something up there. If we see nothing, we say, nothing is over there." Vera Rubin found out that we cannot always assert in this manner. Visually, the galaxies seemed to suggest that there was only so

much matter in them. A careful analysis of the physical parameters suggested something very different, viz., there was much more to the galaxies than evident to the eye; in other words, there was Dark Matter, not visible to the eye, or in the ultraviolet, infrared, etc.

Since then, the idea of dark or missing matter has taken firm root and this immediately has deep implications for cosmology. How? Via the parameter Ω ! I hope you recall the role this parameter plays in deciding the ultimate fate of the Universe; and the value of Ω depends on the amount of matter in the Universe. Earlier, estimates of this mass was made on the basis of stars and galaxies visible to man. But Vera Rubin's studies now showed that we have to be careful; there could be dark matter! This dark matter might not be visible, but it sure could determine the fate of the Universe.

OK, Vera Rubin's studies have shown that there probably is some dark matter out there. Can we have more concrete evidence for it? That question has been addressed, via the search for what are called MACHOS. MACHO [**M**Assive **C**ompact **H**alo **O**bject] is the name given to one type of dark matter called brown dwarfs. A brown dwarf is a celestial object anywhere between 10 to 80 times heavier than our Jupiter [which is a pretty heavy planet by the way]. Brown dwarfs do not emit much light since there is no thermo-nuclear process taking place within. Thus, a brown dwarf that is far away would not be seen even the best telescope man can build. Any other way to detect the existence of the brown dwarf? Sure, and that is by noting that the brown dwarf has gravitational pull even though it might not be visible.

Astronomers said, "Hey, wait a minute. Sure we cannot see the brown dwarf but how about detecting its presence by gravitational microlensing?" The idea behind this technique is illustrated in Figure 4. In a manner of speaking, it is all like the famous experiment done earlier to detect the bending of light by gravity; this time, the bending is used to detect the presence of MACHO. Keeping this in mind, it should be easy to follow Figure 4.

This figure illustrates the principle of microlensing, using which MACHOs are detected. In (a) we have a star whose light reaches the Earth without any obstruction. In (b), a MACHO intervenes, eclipsing the star. As a result, light beams that would have gone away from the Earth are now pulled in. This causes a net enhancement of the light intensity if starlight. In (c) is illustrated how the intensity of starlight peaks, while the MACHO is transiting across the line connecting the Earth to the star.

Have MACHOs been observed? Yes, many of them; so we can say dark matter does exist. OK, MACHOs exist but do they account for all the dark matter that could be present? Any other types of dark matter possible? Of course, say the scientists, and they suggest that certain types of elementary particles called WIMP [**W**eakly **I**nteracting **M**assive **P**articles] could exist, and physicists are busy looking for them; thus far, none have been found.

Cosmic Census

What I want to impress with the above is that one thing leads to another, and dark matter, the value of Ω , the fate of the Universe, elementary particle physics, all have begun to influence each other in ways never before imaginable. Let me now give you some more taste of this! Suppose we do a Cosmic Census, meaning, adding up all the known masses in the Universe; and we represent the result as a pie chart. This was done some years ago, and it was found that if one added all the known masses, including a good estimate of the dark matter, then it all added up to just about 30 % of the mass needed to make Ω equal to 1; remember, Ω is the magic parameter that determines the fate of the Universe, and the value of Ω depends on the amount of matter in the Universe. Current estimates suggest that Ω is in fact pretty close to 1; in which case, the question becomes: “What is it that is missing to make up for the mass needed to make Ω equal to 1?”

This pie chart is essentially an approximate “census” report of the Cosmos. [The percentages do not add up exactly to 100 because of rounding-off errors.] Many decades ago, people thought the Universe was filled only with matter and radiation, with matter being made up of galaxies, which in turn were made up of stars and their planets [if any]. As the figure above shows, the view is now very different. Ordinary visible matter forms only a very small part; besides this, there is a lot of dark matter. But that is still not the end of the story. The requirement that the value of Ω be close to 1, now suggests that besides dark matter, there is also dark energy! In fact, the contribution due to dark energy seems to dominate the contents of the Universe!

Dark Energy

That is where **dark energy** entered the picture, and to get ahead of the story, let me mention at this point that the COBE studies [and some earlier less precise ones] give strong support to the idea of dark energy. So you see, why COBE results are so important – they give support to the idea of inflation, and they also strongly suggest that indeed there is a thing called dark energy.

At this point, you might be wondering: “Who on earth got this idea of dark energy? Why does the Universe need dark energy? How does it help?” and so on. Let me now try and give some answers to the above questions. Astrophysicists have in recent years been carefully studying data from ancient supernova [see SFI part four in the April edition for some information about supernovas], and they have come to the conclusion that quite possibly, the Universe is not only expanding, but that the rate of expansion strongly suggests the value of Ω ought to be close to unity. The COBE results not only say the same thing but even more emphatically.

Thus, many things started pointing to the same thing: 1) the value of Ω has no choice but to be close to unity. Even as people were wondering about the acceleration of the expansion of the Universe, there was the question about something missing in the Cosmic census, something that had to be put in to make the value of Ω come very close to unity. 2) At the same time, the

Cosmic census shows that even if we add up all the mass in the Universe, including the mass associated with dark matter, the value of Ω comes nowhere near 1. So something is missing; what is that? That something, said experts, is dark energy!

Now you just can't get up and say, "Hey, you know what? There is a repulsive force out there that is driving the different parts of the Universe apart, forcing it expand rapidly, instead of allowing gravity to shrink it, which is what one would normally expect." This is too serious a matter to do hand-waving as they say. I wish to assure you that serious science is not done this way, and in fact, much work has been done to give a reasonable theoretical foundation for the concept of a repulsive energy that would take care of the observed expansion of the Universe, and the value of Ω it suggests. But I am afraid I cannot go into those technical details. Let us take comfort, that thanks to COBE results we not only know that Ω is close to unity, but also that there is a way to understand the expansion of the Universe that this value of Ω suggests, an expansion that has actually been observed.

There is another curious thing about this dark energy business. Remember the famous Cosmological parameter Λ that Einstein introduced and then abandoned, declaring it to be the greatest blunder of his life? [See SFI – 02.] It turns out that this dark energy is closely related to that Λ ! Einstein would sure have loved that, had he been alive! Sometimes, history turns around in a strange manner!

The Universe created by God is full of mysteries! More about them next time, when you would encounter some really amazing concepts. Meanwhile, I wish to leave you with small question, which is: "Name a well known rock star who recently completed his Ph. D thesis in astrophysics and submitted it for examination after more than three decades of absence, working in the music world!" We will publish the names of all who have submitted correct entries!

LIVING UP TO HIS MESSAGE

By Sri Sanjay Sahani

Sri Sanjay Sahani is a Gold Medallist from Sri Sathya Sai University. He has served as the Warden of Sri Sathya Sai Hostel, Prasanthi Nilayam and is currently the Principal of the Brindavan Campus of Sri Sathya Sai University. This is the transcript of the talk he delivered to the delegates of Sri Sathya Sai World Youth Conference during a workshop session in Prashanti Nilayam on July 26, 2007.

I offer my loving pranams at the lotus Feet of our beloved Bhagavan. Revered elders, Sai youth from all over the world and Sai educational institutions, Brothers and Sisters:

We are living in extraordinary times. It is the best of times and also the worst of times. It is the best of the times because man will never get an easier opportunity to redeem himself than a time when a Divine incarnation walks on earth. It is also the worst of times, because the very presence of a Divine incarnation amidst us is a sign of the declining standards of living, which have warranted His coming.

In such a scenario, I am reminded of what Bhagavan Himself has said, "If there is a small scuffle on the road, a constable is enough to set matters right. When the problem aggravates and 20-30 people accumulate, the Sub Inspector of Police has to make his presence felt. **When the entire city is in flames and there are riots everywhere, then the Inspector General of Police has to appear on the scene. Bhagavan is the Inspector General of Police for the cosmos who has come to save mankind from itself.**"

Rabindranath Tagore, India's Nobel Laureate in Literature, once observed, "Every time a child is born, he brings a message from God that God has not yet despaired of man. He still has hope in the crown jewel of His creation." Bhagavan Himself this morning was telling us, "*Janthu naam nara janma dhurlabham*". Of all the 84 lakhs of life forms that are possible, the human birth is the crowning piece of God's creation. Having got such a gift from the Divine, what is our role?

"Why Do I Need to Transform?"

A few years ago, while addressing devotees in Brindavan, Bhagavan said, "I do not want your *Bhakthi* or Devotion. I want your transformation." What does Bhagavan mean when He says, "I do not want your *Bhakthi*?" That devotion which does not lead to transformation is no devotion at all. What He wants is that our love for God should goad us, should prompt us, and should nudge us to action. One of the queries that one of our Sai Youth has expressed is: "Why should we spiritually transform ourselves?" Is it because Swami wants us to transform? Or is it because we must transform? Or is it because the world needs our transformation? Or is it

because the world is going to be damned if we do not transform? Why should we transform? That is a very good pregnant thought.

I wonder if you have ever seen a caterpillar, walking on its little legs on a leaf. As a caterpillar evolves, it grows into a beautiful butterfly, which hops from flower to flower, colourful, giving joy to everyone around. Have we ever asked ourselves, "Why should a caterpillar give up its existence as a caterpillar and become a butterfly?" Because its destiny is to be a butterfly! It is manifesting its own inherent nature when it transforms into a butterfly.

When we say that for whose sake I should transform, then I would like to ask, if you are sleeping, for whose sake should you wake up? For your own sake! When the Lord is walking on earth, if we are sleeping, time will be lost and then if you wake up, what a misfortune?

We are living in an age, which is called the information age, but the need of the hour is transformation. Bhagavan distinguishes between the two by saying, when you keep asking others, "Who are you, who are you?", when you are concerned with the world, you are in the stage of information. When you ask yourself the question, "Who am I? Who am I? You have taken the first step in transformation."

The Most Ideal Form of Love

One very beautiful aspect that I have experienced and perhaps many of you have also felt the same is this. When we come to Bhagavan, He accepts us as we are, with all the angularity of personality, with all the vagaries of our minds, with all our shortcomings, He accepts us completely as we are. We have lots of problems in accepting Him. We have so many conditions...1, 2, 3, 4. "Swami, if you fulfil this, then I will accept you." But Swami is unconditional in His Love. But then He gives us what we ask, so that we begin to ask Him for what He has come to give. That is to awaken us to our own reality.

"Who Are We?"

Decades ago, one day, here in Prashanti Mandir, as Bhagavan was passing by amidst the students, we observed that there was a little reddishness in Swami's eyes. We were a little concerned and thought that it would go away, and every *darshan* that Swami would walk by, we would peer into His eyes to see, has that so called 'ailment', disappeared? But days passed and nothing happened. In fact, there was an elderly Doctor in the *Mandir*, He also expressed his concern to Swami.

One evening, a few students were sitting in the *darshan* line, Swami called 3 - 4 of us, we went forward and He called us into the interview room. And He asked the question. "Who are you?" We were dumbfounded by that question. "Who are we?" What is the answer that Swami expects? And then He said, "You and I are one."

The Vedas declared, “*Shrunvantho vishwe, Amruthasya Puthraha*” that is “Listen my dear child, you are not a mortal being. You are the child of immortality!” If this is too high for us to understand, the same thing can be put in much easier terms. We are the children of Sai. If Sai represents the immortal spirit, we as His children, also embody that immortal being.

Swami explained, “See, for the last so many days, you have been worrying about my eye. It has come in the natural course of events. And it will go away, in the same way. For the last 60 years of my life, I have never even once used My Divine Powers for Myself. It has always been for the benefit of the students, for devotees. But because you are feeling so much, I give you a solution. **As You and I are one, there is no difference between Me and you. This is not My body, this is yours! You pray to Me that I cure the ailment that has come upon this physical frame and I assure you that it will be cured.**” It was a great revelation as students to understand that we are truly inheritors of Swami’s spiritual heritage. That is the heritage of every Sai Youth!

What do the letters of the word “SAI” stand for? Swami talks of S.A.I. “S” stands for Spiritual transformation; “A” stands for Association transformation; “I” stands for Individual transformation. And Swami expects each one of us to rise to His expectations.

What Does Bhagavan Expect from Us?

I recall another incident which happened when we were undergraduate students. Swami was explaining the difference between His expectations and the expectations of the parents. He said, “Your parents expect that you study well, get good marks after your education is over, get a good job, a good wife, have good children and accumulate a lot of property. That is the expectation of your parents. My expectation is very different.”

What does Swami expect from us? He said, “Cultivate good thoughts; get a good name”, that is my expectation from you! “The end of education is character”, Bhagavan has often reminded us. If a Sai Youth does not have character, he loses his right to use the name of Sai, associated with himself. Swami Himself is the embodiment of perfection.

How to Build Our Character?

How do we build our character, which is so dear to Swami? He says, “Sow a thought, reap an action. Sow an action, reap a tendency. Sow a tendency, reap a habit. Sow a habit, reap a character. Sow your character and reap your destiny.”

When we are young, we are afflicted with so many thoughts. One day, we were in Trayee Brindavan, Bhagavan’s residence in Bangalore. Bhagavan was with the students, and the Trayee session, the interaction that students have with Bhagavan, was over. He got up from His *Jhoola* (swing). A student was sitting somewhere in the front, knelt and got up to ask Swami something.

Swami also went near him, "What is the matter?" And the boy said, "Swami, I have got so many bad thoughts."

Swami, I tell you, is the greatest psychologist, the greatest psychiatrist. He said, "*Bangaru*, my dear one, this is the season! If in rainy season, you don't get rain, when are you going to get the rains?" This is the season!

And then He said, "Do you think that you are the one and sole individual who is afflicted with these thoughts" and he pointed to the entire student community and said, "All are in the same boat, it is only a question of degree. Only you are uttering it with your lips and others are keeping mum."

Swami has said on other occasions, "When you get that wrong thought, you know it is wrong! You know it is not good for you. What should you do? The bare minimum that we should do is to see that it doesn't translate into action."

Sow a thought, reap an action. Don't allow the body to follow the thought. At the same time, when you get a good thought, there are 101 reasons where we hesitate to translate into action. Maybe the time is not good, or other people may not come forward; so many reasons we have. When you get a good thought, immediately put it into action.

The Divine Master Knows It When You Practice Love

One of the queries (of the Youth) was, "What is the essence of Swami's message?" Of course, He Himself has chosen to speak on that. The essence of Swami's message is Love. And the easiest way to experience Love, to experience spiritual joy is service. We may not be able to do many things in life. In this age, something that you can certainly do is to serve anybody around you in need. I will perhaps end with this small anecdote. There used to be a devotee in the ashram at *Brindavan*, in Bangalore, who had a mental problem. And Bhagavan blessed the students, with the privilege and the opportunity to take care of this devotee. It was, in fact, one of the most sought after service activities in the campus.

There were a few students who would do this service, in rotation and it so happened that during the summer, there was this student when everybody had gone to their respective home towns. Swami too was not in *Brindavan*. Very few teachers were around and there was this student who was looking after this devotee and his welfare. Even the washerman of the ashram had disappeared. The student waited, one week, two weeks; three weeks passed. They were twenty-one pairs of clothes collected over 20 days to be washed. This boy waited, the washerman was not around. He gave up and himself washed all the twenty pairs of that devotee unknown to anybody in the Hostel or in the Ashram.

A few weeks later, Swami returned to *Brindavan*, and suddenly He asked the Warden one day, "Send the boys who take care of that devotee" and when the boys were with Swami, out of the blue, Swami pointed out to that boy and said, "I know that the washerman was away and you personally washed twenty clothes belonging to him" and then He blessed him and filled his hands with gifts.

What I am trying to underline is every good little act you do, in the silence of the night, even if nobody around knows it, God knows and is willing to bless you and recognize you for your effort.

The True Sathya Sai Student

There is also a Question and Answer session following, I will not take more time, but it is a great privilege to be a Sai Youth and to be a Sai Youth is actually an aspiration. The other day I was interacting with some of our students and I asked them the question, "What is the difference between being a Sathya Sai University Student and a Sathya Sai Student?"

This is what a student replied and I like to share it with you: **"To be a Sathya Sai University Student is to be a student of Sai for just a few years, during the tenure of your education. To be a Sathya Sai Student is to be a Sai Student for Life!"**

Brothers and sisters, let me assure you, if you can make this aspiration your heart's keenest desire, the Advent of the Lord amidst us will not have been in vain.

Jai Sai Ram.

SERIAL ARTICLES

SHIRDI SAI PARTHI SAI

Part - 33

(Continued from the previous issue)

ACT IX - SCENE 4

Sathya decides to walk all the way to the Pushpagiri Fair. The distance is about fifteen kilometres but He has no other choice; no money. He trudges all through the night and reaches the destination in the early hours of the morning. He catches some sleep, has a bath in the river there, and then heads for the Carnival site. On the way, while crossing a sandy patch, He finds a packet of beedies [native cigarettes] and a one anna coin. At that time, a man comes that way.

SATHYA: [to man] Sir, are these *beedies* and this one Anna coin yours?

MAN: Not mine, boy.

Sathya buries the beedies in the sand, and keeps the coin. He continues to walk and arrives at the Carnival site. There He finds a petty gambler running a betting game.

GAMBLER: Bet, man, bet! Sisters and brothers, come and place your bets! Offer salutations to Goddess Lakshmi and try your luck! Bet, bet,

A MAN: What are the odds?

GAMBLER: An Anna for an Anna, a paisa for a paisa; it is fifty-fifty! Bet, come on, bet.

MAN: Okay, I wager a *beda* or two *annas*.

Gambler throws the dice and then looks.

GAMBLER: [to the man who placed the bet] You win! Collect your gift item.

GAMBLER: Bet, come on, bet, bet, bet, don't hesitate, bet! No magic, no witch-craft, no cheating, no betrayal! What's your bet?

ANOTHER MAN: Two *annas* on battery light.

Again the dice is thrown.

GAMBLER: You are riding high! Great! Take your battery light! No magic, no witch-craft, no cheating, no betrayal. [to a spectator] Brother, are you from Srikakulam or Simhachalam?

MAN: Velakulam.

GAMBLER: My town. When I was young, I used to live there with an aunt of mine.

MAN: Okay, I wager a *beda* or two *annas*.

GAMBLER: Be careful; think and then place your bet. No bargaining! Oh great! This time I won; Goddess Lakshmi has favoured me! Ha, ha, ha! Bet, come on, bet! Bet and see your fortune. Paisa for paisa, one for one. [to Sathya] What brother, will you play or just watch?

SATHYA: I'll see.

GAMBLER: No use just seeing. Goddess Lakshmi radiates from Your face! Go ahead and bet!

SATHYA: Okay, I'll bet.

GAMBLER: You will bet? How much?

SATHYA: I'll bet one Anna.

GAMBLER: That's it, that's guts. Bet on any number. On what number do You place the bet?

SATHYA: I'll bet on two.

Gambler throws the dice.

GAMBLER: Two, two, two, two! This is called luck! Number two has turned up! An *Anna* with an *Anna*. I give you double, that is, two *Annas*. Will you continue playing or quit?

SATHYA: I'll play.

GAMBLER: Look, I'm removing all this stuff. It's only cash now.

SATHYA: I'll bet two *Annas*.

GAMBLER: You are doubling the ante? Well done. Keep it up and Goddess Lakshmi will lead You on to a fortune! Double, double, doubleGood!

Gambler throws the dice; Sathya wins again.

SATHYA: It's good for Me but bad for you.

GAMBLER: Okay, double and double. I will give You four *Annas*. How much will You bet now?

SATHYA: I'll bet one *Anna*.

GAMBLER: What do You mean one *Anna*, brother?Goddess Lakshmi will fall down laughing!..... Bet four *Annas* and win eight *Annas*.

SATHYA: All right, I'll bet four *Annas*.

GAMBLER: Aha! Keep betting like this, and Goddess Lakshmi will favour You with a big fortune. Bet, bet, and bet!

SATHYA: Here are four *Annas*.

GAMBLER: Ah.....Aha! four *Annas*; four, four, four,..... [*throws the dice but the result is not in his favour*] What's happening today? He's on a winning streak! I am finished. I thought He was but a kid but He is shaving me bare! Okay, let go. Here are four plus four, Your eight *Annas*. How much will You bet now?

SATHYA: I'll bet two *Annas*.

GAMBLER: Hey! Again two *Annas*? What do You mean by this brother? When Goddess Lakshmi is favouring You so much, You should bet eight *Annas* for eight. Bet, bet, come on, bet.

SATHYA: I will bet only for four *Annas*.

GAMBLER: Again You are saying four *Annas*?

PARTNER: Hey you, shut up and do as He says.

GAMBLER: Okay, bet something.

SATHYA: Four *Annas*.

GAMBLER: Four *Annas* it is....[*the dice is thrown but the gambler again has poor luck*]. This time also, Goddess Lakshmi has favoured You! Amazing luck! [*aside*] Looks as if He is going to shave me clean today!!

PARTNER: Let's shut shop here and move elsewhere.

PARTNER 2: When I see your ugly face, I don't think we will win. Come on, let me change places with you.

GAMBLER: You shut up! What's wrong with my face? It is the most handsome face in town! Actually, it is by looking at your ugly faces this morning that my luck has been ruined! Get out. *[to Sathya]* Brother, a deal, four *Annas* for four *Annas*. Grab, grab. Goddess Lakshmi has entered Your palm! I tell You what. Brother, this will be our last game. You have twelve *Annas* with You, right? Bet twelve *Annas* and win twenty four!

SATHYA: Twelve *Annas* are enough for Me. I will not play any more.

GAMBLER: Hey, what do You mean? I tell You, bet twelve and win twenty four! Continue playing and winning, playing and winning, You can walk away as a millionaire!

SATHYA: Twelve *Annas* are enough for Me.

GAMBLER: What my dear smart fellow?! You came with just one Anna and now intend to walk away with twelve *Annas*? You think only You are clever? You are just a kid, and You obviously do not know much about me! What do You think You are doing? I say, bet twelve *Annas*.

SATHYA: No.

GAMBLER: I say bet!

SATHYA: I will not.

PARTNER: Keep quiet, will you? Keep quiet.

GAMBLER: Okay, okay. You play so well my boy, and it's just that I feel like playing more and more with You, that's all! Just for fun, You know! You play so well!

SATHYA: What is your game before Mine?

GAMBLER: True, true.

SATHYA: There must be a limit for desires. One must never have too many desires. Desire is the main reason for sorrow.

GAMBLER: He looks small but how sweet are His words! You know, there is sense in what He says. Brothers, from today, let's close down this gambling and do something else from tomorrow. Aha!

SCENE 5

Sathya finally arrives at the Scout Camp in the Pushpagiri Fair.

MASTER: Oh, all of you are here! Attention! Stand at ease! My dear Cadets! Carnival is supposed to mean fun and frolic. But you should not think so. We

are here to do social service, and it is service that will be fun and frolic for us. Cadets, now split into three groups. You, go near the Temple and the sacred tank. You will handle water distribution. You will serve the road *coolies*. I have already told you what to do and how to do.

SATHYA: Master, I have come.

MASTER: Hey, Raju has come!

BOY: Raju has kept His word and come!

BOY: Raju will never break His word!

MASTER: Raju, You too go along with them and perform service.

SATHYA: Sir, I do not have a uniform. Is it okay sir?

MASTER: Doesn't matter if You don't have a uniform. It is the determination to serve that is more important. All of you! Commence service activities in your respective locations, as per instructions I gave earlier. Go! Raju will be your leader. Go.

BOYS/CHORUS: Will do, sir!

Sathya leads the Scout Troop in rendering various types of service – crowd control, helping the aged, rescuing lost children, serving water, etc. Days pass quickly. One day,

MASTER: Cadets, it is six days since the Carnival started. You must serve the remaining four days with the same discipline as before. Remember! All of you must win for our School the National Scout Appreciation Certificate.

BOYS/CHORUS: Yes sir!

GITA FOR CHILDREN -
Part 35
(Continued from the previous issue)

CHAPTER 16

1. Krishna continues His Divine instruction and tells Arjuna, 'People come in various shades and at the two extremes are the people who are literally Divine and those who are absolutely demonic. I shall now describe briefly their characteristics.'

2. 'Attitudes vary because of the different ways in which the body, the senses and the mind function in relation to the heart. Incidentally, there are three spaces or worlds related to the body, the mind and the heart. They also are important in this discussion and you must know something about them.'

3. 'Let Me start with the body. It is gross in nature and exists in the physical world. In spirituality, this world is referred to as *Bhutakasa* or the Space of the Gross. Likewise, the mind has its own space called *Chittakasa*. Just as the individual body can wander in the *Bhutakasa*, the mind similarly wanders in the *Chittakasa*.'

4. 'Beyond the *Chittakasa* lies the *Chidakasa*, the Causal Space from which everything is born. This is the space associated with the heart. You see Arjuna, everything starts with a feeling. Let us say there is an artist. First he feels like painting. This feeling originates in the heart - the heart is the realm of feelings. Next he develops ideas about what to paint. Action is now in the realm of thought, which takes place in the space of the mind. Finally the artist actually paints, an action that takes place in the *Bhutakasa*. This example must make clear how the three entities and the three associated spaces are all involved in the transformation of feeling into action.'

5. 'Let Me now move on to the topic of how the heart, the mind and the senses influence the personality of an individual.'

6. 'With regard to these three entities, God's hierarchy is: Heart first, Mind next and senses/body last. That is, the heart must dictate the mind and the mind must control the senses as well as the actions of the body, in accordance with the wishes and feelings of the heart. This is the way God wants things done, and this is the right and proper way of doing things.'

7. 'If this order of priorities is followed, then you can be certain that the person concerned would be a good man. You can't miss such a person because he would have a Divine glow about him. This effulgence is no accident; it springs directly from his sacred and noble qualities. He would exhibit moral courage under the most difficult of circumstances. Divine attributes like *Sathya* and *Dharma* would shine forth from him.'

8. 'Always radiating Love, he would be the embodiment of *Daya* or Compassion, *Kshama* or Forbearance, and *Ahimsa* or non-violence. I am sure you know exactly what I am talking about.'

9. 'Let Me now consider the alternate scenario where the body and the senses call the shots. Here, the mind is a slave to the body and the senses, and as a result it totally ignores the dictates of the heart. In this case, the heart is just a silent spectator. This precisely is what happens in a demonic person. The person may be human in appearance but in reality he is nothing short of the devil.'

10. 'In such a person, the senses run wild, and the mind becomes a co-conspirator. The heart, as I just said, remains a silent witness.'

11. 'This demonic person would be as bad as a person can be and would possess every conceivable evil trait. He is proud, arrogant, has a mountainous ego, bows to no one, and imagines he would be ever powerful.'

12. 'He cannot simply understand virtues like compassion, etc., and values like Truth and Righteousness are complete strangers to him.'

13. 'Harsh, vulgar, rude and easily prone to violent temper, he does not bat an eyelid in hurting others. He hurts in various ways; he hurts the minds of others with his cruel words and psychological pressure, and he hurts bodies with physical violence.'

14. 'About his insatiable desires, what can I say except that even the sky is not the limit for them! Is it any wonder that such a person is utterly selfish and knows nothing other than self-interest?'

15. 'Arjuna, it is pretty revolting even to talk of such a person! Not only is he stuffed to the brim with every wicked and foul quality one can think of, but, what is even worse, he denies My very existence.'

16. 'Imagine that! He exists because of Me. I am the one who pumps his heart, it is I who digests his food, it is I who takes care of his blood circulation and so on; and yet, he denies Me! But what else can one expect from egoistic fools?'

17. 'While alive, these maniacs imagine they are on top of the world and are having a great time. But they do not know how fleeting all this experience is.'

18. 'Arjuna, these demons in human form get flung again and again into inferior births through the Law of *Karma*. A million times they have to go the misery of life and death. People complain of just one birth. In that case, should one make advance bookings for millions of births?'

19. 'Three-fold is the gateway to hell – lust, anger and greed. All these must be severely shunned.'

20. 'Arjuna, I hope you have clearly understood what exactly ought to be the internal priorities. Everything must flow from a pure heart. The feelings of the pure heart must be converted into a sacred plan of action by a pure mind. And the holy commands of the mind must be translated into loving and selfless action by a pure body acting in conjunction with unpolluted senses. Follow this formula, and you will come to Me for sure!'

END OF CHAPTER 16

(To be continued)

WINDOW TO SAI SEVA

SALTY WATERS TURN SACRED AND SWEET

The Story of Giripuram, A.P., India

“Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organization should strive towards resolving long standing problems in villages. They should provide minimum necessities like education, medical services, and supply of basic amenities like water. The service activities conducted by the organization should aim towards eradicating problems from the root to provide permanent solutions to the village hence contributing to the progress of the nation”

– Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba.

With the focus on grass-roots level empowerment, for nearly five decades now, the Sri Sathya Sai Service Organization has been doggedly providing sustainable and long-term solutions to the problems of the millions that languish in remote and rural areas of India, neglected by the local administration.

Today, the service organization started by the Avatar has built itself a sterling reputation for the highest efficiency, dedication, honesty and integrity. From government agencies to corporate India, decision makers are unable to ignore the saga of endless love that Bhagawan Baba's life has come to personify, in uplifting the plight of rural population in the remotest of locations. Social outreach, driven by love for God has become the hallmark of the Sri Sathya Sai Service Organization in India and all around the world.

The story of Giripuram village in coastal Andhra Pradesh in South India is yet another chapter in Bhagawan Baba's book of selfless love that flows from the sea of infinite compassion that is His cosmic heart. This exciting tale deserves to be told and celebrated, for it is a story of how a group of committed and socially responsible citizens took to heart Baba's advice to provide sustainable social relief at the grass-roots level to uplift a downtrodden fishing community of unlettered men and women who had never received the benefit of any of the fundamental rights guaranteed to every citizen in the Indian constitution. Their work proved the timeless appeal of the American Anthropologist Margaret Mead's sentiment "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has."

Fired by the personal example of their role model Sri Sathya Sai Baba, a group of volunteers took it upon themselves to rescue a neglected community by infusing hope and a sense of dignity in their lives and by initiating and providing a sustainable model of development aimed at improving the quality of their lives.

No Water, No School, No Zeal To Live

It was not too long ago that the residents of Giripuram lived a miserable existence and suffered silently. They had become used to their plight and were resigned to their fate. They lacked basic amenities including access to clean drinking water for more than a decade. Their lives were so miserable that they could not cook their rice because the water was too salty; they could not grow their crops because the beach-like sands covered their farmlands; they could not wash their clothes because the brackish waters could not produce enough lather. Lack of continuous electrical power supply meant that the groundwater bore wells could not function adequately either.

Free Flowing Liquor In Parched Land

Ironically, even as they lacked proper drinking water for decades, there was a free flowing supply of country-made liquor in the impoverished community! Adding to the social evils this heinous profit-driven venture led to, the school children too suffered in their thatched-roof school which barely provided shelter. This school had the dubious distinction of having frequent holidays. The students did not need to leave their seats to stare at the sky. The roof or its non-existence exposed them to the elements, even while indoors.

Meanwhile, along with the health hazards of alcohol, the absence of potable drinking water also took its toll on their health. Leave alone the lack of access to a proper health facility, these socially neglected villagers did not even have a proper pharmacy to buy medication for their health needs. Though they were only a few kilometers from the neighboring town of Machilipatnam, the only time this fishing community felt cared-for was just before the elections, when various political parties came to woo them for their votes. During this time, every few years, exciting promises were made but none kept. As always, the residents of the Giripuram village were denied fundamental necessities, including the elixir of life: water, the essential life-line for their survival.

Forgotten Village Makes Headline News

Such a neglected community, instead of being angry at the system, or soaking in self-pity, was recently catapulted into the limelight for destroying all its toddy or country-made liquor shops. Today, the mothers of Giripuram are smiling, children are going to school, and men are healthier and more disciplined. Even the former toddy shop-owners are part of this sweeping change. The liquor retailers of yesterday no longer contribute to the social delinquency – instead they sell healthy provisions in their transformed Kirana or provision stores.

What caused this incredible social, emotional and mental transformation of an entire community in Giripuram? What made these neglected fishermen turn glee? Why are they now a model for others to emulate?

It all started a few years ago...

The Ocean Makes And Breaks Lives

Giripuram is a small village that resides on the banks of Bay of Bengal. The residents of this village combat with the tides of the sea waters to make their living as fishermen. The day begins with the men of the village setting out to fish.

God fulfills the desires of every individual but tests the same for courage, fortitude, endurance, and internal development. Bhagawan Baba says, "Pleasure is an interval between two pains".

Two and a half years ago, on December 24, 2004, the tsunami struck Giripuram, along with much of South Asia, leaving the village completely devastated. Many lives and entire families were wiped out. The very tide that had sustained them for so many years, turned against them, engulfing their destinies in its fury. The same ocean that had nurtured, nourished and nursed them for decades, swept them away in seconds at the fateful moment. Pleasure and pain came to them from the same source.

Sai Youth Rise to the Challenge

After the ghastly Tsunami calamity, the survivors were plunged in grief. The stream of tears in their eyes said it all, as they desperately longed for compassion and comfort. At such a needy hour, the Sai Youth of Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organization, Krishna District, Andhra Pradesh proactively came forward – not only to distribute amenities like cooking vessels, clothes, blankets, drinking water and food but also to take up and resolve other significant and long standing problems of the villagers.

At first it was the condition of the Giripuram school children that pained the Sai Youth members. It was then that the Sai Youth decided to initiate service activities in this village community while connecting it to an ongoing (AP, India) state-wide school uplift project called "Sri Sathya Sai Gurukula Seva Yagnam" a campaign aimed at creating decent primary learning facilities for the downtrodden everywhere; a project that hopes to leave no child behind.

Leave No Child Behind

In keeping with the objectives of the noble Gurukula project in mind, and with the divine name on their lips, on 25th October, 2004, the Sai Youth of Krishna District of Andhra Pradesh laid a foundation for a permanent school building in Giripuram. The experiences derived out of this program are simply unforgettable and precious.

Right from the inception to the inauguration of the school building, the participation of the villagers directly or indirectly towards construction was commendable. Even the school children rose to the occasion and expressed

their love for this noteworthy cause. They carried bricks of love on their tiny heads and participated in small chores. The hands that could barely clutch the ends of a slate, moved by the notion and emotion of building their own dream school, now joined with the Sai Youth thus demonstrating to us that it is indeed conviction, not age or maturity that is required to take on a noble task.

The entire village was involved hands-on in the project and participated with pride and joy. The Sai Youth and the village children together brought to life the school of their dreams in just three weeks, proving the power of team spirit, purity of intentions and divine grace, the sure-shot formula for unprecedented success!

At the district level, *sevadal* members from various zones also participated in the construction of the school building. The inauguration of the school building was held on 15th November 2004. Completing the entire project, right from the foundation laying to inauguration, within 21 days was possible only because of Swami's *sankalpa* or divine resolve and this is indeed a lasting boon to the village.

All-Round Development To Uplift The Impoverished Community

In addition to the amazing school project with attendant Bal Vikas and Education in Human Values classes the other service projects taken-up by the Sathya Sai Seva Organizations in and around Giripuram include:

- Providing medical facilities for villagers.
- Inculcating health awareness among villagers.
- Conducting various activities to create enthusiasm and networking amongst villagers through such activities as:
 - Sports competitions
 - Cultural group activities like *Sitarama Kalyanam*
 - Employment training and opportunities workshops for youth
 - Free education for the poor
 - Community halls (Anganwadi Bhawan).
 - Medical facilities for patients suffering from chronic diseases.

Combating the Saline Water Problem

While conducting the above activities, the organization members noticed that for many years, the surrounding 12 villages suffered from water scarcity as well. There have been instances when ground waters evaporated completely thus causing villagers to flee from their homes. Such a condition was examined earlier and a water plant that converts salt water into plain water had been set-up in 1988, to solve the problem. However, due to maintenance problems the plant was shut-down within a short period of time. The problem of brackish waters continued to plague Giripuram and its entire surrounding region.

Sai Organization Inspires Corporate and Government Sectors

Having researched the pathetic condition of these villagers, the Sri Sathya Sai Grama Seva Trust of Andhra Pradesh decided to renovate the water plant. The Indian Oil Corporation, as part of their corporate social responsibility, also chose to lend a helping hand. The significant renovation cost to bring the abandoned desalination plant to functionality, which stood as a barrier in the past, was now overcome.

I live a mile away from the water plant. Everyday I carry the water back to my village on my shoulders. Lots of people in my village are anxious to get this water. I have not seen Sai Baba so far but I offer my respects to Him.

- Botla Satyanarayana, Botlavanipalem

Inspired by the lead taken by Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organizations, the local leaders of the village community did their part and managed to get a Government Order (G.O.) to sustain the future monthly maintenance of the plant. With Sri Sathya Sai Grama Seva Trust taking up the herculean task of bringing the plant to order, and with government now promising to take up the monthly maintenance cost, the idea of bringing in sweet drinking water to the neglected masses became a reality.

Government Endorses Sai Organization with Its Vote Of Confidence

The confidence in the work being done by the Sri Sathya Sai Organizations was such that the government even went to the extent of clearly putting an exclusive clause in the G.O. stating that, "Only if Sri Sathya Sai Grama Seva Trust renovates..." It is said that good work is contagious; this being God's work, it must be doubly so! As Bhagavan Baba always says, "My Blessings are always there for a good cause." To keep up the momentum, the Government as well as R.W.S (Rural Water Supply) officials completed their works pertaining to the plant much beyond the expectations. The entire work of this plant was successfully completed within a month of the *Bhoomi Puja* or the ground-breaking ceremony which was held on 14th April 2007.

On 17th June 2007, Mr. Vemuri Krishna Murthy, District President of Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organization, Krishna District, lit the lamp to inaugurate the program of "Rakshita Manchi Neeti Padaka" (Protected Drinking Water Project). The Member of Parliament of Malleshwaram, Honourable Booragadda Veda Vyas presided over the function. The inaugural function was also attended by the Water Supply Minister, Mr. Pinnammaneni Venkateshwar Rao who was the special guest. The President of Sri Sathya Sai Grama Seva Trust, Andhra Pradesh, Mr Y. Srinivas, the president of Tallapallem village Gram Panchayat, other ward members, officials, and villagers were amongst those that took part in the inaugural function.

Sri Pinnammaneni Venkateshwar Rao said, "I bow to Baba garu, who not only started just this project but also many such water projects throughout the

state.” His speech delighted the audience as he reiterated the government order (or GO) and stated that although Sri Sathya Sai Grama Seva Trust implemented the plant renovation, the monthly maintenance cost for it henceforth will be taken care by the government.

During his speech, Mr. Booragadda Veda Vyas, said, “It is indeed a matter of pride that the Sri Sathya Sai Grama Seva Trust has taken the initiative of renovating the water plant thereby following the footsteps of Baba who says service to humanity is service to God. Today is a day of celebration.”

The function indeed was a celebration of Sai’s will to transform both the served and those who serve. The development in local infrastructure that 60 years of independence could not bring to the village, the youthful force driven by their love for Sai accomplished literally in weeks! The school building took precisely 3 weeks to come up from the ground up and the desalination plant took 4 weeks to turn salt water into the sweet and sacred elixir that is effectively quenching the thirst of the local population.

At the celebration, it was hard to miss the excitement in the air. The sweet melody of the *Mangala Vaidyala*, a symphony from traditional instruments, filled everyone with a sense of triumph and relief. The overflowing crowd in the tent and the rapt attention of the villagers were sure signs that the community was thrilled with this new project successfully spearheaded and accomplished by the Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organization. It was surely out of happiness that on the spur of the moment a young lad of Giripuram stood up and impromptu composed and rendered a heartwarming song. All were spellbound by the spontaneity, genuine gratitude and appreciation. The villagers felt proud of their involvement in the project.

**It has been several years since our village had safe drinking water. Our wells are all full of salty water. It is only due to Sai Baba that we are now able to drink pure water. I have never tasted such sweet water. It is all Sai Baba’s blessings.
- Swarajyam, Harijanwada**

The long wait of the villagers had finally come to a happy ending: The pure drinking water of the desalination plant was released. Hundreds of villagers stood in line with their earthen pots to carry home their first fill of clean and sacred drinking water. Their first sip down their parched throats... a drop on their tongue, a tear in everyone’s eye, the auspicious *mangalavaidyala* music playing in the background, holy bhajans being sung... one had to be there to truly experience the joy of the moment, a joy that had its source in the selfless love that is Sri Sathya Sai!

Our years of suffering for the lack of water is only know to the Almighty. Not able to endure the thirst we even drank hot water. Children even got Jaundice for drinking such water. Because of Sai Natha's blessings we are today able to drink pure & sweet water.
- Jhansi, Satravapalem

The members of the Indian Oil Corporation, corporate partners of the project, declared that they were happy for having had the privilege of participating in such service activities that prove beneficial to people. In this regard, the service activities conducted by Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organization are indeed ideal and exemplary, they pointed out. Thus, the project had left a mark not only in the corporate world, on government records, but also most importantly in the hearts of the villagers.

Sai Love Brings Water and School to Community

Giripuram now not only has a concrete school building in place of its pathetic predecessor, but also a proper working drinking water facility. The newly renovated drinking water plant is not only serving Giripuram, but also a bigger neighbourhood of 6 villages, which consists of 10,000 people. The plant has now the capacity to produce 100,000 liters of highest quality drinking water per day and can serve 25,000 villagers shortly. When tested by experts, the drinking water was so pure that even the best of the store bought mineral waters paled in comparison.

It is only Swami's grace that could bring the best of care and facilities to the most deprived of communities. For the villagers the long await was over. Decades of agony over salty water, lack of health care, lack of proper school was now overcome by the sacred love that Swami channeled through His instruments. Their longstanding problems were now resolved by the Sathya Sai Organizations in a loving, sustainable way. More importantly, it involved every member of the local community, inspiring and empowering them along the way.

Today, one cannot express the joy that fills the hearts of the residents of Giripura village. Inspired by the teachings of Bhagawan Sri Sathya Sai Baba and the various activities conducted by the Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organization, Krishna District, the villagers expressed their love and manifested their transformation by totally eradicating toddy, the local liquor from their lives and their village.

It is said that actions speak louder than words. During this project the Sai Youth learned that results are better than actions; better than results are sustained results; even better than sustained results are sustained solutions to long-standing problems. The participants received lessons for life from the experience.

As the comments from the villagers suggest, they are indeed grateful and happy. It is not just them that walk away with these feelings. We the youth of

Bhagavan Baba too are immensely thankful to Him for having received the gift of this opportunity to serve Him in this way. We pray to Swami for strength to carry out many more such activities in His Divine mission. Even though what we accomplished with His grace and guidance is something quite small in face of the magnitude of needs for such intervention in our nation, we cannot discount the experience as insignificant. Mother Teresa so rightly said, **“We ourselves feel that what we are doing is just a drop in the ocean. But the ocean would be less because of that missing drop.”**

For the last 50 years I used to drink the well water. Today I have tasted the sweet water from the plant. Wow, I have never tasted anything like. May god bless you for the good work you have done.

- Subba Rao, Satravupalem

Nothing in the world is more gratifying than to make a difference by reaching out to others, only to realize that the person who seems to be the other is none else than ourselves! That realization is the ultimate high of our journey with Sai! And it's simply...indescribable and priceless!
Jai Sai Ram!

- Sai Youth of AP and the H2H Team

PRASHANTI DIARY

1 August, 2007: Music Programme by USA Youth and former students

To begin the wonderful blessings for this month, Swami had agreed for a programme by youth from USA. Many of the participants of this music programme were former students of the University. The car was absent when Swami came out for darshan and the greater proximity was reason for great cheer and excitement among all. He spoke to a few ladies and collected letters from many of them. As He passed through the boys in the middle, He took letters from almost everyone who were pining for this act of grace from their Lord. Then He went around the gents side and as He neared the birthday boys, He blessed them also. Finally, having brought so much joy with this unexpected gesture, Swami went to the dais enjoying the Vedic chants for sometime and then, He asked for the programme to begin.

Three members went on stage and handed over a card with beautiful roses to Swami. After seeking His blessings, the first song began. What followed next were songs in different languages - Hindi, Telugu and English. There was a plethora of instruments: tabla, harmonium, drums, *mridangam*, electric guitar etc. and the songs were well distributed between the gents and ladies. In the middle, there was a dance performance too. Two young adults went up to Swami and requested whether they could perform a dance and Swami graciously agreed. They did the traditional *Bharatanatyam* bow to Swami and then began the dance. The dance was set to the rhythm of the famous song "*Bho Shambho*" and tuned to *Raag Revati*. The song possesses the magical capacity to arouse in the listener a great sense of detachment towards the world and an intense reverence for God. The two performers danced gracefully yet powerfully and Swami kept watching them with a mystical smile and great interest.

There is something so unfathomable about the way we feel and relate to Swami. When we call out to Him as the mischievous babe of Brindavan, He appears so tender, innocent, and so full of sweetness. As we sing out the glories of Lord Shiva and get immersed in them, He resembles the blue necked Lord and we gape in awe at His magnificent presence. On singing about Rama, and there He sits as the perfect one, full of dignity and equipoise. On this occasion as the song on Lord Shiva progressed, there seemed to be an aura of grandeur about Him.

The dance concluded and Swami called the dancers to Him and they prostrated at His feet. His hand immediately twirled and there was a beautiful necklace in His hand. He lovingly put it around a dancer's neck as the second dancer looked on. One could not help empathising with the mixed feelings the second dancer might have gone through. Both had undertaken the same effort and undergone the same pains. Yet only one seemed to be amply rewarded. As they were slowly and gracefully making their way back, Swami lovingly called out to the second dancer. He waved His hand and materialized

a ring and there were two sudden bursts - a burst of applause from the audience and a burst of emotion from the artiste!

Then the songs continued, only now they seemed to have greater vibrancy and variety. Swami sat through all the songs, granting a smile, waving His hands and closing His eyes as if in contemplation. The programme ended and Swami told them to continue with bhajans. After the bhajans, Swami blessed *Prasadam* to be given to all present. He then received Aarthi and left.

4 August: Leipzig Philharmonic Chamber Orchestra

The programme scheduled this afternoon, was very unique in the sense that it was part of a foreign government aided tour. The performers were from the Leipzig Philharmonic Chamber Orchestra, Germany. The orchestra was on a musical tour of India and the final concert before their return to Germany was to be performed before Swami at Puttaparthi. By 2:30pm itself, the members of the orchestra started assembling in Kulwant hall and began taking their positions.

At about 3:30 pm Swami came out without the car. He looked at all the musicians as He passed by them in the centre of the hall. Then completing His darshan rounds, He came to the stage and sat for the programme. Dr. Michael Koelher, the director and conductor offered a rose and dedicated the programme to Swami. Then the orchestra began. The first piece was "The Hungarian Dance." It was a lively piece and literally lived up to its name. Pieces from Brahms and Mozart were played mellifluously. A special rendition in three parts of a composition of the Indian great L. Subramanyam was also played. On the whole, the programme brought out the beauty and harmony that could be achieved through unity and dedication to great musical works of art.

Heard individually, each instrument seems incomplete and disconnected. But heard along with all the other instruments, the unity seems to conjure up an enchanting and divine melody. The strength in Unity is something so phenomenal yet so subtle that it has to be experienced to be believed. Take the first few steps for Unity as Swami says and then we will never feel like dividing on any basis. The orchestra seemed to echo and resound this Truth and it was so joyful for the ears. The orchestra thrives only because everyone is united in focusing on the conductor. Their playing is governed by his hands and facial expressions and so there is harmony and symphony.

To add to the spiritual undercurrent of the programme, Mr. Paul Erhard, who trains the Institute Brass band, spoke in between each song explaining its beauty and significance and relating it to Swami. The whole performance lasted about an hour. All of us were enraptured and Swami was there smiling and blessing their magnificent effort. Swami had sarees and white safari pieces to distribute to them as a token of His Love and Grace. He even came down from the stage and personally handed over the clothes. Swami was beaming at each participant. Many of the musicians had come for the first

time to see Swami. It was so sweet to see them looking at the more 'experienced' members as to how to conduct themselves in Swami's presence. Hesitating bows and slightly confused handshakes slowly became devotion filled salutes and namaskars.

Swami then posed for a group picture with all the musicians. He insisted on standing up and it was a beautiful moment to capture the orchestra with The Orchestrator. Swami then walked back to the stage and when the group photo was given to Him, He gave it to His conductor who was overjoyed on receiving it. Swami then took Aarthi and left.

7th August – Musical Programme by North East region, USA

Today Swami came out at about 3:30pm and went around the darshan hall. Suddenly as Swami went into the interview room, there was some movement on both the ladies and gents side. After a little confusion, we came to know Swami had permitted the devotees from the North East region of USA to sing their offering of songs. Fifteen minutes later after a quick reorientation of seating, Swami came out and sat on the ladies' side of the portico and immediately asked for the programme to start. They began with a song on the oneness of Love, followed by "Love is My Form" which had a good following from the devotees. In the middle of the programme Swami called the co-ordinator and asked him as where his wife was and he pointed to her seated in the second line of the singing ladies.

The programme continued with ten more songs in English all conducted by a very enthusiastic lady orchestrator. She kept smiling at Bhagavan throughout and Swami would lovingly reciprocate. After 45 minutes, the programme was complete. Swami sent word for the student singers also to come and be seated outside. Then He went into the interview room. After 15 minutes, He came out with trays of sarees, watches and silver chains with medallions! He descended from the stage, down to where the USA devotees had assembled. Then He called all the ladies who were part of the music group and handed sarees to them personally. Many of them took *Padanamaskar*. Then He called all the youngsters and gave them all silver chains!! Some of them broke down and sobbed openly. Then He came over to the gents' side and gave watches to all the adult performers and the youngsters all received silver chains. After He had finished the distribution, someone from the gents side said, "Thank you Swami." Instinctively, Swami said, "Why thanks?"

Then they asked Bhagavan whether they could sing bhajans and after gaining Bhagavan's agreement we were treated to some melodious bhajans from the bliss-filled US singers. After a while, Swami called the students and told them to continue the bhajans and as this was going on, Swami called the lady conductor. He spoke with her for some time and materialised *Vibhuti*, personally packing it in some paper and giving it to her. After another bhajan, He asked for Aarthi and blessing everyone, He retired.

4 August: Leipzig Philharmonic Chamber Orchestra

The programme scheduled for August 4 was very unique in the sense that it was part of a foreign government aided tour. The performers were from the Leipzig Philharmonic Chamber Orchestra, Germany. The orchestra was on a musical tour of India and the final concert before their return to Germany was to be performed before Swami at Puttaparthi. By 2:30pm itself, the members of the orchestra started assembling in Kulwant hall and began taking their positions.

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was given to Him, He gave it to His conductor who was overjoyed on receiving it. Swami then took Aarthi and left.

9th August – Inauguration of ‘Screening and Research Block’ at SSSIHMS

On the morning of August 9, the second Thursday of the month, there was a buzz at the Super Specialty Hospital in Puttaparthi. It was agog with activity and everyone seemed to be engrossed in something or the other. Little wonder when Swami had Himself promised that He would be there to inaugurate the new Screening and Research block. At exactly 9 am, Swami arrived at the new block in the Porte car, accompanied by a motorcycle escort team comprising of the Hospital staff. As Swami arrived, staff and students in the traditional saffron dress chanted Vedas with the *PoornaKumbham*.

Swami got down from the car looking radiant. Dr. Safaya, the director, welcomed Him with a rose and took Him to the oil lamps at the entrance. Here, was a beautifully decorated altar with a marble statue of Lord Ganesha. Swami lit the two lamps and then slowly moved towards the main hall. As they were moving in, Swami kept asking Dr. Safaya about the new building. He pointed to the roof at a few places and asked about it. As soon as He entered the building, He was taken to the different rooms for screening. On these short rounds, Swami blessed so many members of the staff who were beaming with happiness at this beautiful opportunity. Bhajans were sung and Swami sat in the chair enjoying it.

However after the Ganesha bhajan, there was silence as Swami began to speak and interact with those around. Dr. Safaya and the others showed Swami a card with various details and Swami went through it in earnest. At this juncture, something humorous took place. Just before Swami's arrival it had been repeatedly announced that cell phones must be silenced. As Swami was speaking with Dr. Safaya, his phone began ringing loudly! The great man, a former director of the All India Institute of Medical Sciences who has been serving as the Director of Swami's Hospital from its inception, was extremely busy till the last second of Swami's arrival making arrangements. He was taken aback when the 'phone music' started and he quickly brought the culprit out of the pocket and handed it to a person chanting the Vedas. It was soon silenced. Everyone had smiles, but the best part is it looked as if Swami had not heard even the slightest sound!

Soon, Swami's attention was diverted to a young doctor who was up in the front. Swami called him and enquired about him. This professional had completed his MRCP from London and was eager to serve in Swami's Hospital at Puttaparthi for more than a year now. Unfortunately, the MRCP is not recognised by the Medical Council of India (MCI). And this had been the reason for the young man's wait. Swami spoke very reassuringly to him and along with Dr. Safaya, said that something would be done. The MCI doesn't

recognise many of the PG courses in India itself! When one wins the Lord's support, the whole universe seems to conspire to help him. A vice president of the MCI also happened to be there in the gathering. Swami called her and spoke to her as to what could be done. Swami, the vice president, the young doctor and Dr. Safaya were in a discussion for a while. It concluded with Swami materialising vibhuti for the young man and the MCI vice president.

Some doctors around Swami told him that the trainees from the hospital were doing very well. Swami said that it was not enough if they do well. It would be a matter of pride if and only if they serve the society. Dr. Voleti Choudhary told Swami, "Swami the poor have been benefited and helped immensely by the hospital." Swami said, "The poor must be served." He emphasized it again, "**The poor must be served.**" Then there were 4-5 students from other colleges who had been trained in the SSSIHMS at Parthi. They were presented before Swami. Swami accepted cloves and water from them. He was told that some of them had won gold medals in Urology. Swami was not so impressed with those facts. He asked, "Are you going to serve? You need not serve here; wherever you are, you must serve. Service is important." He blessed all these young future doctors and exhorted them again that they should serve the society.

Swami often says that His Life is His Message and we echo many times, "Swami, our lives are your message." Do we realize the import of what we say? What it means to make our lives His message? The passion with which Swami was speaking of service had to be seen to be believed. For Him, it does not seem to matter what the profession is. The message is so clear and simple. Anyone can serve and that is what they must do, especially to the poor. The bhajan rings out, "Deen dukhiyo se prem karo mera Sai prasanna hoga." Swami was stating just that.

"Forget making me happy. If you want to be happy, serve. Serve till the breath lasts in you. Serve so that every sinew in your body is tingling with My Love," He seemed to say. Let us take these first few steps of love and serve our Lord in everyone around. As He has promised, we would be able to see Him and speak to Him everywhere and everytime.

Then Swami called a lady Surgeon and asked her as to how things were going on in her department. He looked at her and with a sweet, loving smile asked, "Don't you go for daily jogging? No time?" There were smiles everywhere. One more observation is that whenever Swami cracks a joke, the way He does it is simply wonderful. It is so sweet and full of Love that no one is ever offended. He ensures that all laugh along with Him and nobody feels that someone is laughing at them. Ah! Indeed His Life is His Message. We must learn from the day to day behaviour of our Lord. Swami then enquired about all the work going on and she said, "Swami everything is fine because of you." Swami smiled and placed His hand on her head and blessed her.

The doctors prayed to Swami to speak and He gently refused. They asked Him again and the discourse table came in His view. He quickly said a sweet but firm 'no'. He had different plans and said that He would go around the hall

to grant everyone the joy of His darshan. There were almost gleeful shouts at this decision! Swami went around slowly, taking letters and even speaking to some of the people along the way. Then Swami decided to go to the adjacent hall where people had gathered for a *Narayan Seva*. Swami entered the hall and with a touch converted the food to *Prasadam*. He blessed all the people there as everyone prayerfully prostrated to Him. As Swami went to the car, the discipline that had lasted till now broke, as devotion poured forth. Swami sweetly kept smiling and blessed all as they tried to catch a glimpse or touch His feet. After a 45 minute stay, Swami left leaving behind hearts filled with love, joy and inspiration. He was again escorted by the motorcycle team back to Mandir. Reaching there, He granted photos to the escort team and filled their cup of joy too to the brim.

10th August - Drama by devotees of Karimnagar District

Thousands of devotees from the district of Karimnagar had arrived in Puttaparthi as part of their annual pilgrimage. They had filled the Kulwant hall and awaited Swami's arrival with great excitement. Swami came at about 3:30pm and slowly gave His sacred *Darshan*. He alighted from the car and sat in the portico enjoying the Veda chants for a while. Then He asked for the programme to begin. The lamp that Swami lit to mark the beginning of the evening programme was very special. It was a replica of the Sarva Dharma Stoopas, about a foot in height, made fully of silver. Swami lit this beautiful lamp and then many elderly devotees went up to Him and offered roses. Swami blessed all of them.

The programme was a Telugu skit named, "Chaduvu" (studies). The storyline was very simple. A headmaster is running a school very successfully based entirely on Swami's concept of Educare. Two parents arrive with their wards. While one wants admission for his child so that he becomes a successful money maker, the other wants to discontinue his son's studies in the same school because it was not teaching him the "true" knowledge (about the world, making money, etc.) Like Prahalada educating his father, the children speak to their fathers and the nobility of their thoughts and grandeur of their vision floors them. The headmaster also quips in with Swami's teachings and explains the futility of education becoming a commercial industry.

Swami sat, fully engrossed in the drama, especially the part where the children convince their fathers. Swami was very appreciative and seemed deeply touched. The beautiful aspect of the drama was that when it came to discussing education, it did not concentrate much on the negative aspects. It only spoke of the golden age that would be possible if one were to follow the ideals of Rama, Krishna, Raja Shibi and Harishchandra. The description of the glory of these noble men made an impression on anyone who could understand Telugu. Everyone felt at least a tinge of that nobility in their own thoughts and hearts.

Please permit a small but very relevant digression at this point. The Convocation drama put on every year on 22nd of November is very special because Swami Himself directs the boys doing it. Swami has never

appreciated the concept of the hero, a good man, transforming the villain. He always wanted the hero to be the perfect man who transforms and inspires good men to even greater heights – there were no villains in His dramas. The message is so clear. If you want goodness and nobility, think, speak and discuss about goodness and nobility. The grander your thoughts, the grander will be your words and grander will follow the deeds. Today, we discuss and concentrate upon negativity and expect positive outcomes! What foolishness! Whatever be our motive for discussing what is wrong in the world or in our lives, it leads only to those kinds of feelings. Whenever glorious and noble thoughts are discussed or portrayed, glorious and noble will be the feelings and thoughts evoked in all present. That's why we see Swami always insisting on idealism to be portrayed always. We have a part to play in building up the "atmosphere" around us. Is our contribution negative or is it positive vibes that we add?

Returning back to the drama, it concluded with a transformation of all the actors' hearts. Everyone agreed that education is meant for more than just a living. As the final dialogues of the drama were enacted, Swami called the little boy who had advised his father. He went up to Swami who created a beautiful gold chain for him. He personally put it around his neck and patted the boy lovingly on his cheeks. He called all the members who had participated in the programme and allowed them to take *Padanamaskar*. He told them that the drama was very well done. Then they prayed that a music programme was also ready and Swami told them to put that on too. The songs began and were sung with great enthusiasm and gusto. As the songs were on, Swami went into the interview room and arranged for some clothes to be distributed, personally handing over the white cloth pieces to the men and sarees to the ladies who had performed songs and qawwalis. All were so thrilled at this gesture of His. Then He specially called the people playing the harmonium and tabla and gave them clothes too. He also called the main actors of the drama and told them to sit close by in the front and then fulfilling all the participants' dreams He walked down to pose for photos. Coming back on the stage, Swami asked for the *Prasadam* to be brought and distributed, retiring to the interview room at about 5:15 pm. Later Swami attended the bhajan hall for bhajans till 5:50pm. Swami then received Aarhi and retired.

12th August - Higher Secondary School Drama: "Living for each Other"

The afternoon of 12 August, was a real roller coaster ride for the students of the 12th class of the Higher Secondary School. The ride had actually started the previous evening, as they sat with a huge card to seek Swami's permission for putting up a programme. Swami saw the card from the car window but did not tell anything to the boys. The future of the programme thus hung delicately in the balance – an uncomfortable uncertainty, but an uncertainty that He wants us to love!

So today, when the school boys received news that they should be ready by 2:30 pm, they were gleeful. But come 2:30 pm, the Mandir still wore a deserted look. Uncertainty seemed to have raised its head again. There were hushed talks of a programme by the devotees from Canada. The optimists

and pessimists alike had a field day promoting their own theories. In the end, there was a sense of happy resignation. The boys seem to say: We are ready with the drama. Let Swami do what He wants. That is best.

Living with Swami is a continuous learning – learning for the ‘drama of life’. Whenever we put our efforts for this ‘drama’ the ups and downs are so numerous that finally we sit back in happy resignation and say, “We are ready with our efforts. Let Swami do as He pleases. That is the best.” Then we realize that we have grown – wiser and happier.

Swami came out for darshan at 3:35 pm. It was a beautiful surprise when instead of the car, Swami came in the chair-sofa! There was a wave of applause even before any programme began. As people rejoiced, Swami seems to appear so much more beautiful. And unlike the air of superiority cast by the mortal beauties of the world, Swami’s beauty makes everyone who come in its light more beautiful and sublime. The glow on His face reflects as a glow on the faces of all those who see Him. Swami went around and patiently collected letters from almost anyone who had one to offer. He blessed all the birthday boys and then moved along the lines of the primary school kids. As He neared the interview room, He saw that there were school boys seated in the bhajan hall. He went in and enquired into the details of the programme and with a smile playing on His lips added the beautiful twist to the tale of uncertainty when He said, “I will see the drama at 4 o clock.”

At sharp 4:00 pm, Swami came out and immediately asked for the drama to begin. A huge card had been prepared specially for the occasion. It was shown to Swami and He blessed it after going through it thoroughly. The drama began with a satirical description of ‘present day man’ and ‘futuristic man’. The two keep arguing, with ‘present day man’ mistaking progress to just running around in circles, while ‘futuristic man’ thinks that he is progressing every moment when in reality he is running in the same place. There is then the dramatic entry of a white ethereal being on the stage. This is ‘The Conscience’ who comes out of the depths (from where man has buried it) whenever the heart is touched. It does not prick us as we like to believe; it only expands our Consciousness to a level where we feel very uncomfortable with our narrow mindedness.

‘The Conscience’, while convincing the men of their foolishness powerfully portrays his lesson with the case of a man who falls down from illness in a busy street. There is none to help him and he bemoans, “Oh God! Are you not there? How cruel is humanity!” The scene shifts as ‘The Conscience’ takes him back in time in his life to periods when he made other people cry out those very same words. It shows him that the whole world, nay the Universe, is nothing but Reaction, Reflection and Resound.

“Why did you not come before and tell us this?”

“I was there all the while. But you did not call me.”

“Did we call you now? Why did you come on your own?”

“You did call me. Whenever you feel the slightest tinge of Love in your heart, **that** is a call to me. Love and Expansiveness is my nature.”

The drama concluded with ‘The Conscience’ leading all of them to God - Swami in this case. A qawwali formed the fitting finale to this thought provoking presentation. As the song concluded, ‘The Conscience’ went to God to intercede on ‘Man’s’ behalf for a group photo. Swami told them to be seated. Then there was a wonderful stillness as the boys sat watching Swami and Swami sat watching them. He called one or two boys and spoke to them. Then, He asked for the chair to be taken down. As all the boys crowded around Him, Swami raised His right hand in *Abhayahasta*. It was a superb group picture as Swami also sat posing with His hand in the benedictory pose.

Swami then came on stage for a while and after went into the interview room. There were bhajans at 5:00 pm after which Swami received Aarthi. As He was going back, a copy of the group photo was given to Him and He handed it over to the boy who had come to offer Him a rose. Then He retired into Yajur Mandir.

14 August – Swami Attends Institute Students’ Drama Rehearsal

Today was one day when everything moved by instinct and intuition. It did not move as per anybody’s plan - or shall we say it moved as per His plan! In the bhajan hall arrangements had been made for Swami to inaugurate an innovative telemedicine launch whereby doctors in Bangalore and Puttaparthi can treat patients in Chennai and Bengal. The computer, cameras and the presentation - all awaited His arrival in prayerful breath. But as mentioned, this day was a day that took many breaths away!

Swami came out at about 3:40 pm and cut short the darshan rounds when He took a detour after the ladies side. He went straight into the interview room and then expressed a desire to see the rehearsal of the drama for the Independence Day. There was a lot of scurrying among the boys as they discovered that many of the actors were either in Mandir or in the hostel. Quick calls were made and messengers dispatched towards all possible "actor-resting" spots. Swami started to move towards the auditorium. He was kind in the sense that He first went for a small drive before entering the Institute premises. Swami knows His boys the best! As He came to the auditorium entrance, the principal, vice chancellor and controller for exams were all there to receive Him. He went into the auditorium and sat in the centre waiting for the rehearsal to begin. A lot of noise emanated from the backstage and Swami just sat patiently for about 5 minutes. When there was some semblance of order, the rehearsal began.

The first scene to be depicted was that of Rama proclaiming His love for the mother and motherland being the greatest: "*Janani Janmabhoomischa Swargaadapi Gaariyasi.*" Swami was fully absorbed in the scene. He enquired into the roles of various characters, all of whom were in white dress! He identified characters based on their dialogues and for Him it didn’t seem to matter that the enactment lacked lights, costumes, music and settings. He just

immediately connected with whatever was enacted on the stage. He also asked why Hanuman was carrying a small mace and not a big one. After that, the scene of Shivaji being blessed by the darshan of the Mother was enacted. It was innovatively done with a horde of Veda chanting brahmins and drum beating warriors. Once again the actors were all in whites but their passion carried the scene and it was as if we were reliving that historic moment when Shivaji picks up the sword to valiantly defend his motherland. Then was a scene from the life of Bal Gangadhar Tilak. The "*Kesari*" newspaper which Tilak had started has been branded as negative and has been banned by the British regime. But Tilak celebrates that his paper has finally received its due of attention. Then was a scene from the life of Netaji Subash Chandra Bose.

As the 'white' teacher condemns the Indians and emphasizes the "white man's burden" that has been thrust upon him, Bose responds with a tight slap. Swami later mentioned that the slap must resound and all must hear it! The scene of the martyrdom of Lala Lajpat Rai was also depicted later on. Thus Swami sat watching till about 4:50 pm. After that, blessing all the boys and accepting letters from many of them, He made His way to the car. Everyone was thrilled at this unexpected shower of Love and Grace. Swami returned to Mandir and there was the bhajan session after which Swami left.

The final surprise of the day came in the late evening when it was informed to the students that Swami would prefer a music presentation over the drama on Independence Day. Living with Swami is a constant learning experience and the students displayed this remarkably as they just jettisoned the drama and went about enthusiastically preparing for a musical evening tomorrow.

15 August Independence Day Celebrations: Three Eminent Speakers; A Divine Discourse by Bhagavan; Drama by Bengal Youth "*Ab tumhare Hawale watan Saathiyo.*"

Swami arrived for the afternoon session on the Independence Day of India at about 3:55pm. He went around for the darshan round scanning the stage that had been set for a drama (Pun intended!). He first went into the interview room. After a while, the vice chancellor came out and announced the evening programme. There would be three speakers – Prof. G. Venkataraman, Sri S.V.Giri and Sri V.Srinivasan. Their talks would be followed by a music programme and the final event would be a drama by the Sai Youth from the state of West Bengal. Swami arrived as the speeches began. The elderly and learned speakers spoke on the significance of Swaaraajya (rule by the higher Self) and 'In'dependence (meaning being dependent on the 'indweller'). They exhorted the important role the youth had to play in ensuring the arrival of Sai-Rajya in India and then in the world. Each spoke short and crisp and by 5:00pm the speeches had concluded.

As the speakers concluded their speeches, Swami asked for the singers. The music group was just assembling when Swami suddenly motioned for His mike and the discourse table. This was a bolt from the blue (a bolt from The Orange actually!). None had been prepared for this and even the translator was a little surprised. Quickly grabbing the most easily accessible pen and a

scratch pad he went to Swami. Swami sat waiting for the discourse table to arrive. The music group was ready with songs and the Bengal youth were ready with their drama. But are we ready for Swami's drama when He decides to stage it? The simple Truth of Swami's dramas is that in them, we are not reduced to mere spectators but transformed into active participants. How willing we are is entirely up to us.

The table and mike arrived and Swami rose to speak. And what a discourse it was! *Ganga Pravaaham* or the ceaseless flow of the heavenly Ganges. The translator was converted into a student taking notes as Swami launched into an effortless yet powerful, gushing flow. He gave free vent to His words and His 'emotions'. Swami spoke non stop for 25 minutes, without pause or hesitation. It was spontaneity and absolute free flow. There was a passion in His voice - a passion that in itself was enough to shame most of us into a physical and mental silence at the total lack of Love for our country. It is not a cliché that we say Swami is Perfection. If anyone had a question, "What is patriotism?" he/she should have seen Swami thundering. It is a very frank and honest confession that no amount of explanation or writing will ever do justice to even a fraction of the feelings and thoughts that Swami aroused as He spoke that evening. Given below is a brief transcription of the Discourse.

One sees the name written over all the speakers here (ie audio speakers made by the company Bose) - Bose but not a mention of his name has been made today. People keep saying that He died in an accident. That is wrong. He never met with any accident. He was the greatest. He authored a book, "My India" and that was later translated into English. He was married and his daughter was Lalita Bose. She in fact came to Parthi and followed Swami everywhere, whether it was Ooty, Kodaikanal or Madurai. She always kept Swami's name on her lips and sang bhajans and songs. She often lamented, "My father was a patriotic Indian. I am so proud of Bharat; but today the unity has been shattered, there is no unity among people." Lalita approached her father and sought permission, "I wish to go to Puttaparthi. My Swami is there." She came to Parthi and then even to Whitefield.

Bose was very strong and powerful, in body, mind and in spiritual splendour. He always desired that India must be foremost, pure and grand. There is none equal to him in wanting the progress of the nation. Other prominent leaders at that time were actually jealous of him and they did everything to keep him away. They say that he died in an accident. At that time he was actually in a steamer. There still exist such people in Bharat but the pity is that they all just keep speaking and refrain from action. No one acts. Everyone delivers speeches. I feel a stabbing pain that there is not a single Bose today. Tell me is there any one? One Bose is enough. Bose truly understood the plight of India. (At this point Swami was very emotional. One wondered at Swami's passion. Oh! If we feel that way! Just once at least.....)

Swatantra (freedom) as it is called does not relate to the body or the mind. It is in reality Swaatantra where Swaa means the Atma or Self. When you follow the Atma, there is nothing else left to be achieved. There is no use of just rejoicing on this day without even realizing the meaning of Swaatantra. Bose

knew what it meant. The patriotic fervour that he displayed is worthy of emulation. Without the patriotic spirit one is more dead than alive. It was only Bose who fought for Swaatantra. All others had selfish agendas. They were the ones who divided people. Swaatantra makes you realize that the country is ONE because ALL ARE ONE. 'Mamaivamsho Jeeva Loke Jeeva Bhoota Sanatanaha' - that is what Krishna says.

Today people eat, drink and make merry. There are so many 'rich' people. But they are unable to give a handful to a beggar. These rich people are actually living in abject poverty. You keep saying brothers and sisters, but none keeps that relationship. No one here is as great as Bose. Bose too had met me. He came up to Bukkapatnam and was unable to come to Parthi. I went myself to Bukkapatnam. When He saw me, he held Me and cried, "You are doing so much at such a young age itself. You are working for the emancipation of mankind itself." He had so much pure feelings.

The country is as great as one's Mother. It is a land of Kshama (forbearance). Today all try to earn more and more money. But not a single one strives to earn Prema. All those who spoke, spoke only of the world. None speaks of the Atma. Swaa is mistaken for Swaartha (selfishness). Swaa is Swaatantra. Love all, Serve all and help everyone. The Atma is unchangeable. Have Atma Vishwaasam (Self Confidence).

None of you asked me to speak. It was my love for Bose that made me speak so. Such people must be born again in Bharat. Never forget Bose. Even on the speakers his name is there. Sarojini Naidu (The Nightingale of India) was another great soul. They are all being forgotten. Such glorious personalities are not to be forgotten.

As Swami sat down concluding His Discourse, His voice had become hoarse with what we humans would call as emotion. The first thing He said to the boy next to Him was, "My voice became hoarse. Do you think all would have heard what I said?"

Oh Swami! Today we have technology by our side, we feel like saying. The whole discourse has been recorded and it can be cleaned so that each and every word is heard clearly. No problem. Everyone would definitely have heard or will definitely hear whatever you said. Some words may have been clouded but the message was very clear! In spite of all this, that is really a question to ponder about - "Do you think all would have heard what I said?" Have we heard? Have we heard what He has said over the decades - even when His voice was so sweet and clear?

It was then that the translator requested Swami whether he could speak in English for the benefit of the non-Telugu audience. Swami gladly consented and he translated it but not before issuing the disclaimer that no amount of translation could ever match what Swami had spoken. That was really true and anybody who could understand Telugu would know why he said so; anyone who didn't understand Telugu too would know why he said so! For today, one could just feel what Swami was communicating. The language of

the Heart is too easy, powerful and universal for anyone not to understand.

After that Swami asked the boys to sing. The music group began with a soulful rendering of *Vande Maataram*. It sounded so inspiring - that too after Swami's discourse. Every drop of blood coursing through the veins of all assembled must have flowed at a lively pace. Swami was quite emotional and He kept beat for the song. Next there was a patriotic song. As that song gained momentum, the devotees from Bengal who had gathered began to wave the Tricolour in rhythm. It was a superb sight - filled with patriotic fervour and nationalistic feelings. There was another song on Lord Rama. Wanting to make everyone happy, Swami asked them to conclude early. The final song was full of swing and enthusiasm. As the song ended, Swami indicated to the Bengal youth to begin their programme.

The final presentation of the evening was by the youth of Bengal - a drama entitled, "*Ab tumhare Hawale watan Saathiyo.*" The presentation began with the Independence Day celebrations where some members of the youth start a discussion. Suddenly a mysterious being in "fancy dress" arrives. Announcing himself as Time, he tries to make the youth aware of how the eternal values have degenerated in the present age. To his aid come the heroes of Bharat - Swami Vivekananda, Netaji Subash Chandra Bose, Guruji Rabindranath Tagore and Mahatma Gandhi. Now there was something that happened so coincidentally to the 'scientific' mind and so miraculously for the natural mind. As Bose stepped down to speak, the first statement that issued from his lips was, "Is there nobody who is selfless enough to live for the Motherland?" As he mirrored whatever Swami had said about him in the discourse, one could feel goosebumps tingling the skin. Thereafter, it was seen that Bose seemed to speak the most. The other glorious leaders spoke only once - at most twice. Did these youth prepare the drama after Swami's discourse? That could not be possible for it had been pre-recorded! One had to just admire the skill and intelligence of The Script Writer for the visual reinforcement of the audio wisdom that had been received minutes ago!

The whole presentation was interspersed with graceful thematic dances. The messages delivered were mostly in song form and the dance did great good to the message delivery. The music was so beautiful and apt to the feelings and emotions that had to be aroused in each scene. The youth were made aware that only young men and women are capable of restoring the declining human values and they are made to take up this responsibility.

"Strive for that and even if the whole world deserts you, walk the Path alone fearlessly. Arise and awake now and stop not till the goal is achieved", is the message that is given to them. At the end, Time succeeds in motivating them and introduces them to the greatest Hero - our dear Swami. A loud applause rent the hall - so loud that it drowned all the other sounds. Meanwhile, Swami called the youth who were acting and created Vibhuti for all of them. Some broke down in front of Swami and He so sweetly told them, "Ay! Do not cry....don't cry." Swami was also in a state of supreme happiness. Not that He isn't always, but He does not display it always. Many times we look to God and hope that all the apparent reality is just a drama. It looked like Swami

today was looking at us and hoping that this apparent drama is The Reality!

After the drama, Swami called all the actors to sit around His chair for group photos. They all happily obliged. As they settled around Him, He rose up and gave the most charming smile. After the photo session, Swami spoke to all the youth who crowded around Him. They all seemed to be enveloped in a cloud of joy. Swami also gifted them a copy of the group photo that had been taken just moments before. It was 6:30pm when Swami received Aarthi. As He went back into the car too, He raised His right hand in benediction to all.

18 August: 'Yoga Mandala' programme from Vijaywada

Swami came out for darshan at about 3:35 pm on August 18. Thousands of devotees from Vijaywada had thronged to Puttaparthi for seeing Him. The programme by the 'Yoga mandala' had been scheduled. There were pink scarves of these devotees seen everywhere in the hall. By 4:00 pm Swami came out to the stage and blessed the programme to begin. The chief co-ordinator, who seemed to be the Gurujii for all the people assembled with Swami being the Sadguru (Supreme Preceptor), went up to Swami and offered his salutations. A roar of applause went around the hall when he prostrated to Him. He showed Swami the programme schedule and offered a rose.

Then two girls went up the stage and offered roses to mark the beginning of the programme. First there were two songs to which "*koolattam*" was performed. One was a bhajan on Krishna. After these dances, there were group Bharatanatyam dances. This was followed by a dance welcoming Shirdi Baba in a procession. The song depicted the scene from Shirdi Baba's life wherein the devotees cry out to Baba when He leaves His body to save a devotee. Finally, Swami Himself asked as to when would the yoga performers arrive. The dance which incorporated in it many difficult *Asanas* (yogic postures) was also performed. The grand finale was in the form of a human pyramid which offered its salute to Swami.

Swami blessed all of them. One of the co-ordinators and a small girl went up the stage and once again offered a rose as a token of gratitude. Swami waved His hand and materialised a beautiful gold chain for the little girl and He Himself put it around her neck. Then He went into the interview room after which there was bhajans.

21 August – Anniversary of the School of Business Management Accounting and Finance.

The 21st Anniversary of the birth of the School of Business Management Accounting and Finance (SBMAF) was on August 21, 2007. As per Swami's request, the students of the MBA programme displayed their dedication and Love for Swami as they gave up the drama they had prepared. Swami wanted two speakers in the afternoon.

The afternoon arrived and the stage had been set. Swami completed His darshan rounds and went into the bhajan hall. He came out and sat on the stage. The VC made a few introductory comments on the significance of the day. The first speaker of the afternoon was the Principal and the dean of SBMAF, Prof. U.S. Rao. He spoke with gratitude on how Swami had made the MBA course so special and unique - one of its kind in the world. Swami was touched with his short but sweet speech. He patted him lovingly on His head. For Swami, age is no bar at all. If one loves Him like a child, then He treats him like a child too. He is just Pure Reflection, Resound and Reaction. Swami also gave him a vibhuti packet to keep.

The next speaker was Sri Ameya Deshpandey - a research scholar of the Sri Sathya Sai University. He spoke wonderfully well with the maturity of a Sai student who had been deeply touched by Swami. Structuring his speech on the popular song, "*Hain Aankh Vo Jo Shyam Ka Darshan Kiya Kare*", he narrated incidents on what a Sai Student is - and what Swami makes him/her into. Being a student of Sathya Sai University is not enough. One must strive to be a Sai Student too! His mellifluous voice won him Swami's emotional appreciation and the crowd's enthusiastic one. Liberally sprinkled with experiences from the lives of Sai students, the speech demonstrated why Swami means everything to His students.

Once a student, forever a student till He makes us the Master! There may be miles that separate us from Him, but He is always near and dear - guiding and comforting us. As He says, "You may leave me and go, but once I have accepted you, I will never give you up. You are mine forever." No lover in the history of the Cosmos can ever be like the Lord - so selfless and sacrificing. All the incidents narrated brought out these facts. At the end of the speech, Swami blessed the speaker beautifully and slipped a vibhuti packet into his pocket!

The final speaker was Sri Subhash Subramanyam. His speech was another masterpiece in terms of the sublime feelings that were conveyed. When Swami's students make public speeches in His presence, there is something very paradoxical. It is neither meant for the public, nor is it a speech. Very often, it becomes a private conversation that we are able to hear on the speakers! As we listen to them express their love for Swami, we are touched at how Swami has touched their lives. That was the story of Subhash's speech. As he sang melodiously and conveyed his love and gratitude to Swami, one could not help becoming a bit emotional and Swami too was very deeply moved. At the end of his speech, Swami profusely blessed him and gently dropped a vibhuti packet into his pocket.

Then Swami was requested to deliver His divine discourse. Swami said that He was so overwhelmed by what the boys had spoken that He was unable to speak. He asked for songs to be sung. The students sang their hearts out for Him which was again a beautiful experience in itself. After that Swami received Aarthi and left.

22 August – Bhagavan's Discourse

Swami was so happy with brothers Amey Deshpandey and Subhash Subramanyam who spoke yesterday, that He called all the students for morning Darshan to Sai Kulwant Hall and promised that He would address them. All had assembled by 7:15 am. Swami came out at about 8:00 am without the car, to the delight of everyone. He went around the whole hall collecting letters. He sat on the stage and told the Vice Chancellor to speak on the reason of the day's occasion. Sri Anil Gokak, the Vice Chancellor, spoke about the boys who had made Swami so happy. Then he continued to speak on the University. After his speech, Swami called out for the two students. He materialized gold chains for both of them and put it around their necks. He patted them on their cheeks and blessed them very lovingly. He spoke to them for a while too. Then He rose up to address His dear children. It was such a beautiful sight. Swami was smiling and seemed so excited to speak. His enthusiasm was just bubbling and bursting forth. His voice sounded like music to the ears as He began. Given below is a summary -

- 1) Today is supposed to be a day dedicated for the management students. But business is something that goes on everywhere. All the senses in the human body too are constantly carrying out business.
- 2) It would be wrong to compare the business done in India with that done in other foreign countries. It is different scenario here. Never compare and never stretch out your hand and ask anything of them. Elsewhere the basis of business is only power and domination. Only the cost is taken into account. It is of paramount importance to consider the country and culture too. Culture is to follow the traditional path that has been laid from times immemorial.
- 3) Culture can be inculcated only when there is discrimination. Without that, culture becomes perverted. Discrimination is the first step in Self-Realization. Discrimination leads to confidence and also to self satisfaction.
- 4) When I was small, a 70 year old communist by name of Hanumantappa came to me and said, "Swami you write poems so beautifully. Please write a poem on Communism too." Swami wrote the poem as a lullaby. (Swami sang out the lullaby. The lullaby predicted the fall of Hitler at the hands of the red armies.) Sure enough, the next day itself saw the downfall of Hitler at the hands of the Russians. Then Hanumantappa held Swami's feet and said that it was God who spoke, otherwise such a coincidence was not possible!
- 5) I had composed songs on the fashion of those days too. It was funny the way people would keep a French-cut like beard and moustache. A few hairs in the centre and they would think that they look handsome. Keeping a 'moustache', they would just leave a small portion in the centre! The same was true even of clothes. The fashion then was the bell-bottom pants. It would be tight on the top and hang out wide and loose at the bottom. Then came the age of the parallel pants. Now finally people have come to senses and they wear normal pants.
- 6) Today the education system is being changed constantly and that is not

good. From times immemorial, we have been using earthen pots for keeping food and other materials. In the recent times there has been a proliferation of plastics. And see what the result is. Everything is being choked and food kept in plastics turns into poison. That is what will happen if you try for quick changes from the traditional ways. So do not try to change the Sathya Sai University type of education. It will ensure a bright future for all.

7) Help ever and hurt never. You spoil the present by unnecessarily worrying about the past and the future. Present is the omnipresent. Right now you have a comfortable living and your mind is also steady. So be in the present. Even parents of children cannot know the mind. They too teach only of the past and the future. Less luggage, more comfort, make travel a pleasure. Don't carry the past in your mind. Present is the most important. Even in a class, you have to be present. Else they will mark you absent and you lose out!

8) Today wherever you see, you see conflict. There is no unity, no purity - only enmity. Enmity was the cause for Bose leaving India. Utter selfishness caused that. We need good people like Subhash Chandra Bose. The teachers too are very good here. They want the students to stay here and work for their welfare.

9) Why go abroad? Instead of going there and earning 10,000 Rs, stay back here and earn 1,000 Rs. That is far greater. There is nothing great or special in going away. Half of what you earn, you will have to spend for rent itself! You will be made to pay for everything - even water. But it is not so here. You can comfortably eat and drink. Why do you invite trouble by going abroad? I never went abroad. People may immediately say that I went to Africa, but that was only for a short time.

10) In the African forests, one could see a herd of elephants. Their ears are so huge like fans. When they swing them, mosquitoes are thrown far away! There are also zebras, giraffes. They are so happy and living harmoniously. They harm you only if you harm them. There were also 10 lions with the cubs. When Swami fed them fruits, they accepted them. They wanted more and I told them that I would be back the next day with more. *Yad Bhaavam Tad Bhavati*. Animals react as you treat them. Even snakes don't harm anyone. They just slither away if you leave them alone.

11) These two boys who spoke and sang so well made me very happy. Be good boys always. Gold may lose its value but never goodness. Have the feeling, "I am from a very good University." Keep the Institute flag flying high. For that keep good company and have self confidence. Dhruva, Prahalada and Radha succeeded only because of confidence and good thoughts. Prahalada was thrown from hilltops, into oceans, trampled by elephants and bitten by snakes. But Lord Narayana was always there guarding him. One with faith in God will never have failure in life. Strengthen your faith. Faith will lead to Love and that Love is the Atma. All you have to do is to trust God. He will take care.

12) You know your parents. Even if thousands of people tell you that they are

not your parents, you will not be affected. That must be your faith in God too. These two boys are here are gold medallists. They always put in a lot of effort.

13) When Ramadas was deep in debt, he told Rama, "I am struggling here. I made a necklace worth 10,000 *varahas* (currency in those days) for you. But you just walk around parading it and I am in trouble." Later he repented, "Oh Rama! That was my weakness. I am so sorry that I criticised you." Rama never deserted him. Two boys appeared out of nowhere and paid off the debt that hung over his head. By Swami's grace, all of you will be 100% successful. The confidence of the foreigners is something to be appreciated. They come here leaving everything and they adjust to all the difficulties. Remember, wherever you are - in the forest, on the hill, in the city or in the sea, faith in God will rescue you. Have that confidence.

14) Students, you are good and like pure gold. Clouds just seem to appear in between. Don't get carried away by them. All your study is of any use only if you are steady. Those two boys are so good. Likewise all of you are good. Their music was melodious and all enjoyed it. They are virtuous, strong and well behaved. They are valued wherever they go. Such boys are needed. Such boys must stay with us.

15) Preserve all I said in your mind. There is nothing great about amassing wealth. You cannot eat money. Money will come and go. Morality is most important. Bose visited many countries but he never gave up his patriotism. Do not spoil the national culture.

Hmmm.....Swami must have put you all to a lot of strain. ("Noo.. Swami" echoed back everyone very loudly) Be Happy.

At the end of the discourse, Swami asked for songs. The students sang, "Humko Tumse Pyaar kitna". That song seemed to have such a rich flavour of Love this day. One could feel the Love in the air and the gratitude in the hearts. The "bond" of Love is so liberating! Swami called the two students and gifted them with white cloth pieces and a white shirt. Then he received aarthi and left at about 9:50 am. He also agreed that two other students could speak in the evening too!

And so according to the agreement (!), there were two speakers scheduled for the evening. Swami arrived without the car, increasing the devotee's mounting joy. This has been becoming a quite regular feature these days and everyone seems so happy at the change when the Porte is de'porte'd! Swami went around collecting letters and granting close darshan to all. He came onto the stage after a short visit to the interview room. The first speaker was Lokesh Aswani, a student of the final year in the MBA programme. He spoke of experiences with Swami.

The second speaker was Prof. Anantaraman. As they say of great speakers, he did not speak of glorious things; he spoke what everyone knew in a glorious way! It was such a refreshing speech and it displayed the man's mastery over the English language. He spoke of Swami's water, Educare and

hospital projects, but it was in a new light and everyone appreciated it. At the end of his speech, Swami materialised vibhuti for him. Then He went into bhajan hall for bhajans after which He received Aarthi and left.

23 August: A Student and Staff Member Give Speeches

In the afternoon of August 23 two more speeches were scheduled. Swami completed His darshan rounds and sat on stage after a brief visit to the interview room. The Vice-Chancellor introduced the two speakers and invited them to the dais. The first speaker was Sathyabrata Paul from the final year MBA class. His speech was a mixture of songs and words! He spoke and sang out his feelings for Swami. After his speech of 25 minutes, Swami blessed him with a gold chain and *Padanamaskar*.

The second speaker was Sri Rangarajan from the School of Business Management, Accounting and Finance. He spoke on the "roar of the lion" - the clarion call of the Avatar as He spends time in the human frame in the world. He narrated many experiences and instances where Swami silently and in a very casual manner, either said something, or did something, which was a resounding wake up call for alert minds - and would have alerted the minds that were asleep. The straightforward manner and easy style of his talking made refreshing hearing and the message was straight from the heart. After his speech, Swami blessed him with *Padanamaskar*. Then Swami went into the bhajan hall for bhajans. Prasadam was distributed after which Swami retired after Aarthi.

24 August: Varalakshmi Vratam and Books and Publications Trust 6th Anniversary

The 6th anniversary (5 years completion) of the 'new' Book Trust building was on August 23, 2007. Swami promised the students and staff working that He would visit them the next day (August 24) and bless them. The Varalakshmi Vratam was also scheduled to be held today. At about 8:20 am Swami came out in the sofa chair. There were ladies dressed in blue silks filling up the entire front section of the Kulwant hall. He slowly moved through the central path and took a detour at the middle of the marble block and turned towards the stage. On the stage He lit the lamp to mark the beginning of the Vratam ritual. He sat for about three minutes and then said, "Come let us go."

Swami then went straight to the Book Trust building as He had promised. As He got down from the car, the first thing He asked was, "Where is the lift?" (The Lord had never been to the first floor of this building before). Swami was taken into the lift and as He arrived in the first floor, He had a smile dancing on His lips. The Veda chanting with the *Poorna Kumbham* began. Swami was taken into the building amidst rows of the employees who were excited and delighted at the prospects of Swami in their midst. The table had been kept for Him and in front of it was the lamp which Swami lit. Then, He asked Mr. Rajan, Convenor of the Books and Publications Trust, to speak. After his short speech on how everything had been going on prosperously and perfectly by

Swami's grace, he asked Swami to address all who had gathered. Now, as Swami's mike was placed on the table, there was a new translator! Swami permitted Sri Srinivasulu, a former student of the University working in the Book Trust, to make the translation. Given below is the entire text of the discourse that lasted about 30 minutes.

"All those students who are working here are discharging their duties with steadfastness and devotion. It is because of them that this Book Stall has developed. It is not enough if you merely bring out books, you should put into practice what is there in the books. You should understand and assimilate all the teachings that are contained in the books and practise them. Pustaka (book), Mastaka (head) should be in harmony.

What the world needs today is service. We should love everybody. *Love All Serve All*. This is what we are supposed to do. Whatever work we may do, we should do it with the feeling that we are doing the work of God. There is no place in this world where God is not present. He is all-pervasive. Never doubt that God is here and is not there. He is everywhere. God is in you, with you, above you, below you and around you. Whatever work you do, whatever happens is only due to the Will of God, and not by your own effort. (Showing His handkerchief) Here you see a cloth. This cloth is woven with a bundle of threads. The threads are made out of cotton. So, the process is - first cotton, thread and then, thirdly, cloth. Similarly, you are not one person but three. The one you think you are, the one others think you are and the one you really are.

There are three processes involved in writing a book – the person who writes, the people who read and the person who prints it. Do not lay importance on just bringing out books. The books we bring out should broaden the vision of the people. We should not give room to narrow-mindedness. The books should help people develop broad feelings. We should publish books which are essential for everybody. But money is not important, morality is important. *Money comes and goes, morality comes and grows*. We should develop morality. What is the use of writing and reading books without putting them into practice? We should be able to practice at least one principle. There may be many items in the plate, but by merely repeating the names of those items, will our hunger be satiated. Take at least one item and eat. In the same manner there are many books. People are writing about the divinity of Swami in many books. But are you putting into practice at least one principle contained in them? No. What is the use of reading books if you do not practice? You may listen to ten teachings, but at least one of them you should be able to practice. Only then will we derive the necessary strength to carry on our lives.

Our Rajan is putting in lot of efforts to develop the Book Trust. He is doing much more than what is expected of a person of his age. Students are also

cooperating and working in the right direction to make it conducive for the smooth functioning of the organisation. You may take into consideration any workplace, progress is possible only when there is cooperation. Cooperation should be such that there should be relationship between heart to heart. We should understand thoroughly whatever work we are doing in the first instance.

All are one, be alike to everyone. All should work with unity. One may write the book, another may print it and yet another may bind the book. But there should be cooperation and unity between all the departments. Only when all work in unity can we get the desired result. When can you develop unity? You can develop unity when there is purity. How can you develop purity? If there are any negative feelings in the mind, purity is not possible.

First of all, there should be unity. Where there is unity, there is purity. Where there is purity, divinity will manifest. So, first of all develop unity and purity. Then you will attain the grace of divinity. If you want to attain divinity, first of all you should develop unity and purity. Therefore, I exhort you to develop unity and work together – persons who are writing and those who are printing them.

What I see is not the Pustaka (book) that you print, I see your Mastaka (head). Our Rajan brings so many things to Me that are printed by the Trust. But I am not satisfied with any of them. I see the purity of heart of the person who has written the book. Hence, purify your heart in the first instance. A cooked dish will be tasty only when the vessel in which it is prepared is clean. Cleanliness of the vessel is very important. In the same manner, purify your heart. Any number of changes may take place in the world, but the heart should not change. Here when I refer to the heart, it does not mean physical heart. I am referring to the spiritual heart. Spiritual heart means divinity. Divinity is referred to as Atma. God has no specific form, but He is all-pervasive. He is in you, with you, below you, above you and around you. The Atma is present wherever you see.

But when there are passing clouds you will not be able to visualise the Atma. Moon is always present in the sky, but you will not be able to see the moon when it is covered by clouds. You cannot deny the presence of the moon because it is covered by clouds. If you want to see the moon, you have to wait for some time. You can see the moon, once the clouds move away. The Veda declares, *Chandrama Manaso Jataha Chaksho Suryo Ajayata* (the moon was born out of the mind and the sun out of the eyes of the Supreme Being). The Atma is shining like moon in the sky of our heart. But sometimes, it is covered by the clouds of thoughts and desires. In some seasons, you find thick clouds. When there are thick clouds, you will not be able to see the moon. But do not deny the existence of moon just because you are unable to see. In the same manner, God is present in the heart of everyone. You are unable to see the Atma because of your thoughts and desires. So, you should exercise control over your desires. *Less luggage more comfort makes travel a pleasure.*

You can experience immense happiness if you reduce the luggage of your desires. It is because of desires, you are unable to see the Atma. Therefore, reduce your desires. This is referred to as Vairagya in Vedanta. What is meant by Vairagya? It is reducing your desires. You should not have more and more desires. Our body grows every day. But our life-span decreases day by day. As the body grows, our life-span also decreases. Hence, it will be very beneficial to us if we reduce our desires. You can be always happy and cheerful when you reduce your desires. You may read any number of books and listen to many sacred stories, but first and foremost you must reduce your desires. Only then can you find benefit out of them. Everyone has desires, but some are necessary and some are not. When we wake up in the morning what is that we do? We get up from the bed with a lot of desires.

Oh man! You struggle hard in life merely for the sake of filling your belly. You acquire myriad types of knowledge from various fields. Examine and enquire for yourself what great happiness you have achieved by spending all the time from dawn to dusk in acquiring worldly knowledge and earning wealth while forgetting God.

(Telugu Poem)

Forgetting God whatever you may do is a mere waste of time. You should always keep God as your goal. God is not present in a far off land. He is present everywhere – in you, with you, below you, above you and around you. Hence, we should never forget God. People may say anything, you may face any number of difficulties, but you should never forget God. Only when you have such pure, unsullied and steady devotion can you be called a true devotee. You cannot call yourself a devotee if you do not have steadiness of mind. Your devotion should be steady like an ocean which never reduces in quantity. On the one hand, the water gets evaporated from the ocean and on the other hand, rivers merge in it, but still the ocean maintains all its characteristics. Our heart should be filled with devotion like an ocean. We should not entertain the waves of desires and malign it. Any number of waves may arise, but the ocean maintains its pristine state. Hence, keep your heart always pure, steady and selfless. Our Rajan is putting in a lot of effort. He is bringing about many changes in the publication of books. For the 80th Birthday, many good books were brought out.

Never entertain any desires. Whatever you do, do it as an offering to God. *Sarva Karma Bhagavad Preetyartham* (do all actions to please God). That is the sign of true devotion. Do not give rise to differences like this is my work, that is Swami's work and yet another work pertains to public. Think all work is God's work. One who writes the book, one who prints and one who reads the book, all are one. All are one. Never entertain any differences. Only when you do not have differences, can you develop steady devotion. Your devotion should always be steady, it should not waver moment to moment. When you have a wavering mind, everything will keep changing. Do not give scope to a wavering mind. Desires and thoughts may arise, but we should utilise our power of discrimination. Is it good or bad? Is it right or wrong? When your

conscience tells something is right, follow it. Always follow your conscience. It is like a traffic signal. Follow it conscientiously. When your conscience tells something is right, follow it scrupulously, irrespective of what others say. Let people say whatever they want, but we should remain steady in our mind.

Greatness does not lie in bringing out books, but we should understand the essence contained in the books. We should bear in mind the essence in the books. Without matter, it cannot be called a book. Without any subject, you cannot get matter. What type of subjects should you choose. You should choose those subjects which are related to the heart. If you do not go by the dictates of the heart, you will not be successful.

An author should write good books which are beneficial to one and all. We should not print unnecessary things. There are many books brought out in the outside world which give rise to worldly desires. What is happening to all those books? Nobody is reading them. Whatever subject that is pleasing to the heart should be the subject matter of books. They are true and eternal. We should perform actions without deviating from the path of Sathya (truth) and Dharma (righteousness). Sathya and Dharma are not different from each other. *Sathyannasti Paro Dharma* (There is no Dharma greater than adherence to truth). Sathya and Dharma are one and the same. Without Dharma there cannot be Sathya and without Sathya, there cannot be Dharma. They are interdependent and like mirror images. We can achieve anything when we have Sathya and Dharma on our side. We should always keep Sathya and Dharma as our goal. Then we will certainly achieve our goal. Now, I cannot explain in detail any further due to time constraint. I wanted to tell you something related to publication of books and nothing else. We should publish only good books. Good books that are beneficial to one and all. You have heard Bhagavan's Discourses, read many books, at least from now onwards put them into practice."

After the discourse, Swami was taken to a room inside where an elegant dining place had been arranged for Him. He ate very little. He said, "I am not hungry. But since you offer to me, I accept." And ate just one or two spoonfuls of the offering. Then He went into the multimedia room where a short documentary on the Book Trust was aired. Swami sat watching the whole thing with rapt attention. After the 8 minutes, Swami said that it was good. He granted padanamaskar and showered His blessings after accepting letters from all the boys working for the Book Trust. He then went around all the other rooms and even to the balcony. As He went around the balcony, all the devotees who had assembled below delighted at this unexpected shower of Grace. Then visiting the other rooms, Swami wended His way back to the lift through rows of people. He also had a look at the latest books and CDs and DVDs. Then He received Aarthi and went into the lift. Huge crowds had gathered below to have a glimpse of Him. Swami then went back to Mandir. There the Varalakshmi Pooja had almost concluded. Swami went around once and then receiving Aarthi, retired into Yajur Mandir.

In the evening, there were two speakers scheduled. The first was Prof G. Venkataraman. He spoke on the Institutions Swami established that people do not seem to notice so much - the Mandir and Sanathana Sarathi. Speaking on the work done by the Book Trust in bringing out Sanatana Sarathi, the erudite speaker brilliantly wove the story of the way the Book Trust began in Puttaparthi. In the early days, Prof Kasturi would knock on Swami's door every month for new articles for Sanatana Sarathi! He then spoke of the new age media to spread Swami's message viz. the internet and digital radio.

The next speaker was the new Telugu lecturer in the Institute, Sri Veerabhadraiah. He spoke with such vigour that all were floored. He spoke very wittily and the next hour passed so swiftly. In course of his speech when he spoke of how Swami had blessed him once when he was playing the Veena, Swami immediately told him, "Play Veena for me here." Everyone was awe struck at the Lord's spontaneity. The speaker was delighted beyond measure and that delight manifested in added enthusiasm and fiery words. He told Swami that he would be ready soon. After his speech, Swami asked for bhajans to be sung outside itself. Bhajans were full of gusto and spirit as Swami was seated right there for all to see. After the bhajans, Swami retired.

25 August – Dances Drama “Krishna Kripa” by Bal Vikas Students of Kerala

The Saturday evening saw the Sai Kulwant Hall rapidly filling up. Devotees by the thousands had arrived from Kerala with a much larger tide being expected the next day on the eve of Onam. Swami once again discarded the car to come amongst the devotees. Necks craned everywhere to have a darshan of Him in His full majesty. Ah! The devotees must be truly happy at this unexpected sign of Grace whereby He comes out without the car. Though we all have heard of the phrase, "Knock and the door shall be opened to you", we never realized that it held true for car doors too! And so it was, as Swami went through the hungry devotees, all felt satiated. Swami continued taking a round even in the inner portico. Then after a short break into the interview room, He came and sat on the stage.

The programme was a dance drama entitled "Krishna Kripa" by the Balvikas students of Calicut and Malappuram districts in Kerala. It was saturated with dances by little children. It began when little Krishna and a tiny dancer came up to Swami to offer roses. Swami lovingly patted them on their cheeks and blessed them after accepting their roses. There was a colourful opening sequence after which the drama began. Sudama, the childhood playmate of Sri Krishna was a spiritual millionaire and so his material poverty hardly touched him. But when his wife pleads on behalf of their children to request the Lord to intercede, He sets forth to Mathura with a handful of beaten rice as a gift from his wife. His entire journey is saturated with thoughts of the Lord and he reminisces incidents from their childhood when he had hidden from Krishna the grams that *Gurumata* had given them for the evening.

As he reaches the palace, Krishna comes running out and embraces His beloved friend. He washes his feet and is overjoyed at the "poor" offering of the beaten rice which is rich in Love. Days pass and finally it is time for the friends to pass. Sudama leaves with a heavy heart totally forgetting the purpose for which he had come in the first place. On his return, he is greeted by his wife and children who are rolling in prosperity. The Lord had blessed them.

Interwoven into the play were more dances in the traditional Kuchipudi and Bharatanatyam styles. The synchronisation and grace of the children were beautiful. As the drama neared completion, God called Sudama and blessed him with gold even in his real life apart from the dramatic life! Swami materialised a beautiful chain and put it around his neck. After the 40 minutes drama concluded, there was great applause and Swami stood up from the chair and walked down to pose for group photos. He specially called the teacher who had trained the children too to come for the group photo. Then, blessing all of them with *padanamaskar*, Swami went back on stage. Bhajans began along with Prasadam distribution. After five bhajans, Swami asked for Aarthi. A print of the group photo was given to Swami and He gave it to one of the actors. Accepting Aarthi, Swami retired for the day.

26 August: A Medley of Music Programmes

One day before before Onam saw a huge onrush of devotees from Kerala. The evening had been slotted for music programmes which Swami had approved. Continuing the flow of Grace, Swami came out without the car. Once again, the Darshans have become relaxing yet charging. It is not that they are not so when Swami comes in the car; but when the car carries the Lord, there seems to be a lot of strain to have a glimpse of the Lord. Now, the thirsting eyes can drink to their fulfillment.

Swami went into the interview room. The governor of Nagaland, His excellency Sri K.Sankaranarayanan had come to pay his respects to Swami. Swami spoke to him lovingly for a few minutes and after that, came out and sat on stage. He also went around the portico blessing the people who were seated there. He blessed all the students from Kerala who were seated in front with cards carrying the traditional Kerala symbols like the *Pookalam* and the *Kathakali* mask. There were balvikas students also sitting in the front. Swami seemed very happy that they were seated there for singing bhajans. Then, turning the chair so that He could face the musicians as they performed, Swami asked for the programme to begin. The first performance was by a playback singer from Kerala, Smt. Ambili. She sang some popular songs like *Bho Shambho*, *Kurum Undrumullai* and *Satyam Shivam Sundaram*. She was accompanied on the drums by master percussionist Shivamani's brother. Swami gave all the performers padanamaskar and blessings after the 25 minutes programme. In the meantime, Swami could not help seeing the little children seated in a very disciplined manner for singing bhajans. He kept looking at them and smiling at them.

The next was a programme by Prof. Ranganatha Sharma - an excellent Carnatic singer. He sang many of Tyagaraja's krithis. In between the programme Swami went into the interview room. The singer continued with the same fervour. After about ten minutes, Swami came out again and sat for the remainder of the songs. After the professor, there was a little surprise packet. Swami called the new Telugu lecturer in the Institute - Sri Veerabhadraiah - and asked him to perform on the Veena! As he was getting ready, Swami distributed white safari pieces to all the performers and to the ladies He gave silk sarees. Then the Veena recital began with the popular bhajan, *Ganesha Sharanam*. Thyagaraja krithis seem to be everyone's favourite. (That's what happens when someone or something becomes dear to God. They automatically become dear to the whole world.) He also played a few other bhajans. Swami blessed him and the Music College students who accompanied him with white cloth pieces and Padanamaskar.

Then Swami asked the children to begin singing bhajans. As the bhajans went on Swami observed a little blind boy playing the harmonium in full gusto. Swami had in fact blessed this same boy with a gold chain during the Visu celebrations earlier in the year. Swami called him up to the front and looked at him with such compassion and then pulled his cheeks. He blessed him, renewed his already soaring spirits and then sent him back to his seat. The boy now began to pump at the harmonium with redoubled energy.

Thus the bhajans went on for a while. At about 5:50 pm, Swami signaled for Aarthi and then left.

27 August – Onam Celebrations

Today morning the devotional hordes from God's own land had arrived at the haven of peace. On Onam day, the Keralites believe that their king Bali comes out of His abode to grant them Darshan and joy. All awaited the arrival of Swami. At 8:30am, Swami came out without the car. There was a huge procession consisting of a band, children holding lighted earthen lamps in their hands and a contingent of Veda chanting children. Bringing up the rear of the procession was our dear Swami. There was the traditional *Panchavadyam* being played by students from the Institute. Swami crossed the ladies side and then moved across the gents side. When He came to the front, He saw the huge 'floor'al decoration which consisted of multicoloured flowers. He slowly moved along the students of the Primary school and then turned to the portico.

And then it happened. Mr.G.K.Raman, a long standing devotee of Swami, collapsed in his place. Mr.Raman was the Trust convener in Tamil Nadu and the director of Sundaram finance. He had suffered a massive heart attack and the heart had stopped as he glimpsed Swami. Swami immediately enquired as to what had happened and came close to where he lay prostrate on the floor. He was told what had happened. Mr.Raman had arrived to the mandir in the morning looking very tired. He had not had a proper sleep in the night. When asked as to why he should not take some rest in the morning, He said,

"I must have Swami's darshan. Then I will go. Swami will come at 8:30. Till then I will sit." It was in these circumstances that he collapsed when Swami came.

Doctors - the best in their fields from the SSSIHMS - came there immediately. They tried very hard, pumping at his heart and mouth-to-mouth resuscitation. Swami sat watching the whole scene quite steadily. The Veda chanting continued, the mandir was agog with devotees and yet the portico was in a state of freeze. The next ten minutes saw the doctors try everything they could. The pulse would return weakly and at one point, Mr. Raman also weakly moved the eyelids and possibly saw Swami. Swami then asked for a glass of water to be brought. He gave it to Mr. Raman's son to offer for his father. Then Swami went into the interview room. While the body was shifted to the General Hospital, Swami asked the students to start bhajans. It was during the bhajans that Swami was 'informed' that he had passed away. Truly blessed indeed is Mr. Raman that on the holy Onam day, as the Vedas were being chanted, he breathed his last in the presence of Swami. And it happened so quickly. The statements he made before that moment seem specially significant. As it is said, a person's death is an indicator of the kind of life he lived. Blessed indeed was Mr. Raman that he had such a holy end. The pious soul must have found fulfillment at the feet of its Master.

Death is such an awe-inspiring phenomenon. It is a powerful reminder of the temporary nature of everything that we see around. In its wake, the problems seem to torment us, differences that we promote, negative feelings that we harbour - all just melt away into relative insignificance. The importance of just thinking of the Lord and doing His work alone hits very hard into our innermost being. All else but the Love of God, that we achieve in life, are just absolutely worthless. The lonely journey becomes a beautiful sojourn of solitude only if our lives have been saturated with love for God and service to Him.

After the bhajans, Swami received Aarthi and left. The discourse and speeches that were scheduled were cancelled. Swami might not have spoken, but this Onam day, He conveyed to all who were "listening", a wonderful example of the kind of noble life one must lead.

In the evening, Swami came out without the car once again. He completed the full darshan round. As He neared the front part of the hall, He went up the stage directly from the centre path to the stage. He went for a quick round around the portico and then into the interview room. Coming out, He asked for the Veda chanting to cease and the programme to begin. The drama scheduled today was "Tyagaraja" by the students of Sri Sathya Sai Vidya Vihar,
Aluva.

The drama was full of songs from the great saint's life. It showed how as a child, Tyagaraja submitted to his Guru. From then on his entire life becomes a song for the Lord - a divine symphony. When the king offers him treasures to sing his glory, Tyagaraja responds that he is already in the employment of The Emperor. Though living in dire poverty, he enjoyed the spiritual affluence

that very few can boast of. His house is visited by the Lord when material poverty gets out of hand and there is not a morsel to eat. There he gets a darshan of his beloved Lord Rama. Having lived a life of fulfillment in the Love of Rama, Tyagaraja finally merges back into his Lord.

Throughout the drama, Swami was enthralled whenever a krithi came up. It seemed as though He was listening to the saint singing live. He kept beat for every song and as each song started Swami would tell the Kerala Organisation president something about Tyagaraja - the travail he was going through, his love for God, his sense of contentment with the Lord's name alone.

After the drama, Swami walked down to pose for group photos with all children. He spoke to all of them. He asked many of them their names. They all requested Swami to visit their school in Kerala. Swami was so happy with them, that He asked for bhajans to be started and went into the interview room. He came out with sarees and white cloth pieces and personally distributed them to the children. Then He blessed the prasadam and ensured that each child received it while bhajans were going on. At the end of bhajans, the group photo was given to Swami and as He displayed the photo for all to see, there was a loud round of claps. At about 5:35 pm, he received Aarthi and sat till the last word was sung. Then He blessed all and retired for the day.

SWAMI AND ME

A STIRRING STORY OF SURRENDER

By Mr Ivan Bavcevic

Mr Ivan Bavcevic is the Sai Youth coordinator for Southern Europe. After graduating with distinction from the American College of Management and Technology in Dubrovnik, Croatia, he served as the chief of staff of the office of Her Royal Highness, the Archduchess of Austria. He has also worked as assistant professor at the American College of Management and Technology and currently runs a business involved in professional development and business consulting. This is the transcript of his talk delivered in the Divine Presence on July 27, 2007, the second day of the World Youth Conference.

Dear sisters and brothers, dear Friend, Teacher and Lord, my dearest and only Self, I am grateful and blessed for the opportunity to address this Holy gathering in the presence of our beloved Bhagavan Baba and I pray to Him to think and speak through this body now and ever on.

I thought I would be nervous talking in front of thousands of people, but then I remembered that I can't be nervous in front of my very own self, even if it is spread in thousands of forms.

It is difficult to even comprehend with our minds what it means to stand here in this holiest of places. But that is exactly what is not necessary. Our soul knows the greatness of this occasion and that is enough. There is no need to comprehend it with our minds as the mind will only lead us to limited and small conclusions and lead us away from the Truth.

All Life Leads to Surrender

When I thought what to share with you today, I realized that I could only speak from my personal experience. I could share with you the knowledge I have accumulated from books and others, but you can all read and listen for yourself. What is more important is how I implemented the teachings in this body and this life; what I have realized from life experiences and events and to what understandings did I arrive. **For, life serves as a tool for experiencing different aspects of our Divinity and Divinity is present in every thing, every being, every situation, every experience and every moment we encounter. I realized that all events lead me to the practice of surrender to God.**

If I look back into my early childhood, to the moments I can remember, I see some invisible hand leading my life. I did not grow up in a religious or spiritual family, especially since it was a communist country, but my beloved parents always knew there was something greater than us. They did not call it God, but they knew there was some energy, some being, some consciousness pervading everything and they told my sister and me that we can choose what

form to believe in when we grow up. Even though they never went to church or prayers, they brought us up to always tell the truth, to love and respect others, to tolerate the differences and to forgive, and I am grateful to Swami for them because only God can give you such wonderful parents and wonderful childhood. **My father, a non-religious man, would tell me at least twice a week: “Son, remember that you are God and always live your life like one.” He was telling me the biggest of all truths from the early childhood and at that time I didn’t realize it.** I was not comfortable thinking that ‘I am God’. I thought that he should not put me up to “stars” in such a way.

The Invisible Hand of Sai

So when I look at my childhood, from the parents and grandparents I had, from birth to kindergarten, from elementary school to high school, and all the good things that happened, the invisible hand that was arranging everything is definitely the hand of our most loving Lord Sathya Sai Baba. While writing the speech I remembered that I spent a great part of the first 10 years of my life with my grandparents. **In Croatian language, the word for grandmother is Baba. I would call that name at least 20 times a day: Baba, I am hungry; Baba, where are you?; Baba, can I have some ice cream; Baba, let’s go out; Baba, let’s watch TV, etc. In a way, Swami made sure that I call His name from the early days of my life without even knowing it.** The first time I saw His image was in 1985 on TV in Yugoslavia when they showed a documentary on a holy man from India who can ‘materialize a powder for long time from a metal pot’ (the Vibhuti Abhishekam that Swami used to do in seventies). At home we were all amazed by what He can do and at that moment I wished that I could see Him doing that in person. I never ever thought that He Himself would make that wish come true and that I would go to India more than 15 years later. Our dear Swami never lets any sincere yearning, any innocent and honest wish go unnoticed and unfulfilled. For, He is the Fulfiller of our dreams and the Giver of all Boons.

Jesus’ Divine Reassurance

It was not until 3rd grade of high school that I started reading the Catholic Christian Bible and one night I asked God whether He really existed. **That night I had a dream that Jesus was saving my friend and me from some criminals. I did not believe the dream to be true so the second night I asked the same question and Jesus again came to my dream and said that he will protect me and that I am safe with Him. From that moment I believed that God was true.**

Then one day I read a story in the Bible about Joseph, a son of Jacob, who was very dear to his father and whose brothers left him in the desert to die and sold him to a caravan because they were very jealous of him. The caravan took him to Egypt where he was a slave and lived in very terrible conditions. But Joseph was very dear and close to God and had the power to predict events and explain dreams of others. He predicted many things and the Pharaoh realized that he can help the country in many ways. One day

Joseph predicted that there would be 7 years of good harvest followed by 7 years of drought. Pharaoh put him in charge of food supplies for the whole Kingdom of Egypt. When the drought came they had enough of food and all other countries around were dying of hunger. Jacob, who was living with his sons in Israel, sent his sons to ask for food in Egypt as they would otherwise all die. When the brothers came to Egypt, it was Joseph who received them. When they realized it was their youngest brother they were very ashamed and afraid. He then told them not to worry as it was God Himself who put him through all this trouble in order to be able to save Israel and his family from starvation. Because, if they had not sold him to caravan he would never have become in charge of food supplies in Egypt and would not be able to help his family.

“All is Perfect”

This story taught me to believe firmly in God's will and His plan and always to know that everything happens for my highest well being. Ever since then I try taking everything that happens to me as the best possible thing, the perfect thing. Even if it doesn't make any sense at the beginning, I know that it will all make sense the next hour, or the next day, or in a month or in a few years. I no longer worry and don't ask why something happens to me. **Actually, it is me who has brought that event to myself in the first place. All I pray for to God is for the strength to accept the things and events He sends me and to realize that is how it should be. All is perfect, just as it should be. That is the first step on the path to surrender. So simply always thank God and be grateful for everything that happens as it is surely the perfect thing for you.**

This reminds me of my college days when I enrolled into a private university in Croatia. University education is free in Croatia, but if you go to a private institution you have to pay a lot of money. My entire family gathered money and I was able to enroll in the first year. However, for the second year we had no money. My parents asked me whether I was worried that we cannot afford to pay for my university and I said that I was not worried at all. **I said: “I didn't put myself in this university at the first place. God put me there and He will pay for it.” A month later I received an unexpected scholarship and was able to continue my studies.**

If I look back to 7-8 years ago when Swami was present in my life without my conscious knowledge, I can see that I was quite a frightened person, often nervous and upset, often moody and lonely, sometimes loud and rude, and feeling that something big was missing. That 'something big' walked in my life at the end of 1999 and turned out to be bigger than I could ever think of. Our Beloved Lord made sure that I enter the new millennium with Him in my mind and life. At that moment I remembered many situations in life when it was obviously His hand that perfectly arranged everything in order and in timelines. There are countless events that showed Swami's constant presence and care for my life and it would not be possible to tell them all this now, as they range from admissions to schools and universities, to saving my

body without a scratch in deadly car accidents, to getting excellent jobs with famous people and European royalty.

When in 2002 I was hired to work as an executive for Her Imperial Royal Highness Archduchess of Austria, I came to the place where we were opening our new office. There was nobody there and no furniture or equipment. **I opened a cupboard and on the door I saw Swami's photo in yellow dress. Nobody knew how that photo came there. Swami always makes sure to show us His omnipresence and involvement in our lives.**

Going Deep in Surrender

Dear sisters and brothers in Sai, I would like to share with you some of the changes in my life since the last year. In 2006 I realized that, even though I felt I was surrendering to Lord and believed in His will, I was still relying on worldly security and comfort. If I would honestly look into my mind and habits, I would find out that I thought: "If everything else fails and shows to be wrong, I still have an excellent paying job, a good career, a house to live in and I am safe." **I saw that this mental concept was keeping me away from deeper surrender. I decided to leave the dream job and secure salary and with God's help open my own business that will be set up on human values and dharmic management and which would do consulting for companies on how to run better business.**

When you have to earn your bread every month, which is not guaranteed, you better surrender to God. I told Swami: "This year, 2006 is nearing its end and I sense it is the end of a big part of my life. I am ready to be part of your Holy Mission and to let go of my petty worldly habits and thinking. I am ready to enter the 2007 in a new spirit of dedication and commitment to You." When you say "yes" to Swami then you reject the right to be like everyone else. And when you make that one step towards Him, He makes hundreds towards you.

Not too many days passed after my words to Swami when I received an email from Dr. Reddy, the Director of Sri Sathya Sai World Foundation, telling me that Swami has graciously approved me to be a member of the Planning Committee for this World Youth Conference. You can only imagine the joy, the tears, and my complete happiness with this news! I thought I was dreaming. And I knew it was not just an honor, but an enormous responsibility. When you "work" for the Master of the Universe then you are extra careful in everything you think, say and do. And every day is a new challenge.

I truly felt like I have been growing in surrender to Swami. When I look back to the years before when I thought I had entrusted my life to God, I realize that I had not surrendered compared to what I realize now. **Actually, since last December, I discovered that every day my level of surrender is increasing. There is no limit to how much one can be surrendered until she or he finally merges with God in timeless being.**

Surrendering does not mean expecting everything to be smooth. On the contrary, God puts in front of us many and ever more challenging situations so that we progress on our spiritual path. But in surrender you do not worry as you are not alone. You know that Swami cares for you because you are dearer than the dearest to Him and He is there for you in every moment. **Imagine how great is our Lord when He is able to dedicate every single moment to every one of us individually. To all the billions of people and other beings He dedicates every second to every one of us individually and personally.** Nothing and nobody is left unnoticed.

Heaven is Right Now

I can only suggest to each one of us to look sincerely within and see what is still left to be transformed and surrendered to God. One holy man said that it may seem like a process that will lead us to change, but at the end it is an instant moment that leads to transformation. We can't know when that instant will happen, but we can start living our lives as if it has already happened. By living the goal, by walking the talk, and by talking the true thought, we can use our creative power to create Heaven on Earth in this life, this day, this minute. And if you look around yourself you will see that you already are in Heaven, right now.

I would like to remind all of us on how lucky we are to be here. We have waited for hundreds of lives to be born to serve in the Mission of this Avatar. That opportunity has now come. The Avatar Himself has invited us all here in His name to start carrying His Mission of Love to this world, not in words, but by our own example. Our life should become the Mission itself, become Love itself. That is what we are here for. **We should ask ourselves every day: "Is everything I do in Sai Organization, at work, at home and in the public making my heart more loving and open?" If I have more Love as a result of all the activities then I am doing well. If I am not having more Love, if I am not being more Love, then everything I do is in vain. For Love is the goal, the source and the means.**

Living a New Vision

After these three days of the Conference we should not only go home and say what a nice time we had, what good food we ate and what kind of workshops we attended. But we should really grasp the meaning and make a transformation within ourselves. When we go back home everyone will expect us to be the leaders of the new Era. But we can lead only with our Love, our Character and our Personal Example. This is the greatest opportunity a soul can have and it should not be missed. Our heirs will tell stories about this great time and would not be able to understand how some people could not seize the moment and see its greatness.

Let us now spread this paradise beyond the walls of the Ashram, carrying it in our hearts, in our minds, on our lips and in our helping hands. The paradise and its peace can only be spread through our own beings and our very presence in this world. This way we can experience our innate Divinity and

show Swami that we deserve to be called Embodiments of Divine Love - Gods walking on the Earth.

I am grateful to Swami for this Life, for all lives, for the opportunity to speak here today and pray that we always be in awareness with Him.

May love lead us.
Jay Sai Ram!

SAI KRISHNA – THE ENIGMATIC ENCHANTER

By Sri Jagdish Chandra,
A current student in Bhagavan's University

This is the transcript of the talk delivered by Sri Jagdish Chandra, a Ph. D scholar in Sri Sathya Sai University, in the divine presence of Bhagavan during Dasara celebrations on October 12, 2005.

With humility I offer myself at the Lotus Feet of my Beloved Bhagavan, respected elders, dear sisters and brothers, Sai Ram to one and all.

Let me take you all back in time to the *Dwapara yuga* (the time of Lord Krishna) - in the village of Brindavan.

The door of a house slowly opens and there enters the little Krishna with His playmates! And what does He see? He sees a pot hanging from the ceiling – quite high! He makes a pyramid and breaks the pot. In that process, the curds, the butter fall down. He distributes it to everyone and then tramples on it!

As soon as the owner of the house comes to know that somebody has entered he rushes to catch the thief, the *maakhana chora* (stealer of butter) – Lord Krishna runs away! He runs away to His own house and there all these *gopikas* and other people go to complain to Mother Yashoda: “He has stolen our butter!”

Now Mother Yashoda wanted to search where Krishna is hiding? How could she do that? She had to resort to the footprints of the Lord to find the Lord! So slowly and steadily she followed the footprints for they were smeared by the butter which the Lord had trampled; and there, in one corner behind the sack was hiding the Lord!

And the moment Mother Yashoda saw Him; she even forgot to chide Him! She forgot to shout at Him. She only acted upset a little but the best part comes now. She took back Krishna; and for the butter for which He was supposed to be chided, He was offered the very same butter by Mother Yashoda!

Understanding Lord Krishna's Playfulness

How similar is our life? Our own worldliness, our mind full of ego, our own achievements, and our own ideals - we hang them high from a ceiling! So high that sometimes we don't even want God to come and touch it! But when God is with His playmates He may decide to break the pot! He breaks the pot and then spills all that has filled our mind – our ego, our pride – He tramples on them and then He runs away!

When a person affected is disturbed, he knows not where to go, where to search. At that time he sees the footprints of the Lord and slowly and steadily

he decides that whosoever He is, He will be chided – just like Mother Yashoda. But finally when he finds the Lord, what can he do? He has found the Ultimate! He was in search of the thief who stole his butter but he found the Lord! He was in search of the *maakhana chora* (stealer of butter) but he found the *chitta chora* (stealer of hearts)! And then can he do anything but surrender?

Just as the way Mother Yashoda offered the same butter for which she wanted to chide Krishna; the same achievements, the same pride, the same ego – for which man wanted to chide God and wanted to find Him; he offers them at His Lotus Feet and surrenders!

God Breaks Our Mould

Let me begin with the first part – breaking of the pot. When God decides to enter our life, He does so in a magnificent fashion, whosoever it may be! Let us consider the case of the highway robber Ratnakara. He was so proud of his achievements. He felt that people would support him – his mother, his father, his wife, and his children. To an extent that even the things that he knew were wrong; he did not believe in them; he thought that his family would support him; but then God decided to break the pot! And at that moment He used Narada as His Instrument.

When the question was put forth as to who would stand testimony to his actions; nobody was ready! Each of them showed a clean chit and said: “We are not responsible for the deeds that you do!”

The pot was broken! Ratnakara became the great Valmiki (who penned the epic “Ramayana”)! But sometimes this is not enough. God spills the butter and tramples on it! The process might sometimes be very painful.

The Guru Enlightens

I would like to quote my own experience. It was the year 2000 – the first *grama-seva*. I was sitting right next to this pillar in the first line. And that day we were supposed to go to a particular village. A brother sitting next to me asked: “Which village are you going?” I just nodded and said: “I don’t know. I only know the truck number. I just go in the truck and whichever village it takes me to, I do my service”. He said: “If Swami asks you, what are you going to say?” I thought, “Swami? Will He ask me?”

But anyhow, curiosity got the better of me. I ran all the way to the old boy’s hostel; saw the list and there the name of the village was displayed. I will never forget that village! It read – *Guruvayur Reddy Palli*. I quickly ran back and took my place in the Mandir.

Swami came for Darshan. As He walked and came near the pillar, my expectation grew! All the while, the boy who did not bother to find out the name of the village he was going to, was now expecting that Swami will come

and ask him! Each step that Swami took towards me was a new expectation. Swami came right in front of me and then turned away!

He looked at the boy who was sitting exactly opposite me and asked: "*Bangaru*, which village are you going?" It was a big hammer on my head! The boy smiled and here came the thunder bolt when he replied: "Swami, *Guruvayur Reddy Palli*."

I thought: "Bhagavan, it was my chance! I ran all the way back to the hostel to find out the name; I came back and he gets this opportunity of speaking to You!" Each and every question that Bhagavan put him: "How many members are there in the village? How many people are there? How many houses? How much food stock you are carrying?" was a hammer on my ego! And every time I felt miserable.

Huffing and puffing in my own pride, my own ego, I could do nothing but bend my head! I was feeling miserable. But the Lord is ever merciful. Immediately He turned back, looked at me and said:

"You are also going to the same village – isn't it?" I just nodded in the affirmative and said: "Yes, Bhagavan." Swami walked on.

It seemed such a small thing that Swami speaking to somebody turns back and speaks to somebody else – a few words – and just walks away. But what an experience it was to me – my heart knows!

The Perfection of His Creation

Once there were disciples around a Master and he was saying: "God looks at each and every one of His creation as perfection!" Then suddenly one disciple rose and said: "Master, what about the gardener who is working in the monastery?" People looked out and saw that the gardener was a hunch-back. In that pin-drop silence, the master replied: "God looks at that gardener as the perfect hunch-back He ever made and He loves him most!"

Each and everyone with our own draw-backs; with our own faults – God accepts us. Swami loves us! People say that He uses many as instruments to work on us – No! He uses only Love!

There may be a hundred people around us who may tell us: "You are bad. You need to change...you need to do this...you need to do that." But Bhagavan says: "I love you as you are!" That one statement makes us change! Why? Because He loves us!

The next stage – the curds are spilt and there the person searches for the footsteps of the Lord. Many a times there are situations in our lives – we know not what is happening! We are in utter chaos. We don't know where to search for and what to search for. The only person who can come to our rescue is Bhagavan.

He Writes the Programme

I would like to narrate here an experience of a student. He finished his MBA and he was working in a very reputed company. As part of his work, he was asked by some other company to write a computer program that could enable the printing of codes on the various cargoes that were placed on a conveyor belt. So the moment the button was pressed, things had to be printed onto the cargoes and this program was responsible for all the work.

Now somewhere there was a fault and this program was a big flop. Now the boss of this company calls up the Chairperson of the other company and says: "Where is this boy? He has written this program and it is not working! It is not a joke; for all the trucks are waiting to receive the cargo! Who is responsible for all this?"

Immediately this brother was summoned and was sent to this company. As he was sitting, there were big officials breathing down his neck. Each one was shouting at him trying to find a fault and ridiculing him. He did not know what to do. At that situation he just told them: "Gentlemen, could you please give me five minutes? I want to drink a cup of coffee."

Coffee? Really? No! It was to have a sip of the Divine! When everyone had left the room, he just broke down and prayed: "Bhagavan, other than You, there is no one who can rescue me! If not You; who else?" He was in this field for more than twelve years and felt he knew everything about the subject, but it seemed like all his experience and knowledge was useless. He had never felt so helpless anytime in his life before.

As tears trickled down his cheeks, he heard a voice from within: "*Bangaru!*" It was Bhagavan speaking, he was convinced beyond doubt.

Swami said: "*Bangaru!* What are you doing? What is the code that you have written? Open the third window on the tab!" And immediately the boy opened the third window. Bhagavan said: "*Scroll up! Scroll up! See at the top of the page! The parameters that you have fed in the program are nonsense! Change them!*"

Each and every parameter was as if dictated by Bhagavan! Each and every parameter was changed. And then the moment he pressed 'Enter' he doubted! He thought whether it was true or hallucination? Within three seconds, the phone rang and then there was a call from the company boss. He said: "Stop! Stop! The conveyor belt is running too fast! I think all the cargo will get exhausted this day itself!"

They say it beautifully: "*Bhagavan jab deta hai toh chappar phaad kar deta hai!*" that is, "When He decides to give; He showers in all bounty!" The receiver is not even able to receive the Love that the Lord showers! But then there are occasions in life when we search for God. We try to find Him but we

are unable. We cry out and then in some way; in a miraculous way the Lord responds and He shows what it means to surrender!

The same butter for which the *maakhana chora* was to be chided turns out to be the *chitta chora*!

Divine Intervention for Emancipation

A fortnight back I got news from my house that my aunt was to be operated at Raipur. And I was asked that if possible, please pray to Bhagavan. I said: "I will try to do my best." And suddenly two days later when I was working in the lab, I received a message: "The condition is very critical; please do something. At least write a letter to Bhagavan!"

Immediately, I came running directly to the Mandir from the lab. It was three o'clock. I waited and waited. Bhagavan came at four. But there was a small tragedy. I waited until 3:55 and I decided that as I was coming directly from the lab at least let me have a wash and come back again. The moment I stepped out at 3:55, Bhagavan came to the Mandir at four! I missed the occasion; I missed the chance to communicate!

As I went back to the room, I was feeling very depressed. If the phone call came again, what reply can I give? I was worried. And then next day morning at six o'clock, I received a phone call from my uncle and what he narrated is something which is left for each one of you to judge.

When the operation was being performed the condition became very critical because one of the arteries inside was cut by mistake and the doctors did not observe it! They put the stitches back and they left the patient – my aunt – and each and every minute her condition was deteriorating.

The blood pressure was falling terribly to an extent that the doctors themselves started crying and they gave only four minutes! They said: "If the problem is not sorted out within four minutes; and if enough blood is not bought to be fed back inside the body, the patient is sure to die."

My aunt was immediately taken to the operation theatre and there three minutes had already passed. And then something phenomenal happened. As my aunt explained; she saw herself coming out and there she prayed: "Swami, what is this happening? Has my end arrived? Is this the end of this life?"

And then from nowhere Bhagavan appeared in the operation theater with a mask and just made one statement. He said: "I am there."

And then the operation began. The best part was that the doctors could not locate where the artery was! And my aunt could see that Bhagavan was mysteriously guiding the doctors in locating the place where the artery was cut. Though the surgeons could not see Him, they could feel Him.

The chief surgeon could not believe what was happening. All she could remember was there were tears in her eyes and she did not even know how the operation was performed!

Needless to say, the operation was a success. And within those remaining few minutes blood was organized. People came on their own to donate blood. And I think that it was yesterday that my aunt was discharged. She is hale and hearty and she is recovering.

And then when I had a chance to speak to her, I asked her: "How do you feel about it?" She made only one statement. She said: "This life has been given to me by Bhagavan; what can I do other than surrendering it at His Lotus Feet?"

The very life; the very achievements which are so dear to us – at the end we surrender it back. There might be our qualities – our ego, our problems - we might like to surrender and offer it at His Lotus Feet so that He can burn them. But the greatest surrender is to surrender one's own life! Can there be anything greater?

Sometimes looking at all these events I feel what a predicament it is to be God! When He breaks the pot and steals the butter, we call Him *maakhana chora* (stealer of butter)! When He runs away from the place, we call Him *runn chor*, (thief on a run) when He hides somewhere, again we call Him a thief and when we know that He is the Lord of our hearts, we still call Him *chitta chora* (stealer of our heart)! At each and every place the Lord is called a thief!

And at the end it is the Lord who has this to say. Let me narrate here the beautiful poem composed by Sri Surdas describing the enchanting childhood pranks of Lord Krishna:

"Maiya mori, main nahin maakhana khaayo!

*Bhor bhayo gaiyan ke paache; madhuban mohe pathayo;
Chaar pahar bansi dhar bhatkyo saanjh chaley ghar aayo*

*Main baalak bhaiyan ke choto cheekey keh vidhi paayo;
Gvaal baal sab bair karey hain barbas mukh lipatayo*

*Tu janani mann ki ati bholi unkey kaih pati aayo;
Yeh ley apni lapati kamariya bahut naach nachayo!*

Maiya bahut naach nachayo!

"O my mother, I did not eat the butter.
As soon as it is dawn you send me to the Madhuban forest with the cows for grazing.

After hanging around in the forest, looking after the cows day along, I return home in the evening.

Moreover, I am smaller in height than my elder brother, how, then, can I ever reach the butter pot hanging so high?

All the young cowherds are on bad terms with me, they catch hold of me and forcefully put butter into my mouth!

O Mother, you are so simple and innocent-hearted, therefore, you believe what they say.

Take away this waist cloth of yours.

I am fed up with all this now.”

Everything is done for our own good. And in the end it is the Lord who is blamed!

Lord! There is only one prayer. We know not what we can offer but a beautiful poem that You so often sing out:

Lord! Our hearts are dry out of ignorance. You shower Your Love! Let that Brindavan grow there; let a Yamuna flow there. And You establish Yourself as the One who plays the melodious flute and fills our hearts, for it is each one of us who has to make the journey from gross ignorance to ultimate surrender – that is - *Atma Nivedanam!*

A journey from whom we call the *maakhana chora* to the one who is the *chitta chora!* Jai Sai Ram.

SAI-CHIATRIC SHOCK

By Dr. Sara Pavan, Prasanthi Nilayam

March 1995 happened to be the end of my second year of service at the Super Speciality Hospital in Puttaparthi. Before we left for Australia on holiday, Swami graciously called us for interview twice. I had asked Swami in the first interview if He would give us one of His Robes for our Homebush Sai Centre in Australia. Swami brought a Robe from the inner room and gave it to me saying, "This is for you." I wondered if the Robe was for my personal keeping! Four days later we had our second interview when Swami asked my wife, "Have I given you the Robe?" Even before she could say a word, Swami walked into the inner room and brought a Robe and gave it to her. Presuming that Swami may have intended this Robe for our Sai Centre we gave it to the Centre, placing it on Swami's chair during the Centre bhajans.

A Teenage Friend in Trouble

Within a week of our arrival in Australia, I had a phone call from an old friend. He sounded desperate and asked me if I could help him. "I will if I can," I said, and His response was: "I know that you can help us and we are happy that you are back from India. We are really desperate." I told him if Baba could help us anything was possible and let us pray to Him. He told me that his son, David, has been admitted to the paediatric psychiatric wing at a major teaching hospital in Sydney for the past few weeks. Since he had attempted suicide twice during this period the authorities had decided to transfer him to a high security juvenile psychiatric unit, specially built for such cases at another hospital.

David was sixteen and came from a loving and well-to-do upper middle class family. At the time he was boarding at a private Catholic school and attending year eleven class. He excelled in his studies and extracurricular activities. His parents came from different Christian denominations and were a loving couple. For some reason he developed resentment towards his parents and, unknown to his parents, he became extremely depressed. He informed the school counsellor that he did not wish to continue with his studies any more nor go back to his family. The school counsellor failed to inform the parents, but on his own accord, took David straight to the nearest teaching hospital. He informed his parents only after David was admitted to the psychiatric wing at the hospital.

Australia had the highest juvenile suicide rate in the world at the time. Being a juvenile, David would normally have been sent straight to the High-Security Unit. The head of the psychiatric wing happened to be a friend of the family, also known to me. He decided to keep David under his care without transferring him to the 'High-Security' Unit, where personal safety and security were excellent, although living conditions were harsher. With a caring psychiatrist, counselling and medication David had shown some improvement within a couple of weeks. So he was granted leave to go home for weekends

to spend pleasurable time with his family and friends, in the hope of speeding up his recovery. One such weekend proved disastrous when David attempted suicide by jumping through the second floor window at his home on to the concrete driveway. Luckily he fell on the sunroof of his father's car and caused extensive damage to it. He was miraculously unscathed, and ran away from home. He borrowed a mobile phone from someone at a nearby public park and phoned the hospital to take him back, saying he had no money and no place to go. His weekend leave was cancelled and when his parents visited him he was quite resentful. I was in Prasanthi Nilayam during this time.

There was already pressure from other staff at the hospital to transfer him to the High-Security Unit, but somehow, out of kindness, this was resisted by the attending psychiatrist. One day the boy stealthily tried to electrocute himself by poking something into a live power socket in the ward but the safety trip switch thwarted his attempt and caused a power cut to some appliances in the adjoining critical care ward. This was the last straw, and the authorities decided to send him off to The High-Security Unit immediately, where resources were available to cope with such acutely at risk youths.

Light Shines in a Desperate Situation

His father managed to persuade the hospital authorities to delay the transfer until I saw David. It took me some 45 minutes to drive through city traffic to reach the hospital. When I saw David he was packed and ready to go in the custody of a Welfare officer, who was unhappy about the delay, but had to comply as instructed and let me spend a brief time with David. I told the officer that I had to speak with David in private and requested him to leave us alone in the room for half an hour.

I remembered to carry Swami's Robe with me. First I had to win the boy's confidence and told David that I had just returned from India and came to know of his predicament from his father. I assured him that I had come of my own accord out of love for him, having known him from his childhood, for the love of Swami and certainly not at the behest of his parents. I highlighted all his positive qualities and told him that I was at a loss to see that such a wonderful boy like him could have ended up in this situation.

Even though they are Christians, on account of our friendship, all of them knew of our deep commitment to Swami. I gave him the Robe to hold and told him that Swami had given it to me only a few days back. David couldn't believe that such a precious gift could be in his hands and he held it dumbstruck for a moment. His parents come from different denominations and David confessed to me how disillusioned he was with all the inter-denominational conflicts that he was exposed to. He was receptive to listen to me as he held Swami's Robe in his hands. With some reluctance he agreed to let me visit him at the High-Security Unit, while being adamant that his parents should keep away from him. At the behest of his parents the authorities at the High-Security Unit permitted me to visit David.

On my first visit to this High-Security Unit, I was accompanied by the in-charge nurse to see David. He was kept in a locked single room which was

monitored 24 hours by a closed circuit television camera. There was nothing in the room that David could use to hurt himself, not even a shoelace. The entire complex was like a modern prison and David was placed on the highest level of security with one-to-one nursing and monitoring. The nurse who accompanied me explained to me how the restrictive system operated. As a result I could not speak to David freely. I had worked at the latter teaching hospital as a consultant anaesthetist before the High-Security Unit came into existence. This new wing for juveniles, the only one of its kind in Australia to tackle the unprecedented rise in juvenile suicide rate, came into existence after I had left for India. The High-Security Unit was considered to be one of the most modern of its kind in the world, with psychiatrists, psychoanalysts, psychotherapists, counsellors and social welfare workers, all working as a team. Misinterpretation of family laws had enabled some of the authorities to misuse their powers over parents' wishes, even questioning their authority over their children! This kind of liberal attitude, compounded by broken homes and a tolerant social welfare system encouraged youngsters to succumb to negative peer pressure and antisocial behaviour.

I went to see David two days later and was happy to see the duty officer was someone whom I knew well. Unlike my previous visit, I was able to be alone with David for as long as I wanted. So I started visiting David only when this particular officer was on duty. He would leave us alone and go out for some time, knowing very well that David would be safe with me. David was somewhat lonely as days rolled by and he looked forward to my visits, especially when I started taking some delicious home cooked food for him.

With my regular visits, David showed great improvement and the staff there encouraged my visits. On one such visit I had the inner prompting to take Swami's Robe with me. David and I had a relaxed chat, recalling many things that had happened when he was a child, like asking him if he remembered me administering him an anaesthetic for drainage of 'glue ears' when he was four. When I asked him if he would like to meditate with me, he reluctantly agreed. The only furniture in his tiny room was his six foot bed and we were seated on it next to each other. In front of us was a washbasin and wall mirror. I happened to sit opposite the mirror. When I saw my face in the mirror I had a flash of intuition that we should swap places. After swapping seats I asked him if he could see his face clearly in the mirror and he nodded his head.

Reflection of the True Self

I have no knowledge of hypnosis, psychotherapy or counselling. Neither do I have the ability nor experience to guide someone in meditation. I gave him Swami's Robe to hold close to his heart. I believed that Swami would guide me, as I had no idea how to begin! I told David to look at himself in the mirror with concentration and kept repeating, "Look into your eyes, not at your face ... into your eyes ... into your eyes." I prayed to Swami and felt that I was merely an instrument in His hands. As David kept his focus on his eyes I changed tack and started saying, "Breathe in ... breathe out ... breath in ... breathe out ... in ... out ... in ... out," giving him the breathing rhythm and switching from one command to the other – "In ... out ... in ... out ... into your eyes ... into your eyes" for over five minutes. When he seemed calmly

settled in this rhythm I began saying softly some positive Christian as well as Sai affirmations, reminding him of the beauty and goodness of life, the love that exists in everyone and what precious gifts of God they are and that each one of us is so important and special. I was thus trying to boost his self esteem while he continued concentrating on his breathing and looking deep into his reflection in the mirror.

The stillness was palpable and I told David softly, "I will sit in silence next to you and let us continue with this precious moment of silence ('Sai-Lens')." Two minutes passed and suddenly David let out a scream and grabbed me tightly. I held him firmly to restrain him fearing he might turn violent. He relaxed as I held him tight, still gasping away. He appeared to be terrified over something and his whole body was shaking. My firm hold around him had released some of his fear and made him feel secure. Thank goodness, there was nobody around when this happened; otherwise it might have led to a different turn of events, I suppose.

"What happened ... What happened?" I asked and he replied, "Those eyes ... those eyes..." gasping away. I queried, "What eyes ...?" and he said, "That face ...!" I quizzed him, "What face? What are you talking about? Tell me!" and he answered, "Those hairs ...!" Instantly I was able to piece together something astonishing happening and wondered if he had seen Sai Baba in the mirror. Then I pulled out Sai Baba's photo from my wallet and asked, "Is it Him that you saw?" and he replied, "Yes." He was still in utter turmoil and breathing heavily and I persisted, "Where were you then?" and he replied, "I disappeared and Sai Baba alone was there!"

I was overjoyed and I gave him a warm hug and said, "How blessed you are! For over fifteen years I have been visiting Baba every year and never had any vision of Him. You have had this amazing vision of your true self, which even evolved souls strive to experience. Can you realise the truth of yourself that you are Divine? You have seen Sai Baba in you with your own eyes without even going to India, haven't you?"

Recovery Underway

Some of the intractable psychiatric patients are given electric shocks to the brain under anaesthesia, a gruesome procedure that results in spasms and convulsions with a lot of froth in the mouth. I have administered hundreds of anaesthetics for this procedure called Electro Convulsive Therapy – E.C.T. What had just happened to David seemed to be a different kind of shock and it made me wonder if Swami had given David a **SAI-CHIATRIC shock** instead!

David was confused at the time but overwhelmed by the experience. I assured him that he could never have had this vision of Sai Baba if he was himself not pure. I said, "I know you have love for God and Jesus Christ. Sai Baba is revealing to you that He is the Christ and God within you and is going to heal you." David looked helpless like a child and seemed to trust me more. He also became very receptive to what I told him. I felt it was better for us to

discuss his experience further some other time. I noticed lying on one corner of his bed a paperback book, 'The Life of Adolph Hitler' with a photo of Hitler on the cover, badly handled and scribbled all over. When I asked him who had given him this book, David said, "A welfare worker." I was utterly shocked and asked him, "Do you really think this book is worth reading?" With a smile he said, "No, I don't like it either." When I offered to bring a Sai Baba book for him on my next visit he was excited.

Simultaneous Dreams

David eagerly awaited my visit the following day and I gave him a copy of the book 'The Holy Man and the Psychiatrist' by Samuel Sandweiss. He looked bright, cheerful and excited and wanted to tell me about his overnight dream. In the dream he was alone and Baba suddenly appeared at the door, holding a gent's umbrella with a metal shank that had a pointed tip. David saw many cut bits and pieces his body strewn all over the floor. Staring at David, Baba walked into the room and poked the sharp pointed end of the umbrella into a small piece of his body lying in one corner. Lifting it up and pointing it towards David, Swami said, "I am taking this piece away, you don't need it anymore!" and disappeared.

The very same night David's mother too had her first dream of Baba. She and David were together alone in a room with Baba. She showed her reverence by bending down and touching Swami's feet, *padanamaskar*, and David followed suit and the dream ended. The two separate dreams the mother and son had that night, possibly at the same instant, was a sign of Swami's grace and divine intervention.

On my next visit David and I discussed about his amazing dream as well as what he had seen in the mirror. When David saw Swami's face in the mirror when his own face disappeared, did it mean he saw Sai Baba as a reflection of himself? About his dream David had said, "My body was cut into pieces and strewn all over the floor and Baba came into the room and picked one piece and told me that He was taking it away and that would be alright." I felt the need to probe him further by asking, "How can you say those pieces on the floor were pieces of your body and not of any other person? If your body was cut into several pieces you must have been dead. Then how could you have seen anything?" He replied "I had no doubt that they were pieces of my own body." I prodded him further: "Who is that who saw your body cut into pieces?" Realising this was beyond the boy's scope to comprehend, further discussion at a higher level of awareness seemed inappropriate. However, this phenomenal experience certainly had a tremendous impact on him.

Due to my work commitments I could not visit David for the next few days but kept my contact with him over the phone. One day when I phoned, the sister-in-charge of the unit told me that David had made tremendous improvement in recent days. However, she said that they were concerned about him reading an unauthorised book. When I asked her what that book was, she replied, "Oh some rubbish, some book about some psychiatrist and some holy man." Believing that I had a good standing among them, I told her that it was I who had given him that book. On hindsight it was foolish on my part to have made

this admission. I guess this matter must have gone to the high-ups. When I visited the hospital the next time a young psychiatrist along with a welfare worker told me that my visits would no longer serve any purpose because the boy was getting closer to me and distancing himself from his parents. They said that it would be in everyone's interest that I stopped visiting him. David's parents were clearly unhappy about this decision because their son was very much on the mend with my visits.

Downward Spiral

Within a week since I stopped my visits David became depressed and the doctors increased the dose of his medication. They called his parents to discuss matters further and disclosed their plans to give him E.C.T as medications alone were ineffective. The parents were shocked and refused to give permission for such a procedure because they were frightened. They asked me how safe ECT was because they had heard from others that there were some risks associated with this procedure.

Without the parental consent the hospital cannot proceed with ECT. However, provisions were there in law where the hospital authorities could get a magisterial order to carry out this treatment. A magistrate would hear evidence from all sides and can overrule parental objections. The parents were asked to appear for the magisterial enquiry. I found out from David's father the name and phone number of the attorney representing the family from Legal Aid. When I phoned him and introduced myself he greeted me with excitement and asked me when I had returned from India! He reminded me that his name was Joe and he happened to be the chairperson of a Sai Centre in the western suburbs of Sydney where I had given a spiritual talk many years ago. How mysterious are Swami's ways I wondered, but wasn't surprised!

I told Joe that David was recovering well with Swami's grace, especially after his 'Sai-chiatric shock' and how I felt that ECT might be unnecessary. With more love and prayer I was confident that David would recover completely and asked the attorney how the magisterial inquiry worked and if we had any chance of stopping them from giving ECT to David. While accepting my point of view Joe reminded me that my opinion was inadmissible because I had no formal professional standing in the psychiatric field. He said the magistrate would rarely disagree with professional opinion and acts merely as a rubberstamp. When I asked him if an independent psychiatrist's opinion was admissible at the inquiry, he said that was possible with due notification. He managed to get the inquiry postponed and we got a reputed psychiatrist to examine David and submit a fresh medical report, which cleared David from having to undergo ECT or even continue to remain incarcerated in such a setup. This angered those who could not have their way.

David's Future Turns Out Bright

Unexpectedly, for reasons we do not know, David was discharged from the High-Security Unit on condition that he reported with his parents every fortnight at the clinic for follow-up. He was asked to take a reduced dose of all

medications and return to his family. David made such good progress that even the follow-up visits became unnecessary within a few months and he was asked to stop taking all medications. This is an incredible instance of Swami's grace at work, which overturned the decisions of 'institutionalised psychiatry' where the professionals believed that David could not be cured without the ECT.

His parents were happy to accede to David's wish and got him admitted to another school. He did well in the university entrance examination, completed a four year course at the University of Sydney with honours and even did a postgraduate degree. He is now doing well in his career and the family are happy. Twelve years have gone by since then.

This extraordinary story shows us that we are reflections of God, and He has revealed Himself to humanity in the form of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba. The dream David had reveals the existence of a conscious 'subtler person' within each one of us, who can see, hear, feel and interpret, even when the physical body is in pieces or dead, confirming that this physical body is merely an instrument, a psychosomatic apparatus!

[Dr. Sara Pavan is an Anaesthesiologist from Australia, who came to Baba in 1980 and has been residing in Prasanthi Nilayam since 1993 and served in the Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Medical Sciences since then. He was an active member of the Sai organization in Australia served as the editor and publisher of the quarterly Australian Sai Journal from its inception in 1983.]

LOVE SHINES THROUGH

By Lulu Plata

Lulu Plata is a Sai Youth who recently attended the Youth Conference held in Prashanti Nilayam. She is an EHV teacher and has worked on many Educare courses for children aged 4-11 years. She lives in Mexico and is currently studying English at university at the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (UNAM).

Sai says:

*“Love in thought is truth.
Love in feeling is peace.
Love in understanding is non-violence.
Love in action is right action.”*

When I first travelled to India I learnt what these words mean. It is as simple as saying: ‘God is love and love is God.’

When I was a teenager my parent’s divorced and I became depressed over this. In the midst of all this sadness and conflict, when I was 17, I happened to fall asleep crying. Then I dreamt I was being cuddled in someone’s arms, like a baby cradled by her mother. I was crying like a child and someone was caressing and stroking my head. I looked up and saw the most tender and sweet face. There was my beloved Baba telling me: “I’m here.” When I woke up I felt such peace that I asked my mother to send me to India. I wanted to see that loving Being again, I wanted to feel His love just as I had felt it in my dream. And so, a month later I left for Puttaparthi, overjoyed and full of expectations.

When I saw Bhagavan I first saw my father’s face in Him, then my mother’s and when He walked closer I saw Him. I understood one thing: those with whom I fought, who I thought I hated, were Him. That day another devotee gave me Swami’s divine discourse on Easwaramma day. In that discourse, Swami said that we have to deserve our mother’s love to deserve God’s love. This made me attempt to heal the relationship I had with my parents.

Self Discovery

For the two months when I was alone in India, I found myself; I rediscovered who I really was and committed myself to be what Sai wanted me to be, and then deserve His love and my mother’s. I decided to stop eating meat and committed myself to return to Mexico, take up my study, help my mother in our Sai centre, and follow Bhagavan’s teachings. When I saw my family at the airport they told me: “You can’t go back to school, we don’t have money to pay your tuition”. However with my faith in God I was confident everything will be fine, and that Sai will take care.

I began giving human values and Bal vikas education to our Sai centre children and in a social centre. I was there to “teach” but in reality I was being

taught. Sai Baba says, "Practice what you preach." Every time we studied a new Human Value I unconsciously started to practise Sai's teachings. One day one of the girls brought a white flower and hugged me. Before that I wouldn't let people hug me due to my pain. It was Swami's gift, He let me love and feel loved again.

Service on the Streets

A couple of months later we began to take food to people living on the street. On my first visit I was scared, as I thought they were dangerous. I felt uncomfortable as they had poor personal hygiene and took drugs. But as time went on I began to see them in another light. When we gave them the food, we asked them to bless it, and one of them said: "Lord, we thank you for the food you brought today, take it to our brothers and sisters living on the streets, in prisons, in psychiatric hospitals, bless the people who brought it and give them more. Amen." His voice was trembling with emotion while he spoke this and I realised I had never seen anyone as thankful as they were. They were respectful to us, and they began to stop taking drugs.

When I saw their eyes shine again after tucking into the food we brought, I forgot about their lack of outer cleanliness. I was impressed to discover how Swami had let me see their divine qualities and we were able to serve them as His joyful instruments. One of the women once told us: "It's good you bring food for our body, but sometimes we need food for the soul." And so we decided to teach them this song:

*"Amor, amor, amor, amor, amor.
El mensaje es amor.
Ama a tu prójimo como a ti mismo.
Somos amor, somos amor."*

(*"Love, love, love, love, love, love.
The message is love.
Love your brother as you love thy self.
We are love, we are love."*)

When we started singing one of them started to move his hand just like Baba does during bhajans. We were startled at this and took it as a sign that He is always with us - He is receiving the food, and He is serving the food.

Baba blessed us showing us that we are all one family, especially those needing help - and not just those we live with. The more we served the more we could feel His infinite love.

Finding the Real Meaning of Life

During those days a professor from Baba's University came to Mexico and told us that once Bhagavan had taken away from a student his family, money and even his reputation and friends, with the only purpose of detaching him

from the world. Baba left him with nothing, so that he could find everything: God. **Then everything clicked inside me: Sai had taken exactly the same things away from me to allow me to find the most beautiful thing, the only thing that matters: His love.**

Meanwhile the problem with my schooling continued. When I let go and let Swami decide, my brother's friends paid for the studies. Then I knew: my only father is Baba, and He had paid for our studies.

That Thursday I went to our Sai centre to thank Him and saw a picture of Jesus, I remembered going to the Church one day and thinking: "If I had been born when God was alive I would have wanted to be a close follower". Once more He was showing me His omnipresence; something I once thought impossible came true, not only had I been in God's presence but I was working for Him.

Then I realized He gives us everything we ask for; He gives us His love. This is when I realized the huge responsibility we carry; we are here to carry His message, we are here to be His instruments, we are here to be whatever He asks us to be.

I thank Him for giving me another opportunity to straighten my life, my attitude, my heart. I am filled with gratitude, especially, to Him for being His daughter. This is how I understood that:

"Love and God are not distinct from each other. God is Love and Love is God."

I offer myself at His lotus Feet. Sai Ram.

H2H SPECIAL

"HE IS MY SWAMI"

Conversation with Mrs. Padma Kasturi Part - 5

In the last issue we had the first part of our second interview between Mrs. Padma Kasturi (commonly called as Padmamma) (PK), daughter of Sri N Kasturi, Swami's biographer and Ms. Rajeshwari Patel (RP), an alumnus of Swami's University and now a faculty member in the Anantapur campus of Sathya Sai University, which was aired on Radio Sai a few weeks ago. Now we have the second part – the last in the series which we hope you have enjoyed.

PK: I also have some mementos of letters which Swami wrote to me.

RP: First tell us about that book-mark that I saw with you; a very unusual book-mark.

PK: In those days when Swami used to move about in the garden, people would meet Him there and He would talk to them and suddenly when He was near a coconut palm tree, He would just pluck out a leaf from there...

RP: A dry one?

PK: No, a green one.

RP: Ah yes, it is easier to bend it then.

PK: Yes. Then He would split it; take out the strands and then He used to weave it!

RP: In different shapes.

PK: Yes.

RP: This one looks almost like a deer!

PK: Yes, it was almost always a deer. He used to give it to the person nearby and he would use it as a book-mark. And I got one too.

RP: Ah! That is why I wanted to know what you had with you! So that's another memento then!

PK: Yes, of course!

RP: And it shows Swami's Divine craftsmanship! Even though He is the Creator; you can see the delicate touch of the Creator in this book-mark too! Okay, now tell us about your letters.

Swami's Letters of Help in Family Matters

PK: Since I was married very young, there was some kind of a misunderstanding between me and my husband. So to solve that, sometimes Swami used to call us for an interview to make us clear about the problems. But somehow it was not getting solved so easily - we couldn't understand each other very well.

So to convince me, and advise me, and guide me as to how I should lead the life in the family, Swami used to often write letters to me. I will read some of the extracts from the letters. I will read it in the language in which Swami has written. Can you translate it?

RP: Yes, after you finish the whole letter, I will translate it into English.

PK: At first He used to write to me in the Kannada language because I come from Mysore and Bangalore. Then I started learning Telegu and after I was efficient in Telegu, He started writing to me in Telegu. But Swami had His own way of writing! It used to be in the English script; but the language would be something different!

RP: So He would write letters to you in Kannada or Telegu but the script would be in English?

PK: Yes!

RP: Oh! So that you could read it without difficulty.

PK: Yes.

RP: "Whatever be the problems, whether in joy or sorrow, there should be adjustment between you both. You have got to express yourselves to each other. Whatever maybe the situation, you should be united, happy and live without misunderstandings and doubts. You must always be in bliss. That alone gives Me happiness. What more do I need than that? Whatever be the vicissitudes of life, your Swami is the resident of your heart and will take care of you. Like the water bubble that emerges from water, and merges back in water, Swami will stay in your heart and stroll in your mental bliss. He will always shower happiness, comfort and contentment on you. For the sake of this, whatever be the difficulties, be happy; don't give room to depression. *Namasmarana* or repetition of God's name will resolve everything."

PK: Another letter.

RP: When He wrote these letters to you, how did He address you?

PK: First He will write: 'Padmamma, accept My blessings.'

RP: And how would He sign off the letter?

PK: 'Yours, Baba.'

RP: Next letter:

Swami's Letter on Samsara

"*Samsara* is the *saara* or essence of all *vishayas* or worldly tendencies. *Samsara* is a mixture of difficulties and comforts, truth and untruth, laughter and tears. But in this, you must select the *dharmic*; only the righteous – other things you need not concern yourself with. *Samsara* is not about a single individual; it is about husband and wife. The wife mustn't do anything without the knowledge of the husband; and the husband in turn must not do anything without the knowledge of the wife. *Samsara* is the coming together of the husband and the wife; each should share the joys and the sorrows of the other. If there is a problem, it must be solved between yourselves; it should not be revealed to a third person. Husband and wife are like the two eyes of the face; if there is any ailment in one eye, it affects the one face. You both should live properly in faith and bliss.

Repeat the name of Sairam incessantly; everything will be fine. I will take care of all matters concerning both of you. You must remain happy as I have told you. You must feel glad that you have come to know a lot of things! Know that Swami has done all this to turn you to the right path. I have written all this out of My compassion and concern and to see that your family life proceeds on the right path."

RP: Another letter:

"In human life there are many ups and downs; and mistakes too. You have got to control these. You both should be happy; without doubting each other, you should live happily. That is the characteristic of worldly life or *samsara*."

Earlier, in the previous letter, He has defined *samsara* as a mixture of truth and untruth. So I think He was trying to say that the characteristic of life is to swim through these difficulties without drowning yourself in the ocean of worldly existence – which is *samsara*.

PK: Then after that, the problems increased – my husband lost his job and my father-in-law had an enlargement of heart, so he had to retire – he had no job. So there were financial and psychological problems going on in the house.

RP: Naturally!

PK: And since I had three children; it was really a big problem and I didn't know what to do?

RP: Trouble usually comes in battalions!

PK: Yes. So I wrote a letter and this is the reply He wrote to me in return. But this is in Telugu language because by that time, I knew how to read and write Telegu. The letter goes -

“Amavasya or the new moon night – dark night - is not everlasting. Poornima or the full moon night is certain to follow. Just be patient for some time. Know that Swami’s protective eyes and watchful eyes are ever on you. Swami will never put you through difficulties. Because of difficulties coming one after another in succession, your mind is agitated. This is the time to use Swami’s name for courage.

Will anyone wear woolen clothes in summer and thin cotton garments in winter? Never, ever! For the present heated state of your mind, wear the cooling garments of *Bhagavat chintana* or remembrances of God. Do not increase the heat of your mind by wearing the woolen clothes of *Prakriti chintana* or thoughts of the world.”

RP: After hearing this, I remember in one of his poems how Shelley wrote once: ‘If winter comes, can spring be far behind?’

And here in this letter of Bhagavan as Padmamma just read:

The Lord’s Kindness Knows No Bounds

PK: I would like to narrate an incident related to this situation where you will understand Swami’s care and His Compassion. You see, when I was going through this very difficult financial time and having three children, one day, my youngest son Rajaram who was born here, he was three years old; he had the habit of having a biscuit before he had his milk. That day, there was no biscuit and I couldn’t afford to buy it either – because the situation was so bad! He started to cry and throw a tantrum and it was very difficult to convince him.

RP: Because he wanted to have his biscuit!

PK: Yes, and because of the situation, even my mother-in-law was upset at me to have brought him up like that and to have gotten him into that habit.

RP: For having trained him to have his biscuit with his milk!

PK: Anyway, I didn’t know what to do! My only solace was Swami! I wrote a letter to Him: “Swami! Are you not hearing my child’s cry?” I just poured myself out in that letter and I mailed it to Puttaparthi. That’s what I had always done. But unfortunately, Swami was not in Puttaparthi at that time. I didn’t know that He was on a tour. He wrote after 4 or 5 days. My parents were in

Puttaparthi at that time but I didn't inform them about my difficulties or anything. So they didn't know what was happening to me.

It seems that as soon as Swami got down from the car, He asked my father: "Find out if there's anybody going to Bangalore tomorrow."

RP: You were in Bangalore.

PK: Yes, I was in Bangalore. So he searched and he got somebody and he told Swami: "Swami there are some people who want to go to Bangalore tomorrow urgently."

RP: But you wrote that letter to Puttaparthi! And Swami was just getting down from the car and asking your father! Which means that maybe the letter didn't reach Him physically, but He heard your agony?

PK: Yes. Immediately after getting down from the car, when He came from the tour, He asked for this. Then He asked my father to put them in the front for the interview - where they used to sit in the veranda for the interview. Swami told them: "Please give Padma's address to them." My father was wondering what is all this that Swami is asking - if someone is going to Bangalore and giving them his daughter's address.

RP: He didn't know anything! Swami didn't tell him anything?

PK: No. He called those people for the interview and gave them a big cardboard box and said: "Take this address and go to that house and give it to her." Same day, in the evening they came and they gave me the box which had dry fruits from Delhi. I couldn't express my gratitude!

RP: That is Swami!

PK: My Swami!

RP: You were right when you said you can't describe this Swami! That is just Swami!

PK: Then after these problems were over, my husband wanted to get a job. He thought of getting a job in Bombay. He went there and it was very difficult for him to settle down in Bombay. In those days, I had come back to Puttaparthi with my 3 children. There was no proper school in Puttaparthi then. So I was planning to go back to Bangalore again and see to it that these children were educated. But at that time I was just 28 years old! I didn't have the courage to go and live all alone with three children! But if Swami would have physically given me the permission, I wouldn't have minded it.

So I sent word with my father to Him that I had decided to go to Bangalore and live with the children all alone but I want Your permission directly. Swami

didn't give me any permission here; it was summer so He went to Bangalore and after going to Bangalore, He wrote a letter to me.

RP: Swami wrote a letter to you!

PK: Yes, and in that He gave me the permission and the courage to go and stay in Bangalore.

RP: Yes. This is for all mothers I am sure.

“Perform your duties happily.” - Baba

“Right now, instead of being pre-occupied with other things, busy yourself with the taking care of the progress of your children, dear one. Make them virtuous and proficient in *sath vidya* – knowledge of the Truth. Is this not the responsibility of the mother? You may be wondering about how long this is going to go on; but don't wait for time. Do your duty then time will disappear in it. In such matters, karma or action is more important than *kala* or time. Even if the time is not good, if the action is pure and good, it will transform or purify time too. The good and bad time is the result of actions, isn't it? So follow Swami's commands and perform your duties happily and in a righteous manner.

Don't shed tears for the *kashta* and the *nashta*; the difficulties and the losses; shed tears instead for the *karuna* or the mercy of God. There is no one in this world who is without problems but there are many who are without Grace. So you have to acquire what you don't have and not exalt over what you already have. Don't keep on thinking about the past; past is past. Stale food cannot be made fresh again, can it? First think of life's support and bliss. That is very important for us; it is also our support. Use your life time in getting your children educated and making them good and virtuous individuals.”

PK: So, by going through these problems, I came to understand what Swami once told me in an interview - Swami is the only real, true relative and the others are *veer bandham* – compulsory attachments.

RP: The relation with Swami is Eternal.

PK: And True.

RP: It is before birth and it will always continue.

PK: Yes. So He made me realize this and now I think it was worth going through these problems so I could come to the conclusion and the realization. There is one more letter I would like to read.

The Strength to Overcome Suffering

RP: One minute! I just have one small doubt which I think I would like your opinion on. And I am sure there are others who have similar doubts; so maybe you are the best person who should answer this.

You would think that life in general would be much more smooth and less difficult when Swami is physically close to you. You were one of the inner circles. So what do you think? Is there an inner significance in the fact that despite the Divine physical presence, many of Swami's devotees, who were 'in' so to say, experienced some of the most trying situations?

PK: Yes. Maybe we have to go through these problems because of our past karmas. Swami takes us so near and He gives us the strength to pass through these problems, and to later realize what is real and what is unreal.

RP: Okay. And then there is one more thing I have noticed in these letters and in some of the books that I have read. Swami constantly – and I think He is still saying the same thing until now too – is that, He advises us to and through your letters too of course; all of us, His devotees, to do *namasmarana*. That the name is everything! Don't you think so? Because even now, He keeps saying that the times are bad, they are difficult, but just keep taking the name of God and everything will be alright.

PK: Yes, because it helps us to keep our mind calm and face the problems.

RP: So there is a lot of power in the Name of God?

PK: Yes.

RP: Yes, please tell us about it.

PK: You see, we usually write letters and give it to Swami, but sometimes we are not able to give it to Him, and then we feel very sorry that we were not able to.

RP: We feel disappointed that He didn't take it, or we couldn't give it to Him.

PK: Yes. But it doesn't matter, because as we write, He knows the essence of the letters.

RP: He already knows?

PK: Yes. I have got one proof for that!

RP: Okay, please tell us.

Yatra Darshan

PK: Just to give you the background of this letter before I wrote. Before his retirement, Swami had asked my father to take his mother for a teertha yatra – like Kashi, Mathura, Brindavan; and Swami told him: “Buy three tickets, and four of us will travel.” Because Swami said: “I am a ticketless traveler!” They had been to Delhi and Kashi and all those places. During that time, my husband had a typhoid attack. He had high fever and I was very worried. I didn’t have anybody and since my parents were not there, I felt like I should write a letter to Swami!

So I wrote a letter to Swami and mailed it to Puttaparthi. But unfortunately, I didn’t know that Swami was in Kodaikanal.

RP: You didn’t know the Kodai address either!

PK: I didn’t even know that He was in Kodai! I thought He was in Puttaparthi. After a week or ten days, my husband got better and my parents came back from their trip. My father had also written a letter to Swami about his pilgrimage – it seems he had Swami’s Darshan in Kashi, Mathura and Brindavan too!

RP: Wherever he went!

PK: Yes! So he wrote a letter to Swami about all that; he was so happy!

RP: Like Shyama in Shirdi Sai Charitra. So he had the Darshan of Swami in all those places?

PK: Yes! And in reply to that, Swami wrote a letter to my father. And in it, He has also mentioned about the letter that I wrote to Him too. In other letters, Swami used not to write dates, but in this letter He did! This letter was written on 26th May, 1955; it is in Kannada.

“When Swami is with you, what more is needed?” - Baba

RP: “Kasturi, the letter you wrote, reached Me in Kodai. Since I was leaving Kodai the same day, I didn’t have time to reply! I reached Madras on 25th night, 12 o’clock. Kasturi, I am very happy that your pilgrimage with your mother passed off well.

When Swami is with you, what more is needed? Name is not different from Form; the Name points to the Form. When you see the Form, you remember the Name. When that is the case, that My Name is always dancing in your heart, naturally, you could see the Form! You could say that it is all Swami’s *sankalpa* or Will. No! *Sadhana* first; then *sankalpa*. That is, human effort first, then the Divine Will takes shape. Divine Will is always in proportion to the power of the devotees’ *sadhana*. Therefore, the power of *sadhana* is important. The master or the teacher gives marks according to the answers written by the student. Likewise, the Divine Will manifests based on the *sadhana*. But for this also, *anugraha* or the Grace of God is required.

Poor Padma is in great difficulty. Chandran's health is not a problem. When Swami's *daya* or compassion is present in full measure, where is the room for fear? I came and saw that night Padma was writing a letter to Parthi to Me. The letter has not yet reached, but the contents, the feelings have reached Me."

PK: Beautiful letter! So these are all the mementos I have.

RP: Did you ever think of putting all this together in the form of a book?

PK: Yes, I am thinking; I have already written one book in my language – Kannada.

RP: What is the title of the book?

PK: I have not yet decided.

RP: Are you still compiling it?

PK: Yes.

RP: How many pages?

PK: It won't be much; maybe 100 to 120 pages. It will be a small book with all my experiences; and with these letters too.

RP: And maybe a more exhaustive number of letters?

PK: No, not any more letters; just the same. But maybe more experiences in that.

RP: Alright. I think that's it for now. Thank you very much. As I said last time, talking to you is like unraveling secrets. It was a great pleasure for me to converse with you and I am sure the listeners of Radio Sai Global Harmony will be extremely grateful to you for sharing with them all these very rare and beautiful experiences that you had with Swami.

PK: Thank you Rajeshwari and Radio Sai for having given me this opportunity to share all my experiences with Bhagavan with all the listeners, as a form of tribute to Swami. Sairam.

RP: Thank you, Sairam.

GET INSPIRED

THE LORD'S TRICK

Situated on the banks of the Ganges near holy Rishikesh in the Himalayas, there was once an ashram that had attracted a fair number of seekers due to the holiness of its presiding monk. The guru would take in all seekers who wanted to learn a life of dedication to God; but such was his love that he often did not discriminate who he allowed to stay.

After some time, he noticed that the ashramites were often quarrelling and he could hear rude words that left him pained. 'Why are they angry with one another?' the guru asked himself. But he could not bring himself to throw anyone out - such was his compassion. One day he saw two inmates fighting over food in the ashram canteen. The incident left him shocked and he returned to his hut in a despondent mood.

'What can be wrong with them?' he asked himself. He was racked with the problem of remedying the situation and elevating their souls. So, he increased his discourses to them and gave more personal advice on their *sadhana*. The inmates' reverence for their guru increased, but unfortunately this did not translate in better behaviour towards each other.

The guru, then resolved to practise penance and ask the Lord for divine help before matters could get any worse. So, he shut himself away in his hut for a week, maintained silence and took a reduced diet. After some days of intense prayers and meditation, he was rewarded with a vision of celestial light. The guru was transfixed in bliss as the Lord's nectarine voice came through the light:

"My child, my dear child." The guru could not believe his ears. He was thrilled to hear the sweet voice. "Is it really you, my lord?" he asked filled with ecstasy and disbelief. "Yes, my child," God said lovingly. "Tell me, what can I do for you?"

The Guru prostrated to the Divine voice and said, "Dear Lord, be pleased to come to my ashram."

"What for?" the Voice asked.

"You know everything, lord," the guru humbly submitted. "Yet, I shall say it. The members of the ashram hate one another; they are jealous of each other. Lord, if you come and stay with us for a week, they will be filled with pure and noble thoughts."

The kind Lord replied, "Certainly, I will come, but not for one week, but for ever."

The guru's joy knew no bounds. But the Voice continued, "But only on one condition."

“What is it, my Lord,” the guru asked eagerly.

“I will come, but not in this form,” the Lord clarified. “I will always be at the ashram in the guise of one of the inmates. I shall always be moving in the hearts of one of them; it could be anyone of them.”

With these words, the Light disappeared.

The Guru, after recovering from that ethereal experience, opened the door of his hut and called all the ashramites to assemble. When he informed them of God’s wish to abide in their hearts they rejoiced, but they were confused too.

“Is this inmate sitting near me God in disguise?” one disciple thought. “Who could be ‘God in disguise’?” Nobody knew and everybody was left guessing and as a result careful too. For, each one thought, “How can I fight against anyone here? What if he is one in whom God is there now?” And thus, a subtle change slowly came over each one of them. They began to see God in everyone and took every opportunity to help the other and be kind and courteous. The whole atmosphere in the ashram was now totally transformed – only love and harmony prevailed.

The guru was the happiest man now. The Lord’s trick had done wonders.

If we reflect, we can make our family, our society and our earth just like this ashram – full of peace and harmony – if only we believe and practise the feeling that each one is just God in a different form. Our life would become a sweet experience, every moment.

Adapted from Nava Sarathi December, 2003

BEING TRULY RICH

Once a *sanyasi* (ascetic) came to rest under a tree near a village. He started to contemplate on the glory of God revealed in the nature around him and God's peace within himself when suddenly a man from the village ran up to him and began to plead with him in a frantic way: "Give me the stone, give me the stone!" The man was very excited and his voice trembled as he spoke. The *sanyasi* did not lose his calm demeanour and somewhat bemused asked him, "What stone?"

"Swami, I have been worshipping Lord Shiva all my life. I look to Him for all my joy in life and I regularly offer some of my earnings to feed the poor in His name. Last night Lord Shiva came in my dream saying He wanted to reward me for my devotion. He said that a *sanyasi* would come near the village who possessed a stone that would make me rich beyond measure for all my life. Sir, I am a man of moderate income with a large family and so I am asking you for this stone which will solve all our material worries."

The *sanyasi* searched his bag and took out a large diamond with a big smile on his face. "Oh, you must mean this stone. It seems Lord Shiva wishes to give you riches beyond all worldly dreams. I found this in the forest yesterday and felt that God may have a secret purpose in a humble *sanyasi* finding it - as obviously I am beyond any material attraction for it. So I have been waiting to discern His will and now you have come along! My boy, I am so happy you have come and now I can hand it over to you. Go and make your life prosperous and give joy to all those who you will help with your wealth!"

So saying, the *sanyasi* blessed him and beckoned him to leave without more ado. The man was moved beyond all measure and bowing low to the holy monk turned away with his mind racing. 'What am I to do with the diamond?' 'How can I sell it?' 'Would anyone try and rob me?' 'How can I please Lord Shiva with the money?' 'How could the monk give away the diamond so easily?' All these thoughts were bothering him for the rest of the day.

He hid the diamond in his belt without telling his wife or family and spent the night without a wink of sleep. The image of the calm and serene *sanyasi* returned to his mind again and again and he resolved to visit him the next morning as a balm for his fevered mind.

So, early in the morning, feeling exhilarated but also confused at the gift he had received he approached the *sanyasi* and after touching his feet said,

"Oh revered master, I have not slept all night worrying about the wealth that the Lord has bestowed upon me. After being given this huge diamond I have become very anxious."

After a pause to take a deep breath, he continued with his voice soaked in emotion, "Please sir, what I really want is to have the love and detachment that makes it possible for you to give this stone away. Then I will be truly rich!"

The *sanyasi* smiled and seemed to pass into ecstasy. He was feeling supreme joy at the man having passed the test that the Lord had given him.

“My son, you have earned the grace of Lord Shiva. Henceforth God Himself will foster you and bestow His grace upon you. You will always feel His divine presence and will rejoice in His love and protection.”

With that the *sanyasi* disappeared and in his place was the radiant form of Lord Shiva, raising His hand in blessing.

The man was stunned. In the last few hours he had been through a tremendous divine test and now he was blessed with the Darshan of the living Lord. What could be more precious than this? He marvelled at the ways of God and how he blesses the devotees which He is pleased with. “Is there no end to His mercy and compassion?” he wondered.

On his return home he arranged to sell the diamond and organised all the money in a trust for charitable projects, run by trusted staff. The man would spend all day in devotion to Lord Shiva and take great joy in serving Him in the poor who came to receive the various services from the trust. He knew that it was all God’s mysterious plan – he was simply the Lord’s humble instrument.

Adapted From East And West, May 2007

INFORMATION PLEASE

When I was quite young, my father had one of the first telephones in our neighborhood. I remember well the polished old case fastened to the wall. The shiny receiver hung on the side of the box. I was too little to reach the telephone, but used to listen with fascination when my mother talked to it. Then I discovered that somewhere inside the wonderful device lived an amazing person--her name was "Information, Please" and there was nothing she did not know. "Information, Please" could supply anybody's number and the correct time.

My first personal experience with this genie-in-the-bottle came one day while my mother was visiting a neighbor. Amusing myself at the tool bench in the basement, I whacked my finger with a hammer. The pain was terrible but there didn't seem to be any reason in crying because there was no one home to give sympathy. I walked around the house sucking my throbbing finger, finally arriving at the stairway. The telephone! Quickly, I ran for the footstool in the parlor and dragged it to the landing. Climbing up, I unhooked the receiver in the parlor and held it to my ear. "Information, Please," I said into the mouthpiece just above my head.

A click or two and a small clear voice spoke into my ear, "Information."

"I hurt my finger," I wailed into the phone. The tears came readily enough now that I had an audience.

"Isn't your mother home?" came the question.

"Nobody's home but me." I blubbered.

"Are you bleeding?" the voice asked.

"No," I replied. "I hit my finger with the hammer and it hurts."

"Can you open your icebox?" she asked.

I said I could. "Then chip off a little piece of ice and hold it to your finger," said the voice.

After that, I called "Information, Please" for everything. I asked her for help with my geography and she told me where Philadelphia was. She helped me with my math. She told me my pet chipmunk, that I had caught in the park just the day before, would eat fruit and nuts.

Then, there was the time Petey, our pet canary died. I called "Information, Please" and told her the sad story. She listened, then said the usual things grown-ups say to soothe a child, but I was inconsolable. I asked her, "Why is it that birds should sing so beautifully and bring joy to all families, only to end up as a heap of feathers on the bottom of a cage?"

She must have sensed my deep concern, for she said quietly, "Paul, always remember that there are other worlds to sing in." Somehow I felt better.

Another day I was on the telephone.

"Information, Please." "Information," said the now familiar voice.

"How do you spell fix?" I asked.

All this took place in a small town in the Pacific Northwest. When I was nine years old, we moved across the country to Boston. I missed my friend very much. "Information, Please" belonged in that old wooden box back home, and I somehow never thought of trying the tall, shiny new phone that sat on the table in the hall.

As I grew into my teens, the memories of those childhood conversations never really left me. Often, in moments of doubt and perplexity I would recall the serene sense of security I had then. I appreciated now how patient, understanding, and kind she was to have spent her time on a little boy.

A few years later, on my way west to college, my plane put down in Seattle. I had about half an hour or so between planes. I spent 15 minutes on the phone with my sister, who lived there now. Then without thinking what I was doing, I dialed my hometown operator and said, "Information, Please." Miraculously, I heard the small, clear voice I knew so well, "Information."

I hadn't planned this but I heard myself saying, "Could you please tell me how to spell fix?"

There was a long pause. Then came the soft-spoken answer, "I guess your finger must have healed by now."

I laughed. "So it's really still you," I said. "I wonder if you have any idea how much you meant to me during that time?"

"I wonder," she said, "if you know how much your calls meant to me? I never had any children, and I used to look forward to your calls.

I told her how often I had thought of her over the years and I asked if I could call her again when I came back to visit my sister.

"Please do," she said. "Just ask for Sally."

Three months later I was back in Seattle. A different voice answered, "Information."

I asked for Sally.

"Are you a friend?" she asked.

"Yes, a very old friend," I answered.

"I'm sorry to have to tell you this," she said. "Sally has been working part-time the last few years because she was sick. She died five weeks ago."

Before I could hang up she said, "Wait a minute. Did you say your name was Paul?" "Yes," I replied.

"Well, Sally left a message for you. She wrote it down in case you called. Let me read it to you."

The note said, "Tell him I still say there are other worlds to sing in. He'll know what I mean."

I thanked her and hung up. I knew what Sally meant.

Never underestimate the impression you may make on others. Whose life have you touched today?

TEST YOUR SPIRITUAL CONTENT

MULTI-FAITH QUIZ

This quiz concerns religious festivals celebrated all around the world in September. We offer you a few illustrations of the rich tapestry of spiritual expression, as people rejoice in communion with God this month.

1. Every year Muslims celebrate a month-long fasting tradition called 'Ramadan', which this year begins on 13th September. The term 'Iftar' is used a lot during Ramadan. What does it mean?

- A. Sighting of the moon.
- B. Fast-breaking meal.
- C. Renewed resolution.
- D. Inner reflection.

2. Ten years ago on 22 September 1997, devotees celebrated the Golden Chariot Festival and rejoiced as Bhagavan sat atop it. What did Bhagavan want to happen to the chariot?

- A. That it should be given to the city of Madurai.
- B. That it should be placed in the Museum.
- C. That it should be sold.
- D. That it should be used at each sports meet as His vehicle during the procession.

3. One of the most important festivals in the Jain tradition is celebrated in September and called 'Paryushana Parva' day. For how many days does this festival last?

- A. 2 to 4 days
- B. 4 to 6 days
- C. 6 to 8 days
- D. 8 to 10 days

4. Krishna Janmashtami is celebrated in India with great joy. On 4 September 1996, in His Discourse on Janmashtami Day, Swami extolled that Krishna's greatness consisted of:

- A. His teaching of the Bhagavad Gita.
- B. His permanent state of bliss.
- C. His Love for all His devotees.
- D. His slaying of His cruel uncle Kamsa.

5. An important Jewish occasion that is being celebrated this month is 'Yom Kippur'. What is it also known as?

- A. The Day of Fasting.
- B. The Day of Pilgrimage.
- C. The Day of Atonement.
- D. The Day of Charity.

6. As we all know, 'Thanksgiving' ceremonies and celebrations for a successful harvest are both worldwide and very ancient. In the U.S, Christians celebrate it in the month of November. But in, gratitude for successful harvests have been given since pagan times. In this country they celebrate this day by singing, praying and decorating their Churches with baskets of fruit and food in a festival known as 'Harvest Festival', usually during the month of September.

In which country is this 'Harvest Festival' celebrated?

- A. England
- B. Africa
- C. Ireland
- D. Australia

7. On August 31, 1992; Swami gave a beautiful Discourse on the celebration of Ganesha Chaturthi Day and explained the significance of the vehicles used by each member in Lord Ganesha's family.

What vehicle does Lord Ganesha use?

- A. Tiger
- B. Horse
- C. Rat
- D. Cat

8. Heritage day is celebrated in various countries around the world on different dates. In Canada, heritage day is celebrated in February; in South Africa, it is held on 24 September and is a Public Holiday on which people across the spectrum celebrate joyously.

What is the theme?

- A. Cultural diversity.
- B. Thanksgiving Day.
- C. Independence Day.
- D. African languages.

9. The founder of the Baha'i faith was Baha'u'llah. From which religion was he from originally?

- A. Islam
- B. Judaism
- C. Zoroastrianism
- D. Christianity

10. A very important festival called 'Maskal' is celebrated every September in Ethiopia which has been celebrated in the country for over 1,600 years.

What does it refer to?

- A. The Finding of the Holy Book.
- B. The Festival of the Lights.
- C. The Finding of the True Cross.
- D. The Celebration of Life.

Answers

1B

'Iftar' is a meal served at the end of the day during Ramadan to break the day's fast. Ramadan is a special month of the year for the one billion Muslims throughout the world. It is a time for inner reflection, devotion to God, and self-control. Due to the lack of preoccupation with the satisfaction of bodily appetites during the daylight hours of fasting, a measure of ascendancy is given to one's spiritual nature, which becomes a means of coming closer to God.

Ramadan is also a time of intensive worship, reading of the Quran, giving charity, purifying one's behavior, and doing good deeds. For Muslims, Ramadan is an opportunity to gain by giving up, to prosper by going without and to grow stronger by enduring weakness.

As a secondary goal, fasting is a way of experiencing hunger and developing sympathy for the less fortunate, and learning thankfulness and appreciation for all of God's bounties.

2C

During the discourse that day Bhagavan said:

Here or anywhere else, what you have to offer to Bhagavaan is pure love. Do not make such offerings as a Golden Chariot anywhere. Anyone who desires such offerings cannot be Divine. When the Divine is immanent in everything,

what is it that you can offer to the Divine? How are you eligible to make any offering at all? Everything belongs to God. Henceforth devotees should not bring here any gold ornaments or ornamental chariots or golden chariots. It is better to sell such objects and use the money for providing drinking water to the people.

Divine Discourse 22 September 1997

3D

'Paryushana Parva' is an 8 to 10 day Jain festival signifying our emergence into a new world of spiritual and moral refinement. It is marked by recitations from Jain sacred writings and exchange of cards and letters with family. It is a celebration of the divine qualities of the soul and the eighth 8th day (*Samvatsari*) is most important and is focused on forgiveness.

4B

"Today we celebrate the birthday of Krishna. Where was he born? In a prison. What were his possessions? Nothing. Born in a prison, he was taken to the house of Nanda and then he went to Mathura. He owned nothing. But he became the greatest figure in the world. What does this show? Worldly possessions are not the secret of greatness. Krishna's greatness consisted in His permanent state of bliss."

5C

Yom Kippur is the most sacred and solemn day of the Jewish year. On Yom Kippur, God makes the final decision on what the next year will be like for each person. The Book of Life is closed and sealed, and those who have properly repented for their sins will be granted a happy New Year. This special day is marked by Jews in several ways: they abstain from food or drink for 25 hours; they do not wear perfume; they don't wash; and they don't wear leather shoes. The most important part of Yom Kippur is the time spent in the synagogue. Even Jews who are not particularly religious will want to attend synagogue on Yom Kippur, the only day of the year with five services.

6A

In England, 'Harvest Festival' reminds Christians of all the good things God gives them. This makes them want to share with others who are not so fortunate. In schools and in Churches, people bring food from home to a Harvest Festival Service. After the service, the food that has been put on display is usually made into parcels and given to people in need.

7C

Easwara's family consists of Shiva, Parvathi, Ganapathi and Subrahmanya. When you consider the vehicles of the four, you find that by nature they are antagonistic to each other. Shiva's vehicle is Nandi (the Bull). Parvathi's vehicle is the lion. By nature the bull and the lion are inimical towards each other.

On Easwara's head there is Ganga. In His forehead He has fire. There is natural antagonism between water (in the Ganga) and fire in the Lord's forehead. Ganapathi has the elephant's face and His vehicle is a rat. There is a natural antagonism between Parvathi's lion and Ganapathi's elephant-head. Likewise there is natural enmity between the serpent around Easwara's neck and Ganapathi's vehicle, the rat. There is also enmity between Shiva's serpent and Subrahmanya's peacock. In spite of the natural enmity of these different vehicles of Easwara's family, there is no discord at all among them.

Perfect harmony prevails among the members of the family and their different vehicles. This harmony and unity is an example to the world.

8A

Nelson Mandela coined the phrase "rainbow nation" to describe South Africa's diverse cultures, customs, traditions, histories, and languages. This day is a celebration of that diversity.

9A

The Baha'i faith was founded in Persia (Iran) in the middle of the 19th Century. The founder of the faith, Baha'u'llah (1817-1892), was originally a Muslim. Bahá'u'lláh means "The Glory of God" in Arabic and Bahá'u'lláh claimed to fulfill the Bábí prophecy of "He whom God shall make manifest". He also claimed to be the Messenger of God as prophesized in all great religious traditions.

Answer: C

10C

The word 'Maskal' actually means 'Cross' and the feast commemorates the discovery of the Cross upon which Jesus was crucified by the Empress Helena, the mother of Constantine the Great. The original event took place on 19 March, AD 326, but the feast is now celebrated on 27 September.

H2H QUIZ

1. In 'Baba's Three Questions' from our September 15th 2003 issue, we picked three stories from the Sanathana Sarathi April 1961 issue written by late Prof. Kasturi. One of the stories relates to an officer who had developed high fever in a jungle during a thunderstorm who had thus lost all hopes of rescue. But when He prayed to Baba, he experienced a Saincidental act of mercy when a lorry arrived and the driver took him to a doctor. Later, he came to Puttaparthi.

What did Swami ask him?

- A. "Did you like the Doctor I sent?"
- B. "Did you get the lorry I sent?"
- C. "Were you scared of the rains?"
- D. "Did you pay the driver I sent?"

2. Back in October 2004, we started the 'Conversations with Sai' section which serializes the famous book '*Conversations with Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba*' by John S. Hislop.

What was Swami's reply to Hislop's question: 'What is the big factor that prevents us from seeing the Truth of life clearly?'

- A. Our ignorance.
- B. Our lack of time.
- C. Our disharmony.
- D. Our lack of interest.

3. In 'You Will Win', the Sathya Sai Speaks of the May 15th 2004 issue, Swami compared between Bhakthi and Jnana, stating that Bhakthi is the more difficult path for the sadhaka. What does Swami say Bhakthi means?

- A. Offering fruits and flowers.
- B. Complete surrender.
- C. Praying 5 times a day.
- D. Chanting mantras.

4. In our Chinna Katha 'This Belongs to My Dear Devotee' from the March 2006 issue, we presented Swami's story about a plate of gold which had fallen from the sky into the centre of the temple hall inscribed with the words, 'This Belongs to My Dear Devotee'. However, it turned into an earthen plate the moment anyone touched it in a greedy way - until one day a stranger came and touched it and it remained gold! All the people in the temple

crowded round the man and tried to find out his greatness. What did the man say was the sadhana he had practised to earn the accolade?

- A. Memorizing the Vedas.
- B. Namasmaraṇ.
- C. Chanting mantras.
- D. Fasting.

5. In our 'Reflections On Prayer' article from the September 2003 issue which stressed the importance of prayer in our daily lives, Prof. G. Venkataraman shared a beautiful poem with us written by a famous saint:

O LORD!

*Make me an instrument
of Your Peace!*

Where there is hatred, let me sow Love;

Where there is injury, Pardon;

Where there is discord, Unity;

Where there is doubt, Faith;

Where there is error, Truth;

Where there is despair, Hope;

Where there is sadness, Joy;

Where there is darkness, Light.

O Divine Master!

Grant that I may not seek

To be consoled, as to console;

To be understood, as to understand;

To be loved, as to love.

For it is in giving that we receive,

It is in pardoning that we are pardoned,

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

Who was it written by?

- A. Meera
- B. St. Augustine
- C. St. Francis
- D. Khawaja Moinuddin Chishty

Answers

1B.

An officer who had to tour uninhabited tracts and jungles for at least a few months every year as part of his official duties came to Puttaparthi; he was looking up the verandah on the first floor of the Nilayam, to get a glimpse of Baba. Presently, Baba appeared and recognizing him, asked, "Did you get the lorry I sent?" I thought the man was a businessman who had dispatched a lorry to Puttaparthi and was expecting it back. But the man had a different story to tell!

He said that the question revealed to him that the arrival of a lorry, along a god forsaken jungle road to pick him up from his sick bed and convey him to the nearest doctor, 40 miles away, was the act of Baba and the saving of his life by that doctor's timely ministrations was a Satyasaidential act of mercy. It seems he had developed a septic wound while in camp and that he had fallen into delirium on account of the fever. It was raining terribly and thunder roared overhead. He prayed to all the Gods he knew, including Baba, but, found no ray of hope, for he was on the very center of no man's land. Then, suddenly, he heard the noise of a passing lorry. Yes. The driver had lost his way and was nosing his way about the jungle tracks. His servants ran after it shouted desperately, and caught it, by the side of a deep nullah, where it had perforce to stop. That lorry saved his life. And, now, he knew that Baba had sent it!

2 C.

SAI: You say that Truth, God and Reality are imagination. Why do you think they are imagination? They are not. Time, work, reason and experience; these four in harmony together, that is Truth. When the four are found to be out of harmony, then you feel it is untruth.

3B

Bhakthi is very difficult to acquire; do not think it is easy to become a bhaktha. As a matter of fact, it is even more difficult than Jnana, for it means complete surrender, full contentment whatever may happen. The river must flow back to its source; it must turn back and up. If you flow down, you will have to go down, down, down, and water becomes undrinkable. But do not despair; you have to win some day. The sooner, the better.

4 B

The stranger said: "I don't belong to any place. I just manage to earn my bread by hard labour. The only *Sadhana* I do is *Namasmaran*. This has perhaps rendered my heart pure and filled it with love and compassion. It has enabled me to control my mind and the senses. I have not read any book or mastered any science. The only art I know of is chanting the Name Divine. The only act I do is to be kind to the poor."

5 C

QUIZ ON GANESH AND KRISHNA

This month sees celebrations of both Krishna Janmashtami (4 Sept) and Ganesh Chaturthi (15 Sept). We have ten questions for you, culled from the pages of Heart2Heart, to test your knowledge relating to Lord Krishna and Lord Ganesha. Good luck!

1. In our September 2003 issue, when we first started our 'Sai Bhajan Classroom' section, we presented this Ganesha bhajan, with meaning and pronunciation.

*Gouri Suthaaya Om Namah Om
Lambodaraaya Om Namah Om
Vighneshwaraaya Om Namah Om
Bhava Dukha Bhanjana Om Namah Om*

What does the word *Vighneshwaraaya* mean?

- A. Elephant head God.
- B. Remover of obstacles.
- C. One who loves eating laddoos.
- D. Son of Lord Shiva and Parvati.

2. In our 'Conversations with Sai' from the September 2006 issue, Dr Hislop once asked Swami:

"What kind of person was Chaitanya?"

To which Swami replied...

Chaitanya also would sing to Krishna and dance in ecstasy with Krishna. Once he visited an admirer. He was lodged in a room next to the prayer hall. Whenever food was offered to the 5-metal idol of Krishna, Chaitanya was observed to be eating that same food in his room. The host decided to make a test. He locked Chaitanya in his room and there was some opening through which he could see Chaitanya. Food was offered to the Krishna idol, and Chaitanya was seen to be eating the food. The host entered the room and slapped Chaitanya on both cheeks.

What happened next?

- A. The metal idol of Krishna disappeared.
- B. Chaitanya left the city.
- C. Krishna came in his dream and chastised the host.
- D. Devotees chased the host away!

3. In our September 2005 issue, in our 'Feature Articles' section, we presented Swami's teachings on the significance and importance of the sacred offerings made to Ganesh during *Ganesh Chaturthi*. Why are these offerings made?

- A. To improve health and confer happiness.
- B. To seek knowledge.
- C. To lose weight.
- D. To gain material prosperity.

4. In the feature article, 'Primordial Deity - Powerful Inspiration' from the August 2006 issue, Dr. T. Ravi Kumar shares with us the meaning of a very popular stotram in praise of Lord Ganesha and how it holds ideals for everyone. It goes like this:

*Suklambharadhram vishnum,
sasi varnam chatur bhujam
prasanna vadhanam dyayeh
sarvavigna upashantaye*

Thus, Lord Ganesha holds Himself forth as an ideal for all in this stotram (and more so for the Sai students). Consider this:

Suklambharadharam [the one with white garments on]: we should wear immaculate white (pure) clothes.

Vishnum [all-pervading]: be present everywhere where you supposed to be in time.

Sashi varnam [of bright complexion]: have the vibhuti spot on your forehead.

Chatur bhujam [who has four hands]: be an achiever, be industrious.

Prasanna vadhanam [ever smiling face]: be cheerful and joyous.

What humorous meaning to the words *Prasanna Vadhanam*, does Swami give?

- A. Don't worry, Be happy!
- B. Count your Blessings!
- C. No Castor Oil face!
- D. Devotion is Deep Ocean.

5. 'Swami's Brindavan Discourses' of our July 15th 2004 issue, concerned the meaning behind our spiritual festivals. Besides recalling the teachings of Lord

Krishna as given to us in the Bhagavad Gita, what did Bhagavan say we should contemplate on Krishna Jayanti Day?

- A: How Krishna loves to sing and dance.
- B. How Krishna loves to eat butter.
- C. How Krishna played pranks with His playmates.
- D. How Krishna is the Embodiment of Nectarine Sweetness.

6. In our 'Cover Story: The Krishna Story' from the October 2004 issue, we learn what Swami says was the main purpose of the Krishna Avatar? What was this purpose?

- A. To save humanity by killing the demons.
- B. To save the Pandavas.
- C. To show how man can earn the love of God.
- D. To show His Divinity through His Leela's.

7. In the November 2005 issue, in our Feature Article, 'The Sai Avatar on Himself', we shared an extract from the conversations between Swami and Dr Hislop, where Hislop asked:

"Swami, it seems to be the case that from the time of Krishna to Sathya Sai."

Sai: Time? I AM KRISHNA! Where is time?

Hislop: Then, Swami, this has to be the best time of the world for persons to be born?

What did Swami reply next?

- A. "No, My Shirdi Avatar was a better time."
- B. "No, My Rama Avatar was the best time."
- C. "Yes, This is the very best time."
- D. "My Prema Sai Avatar will be the best of all."

8. In our features section of the August 2005 issue, we carried a Discourse given by Bhagavan on Krishnastami Day, 10 Jun, 1974. He mentioned "During Krishna's Time, His parents, His companions, His devotees - no one had peace from....."

Who was He referring to?

- A. Demons

- B. Kauravas
- C. His Uncle Kamsa
- D. Constant rainfall

9. In our 'Chinna Katha: The Winning Smile' from the April 2007 issue, we shared a small story narrated by Bhagavan about how once the three brothers Lord Krishna, Balarama and Satyaki had strayed into the jungle when they were barely four years and how a demon confronted them but was wounded by the other two in a fierce battle.

What happened when it was little Lord Krishna's turn to fight him?

- A. Lord Krishna used His arrows to kill him.
- B. Lord Krishna used Love as His weapon.
- C. Lord Krishna turned him into a stone.
- D. The demon called his other friends to help him against Lord Krishna.

10. In "The True Meaning of Darshan Sparshan and Sambarshan' from the June 1st 2004 issue, Prof G. Venkataraman shares a small story that Swami has narrated several times before about the time when Mother Yashoda was filling water in her pots and she asked little Krishna for help.

What did Krishna do?

- A. He just laughed and ran away.
- B. He played a prank and made holes in all the pots.
- C. He carried them all the way until they reached home.
- D. He asked his playmates to carry the pots for her.

Answers

1B.

English translation:

I bow down to the son of Mother Gauri (Parvathi).

I bow down to the one with a large belly.

I bow down to the remover of obstacles.

I bow down to the destroyer of worldly sorrows.

2A

Upon this, the metal idol of Krishna disappeared. This caused great worry, and prayers were made to Krishna. Krishna appeared to the devotees and

said, 'You offered food to me and then slapped me when I ate. So I went away'.

3A

It has been the practice in India since ancient times to offer Lord Ganesha steam-cooked delicacies like *kudumulu* and *vundrallu*, especially on *Ganesh Chaturthi* Day. Explaining their significance, Swami says,

These steam-cooked offerings with no oil are unique and special. Til seeds, rice flour and jaggery are mixed, made into balls, boiled in steam and offered to Lord Vinayaka. You should enquire into the purpose of making such an offering. These steam-cooked offerings (modaka) are good for the eyes, they free us from all defects of the eye like spots and cataracts and are beneficial to people suffering from asthma and eosinophilia. A combination of jaggery and til seeds prevents all defects and diseases caused due to bile (vatha), wind (pitha) and phlegm (cough). The rice flour preparation helps in digestion too. These offerings are meant to improve health and confer happiness on man. They are not to be treated as mere ritualistic practices. All that is related to God has a sacred inner meaning.

4C

5D

All festivals are in celebration of just One God – for the simple reason there is only one God! What the different festivals seek to do is to direct our attention to the different aspects of this One God. For example, on Rama Navami day, we must reinforce our dedication to Sathya and Dharma, for that was what Rama stood for. On Vinayaka Chaturthi day, we must focus on developing our Buddhi or intellect; on Krishna Jayanthi day, we must not only recall the teachings of Krishna as given to us in the Bhagavad Gita, but also how God is the very Embodiment of Nectarine Sweetness.

6C.

Unlike Rama, Krishna did occasionally reveal His Divinity, but by and large He very much lived like a normal person. Even when He invoked His Divine Powers, it was always for the benefit of others. Krishna was ever smiling, was always in a state of Divine Bliss, and constantly in the service of others.

Swami says that the main purpose of the Krishna Avatar was to bequeath to humanity the priceless gift of the *Gita*, and to tell man how he can earn the love of God.

7C.

Sai: "Yes. The very best time. Even better than during the lifetime of the Krishna body."

8B

Krishna had to meet these malicious slanderers and destroy them one by one, throughout His life. His parents, His companions, His devotees - no one had peace from that tribe of Kauravas. The message is that you must see the Truth that is covered by all the tales and legends that tarnish the Name.

9B

The demon came roaring like a wounded tiger, and advanced furiously at the little Divine Boy. Krishna turned his sweet charming face at him, and rewarded him with a lovely smile. That smile disarmed the demon. The longer he came under its influence, the weaker became his vengeance and venom. At last, the demon became as docile as a lamb. When the other two awoke, they were surprised at the victory that Krishna had won by the weapon of Love. You cannot destroy anger by anger, cruelty by cruelty, hatred by hatred. Anger can be subdued only by forbearance. Cruelty can be overcome only by non-violence. Hatred yields only to charity and compassion.

10A

The story goes like this. It appears that when Krishna was very young, one day He was playing near the area where Yashoda was filling water in her pots. After she had done the filling she called out, "Hey Krishna, come and help me to load the pots on my head." Krishna just laughed and ran away. Yasoda grumbled, complained about her "unhelpful son" and trudged back home. When she reached the doorstep there was Krishna waiting for her. Not just that; with a big smile, He even helped Yasoda to unload the pots, although she did not ask for help. Yasoda was quite surprised and said, "Krishna, You are strange. When I asked You to place the pots on my head You refused but now when I did not even ask You, You have voluntarily helped me to bring down the pots from my head. What is the meaning of all this?" Krishna smiled and replied, "I do not place burden on people; I only help in removing them!"

HEALING TOUCH

From Cardiac Blues to the Family's Blue-Eyed Boy

Samir Parida's Journey to Perfect Health

"Bed No. 26—Phone Call!" rang out a shrill voice breaking the peaceful silence in the post-operative cardiac ward. You would expect the voice to belong to a nurse, beckoning a recuperating patient to attend a phone call from home. You're in for a pleasant surprise when you trace the voice to a seven-year old boy, recovering from a heart ailment, gaily zipping through the ward, trying to reach the patient to the phone.

Samir Parida feels totally at ease in the ward and mingles with the nurses as he would with his elder sisters at home. When free from answering phone calls, Samir helps them push the medicine trolley as they dispense medicines to the patients in the ward. Sarbeshwar Parida, the proud father of the child, looks on at Samir busy in all such activities, partly in amazement but mostly with a deep sense of gratitude towards the Hospital and to its Founder, Bhagavan Baba for giving his dear son a brand new lease of life.

The Parida Family of Ghagra, Orissa

Sarbeshwar Parida works for Jessop & Co. Ltd., a heavy engineering concern, head-quartered in Calcutta, West Bengal. Originally hailing from Ghagra village in the Kendrapara district of Orissa, about 460 kilometres from Calcutta, Sarbeshwar has been working with Jessop & Co. since 1989, when he started his service as a peon there. Over the years, through his sincerity and diligence, he rose to the position of a senior writer in the Dispatch section of the Administration department of the company.

A devout wife, one daughter and three sons, all of them living in Ghagra, made up his family. He supported them from Calcutta, as the children were studying in the local government school in their native village of Ghagra.

Samir's Sorry Story

It was four months after the birth of his third son, Samir, that Sarbeshwar's difficult times began when an unexplainable swelling appeared on Samir's head. Soon his whole body was covered with blue colour boils. Sarbeshwar feared Samir was suffering from some form of poisoning. Hoping it would soon pass away, he and his wife Shanthilatha Parida tried out different medicines but to no avail. Sarbeshwar took Samir to a local doctor, a general practitioner in Calcutta, who took one look at Samir and advised Sarbeshwar not to waste any time in taking him to a children's hospital.

Sarbeshwar immediately took Samir to the doctors at Jessop & Co. Ltd. After an x-ray the doctors conferred amongst themselves and confirmed that Samir's condition was due to a congenital heart defect, but were unable to diagnose further. They advised him to admit Samir at a super-specialty hospital for treatment. Time seemed to be running out for Samir. After a

desperate search, Sarbeshwar finally admitted Samir in the Intensive Care Unit at the Tollygunj Hospital, in south Calcutta. Samir was in the ICU for three days. At the end of the stay, the boils disappeared, but the diagnosis eluded the doctors. Though disappointed that the doctors could not diagnose Samir's problem, he reminded himself that his son is still alive and brought him home to Ghagra. He went back to work at Calcutta.

Anxious Parent's Pains Had No End

At Ghagra, Samir was unable to resume a normal childhood. He continued to suffer from bouts of cold and cough. Although he was able to participate in games with boys of his age, his growth was not satisfactory. He had to make frequent trips to the local doctors but to Sarbeshwar and Shantilatha, it appeared the doctors, unable to diagnose Samir's ailment, were only experimenting on their child.

Watching Samir suffer this way was a painful and agonizing experience for his parents. Since the frequent bouts of illness did not seem to abate, Sarbeshwar and Shanthilatha subjected little Samir to many investigations at several Government and private hospitals at Calcutta in the hope of a permanent cure. Today, sitting in the post-operative ward of Sri Sathya Sai Institute, Sarbeshwar looks back at that painful period with dread and recalls, "I have no account even of the money I spent during that time towards Samir's treatment. We sought help at so many hospitals. In spite of our poor financial situation, we wanted our child to get well and were prepared to spend what little we had, but all expenses seemed to be in vain." Samir's condition continued to be the same. The parents, Sarbeshwar and Shanthilatha, continued to lament their fate.

The 'Superior' One Intervenes...

Hope entered their lives in 2005, when Samir was almost seven years old. By now Samir had grown up into a sweet little boy with large expressive eyes and a toothy grin. In spite of his poor health, he became notorious for his sudden vanishing acts—disappearing with his friends at short notice to play a game of cricket.

God's love and light found its way into their lives through one of Sarbeshwar's superiors at work, who was acutely aware of Sarbeshwar's plight. He suggested that Sarbeshwar take Samir to Bhagavan Baba's Super Specialty Hospital at Bangalore. This was when things started to fall into place.

Strangely, even though Sarbeshwar was aware of Baba's service organization and the service activities being carried out by Baba, he was not aware of the Medicare aspect of His mission, notably the Super-Specialty hospitals, which offered the highest quality of tertiary healthcare services to all, at no cost.

Coincidence or God's Miracle?

Around this time he happened to meet a close associate who had obtained treatment for a relative of his at this "too-good-to-be-true" Hospital in Bangalore. With hope firmly planted in his heart, Sarbeshwar sought God's blessings for his son and bundled up copies of previous medical reports—

which by now had swollen into a thick folder—and arrived at the Hospital, requesting for an appointment. Very soon Sarbeshwar held in his hand a post-card from the Hospital, inviting Samir for a consultation. Though the post-card was only an invite for a consultation and did not promise to solve Samir's problem, the family's joy seemed to be boundless. Holding that precious postcard from Baba's Hospital, Sarbeshwar and Shanthilatha intuitively knew that it was their passport to Samir's good health and that their difficult times were finally going to end.

In early 2005, with his mother and father in tow, a wide-eyed Samir entered the magnificent Hospital complex in awe. After knocking on the doors of many government and private hospitals and finding no relief, **Sarbeshwar was completely overwhelmed to find the doors of this unique Hospital wide-open to receive Samir. Recounting the love and caring he received at the Hospital during the first visit itself, an emotionally moved Sarbeshwar says, "No one should call this a Hospital. It is a Temple. I felt completely relieved when I entered the Hospital. The mind was at peace and my wife and I were completely floored by the quality of care and the helpful nature of the staff here. We felt so very secure when we were in the Hospital premises."**

The "Mix Up" That Messed Up Samir

During the first visit itself Samir was diagnosed with a complex congenital heart defect—Total Anomalous Pulmonary Venous Connection. He was put on medication and asked to await a call from the Hospital. Samir's call for surgery came soon enough and once more the family made a trip to the Hospital around July end, 2005. Thursday, August 4, 2005 is the day that will ever remain etched in gold in the memory of the Parida family, for Samir was operated upon that day.

The Head of Department of Cardiac Surgery at the Institute and the surgeon who operated on Samir is Dr. Anil Kumar, a senior surgeon, with vast experience in dealing with such cases. He explains Samir's condition. "Samir suffered from a complex congenital heart defect where the pure blood from the lungs, instead of reaching the body, is diverted back through a hole into the heart, and mixes with the impure blood. As a consequence impure blood circulated throughout Samir's body. Deoxygenated blood is blue in colour and this explains the blueness of Samir's skin.

"Samir's surgery was fairly complex. After he was anaesthetized, the heart and lungs were arrested and the functions of these vital organs were performed by the sophisticated heart-lung machine. We opened up the heart, closed the hole in it through which the pure and impure blood were mixing, and also the vascular pathway through which the "mix up" was taking place. Once the procedure was completed, taking all necessary precautions and ensuring his heart and lungs were functioning normally, we disconnected the heart-lung machine. With Swami's Grace, Samir's recovery was exceptionally good and within a week of the surgery, he was fit enough to be discharged.

“The operation is only part of the treatment. The post-operative care, which includes medication, state-of-the-art equipment, ICU Management, is quite demanding and requires qualified and trained personnel round the clock. Baba ensures that though our Institute offers free medical care, the quality of care far exceeds that provided even in private hospitals. It is purely His Love and Grace, which is translated into action at this Hospital.”

“It is unbelievable, it is a miracle” - Sarbeshwar

Samir is no longer “blue”! He is now fully cured. Sarbeshwar recalls the moment the doctor informed him and his wife that Samir’s surgery was successful and that he would grow up to be a normal child. “I remember it was on a Thursday that Samir’s surgery was performed. We were certain that Samir would therefore get an extra “dose” of Baba’s blessings. **When we heard the doctor give us the good news, we both shed tears of joy. We were completely overwhelmed by His Grace. It is unbelievable. It is a miracle that we received such wonderful treatment at no cost to us.**”

Samir is now nine years old and comes to the Hospital for regular checkups to the out-patient department of the Hospital. He carries with him fond memories of the Ward in which he used to zip around two years ago, playing the role of a “phone message boy” to perfection. Samir and his father stop by at the ward to greet the doctors and sisters who were instrumental in his treatment. The smile on his face and his boundless joy give the doctors, nurses and other staff of the Hospital immense satisfaction. “We are eternally grateful to Baba for the care received at this wonderful Hospital,” says an emotionally moved Sarbeshwar.

Though the story of no two patients is ever the same, the feelings of wonderment, gratitude and peace they experience at Baba’s unique Hospitals will always remain the same, for pure, selfless love is truly a universal feeling and transcends all barriers of race, class, faith, culture. As Bhagavan Baba, who is the sole force and inspiration behind such stirring service projects, says, “there is only one religion, the religion of love.”

- Heart2Heart Team

YOUR SAY

- Feedback from our readers on the August issue Feedback on the Cover Story 'Enlightened Leadership...A Matter of Heart, Mind and Soul.'

Sairam,

I enjoyed every bit of the article – “Enlightened Leadership - A Matter of Heart, mind, and soul”. It was educational, inspiring, and thought provoking. All of the identified businessman/politicians live under Swami's dictum “Head in the forest and hands in the society”. It gives me a different perspective and a great source of inspiration and value to live in this materialist world, which can be certainly used to complement our spiritual advancement.

Although I just relaxed in my room and enjoyed reading the article, my heart was with the authors who have devoted their time, effort, and energy to compile this.

My heart felt thanks to Radio Sai also.

In The Service Of Sai,
Ravi.

Sai Ram Dear Members of the H2H Team,

I just now finished reading the article "Enlightened Leadership", which is truly enlightening. I showed this to my Mother and Father, who were both equally impressed with the article. Before I read this article, I was aware of the concept of business and spirituality being integrated at Swami's University, but I still had this lingering doubt about whether it can really happen, due to influences around me such as TV and even a few relatives and friends who said that this integration was more or less impossible. But now this has totally dispelled my doubts regarding spirituality and business going in hand to hand, and I am completely convinced that this can and will be done.

Loving Regards,
Nimish Ubhayakar.

Sai Ram!

I wanted to extend my thanks and gratitude for this article. It came at the time in my Life when I needed to read it. I am at a point in my life of career change. I know what I want to do and why, but have fears and doubts. Financially, things are bleak. I keep telling myself that all will be well and that there is a lesson in all of this. I believe God is in control and is working behind the scenes. Timing is very important in starting a new venture, as is patience, trust and discernment.

Due to my lack of funds, I have found myself making decisions based upon "my" needs. All your interviewees have stated not to seek personal rewards, but to do the work one is given with our whole heart and soul, then everything will work out fine for us too.
Thank you again. May God always shine the Light and Love in your lives, Michele

Sairam,

The article on leadership shows how a common man who comes in touch with Baba can benefit from practicing His teachings and go on ascending spiritually without forsaking responsibilities.

Rgds,
R.Dattatri.

Sai Ram Dear Heart2Heart team,

Thank you so much for this unique cover story by Prof. Peter Pruzan and Mrs. Kirsten Pruzan Mikkelsen from Denmark. I have a place in my heart for these two wonderful persons as I know them both. It was very enlightened and if every leader in the world started to study our beloved Swami's teachings the world will be a better place to be as a worker. We really have to combine our spirituality with our daily work, always remembering the Lord and give everything to Him.

I am a secretary to our company's director and I smile and be kind to everyone who comes into the office to have a talk with the chief. If I have Swami in my heart I have no problems doing that at all.

Still, sometimes I sadly forget it and that makes problems. So by reading this wonderful cover story I know from the bottom of my heart that I always have to remember Him and always remember that He is inside of me and in everyone I meet every day at work and when I'm off duty. Normally I always think of Him, but sometimes I forget it, if everything has to be done in a hurry. Thank you for reminding me (again dear Lord) through this story.

God is in everyone - be alike to everyone. Always be full of love towards each being you meet on your path. I hope that the leaders of tomorrow will be guided by the Lord Himself through heart to heart connection. That's what I experience with the Lord and it is also what I teach others to do.

With love and Sai Ram,
Mrs. Heidi Elisabeth Hansen, 1658 Copenhagen V, Denmark

Feedback on: 'Conversations with Sai'

Sairam,

A section of h2h I have been reading with great interest is 'Conversations with Sai'. It is verily a treasure for all Sai devotees especially those who are eager to pursue the spiritual path. We are really grateful to Dr. Hislop, a wonderful devotee of Bhagavan, for having plied Swami with questions on spiritual and organisational matters and duly recorded the answers that Swami gave him. Dr. Hislop, I should say, has more or less played the role of Arjuna to Swami, that of an earnest spiritual seeker eager to know the Truth. I have found answers to many of my questions in this column. Hope the series never ends.

Thankyou. Loving regards, Latha TN, India.

Feedback on: 'When God Injects Hope In A Billion Hearts'

Om Sri Sai Ram dear members of h2h team,

As you put it the Sri Sathya Sai hospitals are unimaginable manifestations of Bhagavan's unparalleled love of a thousand mothers. While comparing the modern hospitals of the Western world with that of the healing temples that Bhagavan has created at Puttaparthi and Whitefield, Mrs. Karuna Sarup Munshi in her own lucid and journalistic way has expressed her splendid views, experiences and the compassionate treatment that are given to the patients at the super specialty hospitals of Bhagavan Babaji. If one calculates from the facts table presented by her we can feel that lucky for those 95,266 patients who underwent surgical operations out of 1,790,246 persons who visited the OPDs so far at the Sri Sathya Sai hospitals at Puttaparthi and Whitefield. Our shatha koti pranams to Bhagavan and many many pranams to the dedicated doctors, volunteers, and supporting people.

Jai Sri Sai Rama, Krishna Prasad, Bangalore.

Sairam,

While I was reading the article by Mrs. Karuna Swarup Munshi, I just looked into the figures of cardiac surgeries alone done since 1991 to 2007, which was around 16,500 and then I just computed the quantum of money that would have been spent, had the same surgeries got done outside in private clinics. A staggering amount of Rs.500 to 600 crores of rupees would have been spent by patients, who underwent these surgeries. If all the work done in the hospital is computed in value terms, surgeries of other departments and other health care etc., (of course you cannot place any value on the love rendered or manifested), it would definitely beat any health budget of any state. What a wonderful work done by Swami and how blessed are we, to be in His midst.

Sairam, Gopalakrishnan K

Feedback on: 'Sai Service Centre Blossoms in the Slums of Mexico'

Dear H2H team,

The story about the slums of Mexico was touching! I am not usually emotional but tears came to my eyes. Thank you Swami! It was refreshing to read this article as I had gone to sleep last night deploring the nastiness and material bent of our present day society. I prayed to Swami to lighten my heart, and there it was! Now I can start to live this day afresh with more energy and optimism.

Om Sai Ram!

With Love, Jacqueline Trost.

Feedback on: "He Is My Swami" Conversation with Mrs. Padma Kasturi Part – 4'

Sairam,

The conversation of Mrs. Padma Kasturi was deeply moving & enthralling, it carried us to an era we have missed, but could now vividly imagine, thanks to her. Please do include more such conversations in later issues.

With love, Saraswathy, Chennai, India

Sai Ram,

The interview with Mr Kasturi's daughter was such a joy to read. Her first hand experiences are just beautiful and are related with such love and simplicity. Thank you so much. More such interviews would be wonderful.

Sai Ram, Prabha Lalvani, London, UK.

Thank you Sir, for publishing the article of Mrs. Padma Kasturi. I am very much moved to read Swami's blessed devotees' experiences. Please continue to guide and inspire us this way.

With Pranams to Sai, Sridhar Ram, Chicago.

Feedback on: 'Once Upon A Time'

Sai Ram,

The above mentioned article is an eye opener for those confused with the present state of life especially in mega cities, and in western countries who look back to the peace and contented life we had in our childhood, and our family structure. Looking for more of them and praying our Baba shower his blessings on all of you. Best regards.

Sai Ram, P.seetharamaiah.

I thoroughly enjoyed this article about now and then and would like to tell Mrs Bruce that I totally agree. I am a grandmother and a teacher. Things have changed so much these days. I did some of the things mentioned by Mrs Bruce when I grew up. We were creative and had great sense of values. I don't see that now. Technology has changed the life style of the younger generation so much. I agree all those values will diminish soon. I wonder if we could help to restore some. Thanks.

Sairam, Karur Krishnan

It is a wonderful, well-written article and I can relate to most of what she has written in it - very relevant for most of us growing up in the fifties, sixties and seventies. It brought back memories of our growing up not in the US but in India, where one can relate to similar but an even simpler lifestyle than what Rita Bruce talks about in "Once Upon a Time."

I grew up in Mumbai, India and started visiting Parthi from 1966 after we saw Swami for the first time in 1965 in Mumbai. I stayed in Mumbai till 1974 when I came to the United States after marriage. I have been here since then, but we keep visiting Parthi almost once or twice a year. We were fortunate that our three children were blessed to attend Swami's school in Parthi from grade one through grade XII (the older two went to Ooty for the first five years of schooling and then transferred to Parthi school).

After completing their high school education in Prasanthi Nilayam, they came here to California to attend colleges and we can see how the modern day culture and thinking has created some confusion in their thinking. If this can happen in their case where they have had a solid foundation of Swami's values and teachings, I am not surprised at the outcome in others of the younger generation. Our children love Swami very much, but the transition from school in Parthi to life in the US has created some confusion in their thinking which will only straighten out with Swami's grace and some time.\

Sai Ram, Vidya Alekal

Feedback on: 'Test Your Spiritual Quotient'

Sairam!

I tried the Multi-Faith quiz. It was very narrative and gave enough information about the question asked. It really helps oneself to understand the principles of different religions and in a way helps us to realize that all religions teach and follow the same thing - Keeping Faith in the Supreme Power and doing good deeds. I would love to try some more quizzes like this one. I had been a student of Swami's Balvikas programme in my schooling years.

Thanks and Sairam.
Shuchita Dwivedi, Test Analyst

Feedback on: 'Watching the Corporate World - The Sai Way'

Sai Ram Dear Members of the H2H Team,

I was very impressed by the article "Watching the Corporate World - The Sai Way". It was very inspiring and I really liked reading it. Please do present more such articles by former students in the corporate world - I would very much like to read their experiences. Also in one Sunday Special Article for Sai Inspires, it was mentioned that there were instances of former students standing up to corruption in their places of work - please could you present articles on this subject as well?

Loving Regards, Nimish Ubhayakar, London, UK.

Feedback on: 'Bhajan Classroom'

Sai Ram to all at H2H,

A very good morning. I just checked my mail now and saw that the August issue of H2H is up. I immediately opened our website and found that the song that I'd requested 2 months back (Beda paar karo mere Sai) has been included in this issue. My joy knew no bounds. Thanks a ton to you all for the service that you are doing!!! Keep up the noble work....

Sai Ram, Roshni. R

Feedback on: 'Overcoming Fate with Faith'

Sai Ram Brothers and Sisters,

I just finished reading your article Healing Touch: Overcoming Fate with Faith. I always love these messages. They do inspire me and remind me of the great love that Swami has for us all. Bless you all and keep up the good work!

Love love love, Kimberly Klap, U.S.A.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the heartfelt story of Ruby. Such a reminder for me of Swami's work as it spreads quietly and significantly throughout the world. I visited India in 1998 staying at the Ashram in Puttaparti and then at Whitefield. I learnt then of the Specialty Hospital and the healing that happens through this specialist centre. Thank you to whoever ensures these stories arrives on my email site.

Recently I was searching the internet for sites that focus on human development and wondered if there would be a Sai site and was so thrilled to find the site and to also find the offer of daily thoughts and stories of the work done and being done by Swami. Each day I await my 'top up' and reminders of loving all and serving all.

In kindness and love, Gwynne.

Sai Ram dear brothers,

The article on Yadav and Ruby is very inspiring and is a solid evidence of Swami's love shared with the needy. This will definitely have a positive impact on people. This also shows the wonderful work Swami is doing to alleviate the sufferings of poor people and those who can't meet the expenses incurred by costly operations. Thanks to heart 2 heart team for presenting us with such wonderful experiences. You are helping us to learn about many lively experiences everyday and we are thankful to you all for the fantastic job you are doing.

Jai Sai Ram, With Love, Khesseven Narana Pillay, Mauritius.

Feedback on: 'Finding the Secret of Bliss'

It was wonderful to read this beautiful article by Sri Hislop. Till date I haven't got even a darshan of Sai Maa or any plans to go and meet the beloved had never worked out. Whenever I go through these articles I get a feeling he is always there with me. Thank you very much Radio Sai for your beautiful articles which are indeed inspiring to our younger generation. Currently I am working for a charity helping underprivileged and orphan children and elders in our surrounding villages.

Thanking You, with love, Ranadheer Dumbala, Ramavaram, Andhra Pradesh India.

Dear Sir,

Sai Ram! "Finding the Secret of Bliss" by Dr.Hislop is enlightening. Only an evolved person with Swami's grace can express in this vein. The immense

good that SGH is doing cannot be put into words. We may only say that: "All that's part of the Divine Design". The listeners convey their whole-hearted gratitude to the organisers.

Yours in Sai service, P.C.Sharma, Chandigarh, India.

Feedback on: 'The Perfect Guardian'

Respected Sir,

This refers to the lovely article "The Perfect Guardian" by Ms Arunima pant. The divine story made tears in my eyes. I was even more inspired as the author was my teacher when I studied in Anantpur. Maam used to tell us many divine experiences like this. She created in her students a genuine love and interest for Philosophy. Though I have not been able to meet my dear teacher many times after I left the Institute I always remember her. I would like to wish her a happy teacher's day through this wonderful e.magazine heart to heart.

Yours in Sai Seva, Ms R.Aparna.

General Feedback

Dear Heart2Heart team, Sairam,

I thank you for your efforts at bringing the message of Swami and Swami Himself close to people across the world. I find the articles very inspiring and infused with the love of Swami. It was wonderful reading the lecture of John Hislop. I also take this opportunity to thank the Saicast team for making videos of Swami accessible and Radio Sai team for their unparalleled service to humanity.

With love and good wishes,

Jagannadha Pawan Tamvada, Research Fellow, Max Planck Institute of Economics, Germany.

Dear Sir, Sai Ram!

Please accept my sincere thoughts of gratitude for making available to us Heart to Heart interviews and articles. It is impossible to describe their profound effect on sadhaks like us who are in the kindergarten stage of our journey towards Swami. These articles are profound, uplifting and inspiring and give us tremendous motivation and courage to follow SAI's Path.

With sincere thanks, Hemant Chaudhary, Adelaide, Australia.

1.

May the Lord give us all the fortitude to follow His path. Love your (His) daily messages, pictures, articles. Great work! This along with Radio Sai allows us to have darshan in our house on the other side of the planet. Whenever I have trouble finding sleep I turn on Radio Sai. It guarantees a sound, restful sleep. At some level, part of me is chanting away with the music programs you present.

Ivan Garcia, Guatemala.

Feedback on: the Sunday Special on 'Crying Halt To The Rat Race.'

Sai Ram Heart2Heart,

I agree whole heartedly with you on the subject of taking time for God. For the past 16 years I have been getting up to spend time in prayer. After returning from seeing Baba in 1991, and participating each morning in prayer in the Ashram I continued the practice. For the last 6 years I get up approximately 4a.m. (Honor Hour with Baba) and go into prayer. I do chants, mantras, scripture reading, japamala, and the Omkar every morning. My honor hour lasts about 1-1/2 hours. It sets the tone for my day, and I believe that I can handle just about anything that comes at me that day. The last 6 years has been the easiest because I am retired.

However, for five years when I was still working I would rise at 3 a.m. and pray for at least 1/2 hour. I simply love this special time spent with Baba each morning. He is surely grooming me. He is not finished working on me, but there has been some growth.

Thank you for your special article on the Rat Race. I live in the country and my pace is much slower, by choice. I usually get where I have to be early, taking my precious time. I spend as much time during the day reading, and singing to the Lord. I am presently reading, "Sai Baba Gita". WOW - powerful reading. Do I have work to do? YES - I will do my very best to apply some of Baba's requirements.

Sai Ram, Your sister in the Lord, Lady Melba

Feedback on: 'Sai Inspires' the daily Inspirational email service

Sai Ram, Heart To Heart!

I just want to tell you how wonderful your newsletter/e-publication is. It is such a blessing to find Swami's beautiful smile on my computer screen everyday!

You all write so well and the uplifting vibration from your Devotion comes through your writing loud and clear. The love that you pour into your Service is soothing and inspiring.

I have to add my name to the long list of readers who were deeply touched to read all about our dear Sai Geetha. What a lovely Soul She is! I was fortunate to see her on Swami's 60th Birthday in 1985, as she led the Grand Procession through Hill View Stadium. She was just FULL to the BRIM with Love! What a Sight!! I have not been to Prasanthi / India since 2000, but of course I feel hugely fortunate to have gone the five times that I did. I hope I make it back there again, but it's true what they say about how all you need is to have Swami in your heart. I know that Swami is as close as a thought, as a prayer and as my heart, as well as all around me! But in these challenging times we live in, it is wonderful for me to get your newsletter, and stay in touch with the Divine goings on in the land of the Avatar. Keep up the great work! You are a blessing to so many of us.

Best wishes, Liz Abbott, Buffalo, NY USA.

Sai Ram!

Let me again congratulate h2h group on their consistence in doing such a wonderful job!! Apart from Baba who is anyway a Source of divine Inspiration, you all are making sure that his Presence and message is spread wide to all nooks and corners of the world. For wavering minds like mine Baba's message in the mail helps me rebuild my faith and answers so many doubts and fears which keep cropping up. Thank you!!!

Regards, Kusum Kunchaparty, Bangalore

Feedback on: Radio Sai, Bhajan Class

Dear brother Devotees,

I am following your Bhajan Class and waiting for one special bhajan. Listening to the hundreds of your beautiful bhajans I prayed once to Swami, saying, I could not possibly remember them, but would He please help me to keep some melodies in my heart. He has surely granted my request and I keep hearing the first part of the bhajan "Radhe Govinda, Radhe Gopala, Sai Ram."

I sing my own words in Czech to the first part, but unfortunately I cannot remember the whole melody and of course do not know the text. It would have never occurred to me, that I should ask you, until today I heard you say in the Bhajan Class, that some devotee had asked you for this week's bhajan. So suddenly I thought, how simple it is for me to do the same. If you have a fixed plan and this particular bhajan does not fit into it, never mind my request, I shall understand. Let me just thank you for this wonderful opportunity of being able to tune into Radio Sai on my computer (this has reconciled me with Internet as a whole) and tell you, how much we

appreciate
this boon. With best wishes and kind regards

Ruth (aged 81)

Sai Ram,

I was thrilled to hear Hislop on Radio Sai just now. I have been dreaming about it and there it is, the wish is fulfilled. Please have more of such talks by old devotees who spent their lives in such close proximity to Swami in the early hears of the Avathaar. The insights are far too profound.
Love, Sai Ram, Venu Ganji, London, Canada.