

**HEART 2 HEART**

**VOL 7 ISSUE 6, JUNE 2009**

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## **BETWEEN YOU AND US**

A blue jewel suspended alone and majestic in the black void – that is our Earth through the eyes of astronauts. On April 12, 1961, when Yuri Gagarin, the first human being who actually traveled into the 'black void', watched our 'blue jewel' from an altitude of 300 kilometres, he was thrilled. "The earth is blue," he relayed excitedly to Ground Control. "How wonderful! It is amazing!" What makes this 'blue beauty' of our Milky Way so phenomenally incredible is an abundance of one simple compound – H<sub>2</sub>O.

Water, present profusely in its liquid form, is what makes Earth a scintillating celestial body. It is for this reason that millions of dollars have been spent by space scientists to spot even a tiniest trace of this precious element on other planets, most notably Mars. But on Earth, water pervades everywhere, either in solid, liquid or gaseous form. Nature thrives and beings breathe because of water. Indeed, it is the fuel of every human civilization. Historically, all sprawling cities throughout mankind's history had this common feature – they flourished along a body of water, on the bank of a river, ocean or a lake. Today, be it nuclear power plants, the semi-conductor industry, automobile manufacturing or event management, the element of water is the key. There is a clear correlation between access to safe water and the Gross Domestic Product per capita of various countries. Water has become so crucial for a nation's progress that it is been referred to as the "next oil". Many predict future wars may be fought over water, not oil.

Though 70% of earth's surface is covered with this vital element, less than 1% of this huge resource consists of fresh water which is accessible for direct human use. With the rise in population, increasing industrialization and urbanization, the issue of the availability of safe water has indeed become serious. UNESCO's World Water Development Report (2003) indicates that in the next 20 years, the quantity of water available to everyone may decrease by 30%. As it is, 885 million people in the world today have no access to safe water, while 2.5 billion do not have adequate sanitation, including 1.2 billion who have no facilities at all.

It is for this reason that at any given time, half of the world's hospital beds are occupied by patients suffering from waterborne diseases, and 98% of water-related deaths occur in the developing world. In 2004, the UK charity, WaterAid reported that a child dies every 15 seconds due to easily preventable water-related diseases. Even though the issue may not be receiving its due attention, the world is heading towards a water crisis, and the need to provide safe and potable water to the poorest of the poor cannot be overemphasized.

Recognising this fact, in September 2000, 192 members of the United Nations and 23 international organisations, resolved that by 2015 they would halve the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation. This is one of the Millennium Development Goals of the UN. Nine years after setting this goal, the situation has actually become grimmer. One in three people endures one form or another of water scarcity, according

to new findings released by the 'Comprehensive Assessment of Water Management in Agriculture' at the World Water Week in Stockholm in 2006. The travesty of the situation is that it is not as if there is not sufficient water and therefore no solution to this impending catastrophe. **"There is enough water for everyone" says the 2006 United Nations report, and then adds, "Water insufficiency is often due to mismanagement, corruption, lack of appropriate institutions, bureaucratic inertia and a shortage of investment in both human capacity and physical infrastructure".**

Acknowledging the seriousness of the situation is the first step towards solving this crisis. But how does one overcome all these man-made hurdles in the present scenario where policies are driven by short-term economic and political interests, competition and self-centeredness? Is it practical, or even possible? **In this context that how one individual's effort has quenched the thirst of over 10 million distressed people becomes extremely significant.** More importantly, *how* these mammoth projects have been executed has stunned even the United Nations. Just imagine laying 2500 kilometres of pipes through hilly terrain, building 324 overhead and ground level reservoirs at the cost of US \$ 70 million to bring relief to one hundred thousand people in 731 villages. This is the story of **only the first phase** of the Sri Sathya Sai Drinking Water Project for the Anantapur District. And what was the timeline for this project? Just 9 months! This was just the beginning.

Soon after the completion of the Anantapur Project in November 1995, Bhagavan Baba directed the Sri Sathya Sai Central Trust to extend this supply of safe water to the districts of Medak and Mahaboobnagar too, covering 220 villages, thereby **benefiting another one million people at an additional cost of US \$ 14 million.** The enormity, efficiency and extent of Bhagavan Baba's water projects caught the attention of national and international organisations. In 1999, the Department of Posts, of the Government of India, released a special stamp in appreciation of this colossal work, and the Third World Water Forum held in Kyoto, Japan, in March 2003 invited a presentation on this unique project.

Even as the world was still debating in disbelief about the implementation of this massive scheme in the absolutely dry regions of Andhra Pradesh, Baba went ahead and shocked the world with the announcement of another major Water Supply Project, this time, for the city of Chennai in Tamil Nadu. The Sri Sathya Sai Ganga Canal came into being at a cost of US \$ 60 million in one year, and a century old predicament that plagued the city of Chennai finally found a permanent solution. The joy and overwhelming emotion of thousands of citizens of Chennai who had gathered in Puttaparthi in December 2004 to offer their gratitude to Bhagavan Baba was simply overwhelming. Later, in the same month, while conversing with the staff of the Super Specialty Hospital in Puttaparthi, **Bhagavan Baba casually shared His resolve to supply much-needed drinking water to the forgotten tribals and villagers of the neglected East and West Godavari districts in the Andhra heartland.**

As in all the previous projects, even now nobody had come to Baba seeking His help. But Pure Love that He is, He Himself reached out to the suffering of

the neglected and downtrodden. Nobody had ever cared for the tribals living in the hills of this region; the majority of society did not even know about their existence - except of course Bhagavan Baba. He knew how these innocent folk still lived by hunting, collecting forest produce and farming a little; even the idea of hospitals, schools, water tanks, etc. were totally alien to them. The irony of the whole situation was that the mighty river Godavari flowed just 10-12 kilometres away from where they lived, yet, these tribals died from water scarcity and water-borne diseases.

The ocean of Purest Love Bhagavan Baba resolved to transform this situation in a trice and what a tremendous change this region has seen! When you read the cover story "The Copious Stream of Pure Love" you will know why Swami always says that "For Pure Love, Nothing is Impossible." In fact, Swami did not stop with providing just safe drinking water, **He inspired the Sai youth to embark on the novel 'Sri Sathya Sai Village Integrated Programme' to nurture every family unit in these villages towards holistic self-sustenance.** How was this plan implemented? Catch a glimpse of this holy saga of Sai Love in the Part-2 of the current cover story.

What is considered impractical transforms into an incredible endeavour of Love, when Bhagavan Baba wills it. Some say that it is because Baba has the financial resources that He is able to accomplish these projects. Few know that Swami actually took loans to complete these endeavours. Besides, Baba often says, "There is never a dearth of resources to carry out welfare schemes. What is lacking is the impulse to undertake such activities." One estimate points out that a mere one-third of the amount which was spent in the 1991 Gulf War, could have solved all the problems of hunger, sanitation, basic education and water of the entire world! If only we were committed to peace and welfare as we are to conflicts and war!

What we need today is a heart that functions like a heart, one that loves to accommodate and embrace, to give and forgive, to reach out and relish in making others' lives shine, just as Bhagavan Baba has exemplified for scores of decades now.

Let our hearts overflow with this Pure Love for everybody and everything in His creation.

Loving Regards  
Heart2Heart Team

## **SPIRITUAL BLOSSOMS**

### **SATHYA SAI SPEAKS**

#### **Education Is For an Exemplary Life**

##### **Parents Should be United**

Parents should lead an exemplary life if they want their children to be good and come up in life. Parents should enroll their children in Bal Vikas classes and impart them sacred teachings. As the parents, so are the children. Therefore, parents should tread the right path and set an ideal so that their children can emulate them. The fault lies in the parents if the children do not behave properly. After a certain age, children do not obey their parents, because parents themselves do not follow the right path.

There should be no difference of opinion between the father and the mother. They should be united in whatever they tell their children. In some families, mother and father differ in their direction to the children. Such lack of unity and understanding between the parents is not a good sign. Both of them must stand on one word and teach their children the right path. First of all, they should teach their children to adhere to truth. It is enough if we follow the path of truth, because truth is the basis of everything.

*Sathyannasti paro dharma* (There is no dharma greater than adherence to truth). Peace originates from righteousness, and love manifests from peace. Where there is love, there is non-violence. If the nation has to attain peace and prosperity, we should follow the path of truth. What is truth?

*"Manasyekam vachasyekam karmanyekam mahatmanaam"* (He is a noble soul whose thoughts, words, and deeds are in harmony). If your thought, word, and deed are at variance, it amounts to falsehood. Before we teach our children to adhere to truth, we should practise truth in our daily life. Only then can the children emulate us and become ideal.

We should lead a "heartful life" but not an artificial life. Today, right from the system of education, everything has become artificial. People read a number of sacred texts, chant *mantras*, and undertake meditation. But all this is done in an artificial manner. Whatever may be the spiritual practice you undertake, do it wholeheartedly.

##### **Turn Towards God to Control the Mind**

In the name of meditation, people close their eyes and sit cross-legged, but they have no control over their mind. Their mind goes everywhere as per its whims and fancies. Therefore, we should control our mind in the first instance. *Manah eva manushyanam karanam bandhamokshayo* (mind is the cause of bondage and liberation of man). As the thought, so is the action. Hence, we

should entertain only good thoughts, which lead to good actions and ultimately yield good results.

Mind is like a mad monkey. It goes everywhere without any restraint. But it becomes quiet and subdued when it is turned toward God.

When the Sun rises, our shadow is very long. If we start walking toward the Sun, our shadow falls behind us. On the other hand, if we walk in the opposite direction with our back toward the Sun, we have to follow our shadow, which falls ahead of us. When the Sun is right on our head, the shadow falls under our feet. *Maya* (delusion) is like our shadow. In order to conquer *maya*, you have to turn your mind toward God. When your mind is directly focused on God, *maya* will be totally subdued like the shadow under your feet.

There are three hands in the clock indicating seconds, minutes, and hours. The second hand is the longest and moves quicker than the other two. When the second hand completes sixty digits, the minute hand moves forward by one digit. Similarly, when the minute hand crosses sixty digits, the hour hand crosses one digit. However, the hour hand is most important. Thinking of God once in a while and spending the rest of the time in worldly pursuits is like the second hand, which has little significance. But constant contemplation of God at all times is like the hour hand, which is most important.

Love is truth and truth is love. Live in love. This is not physical and worldly love. We should preserve spiritual love in our heart. Only then can we develop steadiness of mind. Worldly love will only make our mind fickle and unsteady. Therefore, keep your mind always focused on God. Only then can you experience peace. People think it is very difficult, but let Me tell you that there is no *sadhana* (spiritual discipline) easier than this.

When we develop love for God, the mind can be controlled very easily. On the other hand, if the mind is not turned toward God, it can never be controlled. Whatever you do, consider it as God's work.

### **Surrender to His Will**

Everything happens as per the Will of God. Do not be under the delusion that your will alone can make things move. If that be the case, why are you not able to exercise any control over certain events that take place in your life? Understand that everything moves as per the Divine Will. If something good happens to you, consider it as the Will of God. If something unpleasant happens, accept that too as the Will of God.

There is certainly some purpose behind whatever He does, which you cannot comprehend. Whatever He does is for your own good. Hence, leave everything to His Will. *Sukhadukhe samekruthwa labhalabhau jayajayau* (one should remain equal minded in happiness and sorrow, gain and loss, victory and defeat). Whatever may happen, consider it as an act of divine love and welcome it wholeheartedly.

When you get immersed in divine love, you will be successful in all your endeavours. But today people are getting immersed only in worldly love. One who develops worldly love is a liar! Only divine love can be termed as true love. Divine love will never betray you. Let people think what they like, let them criticise you in any manner, but always remain firmly established in divine love. Under any circumstances, do not deviate from the path of divine love. When you preserve divine love in your heart, your future as well as the future of your children will be safe and secure.

*- Divine Discourse delivered at the Sri Sathya Sai World Education Conference on 22 July 2008*



## CONVERSATIONS WITH SAI

### ***Satyopanishad - part 16: Direct Directions from the Divine***

*Dear Reader,*

*In response to your positive feedback to this section where we have a conversation with the Divine, we continue with Prof. Anil Kumar's 'Satyopanishad' following Dr. John Hislop's series 'Conversations with Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba' that ended in January 2008.*

*This series is also in the question-answer format that many devotees prefer, and has answers from Bhagavan on topics as wide ranging as the origin of evil, the goals of human life, and aspects of God – embodied and formless, to price hikes, women's liberation, vegetarianism, and the generation gap among people of the present times.*

*Published in two parts by the author, these volumes have 270 questions in all, which are neatly grouped under separate chapters. In this issue, we continue with the fifth chapter: 'Concepts'*

#### **Chapter 5: Concepts**

**Prof. Anil Kumar:** Swami! We have many qualities *tamasika* (like laziness, dullness, etc.), *rajasika* (like aggressiveness, ego, etc.) and *sattvika* (being pious). Do they change at any time? How are we to ennoble ourselves? Sometimes these attributes may be responsible for conflicts with our colleagues in the office. What is to be done under these circumstances? Kindly give us a solution to this problem that we encounter everyday?

**Bhagavan:** The whole world revolves round these three attributes *tamasika*, *rajasika* and *sattvika*. Every individual has these three attributes working like the three blades of a fan. But in a person, the quality which dominates the other two, decides their nature and total personality, nay, their very destiny as a whole.

He is a pious man whose *sattvika* quality dominates his *rajasika* and *tamasika* qualities. He is an emotional, passionate, active man if his *rajasika* quality dominates his *sattvika* and *tamasika* qualities. He is a dull, inactive and passive man if he is dominated by the *tamasika* nature. Thus, everyone has these three attributes.

For instance, in an eyeball don't you see all the three colours - white, red, and black? They symbolise these three traits. Watch the Sunrise. You will notice three colours - red, white and black again indicating three attributes. However, you should note one important point. These attributes or *gunas* have no independent existence. Divinity makes them functional. But the *gunas* are not to be found in the divine, as God is *gunatita*, the One beyond attributes.

*Gunas* are transformable. For instance, you can get over *tamasika* quality by *karma*, action. *Karma* transforms *tamasika* quality into *rajasika* activity. *Rajasika* nature is dual. It may give you success or failure, profit or loss, praise or blame, etc. Man has to perform *karma*. In fact, there is no one who does not take any action. You may lie on a bed sleeping, yet your heart beats, blood circulates and the nervous system and pulmonary system work. Don't they? Does it not amount to action?

By doing selfless actions, offering all the fruits of action to God, serving God in everyone and by realising the indwelling divinity, one can develop *anubhavajnana*, practical wisdom or experience-based wisdom. At that stage, a *rajasika* person becomes a *sattvika* person. Therefore, *karma* is important. It is said *karmanubandhini manus yaloke*, which means, human society is bound by action. Your very life is gifted to do *karma*. Thus, *janma*, birth and *karma*, actions are interrelated. In fact, one should salute respectfully the action he does. *Tasmai namah karmane*, "my salutations to the action given or assigned to me". Therefore, a *tamasika* nature can be converted into *rajasika* by volitional action, which can be further transformed into *sattvika* by *bhakti* and *jnana*, that is, devotion and awareness. This is *sadhana* or spiritual practice.

By *atmavicara*, self-enquiry, you can improve and change your nature. When any lower or animal qualities like wavering of the mind, excessive sleep, gluttony, etc. crop up, immediately say to yourself at least ten times. "I am a man, I am not an animal." Then, you will be able to get over them. Do your duty sincerely. Don't be pompous. Don't show off or do any stunt. Always be sure that God notices everything that you do, though others may not. Do your duty with love.

*Duty with love is Desirable.*

*Duty without love is Deplorable,*

*Love without duty is Divine.*

If you offer all your work and the fruits thereof to God, your work will be transformed into worship.

You may not agree with your colleagues in your office. Your temperament may be incompatible with theirs, sometimes leading to controversies and in-fights, and you may, as a result, lose your peace of mind. So, don't have too close a relationship with too many people. Say 'hello, hello' to everyone, 'how are you' to all those you meet and end with 'goodbye'. That's all and nothing more.

Today, there is no real social service. Everything is either slow-service or show-service. You should have a feeling that what you do is not for anybody but for your own satisfaction and happiness. Whatever you do, do it for the satisfaction of your conscience. You shouldn't do anything for praise or appreciation by others. Your conscience is God. Know that character is most

important and you should never compromise on this score. What is always necessary for success in life is cooperation. But nowadays, we find only operation.

By joining good company (*satsang*), listening to the teachings of great masters and seers, and above all with God's grace, you can change your attitudes and mentality. By Buddha's teaching, the cruel Angulimala and by Narada's instructions Ratnakara (who became sage Valmiki later) were transformed. Visvamitra who was a Rajarshi, a sage among kings, became a Brahmarshi, a sage ever immersed in *Brahman*, by the direction of Vasishtha. Visvamitra thus became the *mitra*, friend of the *visva*, universe.

Arjuna, on one occasion dropped his bow and arrows in the battlefield. He became *tamasika* (dull, passive, weak) and even reluctant to engage in a war for which he stood in the battlefield. He forgot all the vows he had taken and the atrocities the Kauravas had committed. It was at that time that Krishna induced the *rajasika* quality into Arjuna's mind, preparing him for the war of Kurukshetra with renewed zeal.

Emperor Janaka who became a *rajarshi* due to the teachings of Sage Yajnavalkya renounced everything and became a perfect *jnani*, one known for spiritual wisdom.

Therefore, by intense *sadhana*, *tamas* can be converted into *rajas*, and *rajas* into *sattva*. In so doing an aspirant, becomes a recipient of God's grace and ultimately a seeker of *nirvana* (liberation).

**Prof. Anil Kumar:** Swami! We hear of *purusarthas*, the four goals of life. How are we to achieve them?

**Bhagavan:** I tell my students quite often about the four 'F's'. The first 'F' is 'Follow the master'. *Dharma*, righteousness, is your master. Follow *dharma* at all times. All your actions must be approved by *dharma*, the ideal norms of life. If you hold on to *dharma* throughout, the very same *dharma* will protect you, *dharmo raksati raksitah*. *Manava*, being human, should follow the *dharma* of a human being (*manavadharma*), and never that of a demon (*danavadharma*).

The second 'F' is 'Face the devil'. What is the devil here? While *dharma* is the master, *artha*, wealth or money, is the devil. Most people struggle a lot for money. They resort to all sorts of tactics, do unrighteous and unjustified deeds only for money. Many think that the world goes by money, *dhanamulamidam jagat*. No, the world relies on *dharma*, *dharmamulamidam jagat*. One should earn money righteously.

The third 'F' is 'Fight to the end'. What is the enemy you should fight till the end? It is *kama*, desire. Until the last desire too vanishes, you should continue to fight.

Once Sage Dakshinamurthy happened to walk along the shore of a sea. He noticed the rising waves pushing a small blade of grass towards the shore. He felt bad. After all, it was a tiny grass blade and the mighty sea sent forth its mounting waves to push it away onto the shore. "How arrogant is the sea not to tolerate even a blade of grass!" thought the sage within himself. Then the Sea God, Samudra, appeared before the sage with folded hands and said very humbly, "Oh! Great sage! I am not at fault: Do not blame me and call me arrogant. I am not so. I cannot afford to have a single, simple blemish, not even a blade of grass in me. So my waves pushed it away to the shore and not out of any hatred or enmity". This is what 'fight to the end' means.

Then the fourth 'F' is 'Finish the game'. What is the game? It is the game of life. When does the game of life finish? It finishes with the attainment of *moksha*. So *moksha* is the final goal of the four objectives of life.

Here you should remember one important point. Of the four *purusarthas*, *dharma* is 'Follow the master', *artha* is 'Face the devil', *kama* is 'Fight to the end' and *moksha* is 'Finish the game'. The first one is *dharma* and the fourth is *moksha*, with the second *artha* and the third *kama* in between. It implies that *artha* should be earned with *dharma*, then *kama* should be used only to attain the fourth goal of life *moksha*. So, the four 'F's' stand for these *purusarthas* of life. But now, I tell you there is another *purusartha*, the fifth one, which is the supreme goal of life. That is 'Love'.

*Love is God,*

*God is Love, hence,*

*Live in Love.*

*There is nothing that you cannot achieve without love.*

**Prof. Anil Kumar:** Swami! What is it that we should have in order to deserve Your *prapti*, deservedness?

**Bhagavan:** Your interest is the most important thing. With this you can achieve anything in life. When you have trust in a particular matter or a subject or a person, you are said to have interest in that matter or that subject or that person. Since you have immense interest in Swami, you run fast and occupy the front rows close to My feet. Isn't it so? In the morning, in silence you wait anxiously for Swami, and that is why even the slightest sounds, such as the sound of closing the door of Swami's car makes you think, and alerts you that Swami is coming towards you. Whosoever comes to the scene at that time is expected to convey some message of Swami's arrival. What is the reason? This is all due to your interest in Swami. If you have no interest in Swami, you don't notice His presence even if He stands in front of you.

**Prof. Anil Kumar:** Swami! What is illusion, *maya*? Kindly explain.

**Bhagavan:** There is no illusion whatsoever. What exists is only *brahman*, the Cosmic Soul. The so-called illusion or *maya* is only your imagination. There is only *Brahman*. Nothing more! The body attachment is illusion, *maya* or *bhrama*.

A simple example: Here is a huge tree under which you see its shadow, don't you? The branches and the leaves are the cause of the shade. As the sunlight falls on the tree you see the shade beneath the tree. Here you have to know one important point. There is nothing like shade above the tree or on the top of the tree. It means there is no shade in sunlight. Then how does the shade arise? The branches and the leaves of the tree are responsible for the shade below. Sunlight is *brahman*, tree is life and the branches and leaves are attachments and desires. They are responsible for the shade of *maya* or illusion. Shade is out of question when there are no leaves and branches. So, there is no illusion or *maya* as such. It is the fallacy of your imagination.

**Prof. Anil Kumar:** Swami! How are we to get over *maya* or illusion?

**Bhagavan:** There is no *maya*. It is your own creation. How is it then you want to get over that, which does not exist at all?

In the night, seeing a rope, you mistake it for a serpent and you are very much stricken with fear. Later on, enquiry reveals that it is only a rope and not a serpent. What you should know here are two points: Neither the snake disappears, nor does the rope appears specially to give you relief. All along, it has been a rope. You are the only one who is mistaken by taking a rope for a serpent. So also, the reality is *brahman* or *atma* and the rest is *bhrama*, or illusion or imagination.

**Prof. Anil Kumar:** Swami! It is often said and felt that none escapes *maya* or illusion. Everyone falls a victim to the influence of *maya*. So, man is prone to delusion. Then Swami, a person who has known what *maya* is and has been out of *maya*, how is it that he gets into the trap again?

**Bhagavan:** Think of this situation. When it is dark what happens to light? Where does it go? Similarly, when there is light, where does the darkness that was present till the light came, go? Absence of light is darkness. Darkness does not flow or run away. Because of the light, it is not noticed. Once the light is put off, it will be dark as before. Here light is wisdom, darkness is ignorance, or *maya*, or delusion, or *avidya*. To dispel the darkness the only thing to do is light a candle.

Your question is, how the darkness of ignorance comes back again having been dispelled once already by the light of wisdom. A simple example: Many travel by bus. As the bus speeds forward along the rugged roads, we find the dust rising behind the bus so long as it is on a continuous run. But, the moment the bus stops the whole lot of dust collects inside. All of it just blows into the bus. Similarly, human life is a bus. So long as it is on the move of

*sadhana*, the dust of illusion stays behind. But, if the bus of life stops or halts *sadhana*, the dust of delusion will get into life. So, it is *sadhana* that keeps you unaffected by delusion. If you stop *sadhana* you will again become a victim of *maya*. Therefore, you can never take it for granted that you are rid of *maya* in your lifetime. It is your constant *sadhana* that helps you.

**Prof. Anil Kumar:** Swami! Illusion is a non-*atmic* feeling or worldly approach. To identify myself with that which I am not is illusion. Truly speaking, the "I" we often speak of is in reality only *atma*; nothing else. How is one to know this truth, and to recognise and experience this truth? Kindly tell us about this Swami!

**Bhagavan:** Actually, 'I' is only *atma* or *brahman*. A sincere attempt to know this truth is called 'enquiry'. Self-enquiry is most essential in the spiritual path. *Puja, namasmarana, dhyana, tapas, yajna, yaga*, (worship, meditation, chanting His name, ritual sacrifice) and such rituals are not truly spiritual. They are good activities to attain purity of heart. True spirituality indeed, is self-enquiry. I do not mean that you should give up all rituals and sacred actions. Self-enquiry is the most important in My view. Since you do not have people who are properly experienced in this field of knowledge to teach you, you find it tough and difficult to move in the right direction.

If this question, "Who are you?" is put to a group of people you get different answers. One says in reply, "I am an Indian". This is not correct, because you may shift to America and then become an American. If you go to Russia, you are a Russian and so on. India is the country where you are born. But you are not the country. So, to say, "I am an Indian" is wrong. To the same question "Who or you"? Another would say, "I am an engineer". This is not correct, because you are an engineer by virtue of your profession. You are not the profession you are in. Some answer in a different way, saying, "I am so and so ...I am Ram, I am Shyam." It is a name given to you by your parents. You are not born with that name nor did you come to this world with a signboard on your forehead. You are not the name as you may change it according to your taste at any time.

One may prefer to answer the question "Who are you?" in another way saying, "I am a young man", "I am an aged person", "I am a boy" and so on. This is also wrong. Why? Boyhood, youth, and old age are the different stages that you pass through in your life. But you remain one and the same person all along. At one time, you were a boy. Then, a man; later a father and finally, a grandfather. But you have been the same person throughout. Then, how can you identify yourself with your age which does not remain the same? Another person may say, "I am a tall person", "I am a handsome man", "I am a lean man". These are again the replies related to the nature of the body. This is not correct, you are not the body, which is merely an instrument, because while you are in deep sleep your body is passive and static, and you are not aware of its existence. You are not the mind too.

If you think you are the mind you lead the life of ego and pride. Even the mind does not exist in *susupti*, deep sleep. You are not the intellect either. You may

be intelligent but you are not the intellect. Intellect is God's gift for you to discriminate, judge, decide and thus to be discreet. But, when it turns selfish, it is called "individual discrimination". But, what is expected is "fundamental discrimination", which is universal, and is good to everybody. You will also know that *buddhi*, intellect, does not exist in deep sleep. So, definitely you are not the intellect which is only an instrument like the body and the mind.

So, what is the correct answer to this question, "Who are you"? It is "I am *atma*". This *atma* is the eternal witness and is the experiencer of all. This exists in all the three states of consciousness, *jagrata* (waking state), *svapna* (dreaming state), and *susupti* (deep sleep). You maybe named in any way, you may belong to any country, be of any age group or profession, etc., but as a matter of fact, you are only the 'Eternal *Atma*'. This is the correct answer you get in the path of self-enquiry. This is true spirituality.

**Prof. Anil Kumar:** Swami! What is Vedanta?

**Bhagavan:** The Veda is dualism. Vedanta is non-dualism. There is nothing beyond Vedanta. Milk on curdling becomes curds. You get butter when you churn curds. When you heat butter, you get *ghee* (clarified butter). *Ghee* is the final stage of milk. Even if you heat further it remains the same. So, milk, after passing through changes, becomes *ghee*. Milk represents dualism and *ghee* represents non-dualism.

**Prof. Anil Kumar:** Swami, do you view that the three schools of Vedanta philosophy like dualism, *dvaita*, qualified non-dualism *visistadvaita* and non-dualism, *advaita* as contradictory to one another? Does one school advocate just the opposite of what the other says?

**Bhagavan:** This is how it is usually understood and practiced by many. But, truly speaking it is not so. In fact; these three are integrated. You find one as being the continuation of the other. You will notice that one leads to the other.

Take for example, sugarcane. You find juice in the sugarcane. Here, there is pulp and juice. This is the state of dualism. Now, you can extract juice separating the pulp from the sugarcane. The juice, though very important and the very essence drawn out of the sugarcane, does not stay long or cannot be preserved for long. This state of obtaining the juice, separating the pulp from the sugarcane is the state of qualified non-dualism. This juice is purified, refined and processed into sugar and sugar remains the same forever. This is the state of non-dualism. You can make use of sugar in any way you like.

**(To be continued)**

## CHINNA KATHA

### Sincere Yearning and Sure Grace

There was once a Sultan, ruling over the region of Mathura, Brindavan and other places, situated on the banks of River Yamuna. During his reign, the emperor of Vijayanagara (a kingdom in the South of India), came on pilgrimage and stayed at Brindavan for a few days to pay homage to Lord Krishna in the temple there. The Sultan understood that the Emperor had come only to pay respects to that One in the shrine at Brindavan, and he decided to himself, come what may, he would too have that spiritual experience.

So late one night he went and called out before the closed doors of the temple, "Who is inside?" He heard a voice, which gave the reply. "Govind *Maharaj* and Radha *Rani* (The Lord Krishna, the King, and Radha, the Queen)!" The Sultan was now sure that there were two persons living inside, a Super-Emperor and His Super-Empress. He was filled with an agonizing yearning to see the distinguished occupants of the temple. He waited outside the door, without food or drink for three full days. He was overcome with hunger and thirst; but he did not stir, for he was afraid the Imperial Couple may emerge any moment and he might miss the *Darshan*.

That night, when the town was asleep, just before midnight Govind *Maharaj* and Radha *Rani* emerged from the shrine. They signed to him to follow him. They were magnificently dressed and had elaborately bejeweled headgear, necklaces, wristlets and ornaments for the hands and feet. They moved on until they reached the banks of the Yamuna, where thousands of *Gopas* and *Gopis* (cowherd devotees) were gathered to welcome them. There was music and dance in the bright moonlight, heavenly joy shone on every face. At 4 a.m. they returned to the temple and before they passed through the closed door, they gave into the hands of the Sultan the *kankanas* they wore on their wrists, for safekeeping. Before he could say anything, they had gone.

A party of priests came along at that time, in the morning hour, and seeing the Sultan there, asked him as to why he was standing there and what he had in his hands. They had come to open the locks of the inner doors and inaugurate the ceremonials of the day, with *Suprabhatham* and *Nagarasamkirtan* (morning prayers and chantings).

The Sultan said, "Govind *Maharaj* and Radha *Rani* have just gone in; I was with them at the Yamuna Bank from midnight till a few minutes ago. They gave me these *kankanas* for safekeeping. I don't know why."

They surmised he was a thief who, caught in the act, was spinning a yarn and so bound him to punish him. But they found the locks unbroken, everything intact. Only the idol of Lord Krishna had no gold *kankanas*! Now they were convinced that the man outside was a great *Bhakta* (devotee), who had the unique vision of the Lord. They honored him and craved pardon for the wrong perpetrated in ignorance. Such is the reward for sincere yearning; unlimited *ananda* (bliss) can be earned through implicit faith in God.

- Baba



## **COVER STORY**

### **THE COPIOUS STREAM OF PURE LOVE**

Independent India is today 62 years old. With its one billion strong population, a thriving democracy, nuclear power plants, several cosmopolitan cities and a resilient and rising economy, it is undoubtedly one of the emerging powerhouses of this world. But this is only one half of the story. The other side of the same coin is the India that lives in the thousands of its villages. Millions of these rural folk who are untouched by the India of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century are, literally and figuratively, powerless. Their stories are pathetic and their needs, basic. The tribals living in the interior regions and forests of East Godavari district, in Andhra Pradesh, for example, did not have safe drinking water for scores of decades. But one Pure Aspiration of Bhagavan Baba, and the lives of 600,000 poor and innocent villagers have metamorphosed magnificently.

How did this happen? It is a story of Pure Love...rather, one Copious Stream of Pure Love which has drenched, delighted and elevated the lives of over half a million poor rural folk through two historic projects – the Sri Sathya Sai Drinking Water Project and the Sri Sathya Sai Village Integrated Programme, in the East and West Godavari Districts, Andhra Pradesh.

*(This is the script of the audio documentary aired on Radio Sai)*

#### **The Life of the Tribals of East Godavari – Primitive and Pathetic**

Water is life. If life exists on this earth, it is because water exists. In fact, two-thirds of our planet is covered with this life-sustaining element, and this elixir of life is used in a million ways right from washing, gardening and cooking to making chips for computers and sustaining nuclear power plants. And how much water is really available for all these myriad purposes? It is just 3% of the entire water resource on earth, because that is the percentage of fresh water on the surface of our planet. And among all its uses, one of the most vital is for drinking. Today there are millions whose access to clean water is easy, plentiful and uninterrupted, but at the same time there are over one billion people for whom a glass of pure water to drink everyday is a dream and there are 2.4 billion people who do not have access to adequate sanitation. They are poor, isolated and neglected.

“Earlier, the water problem in our village was acute. We had to travel miles to fetch water and this would invariably be muddy because the animals too came to the same pond. We had to wait for hours for the mud to settle down and only then could we use the water. Drinking this dirty water would often make us sick.”

This was Ms. Pushpalata, a village lady from the East Godavari district of the state of Andhra Pradesh in India, speaking to the Radio Sai team. Satyawati, another lady from the same region echoed similar feelings:

“Previously, water was always a difficulty in our village. The wells had very little water, and it was unsafe and filled with insects. We used to drink this after filtering; even then this always caused us many diseases.”

The issue of drinking water in these villages and tribal settlements in the East Godavari district of Andhra Pradesh just a few years ago was in fact serious.

“In summer, all our bore wells used to go dry and all we had was muddy water. It was very difficult to drink that filthy water.”

This was yet another village woman, Suryakumari.

Yes, drinking water was a major concern in these areas. Most ironically, all these areas in the East Godavari district are located about 10-15 kilometres away from one of India's most copious and famous rivers, the Godavari. This river is 14 hundred and fifty kilometers long, covering the whole breadth of peninsular India from West to East, and apart from being one of the sacred rivers of India mentioned in many Holy Scriptures, it is also responsible for the prosperity of many cities and towns in the big Indian states of Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh. No doubt, it is a lifeline for millions but there are millions of others too who have been deprived of this colossal life-giving resource, even though it flows a few miles away from where they live. And that is because they are without the means to benefit from the river's resources due to grinding poverty and a complete lack of infrastructure and education.

Can you believe this? Even in this age of super computers and hi-speed communication, in the hilly terrains of East Godavari district there live tribals who wander around in these hillocks and forests with bows and arrows! Their main occupation, just like it was for man in the Stone Age, is hunting.

“We hunt wild pigs, jungle sheep, and other small animals...of late we haven't found many animals....there are tigers but it is very difficult to shoot them and they may attack us in return...whenever we are successful with our target, all the four of us share the meat together...I have been hunting from childhood.”

This was Chiranjeevi, a young hunter and his comrades talking to the Radio Sai team. These young men, enterprising in their own way, make such excellent bows and arrows from what is available in the forest that the strength of their weapons would baffle even a modern engineer. Though they smile heartily when asked about their exploits, when one probes more, the sorry tales of their painful existence come out.

They have to walk any number of miles through thick forest everyday, from dawn to dusk, and often they go without a successful hunt for weeks together.

During the favourable parts of the year, they farm too like many other people in this tribal region of East Godavari district. Their kind of agriculture is called “Podu Cultivation”. What they basically do is clear a patch of land in the forest by cutting down the trees and then use this area to grow a few crops. Once

the fertility of the soil is lost after one or two harvests, they move to clear another patch of the jungle in a similar fashion. Well, that is how primitive their way of cultivation is, and generally most of what they produce feeds them for only a few months of the year.

"We struggle a lot. Men and women work equally hard. That is the only means by which we can earn our livelihood. Two of us live in this house, – my husband and myself. Our physical strength is deteriorating day by day. We eat what we harvest and once it is over, we have to buy rice. For this we need money, so we try to rear cattle...we remain happy in pain and pleasure by hard work."

This is the story, in brief, of Sitamma, a tribal lady from the hamlet of Teeragatta Raalu in East Godavari district. These tales actually get worse as one travels into the interior regions. In one of the other hamlets, a tribal lady narrated the story of their neighbour:

"This lady had two sons, Ramudu and Lakshmanudu; they were twins. But Ramudu died of illness. The child had fever, but they could not take him to the hospital. It was harvest season and we were all busy in the fields... it happened so suddenly...she has faced lot of difficulties since childhood. She had no money to deliver her babies safely or raise her children..."

This tribal settlement has no electricity, no roads, nowhere to go if one fell sick, no one to teach the small children the basics of education, and yes, the most important fact - they do not know what is safe drinking water. In fact, that is the main reason why people regularly fall sick and even die. Even though it has been more than 60 years since India attained independence, these tribal hamlets and interior villages still live in the India of 19<sup>th</sup> century. They hunt, farm a little, collect firewood, gather fruits and herbs in the forest, and know nothing about schools, hospitals, or life beyond the hills. They struggle, and have been doing so for decades, generation after generation. No one knows them, no one ever spared a thought for them. The government, sporadically did lay down a few welfare schemes, but it did little to uplift their life style and lessen their burden. For the large majority, they just did not exist.

### **Baba Wills to Alleviate the Sufferings of the Poor Tribals**

***But not for Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba.*** Out of the blue, in December 26, 2004, while speaking to the staff of the Super Specialty Hospital in Puttaparthi, Bhagavan Baba, in a casual but very concerned tone, said,

"Currently we are executing a water project for East and West Godavari Districts. It is possible to live without food but not without water. Water is highly essential. These people live by the side of Godavari but they have no potable water. Though water is available nearby, unfortunately they have no access to it. For everything, human effort is very essential. "

Even though nobody ever told Bhagavan Baba about the desperate condition of these remote tribals, He just knew that they needed help. He knew how the poor villagers of this region had to depend on polluted streams, and bore wells which often went dry, to find water which was utterly unhygienic. He knew how they were ridden with many diseases the primary cause for which was unsafe water. Soon, the Sri Sathya Sai Central Trust, under the direction of Bhagavan Baba, swung into action, and elaborate plans were laid to provide pure drinking water perennially at the door step of every home. The scheme, in principle, was simple. The idea was to set up intake wells near the Godavari River which would draw water by pumps, and then send this collected water to a reservoir, where it would be treated and purified. Finally, this clean water was to be piped to local storage tanks built in designated villages. From these tanks, water would now flow to the cisterns constructed in these villages which would have multiple taps.

### **The Execution of the Sri Sathya Sai Drinking Water Project**

Even though pretty straightforward on paper, it was a Herculean task for the Sri Sathya Sai Central Trust to execute this idea because of the hills and forests in the region. Nevertheless, in less than a year, intake wells came up in Purushottampatnam and Pamaleru in the East Godavari district as well as at Polavaram for a few fortunate villagers in the West Godavari district.

Several kilometers of pipes winded through forest pathways, hills and streams, and **on the eve of Bhagavan Baba's 80<sup>th</sup> Birthday celebrations in November 2005, a few villages had already started receiving safe and pure drinking water; they did not have to place one step outside their village, it was available right in front of their homes and at all times of the day.** The joy of these poor tribals knew no bounds.

### **The Joyful and Grateful Villagers**

"Now we do not have any problems, Swami has given us water!"

That was Pushpalata, a tribal woman.

"I have no problems. I am very happy now. We have water, our health is good. Doctors from Sathya Sai Organisation come and give us medicines. We worship Sai Baba with much joy and longing."

This is an old man, Jagannadha Reddy.

Another Village woman Suryakumari is equally happy.

"After the construction of water tanks by the Sai workers, we have pure drinking water without any problem."

In fact, what Suryakumari said further was moving.

"I have not seen Swami physically but I worship Him. I want to go to Puttaparthi for voluntary service."

When asked why do you want to serve in Puttaparthi? She said,

"He has done so much for us. It is our duty to do whatever little we can for Him by serving in the ashram at Puttaparthi. He has provided us with everything."

That is how deep the sense of gratitude reverberates in the hearts of these innocent villagers. And Bhagavan Baba too responds to their inner feelings magnificently.

### **Bhagavan Unravels His Vision of Holistic Village Improvement**

Once the East and West Godavari drinking water projects were completed successfully by November 2006 offering clean drinking water to over 600,000 villagers in more than 200 villages in Andhra Pradesh, Baba was pleased but not completely satisfied. Drinking water, He knew, was their first problem but not the only problem. And so again, quite unexpectedly, on the occasion of Ugadi in 2007, Swami declared,

"On this sacred day of Ugadi, we are launching a new scheme for village upliftment. Every house in every village should be made clean, both from inside and outside. The children should be groomed to become clean and healthy individuals. I want that this service should be performed in each village. This of course will involve an expenditure of crores of rupees. But we do not bother about money. Money comes and goes, but the help rendered remains forever. Therefore, efforts should be made to develop the villages in all possible ways...the elders and the children, the rich and the poor should work in unity to make this project successful. This service should unite one and all. This scheme would become a reality very soon. All should join this service including the students, considering this as service to God. Today we limit ourselves to the individual level. But we should develop the spirit of unity and make the entire country united."

This was the clarion call of Bhagavan Baba on March 20, 2007 and as a result was born the Sri Sathya Sai Village Integrated Programme, generally referred to as SSSVIP project. The goal was very clear: to ensure holistic development of every family in the village, and thereby of the entire village, town, district and the State. The primary focus was to be the spiritual transformation along with economic development of every family in the village.

### **The Sri Sathya Sai Village Integrated Programme is Born**

Mr. Koteswara Rao, an active Sai Worker, has been deeply involved in the implementation of this programme in the East Godavari district and knows this project through and through.

"It was during Ugadi 2007 that Swami gave this wonderful message to the Organization. *Grama Seva* (village service) has been redefined by Bhagavan, in that it should be holistic and total, not the way it has been done hitherto. So this has set the organization to take up holistic *Grama Seva* as the concept, and it is the brain child of Mr. V. Srinivasan, the All India President of the Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organization. This is the genesis of SSSVIP, the Sri Sathya Sai Village Integrated Program. As a flagship project, out of the 212 villages present in East Godavari district, we have chosen 25 villages to start with.

"There was clear guidance from Bhagavan, and the All India President was personally involved in this project. As a result, our Seva dal volunteers went into the deeper forest areas to each and every village. We prepared a Village Development Index, and with this in hand we touched almost every hamlet and settlement. Then looking at this index, we prioritized the villages which need our attention first. That is how we identified about 142 villages, out of the 212, which require immediate service. Since we cannot simultaneously serve 142 villages because of limitations in manpower and other resources, we decided to take 25 villages as our chief areas of operation to begin with.

"These 25 villages, mind you, are from the remotest part of this area where the condition of people is extremely poor. There are no roads to reach these regions and one has to go only by walking. Not a single doctor has ever visited these people and there are buildings meant for schools which have always remained idle. Actually we were shocked to see families who did not have clothes even to cover themselves adequately. They burnt down forests and grew paddy and ate whatever they could produce. Often they went hungry for days.

"When we did the primary survey, we evaluated each village based on several aspects, including hygiene, sanitation, health, education, food availability and living conditions. This helped us to do a proper classification of their needs and soon we identified eight primary areas of service. This gave us a proper framework for holistic *Grama Seva* as enunciated by Bhagavan on the day of Ugadi in 2007."

### **The Eight-Faceted Approach of the SSSVIP**

The eight primary areas of service as mentioned by Mr. Koteswara Rao starts with Individual Care, which aims to eradicate individual malnutrition and raise standards of personal hygiene and moves on to Educational Care, Employment Care, Medical Care, Spiritual and Cultural Care, Agricultural Care, Socio Care, and finally, Infrastructure Care. And the impact this eight-pronged strategy has had on the life and living condition of these rural folk is truly laudable.

"The Sathya Sai Baba sevadals have helped us so much. Earlier, busy in our daily work, we neither knew nor cared to be hygienic. We did not give our kids a shower everyday. Once the Sathya Sai sevadals came, they gave soap and

clothes for our kids and cleaned their nails. They taught them how to maintain cleanliness and also began to educate them. They have indeed served us in so many ways...

"Previously, when we got sick in this village, no one ever came to rescue us. Now, the Sathya Sai sevadals bring doctors every week for general check ups and take care of illnesses like diarrhea and fever. Because of their medicines, the general health condition in the village has improved a lot. Also the pure water, that we receive now, keeps us healthy. We are so thankful to the sevadals."

This was Mrs. Venkatagiri, a village lady from Kundhada, one of the 25 villages adopted by the Sai Organisation for the SSSVIP project upon completion of the Sri Sathya Sai Drinking Water Project.

### **The Impressive Educare Movement**

At about an hour's drive on undulating mud roads is another adopted village Musuru. Here Pushpalata, another village lady, was as happy and grateful as Ms. Venkatagiri

"Earlier, my kids would never listen to me. But after the Sai sevadals came, they have changed a lot in their attitude and behavior. They are more disciplined now; they listen to the advice of elders, take showers everyday and go to school regularly."

In fact, one of the kids, maybe about 6-7 years in age, himself shared the story of his transformation.

"My name is Radhakrishna Reddy. The sevadals came here and gave us clothes, bathed us, cleaned our nails, combed our hair and took care of us. They told us to listen to our parents and not to touch alcoholic substance. I am following all these instructions and I am very happy."

A Sai volunteer who has been working hard to groom these children was enthusiastic about the village children and related her experience.

"When I first came to this village, I saw the kids living in a very unhygienic environment. Often foul odour would emanate from their bodies. So we bathed them and advised them to be clean and study well. They wished to do jobs once they grew up. So we told them they can achieve their aim only if they stop taking alcohol. And when I asked who is going to stop drinking from today, a little girl raised her hand first. Her name is Amrutha."

Today Amrutha is a favourite of the village and she is as devoted as she is disciplined. She chants devotional hymns sincerely and is very respectful to elders.

In fact, the excitement in these villages heightens whenever sevadals come to spend time with them. Ms. Venkata Lakshmi, a young lady from the village G M Valasa agrees.

"The children wait enthusiastically for the arrival of the sevadals every Sunday. They take a bath, wear fresh clothes and gather together shouting 'Sai Ram! Sairam!', and also sing value-oriented songs.... I don't have to tell my son to attend Bal Vikas. As soon as he hears the jeep, he himself goes running shouting 'Sairam!' Sairam!" All the children happily play and sing together during Bal Vikas sessions. There is so much transformation in them... After Swami entered our lives, we are so happy."

This is the profound and powerful impact of the SSSVIP. And this has not happened in just one or two weeks. It is the fruit of persistent and tireless efforts of hundreds of sevadals for months together, and Gunaranjan is one of them. He has been teaching the little children of Sunnampadu, an adopted village, for several weeks continuously.

"I come every weekend to conduct Bal Vikas after a 5 hour bus journey from my town, Amalapuram. Initially, when I saw these village children, I had my own doubts if they would understand and absorb anything I taught. But I feel Swami has reached this village much before us! That is because these children are learning faster than I had expected; this is purely due to His grace. The excellent response that I receive from these children makes me forget the pain of traveling 5 hours each way to commute to this place... In the beginning, even the parents of these children were skeptical of our efforts but once they saw the sea-change in the behaviour of their children, they extended complete cooperation.... The most encouraging result is that the local youth of this village are coming forward to learn, and shoulder responsibility to maintain these programs. We have arranged special training classes for them and within a short time, I can move on to another village leaving these children in the hands of these new and enthusiastic teachers."

So that is how a silent revolution in Educational Care is enveloping all these SSSVIP villages in the East Godavari district of Andhra Pradesh. It is the same with Employment Care.

### **Improving Lives through Easy Employment**

Mrs. N. Lakshmi, a Sai worker, who has dedicated herself to serving these poor rural folk, shares her story of how she could improve the livelihood of a few families.

"We were able to educate the children about cleanliness, but were wondering how we could help better the economic condition of these poor families. So I asked them how they got their clothes stitched. They said that they went to a fair in Maredumilli, a nearby village, and paid a high price to make their clothes. Immediately, I offered to teach them tailoring in my own town. Initially, they were hesitant. I requested them to come to my home at least once, and



try learning this profession; if they still didn't like it, it was fine too. Finally two women from Musuru agreed, and stayed with me in my home.

And this was followed by four women coming to my home the next month. Apart from teaching them tailoring, I also imparted to them valuable lessons about our culture and spirituality. We purchased for them sewing machines and now, all of them, by Swami's grace, are financially independent. Not only that, they are now teaching this trade to other women in the village."

Ms. Suryakumari, a young lady is one of those whose life has been remade after she took up tailoring. This is her experience.

"Now, with this machine, given by Sai Baba, we do not have to go anywhere to stitch our clothes. Not only are we able to make our own clothes freely, we are also earning money stitching for others. This has certainly improved the financial condition of our family. And now I am teaching this art to 4-5 people in our village. In fact, the Sai sevadals have done a lot for our village. They have also installed for all of us a rice mill. Earlier, we used to rent a van and carry our paddy to another town to de-husk the paddy and make rice. But now we do it by ourselves. Baba has done so much for us. We are very grateful to Him."

### **Creating New Infrastructure to Foster Culture, Arts and Unity**

Not only are these village folk grateful, they extend every kind of cooperation to the Sai volunteers to accomplish their goal of overall village improvement. In fact, in the village G M Vasla, a village elder Mr. Sathyanarayana Reddy himself came forward and donated his land to construct a community hall for the villagers. What inspired him to make such a contribution?

"I worked as the head of the village (the Sarpanch) for 15 years. When I came to know that Sai Baba is giving us drinking water, I wondered if it was really possible to get water into our hamlet as we are on a hill top and in a very interior location. But like a Divine Mother, Baba gave us water... And now when there was a meeting in our village for the construction of a marriage hall, I thought to myself, 'Why shouldn't I donate land for this building?' I always tell the villagers: 'Take the name of Sai Baba and tell your problems to the Sai sevadals, everything will be taken care of'."

The Sai workers are building such community halls in every village, or for a cluster of villages depending on the size of the population, so that it could be used as a multi-purpose hall. They are called Sri Sathya Sai Integrated Service Centres and utilized as a place to conduct Bal Vikas classes for children, organize medical camps, conduct marriages, celebrate festivals and for similar ceremonies. In fact, as part of Spiritual and Cultural Care, the Sai Volunteers have encouraged many folk-art forms like *harikathas*, *burrakathas*, and so on. Most of the villagers of this region are devoted to Lord Rama, and legend has it that eons ago Lord Rama had trodden on this part of East Godavari District before He went to Sri Lanka to annihilate the demon king

Ravana. So the Sai Volunteers promote and preserve the sacred culture of this area by showing them audio and video programs on Lord Rama, and also by inspiring the village artists to perform dramas and skits, and enliven the village atmosphere spiritually.

### **Innovative Agriculture and Intelligent Marketing**

There has been tremendous progress in Agriculture Care too. The tribals in these 25 selected hamlets are now being weaned away from destroying forests to do podu cultivation, where they simply felled trees every now and then to create new land for cultivation. Now, they have learnt how to harness the local water resource available and grow new and different varieties of crops. And the Sai volunteers are working to ensure they get a good price for their hard work. Mr. Koteswar Rao shares a few ideas the Sai workers have come up with to help these innocent farmers.

“Custard apple grows wildly here but the tribals receive only 50 paisa per fruit. The middlemen between these farmers and retailers make all the money. So we are ensuring that these farmers get better value. Also, there are many forest products which have medicinal value. We have now contacted big pharma manufacturing companies like Baidyanath and Dabur so that these poor tribals could strike good deals with them and benefit financially. Similarly, Orchids, which grow in plenty here, are sold at Rs. 50 or Rs. 60 per bunch in big cities. We are now organizing proper cultivation and sale of these products. In fact, we have also created three agricultural farms where intercropping and non-seasonal cropping can be done effectively.”

Starting from Individual Care and Education Care to Agriculture Care and Infrastructure care, the development in these 25 villages has been nothing short of holistic and dramatic. In fact, now there are permanent roads with black top in 70 of the total of 212 villages where the Sri Sathya Sai Drinking Water Project has metamorphosed rural lives magnificently. One feels compelled to think “How wonderful it would be if the SSSVIP takes off not only in all other regions of the state of Andhra Pradesh but also in every state of India?”

This thought probably is what prompted the All India President of Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organisations, Mr. V. Srinivasan to conduct a guided tour of all these villages to Sai youth representatives from every state of India on February 30, 2009. And so, about 40 youth from different parts of India - from Manipur to Maharashtra and Gujarat, and from Kashmir to Kerala gathered in the city of Rajahmundry (in the East Godavari district) on the penultimate day of the month of February 2009.

### **The National Youth Meet – A Festival of Love**

Before the actual commencement of this one-of-its-kind tour, Mr. V. Srinivasan addressed them.

.....

"The reason you are brought here is the following. Bhagavan has repeatedly said that it is the youth of India who have to bring about the transformation of this country back to its days of pristine glory. India is the leader of the world, Bhagavan says. It is the spiritual center of the world. It is the center of wealth of the world. It is the center where human values exist. All these, in the last centuries or so, have suffered and Bhagavan's mission is to restore to India and to its people the glory which was Bharat. Bharat is *Sanskriti* (the culture), which provided the light and leadership to the world; and that has to be restored. So it is you, the youth, and our children, the Bala Vikas children, who are to be the main change-agents...

"Today we are going to the villages in the East Godavari district, which are really in deep forest and tomorrow you will see the West Godavari district. I had been there last evening. There is one project there where our brothers have constructed houses just for 9 people. So the number is not important, what is significant is the spirit and love with which it was done. They did this after seeing a newspaper headline in 2005 about the cry of hunger from a remote hilltop; it said "Konda paininchi akali" (meaning??), and they immediately responded. When you go there tomorrow, you will see how difficult it is. They have constructed roads.

"When I went to Darjeeling, I saw that our brothers there too had constructed a ghat road. When I saw this, I realized how challenging it must have been for them to lay that pathway. In the same manner, in West Godavari, you will see that all the equipment had to be carried to the remote hilltop, because those nine families were not willing to come down from their location. Some of you might think why have they taken so much trouble for just 9 people? But I think it is a response of love to love. The happiness in the lives of those 9 families is itself the greatest reward. So make best use of these 2 days...This is a festival of love; let us look upon this visit as a festival of love where Bhagavan's eternal love radiates from each one of us into these villagers and we learn from them."

The Sai Youth traversed the same undulating roads and muddy paths that the Sai Volunteers in the East Godavari district have traveled a thousand times in the last 13 months or so, and saw for themselves the magic that had come about in all these rural areas. They were overwhelmed witnessing the sincere love of the villagers towards them and most importantly towards Bhagavan Baba.

Robin Yumnam, the State Youth Coordinator from Manipur, was impressed and inspired.

"I saw the places, deep in the forest where the SSS Village Integrated Program has been undertaken. What has impressed me most is the love of these people to Swami. Actually within one year, these people have transformed themselves from leading a carefree life to being productive units in the family. That is Swami's message. Here, instead of waiting for them to come out to us, we are taking Swami's love and message to them. This is very important.

.....

What I would like to take back to my state is the implementation of these eight directives of SSSVIP program; this is enough to transform people. Actually, first I thought in Andhra Pradesh I will probably see how the Organization has pumped in a lot of money. But what I have seen is entirely different – it is really love that is been given to these villagers. So back home, I am going to tell the members of our organization that it is love which is very important, not financial resources.”

Another youth leader, Nirmal Patel, from Gujarat too was overpowered by this palpable presence of love.

“First and foremost, what has touched me is the love, care and concern of the Sevadals. The very moment I stepped out of the train, there were people waiting with flowers in their hands. And they literally hugged me. I was so happy; I felt it was Swami who is looking after me. For the next one and half days, they have cared for me like their own child.

“I feel this is the love of Swami, and the same love is reflected in all the villagers of the East Godavari district. It is absolutely great the way many projects have been taken up and completed extraordinarily in record time. Even though in some villages, out of the 8 aspects, four have been fully implemented, everywhere I saw even small children chanting Vedas and taking about human values in life. These kids are waving hands and joyfully crying out “Sairam! Sairam!” Their love and gratitude is the greatest thing I have seen.”

### **Godavari Projects – A Glorious Saga of Sai's Pure Love**

The All India President in his introductory speech mentioned to all the youth that let their visit be a festival of love, and that is exactly what it turned out to be. If there was one message loud and clear for all the youth and everyone, it was this: Nothing is impossible with the Power of Pure Love. A stone can be transformed into cotton and a desert altered into an oasis if we believe in the potent power inherent in Love and dare to practice it steadfastly. This is exactly what one has to learn from the life of Bhagavan Baba when He says “My Life is My Message.” His Life is indeed a saga of Pure Love, and the Sri Sathya Sai Drinking Water Project or the Sri Sathya Sai Village Integrated Programme is just another tiny manifestation of the glorious possibilities that herald the practice of Pure Love. Now, it is for the world not only to observe, assimilate and appreciate, but also to act, implement, and re-create.

Let's harness this infinite and immense power of pure love inherent in every heart for the harmony of this entire humanity, just in the manner exemplified in the life of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba. In the beginning of this programme, we said, water is life. This is true, no doubt, but more significantly, Love is Life! The flow and power of a copious stream of Pure Love is simply spellbinding!

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## **FEATURE ARTICLES**

### **IN QUEST OF INFINITY – Part 26**

*By Prof. G. Venkataraman*

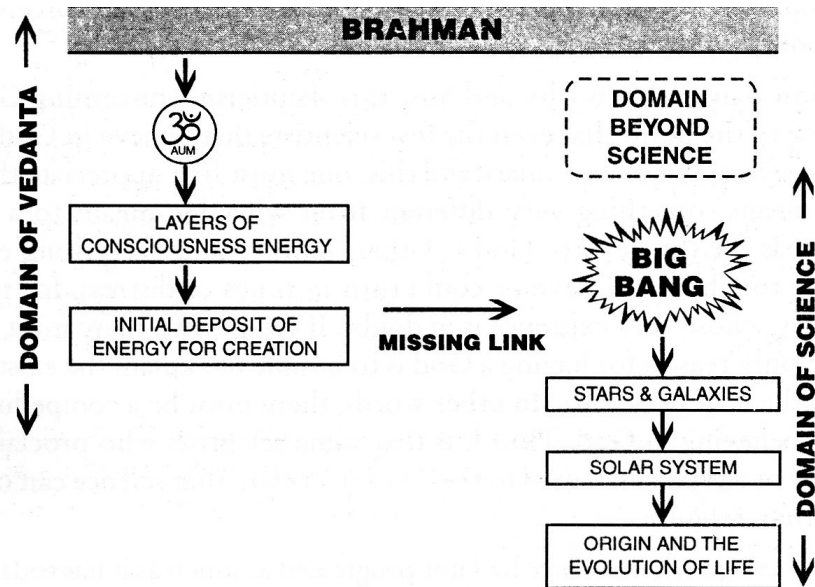
Loving Sai Ram and greetings from Prashanti Nilayam. I hope you have taken note of the fact, that in the last issue we sort of crossed an important border, moving from the realm of physics to metaphysics. When we parted company, I was telling you about how Physics is strongly suggesting that there is a subtle connectivity underlying the entire physical Universe. That also is what Vedanta says, namely that the Creator is the underpinning for the whole of Creation. Those of you who are familiar with the Gita would recall that exactly is what Krishna taught Arjuna, namely that the Atma is the underpinning for all that we see and experience in the Universe. Which is why it is often said: "For the seen, the unseen is the basis."

In the above, I have tried to hint or suggest that the underpinning discovered by Physics is but an aspect of the Atma or Universal Consciousness, which according to Vedanta is the foundation for Creation. The question now arises: "In Cosmology, we ask how the Universe came into existence. Today, there seems to be strong evidence that the physical Universe came from an event we call the Big Bang. In view of the tantalising connection between Physics and Vedanta, can we say anything about Creation according to Vedanta and its relationship to the Big Bang?"

#### **The Link between Physics and Vedanta**

This is an interesting question, and let me say right away that no one can answer this question to the satisfaction of all. The reason for this is simple. Scientists would tend to consider their entire discussion within the framework of Space and Time, both of which come into existence only **after** the birth of the Universe. Therefore, there is really no way Physics by itself can link to Vedanta. However, it is plausible to argue, and this I shall do presently, that Physics and *Vedanta* do not necessarily contradict each other.

Let me start with the figure presented below [Fig. 1], which seeks to tie up the Vedantic idea of Creation with what Science tells us about the Creation and the subsequent evolution of the Physical Universe. Before I make any further observations, I must of course caution you that this is a highly schematic figure.



**Figure 1:**

*This figure, taken from the book **Message of the Lord** referred to in the text, seeks to place in juxtaposition, the view of Creation in the Vedantic picture on the one hand and modern science on the other. Vedanta helps in understanding [to some extent] what preceded the Big Bang, an issue where science leaves us in the dark. On the other hand, science does a pretty good job of filling in with numerous details, where Vedanta sort of just fades away. It is as if two people are walking along the same road, one from one end and the other from the other end. Each has a good picture of the ground he has traversed, but a total description of the entire road is lacking because the two travellers have not met. Will they ever meet? That is an interesting question to think about! One thing is clear though at present. While Vedanta does not either dismiss or scoff at science, many scientists readily dismiss Vedanta as mere idle speculation. It would appear that excessive rationality can sometimes lead to false beliefs even as superstition is supposed to!*

Let us start by looking at the Vedantic side of Figure 1, i.e., the portion on the left. Starting from the top, we have Brahman or Atma or God, call it what you will. In Vedanta we accept the existence of Brahman/Atma as an axiom and therefore cannot question it. It is like accepting the Playfair's axiom, modern statement of Euclid's ancient proposition about parallel lines meeting only at infinity and then going on to build up the whole of Euclidian geometry [or the geometry of flat space]. OK, so we have Brahman/Atma existing all by itself, and there is no Universe. How then does the Universe suddenly pop up?

Vedantic philosophers have discussed this question in detail and a brief summary of this is given in the book **Message of the Lord** [Part IV, Chapter 9, p. 419 etc.] published by the Sri Sathya Sai Books and Publication Trust [the book carries no author's name but was actually written by me and first published by the Sai Organisation of New Zealand, who later gave the copyright to SSSBPT]. I shall not go into all those details here but shall lean

on Aurobindo who said that the Divine Energy associated with Brahman cascades down several steps before it becomes feasible for matter to emerge out of energy. As we all know [thanks of course to Einstein] that physical matter and physical energy are inter-convertible. So, if Brahman wills that there shall be a Physical Universe, then one presumes there would be an energy cascade right down from the level of Brahman to create an energy deposit for the material universe to appear – that is the essence of the left part of Fig. 1. On the right we have a terse summary of what we have been going through for over two years now – from the Big Bang all the way to atoms and molecules, from which we get everything from frogs and snakes and humans to space crafts and i-pods!

As the figure shows, there are two huge gaps in the figure; the first of this is related to the right side, where we are left clueless to what existed or preceded the Big Bang? This is the gap on the scientific side if I might call it that. Similarly, on the right side, there is a gap which is referred to as the “missing link”. This of course is about the gap that Vedanta leaves relating to how, from the energy deposit that Brahman made available, the physical Universe emerged.

In a manner, these two “gaps” show our own mental blocks in approaching the entire issue of God, man and the relationship between the two. Maybe I shall say more about that later, since it is in some respect related to debates currently going on like “Intelligent Design,” for example. For the present, an interesting question to ask would be:

*In view of the remarkable findings of Science concerning a kind of “Universal entanglement” suggesting a strange and baffling underlying Universal connectivity, can one link it in some way to Universal Consciousness, which according to Vedanta, is the “Mother” of the Universe? More specifically, is there any scientific evidence at the present time, about the connection between Mind and matter?*

It turns out that this question has been receiving attention from many, although mainstream scientists are generally sceptical of all such enquiry, to put it mildly.

## **Science and Thought Experiments**

The study of psychic phenomena forms a part of the larger domain of the mind-matter question. While most scientists concede that the latter subject is a respectable one (although one is not in a position to shed much light on it), few would care to regard psychic phenomena as anything other than a fraud or an illusion. But curiously, at the turn of the century, there was so much interest in parapsychology that both in England and in America, societies for psychical research were formed. The British Society for Psychic Research (SPR) had amongst its members, three Nobel winners and ten Fellows of the Royal Society, including such notables as Lord Rayleigh, Sir J.J.Thomson, and Sir William Crooke. The Society even brought out a Proceedings containing papers on telepathy and clairvoyance.

Later, interest in psychic phenomena not only dropped but scientists began to view them with great scepticism. More recently, however, a few scientists have dared to approach the subject without any pre-conceived bias. Prominent among them is Robert Jahn, a former Dean of the School of Engineering of Princeton University. Describing how he came to be involved with para-psychic experiments, he says:

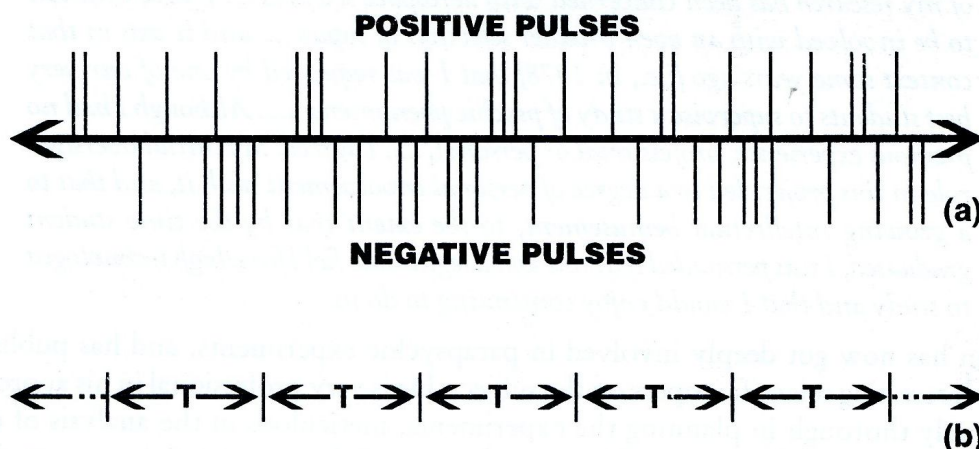
*My formal training is that of an engineer and applied physicist, and the bulk of my research has been concerned with aerospace sciences.... I have occasion to be involved with an even broader selection of topics .... and it was in that context some years ago [i.e., in 1978] that I was requested by one of our very best students to supervise a study of psychic phenomena .....Although I had no previous experience, professional or personal,.....I agreed. My initial oversight role in this project led to a degree of personal involvement with it, and that to a growing intellectual bemusement, to the extent that by the time the student graduated, I was persuaded that this was a legitimate field for a high technologist to study and that I would enjoy continuing to do so.*

Jahn now got deeply involved in parapsychic experiments, and published many interesting scientific papers on the subject. He was always very professional in his approach, absolutely thorough in planning the experiments, meticulous in the analysis of data, and he reported the results without bias or comments. Subsequent to Jahn, many other professionals too dared to take up experiments, unmindful of what the sceptics (who are in the majority) might say.

It would need a whole volume to describe the various investigations performed in the area of para-psychic phenomena. As a flavour of what has been done, I shall describe two experiments, the first one being due to Robert Jahn, and involving a random-event generator.

### Jahn's Random Event Generator

A random-event generator (REG) is an electronic instrument that produces a random series of events, say, a sequence of pulses that occur at random instants of time – see Fig. 2.

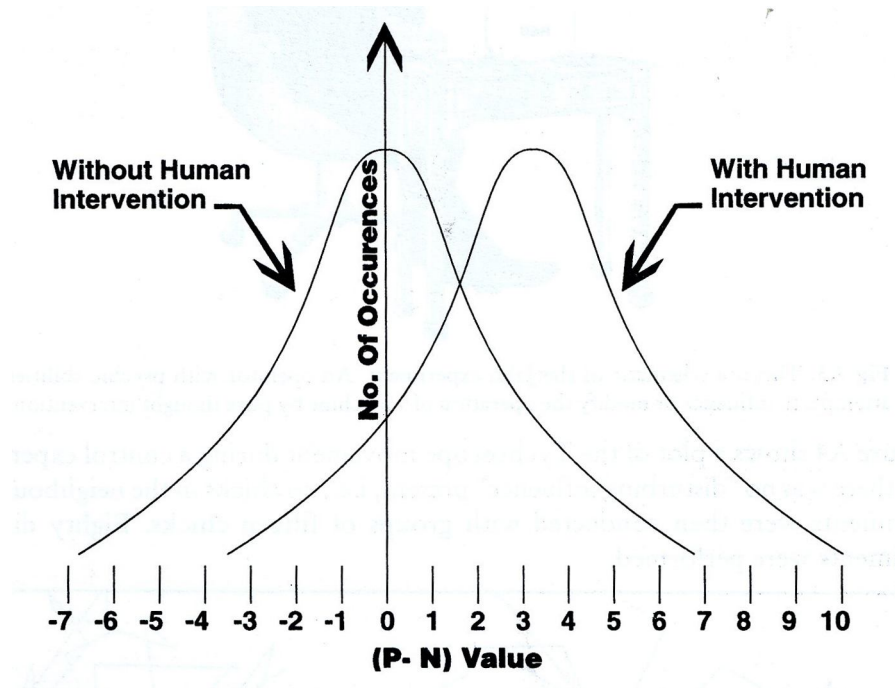




**Figure 2:**

Shown here in (a) are a sequence of pulses that occur in a random sequence. The REG of Prof. Jahn, produced such a sequence. The machine produces both positive and negative pulses. (b) shows the time axis divided into equal intervals, each of the same duration  $T$  say. The experiment consists in counting the number  $P$  of positive and  $N$  the number of negative pulses for each interval  $T$ , and then determining the number  $(P - N)$ . This number  $(P - N)$  could be positive, negative or even zero.

Suppose one divides time into equal interval slots and then counts how many pulses occur in each slot, one will find that the number does not remain the same. It would vary, even as different numbers turn up when a dice is thrown repeatedly. Suppose the distribution of the numbers in the time slots (of interval  $T$ ) is plotted; one would expect a curve as shown in Fig. 3. In fact, this curve is the signature of random events, and the instrument is *designed* to yield this result.

**Figure 3:**

This figure shows a schematic of the results obtained by Prof. Jahn in his psycho-kinetic experiments using a REG. What is plotted is the distribution of the number  $(P - N)$ . For example, when  $P - N$  is 4, it might happen that 4 occurs 87 times in the experiment. Similarly, -3 might occur 35 times and so on. If the REG is operated without human interference, then the curve without human intervention is what is obtained. Notice that it is symmetric about 0. However, if a human volunteer is made to focus on the REG and disturb it as discussed in the text, then the result changes, the shifted curve being an example. For scientists, this is a totally-unexpected result. What it implies is that the human mind **can** influence an inert machine!

In the experiment that Jahn performed, he asked the volunteer to direct his/her attention to a REG, and *mentally* influence the outcome of the random events - see Fig. 4.



**Figure 4:**

*This is a schematic of the Jahn experiment. It shows a volunteer sitting in front of a REG, concentrating his mind on the machine and attempting to influence its pulse train by pure thought intervention.*

In practical terms, what this means is that if a person is able to exert such influence on the REG, then the curve in Fig. 3 that is representative of random events must either get distorted or shifted or both. On the face of it, one does not expect such a thing to happen - at least the so-called rational scientists would laugh and scoff at the idea. It is to the credit of Prof. Jahn that he decided to try the experiment without any bias - he did not care about the outcome. Personally, he started as a sceptic; but he was not ready to dismiss the idea glibly. Instead, he carried out experiments, very careful experiments in fact, so that no holes could be picked in the analysis of the results. Much to his surprise as well as amazement, Jahn found that the curve representative of random events **DID** get shifted when there was human intervention – see Fig. 3. Why did such a shift take place and how did it occur? Jahn had no reply. He merely reported what he found.

For nearly twenty years, Jahn has been conducting such experiments in Princeton University as a part of a full-fledged research program called Princeton Engineering Anomalies Research (PEAR). Jahn's work has inspired many others, and the University of Nevada has what is called the Consciousness Research Laboratory. Likewise, in Geneva, there is a Foundation for Psycho-Physical Research of which Marcel Odier is the President. Describing the objectives and the work of his Foundation, Odier says:

*My rationalist education has obliged me to remain somewhat skeptical towards phenomena which cannot be explained by science.... I reasoned therefore that in the first stage it would be warranted to remake*

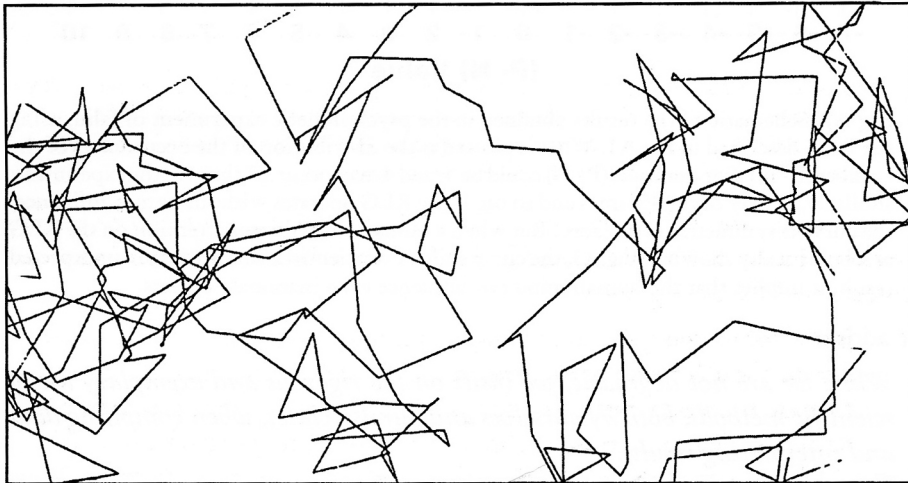
*experiments that had already been dealt with by renowned researchers such as Professor Rhine at Duke University, and more recently by Professor Jahn at Princeton University.....I wanted to see for myself and draw my own conclusions.*

Odier adds:

*While we are not dogmatic, we insist on the rigorous and exemplary use of scientific methods, both by ourselves and our associates, when compiling data and interpreting results.*

### **The Baby Chicks and the Robot Experiment**

Odier's Foundation has carried out many interesting experiments; one of these which involves animal psycho-kinesis is described below. In this experiment, there is no human being who is consciously trying to interact with a randomly operating machine. Instead, there is a robot that moves randomly, and the influence on this robot produced by group of chicks is studied! The robot (called Tychoscope by the investigators), moves within a rectangular area. It is controlled by a REG, and therefore its movements are random.



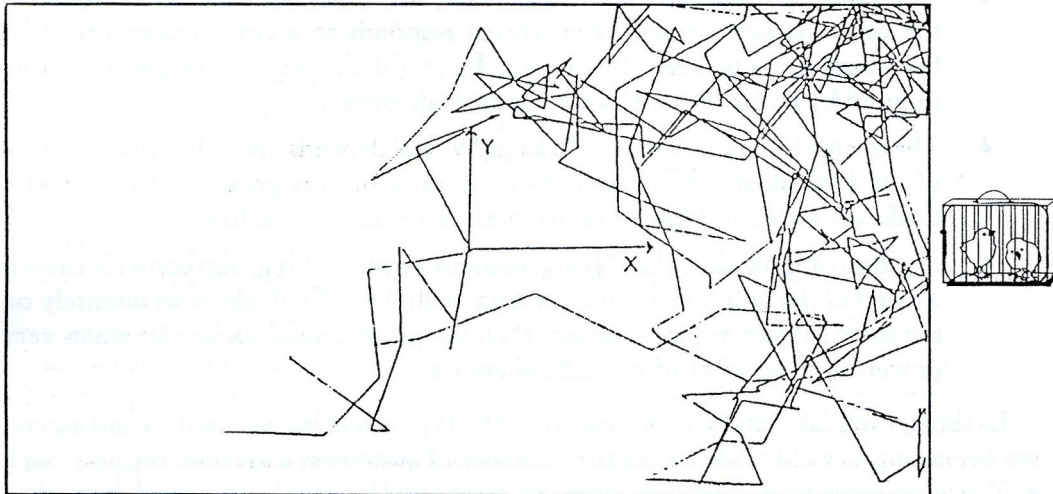
**Figure 5:**

*This shows the trajectory of the Tychoscope, moving about in a rectangular area when no chicks are present. As can be seen, the machine wanders throughout the available space without any specific bias. This is typical of the behaviour expected from a random system.*

Figure 5 shows a plot of the Tychoscope movement during a control experiment, when there was no "disturbing influence" present, i.e., no chicks in the neighbourhood. Experiments were then conducted with groups of fifteen chicks. Eighty different experiments were performed.

The experiment was inspired by the finding of Nobelist Konrad Lorenz that many species of baby birds adopt the first moving object which is close to them as their mother. The birds were first conditioned suitably so that they

would regard the Tychoscope as their mother. After this, the random walk of the robot was initiated, with the chick group at one end of the movement area. Figure 6 shows the robot trajectory in this case, and one can see an unmistakable tendency for the Tychoscope to hover closer to the chicks than away from them.



**Figure 6**

*This shows an example of the trajectory of the robot Tychoscope when chicks are present in a cage at one end. Clearly, in this case, the machine tends to hover around in the neighbourhood of the chicks. The behaviour is thus definitely not random; rather, it is biased. This bias is interpreted as being due to the mental influence exerted by the chicks on the machine.*

As the author of the experiment remarked, the results seem to affirm that the chicks did influence the movement of the robot (which they thought was their mother). Even if one does not quite accept this view, the dramatic deviation from pure random behaviour is clearly evident and cannot be dismissed, especially as this type of deviation was present in over seventy percent of the experiments carried out.

In passing, one is here reminded of what our Swami said on one occasion in His previous *Avatar* at Shirdi (quoted in *Shri Sai Sat Charita*). Shirdi Sai said that the Lord protects by His mere glance;

*Just as the tortoise feeds her young ones whether they are near her or away from her on the other side of the river bank, by her loving looks..... The [mother] tortoise is on one bank and her young ones are on the other side. She gives neither milk nor warmth to them. Her mere glance gives them nutrition. The young ones do nothing but remember [meditate upon] their mother. The glance of the tortoise is, to the young ones, a down-pour of nectar.*

## What Does Science tell us about Consciousness?

A sample of two different experiments has been given, one involving humans and the other involving animals. In both cases, the experimenters, who were to start with not ready to believe that man-machine interaction was possible, found unmistakable experimental evidence that some kind of a mind-matter interaction was in fact taking place. The question now is: "How does a physical system (i.e., an inanimate, mechanical system) targeted by an observer 'know' that the observer is focusing his/her attention on it (i.e., the system)?"

For the record, I should mention that these experiments have been widely attacked by the "purists", it being alleged that the experiments lack sufficient statistical rigour and control. There may be some validity to this criticism, although, I am not prepared to believe that Prof Jahn, for example, is unaware of his responsibilities.

Actually, there is a huge psychological barrier here that traditional scientists are not willing to admit exists. As Prof. Jahn has pointed out sometime ago in a lengthy and scholarly article, experiments that involve mind-matter interaction [of the type Jahn and others are exploring] do not always yield reproducible results. This is inevitable, since the human mind is involved, and as we all know, the human mind can wander so widely and erratically. Thus, while one volunteer might concentrate heavily and be able to influence the REG effectively, another might not. Hence, unlike in conventional scientific experiments where certain macro reproducibility might be expected even with random fluctuations at the micro level, in para-psycho experiments occasional deviations from norm should not be summarily dismissed as evidence for lack of control or whatever. Right now, the bias in the establishment is so strong that not many are prepared to believe these experiments even though they are as good as one can devise them. Clearly, the establishment is not yet ready to come to terms with Consciousness!

At the same time, researchers like Jahn are not deterred and based on their experiments, they are ready to go beyond the frontiers of conventional science to postulate the existence of a "consciousness field" (physicist's jargon) to come to terms with the unexpected results (of the type described above). The following are some of the properties demanded for this field:

- Consciousness extends beyond the individual and has field-like properties (meaning, like electric, magnetic and gravitational fields).
- Consciousness injects *order* into systems, in proportion to the "strength" of the consciousness present. Everything responds to a consciousness field by becoming more ordered. Inanimate objects (like rocks) will respond to order induced by consciousness as well as animate ones.
- The strength of consciousness in an individual depends upon the concentration of the individual. The greater the concentration, the greater is the strength. Ordinary awareness has a low strength since the focus is low.
- A group of individuals has "group consciousness". This group consciousness is a blend of the individual consciousness. If all the individuals

focus intensely on the same subject, topic or object, then the group consciousness becomes very powerful on account of mutual coherence.

So that gives you a brief overview of the brave attempt made by some active scientists to use the tools of science to check if the Mind can directly influence matter. The available results suggest that there does appear to be some evidence that the Mind can influence matter and this occurs through the agency of Consciousness. The question now becomes: "This consciousness field that these brave pioneers are talking about – is it the same as what Vedantins talk about? Or, is it something totally different? Or, are the two related in some sense?

That question requires a long answer, which obviously cannot be provided in this issue. So why don't we get together again next month to take all this further? Meanwhile, I thank you for being with me again, and let me also say that I am deeply touched by the mails sent by many people from different parts of the globe; that helps me a lot in assuring me that I am not really wasting your time!

Thanks a lot and till next time, all the best. Jai Sai Ram.

## VISION AND VALUES

### MAKING A DIFFERENCE: WHOSE RESPONSIBILITY?

***- An invigorating interactive community session by the Sathya Sai Human Values Network in Hatfield, England on March 14, 2009***

#### A Clarion Call

There has never been a time like the present to re-examine our lives against the backdrop of severe global uncertainty and civil unrest. In the United Kingdom, the recession is bearing a huge impact on families in every village, town, and city. We do not know how long this will last or how critical or painful it will be. Every day the media exposes us to our inner fears and anxieties which threaten our well-being. The fundamental question that begs to be answered is: *Where does our responsibility lie in building a healthy future?*

Albert Einstein states that "Problems cannot be solved at the same level of awareness that created them" thus indicating a need to seek solutions from a higher perspective.

Are the current global conditions not a final call to humanity to wake up and unite against a sea of troubles? Time is ripe for a radical change in our thinking and for reshaping our visions to sincerely explore where our true values lie. All recent events indicate that the present crisis is a symptom of a far greater and underlying disease of our human condition.



## Opportunity Knocks

Hatfield is a university town of diverse communities in the South-East of England and is a part of the Welwyn and Hatfield district of Hertfordshire, approximately 20 miles north of London. The area has not been immune to the economic downturn. Schools are suffering from low educational attainment, and levels of crime and anti-social behaviour are increasing. The average incidence of crime in central Hatfield has increased by almost 24%, raising concerns among local councillors and community leaders. This acute deterioration of social and ethical values presented an ideal opportunity for local communities and interested professionals to come together not only to share these concerns but also to create a supporting network based on universal human values.

## From Recession to Renaissance: A Human Values Opus

### *Challenges and Opportunities*

The Sathya Sai Human Values Network [[www.sshvn.org](http://www.sshvn.org)] runs an ongoing programme of Human Values for the global community. It seeks to integrate human values into all aspects of our lives - personal and professional, for the betterment of society and to develop an online resource to share best practices from a human values perspective. The SSHVN provides ongoing training and development to promote human values in various educational and community settings. It aspires to become a catalyst and reference point for values-based interactive dialogue through their Human Values Discussion Forums.

In response to the current crisis in the community, the SSHVN team led by Dr. Daksha Trivedi, recently held an interactive community session on human values. Hatfield Sai Centre provided the necessary support and encouraged participation from the local communities. Together, they embarked on a challenging and a thought-provoking outreach initiative based on the theme *"Vision and Values: Making a Difference, Whose Responsibility?"*

More specifically, they considered the following questions against the backdrop of their current climate of unrest:

- What are the concerns in our society today?
- How can we address these concerns that affect all of us at the individual, community and societal level?
- What is the role of human values in the betterment of our society (personal, social and spiritual development)?
- What is the role of human values in the pursuit of happiness and fulfilment in the complex and diverse society we live in?
- Why do we need to have a vision with values? (What would life be like without a vision and values?)
- What is the role of families in promoting and providing a positive culture?



➤ How can our vulnerable young people realise their highest potential?

With the support and guidance of the SSHVN trainers, the youths worked for several weeks and finally evolved a presentation model appropriate to the needs of the forum. The aims, objectives, methods, ethos and outcomes were all addressed in the development of this model.

Mr. Pradip Trivedi, SSHVN Trainer explained the need for youth involvement.

“There appears to be a hunger in the youth of today to do good and they are always looking for an opportunity to help others. They seem to recognise their shortcomings and are open to the voice of wisdom. Through encouragement, we can empower them to become agents of change. We recognise that adults and youths need to work together to make a difference.”

### **Selecting the Panel**

The panellists were selected on the basis of their significant contribution to the community, their professional and educational backgrounds and their keen interest in working together to promote an understanding and integration of human values at all levels of our lives.

Held at the Green Lanes primary school, Hatfield on Saturday March 14, 2009, the event witnessed the coming together of people from various backgrounds engaging in a lively, informative and healthy discussion. Participants included social workers, teachers, business entrepreneurs, medical and health professionals, members of the faith forum and district council representatives. After being warmly welcomed by the volunteers, the session began at 6 p.m. where participants were introduced to the evening with a thought-provoking slide show accompanied by the uplifting music of Beethoven's piano concerto no.1. The slides conveyed both the images of war, famine and pain as well as those of hope, perseverance, natural beauty and faith, thus providing moments for reflection.

Thus the opening set the mood of excitement and anticipation in the hall. as Dr Daksha Trivedi, (SSHVN Chair) warmly welcomed the guests drawn from the Three Counties (Hertfordshire, Bedfordshire and Buckinghamshire) as well as Greater London.

The session was introduced with the biblical story of Noah's Ark. This depicts a journey where on God's command, Noah built a boat which was constructed to endure a universal flood. It accommodated all the species of animals and insects to take them to a safer and a better place. Noah's ark gives a model of a safe journey to happiness. In comparison, history illustrates the tragedy of the Titanic, the luxurious liner that was deemed unsinkable but unfortunately sank leaving thousands to perish in the depths of the Atlantic.

Our world represents a luxurious liner offering all the material comforts for our journey of life. However, we have unfortunately hit the iceberg on our voyage and are facing a moral crisis. We too have ignored all the warnings and have

lent ourselves to human suffering. Even now we have not planned adequate life boats to save us. We are in a journey that began with a noble vision, but has degraded due to man's greed and desire.

To further elucidate the theme, Dr Trivedi said, "We are a global society. We live in a period where tremendous changes are taking place, affecting every aspect of our lives. Whilst we have the intelligence and the ability to create a healthy environment, we lack wisdom; we have knowledge about human development but we are unable to understand human deterioration; we understand human rights but we do not know the art of living in harmony. We have a profound impact on human well-being but we fail to take responsibility for our actions. Are our decisions profit-motivated or people-motivated? Here, we have a bleak paradigm. Do we need a bigger boat? Or do we need to have a compass to direct us? What do we really need? Where do our personal values lie?"

*"We live in the present, we dream of the future, but we learn eternal truths from the past." (Madame Chiang b.1898 Chinese educator, reformer)*

### **Rhyme of Youth: An Inner Dialogue**

Next was the real life depiction of the lives of many young people in the current economic climate. Two young people conveyed their dilemmas through a powerful 'Inner dialogue'. This was a journey of reflection, with its message of endurance and hope.

*"What am I doing?" "Where am I going?" "I'm so confused; I don't know what to do!"*

In the shock of being made redundant and with no motivation or confidence, Hiten begins the dialogue questioning what the future holds for him. His conscience (Hetal) guides him and leads him to realise that he is not alone, but there is hope and he must search within himself to find the answers. Struggling with his conscience, he recognises that by having a positive attitude, he can develop his strengths, work on his limitations and thereby begin to create a new life-plan. He begins to define himself through both external and internal enquiry and decides to start with random acts of kindness.

This true example elucidated the importance of pursuing Truth, developing self confidence, and overcoming a crippling negativity. These messages were very pertinent for the youth in the audience. Prashant Mistry commented, "I thought the reference to unemployment and financial issues was particularly insightful. With my personal situation being a mirror image of the dialogue, I felt I could completely identify with what was being portrayed. The key message that I went away with was that people should not despair when their life situations are far from ideal."

## **Valuable Insights**

Three respected members of the community; Mr. Kapil Dudakia (*Milton Keynes, Buckinghamshire*); Reverend Michael Roden; and Mr. Ali Sheriff (*Hitchin, Hertfordshire*) were invited on a panel, chaired by Dr. Daksha Trivedi.

### **Mr. Kapil Dudakia**

*An electronic engineer by profession, with a strong interest in IT training, he has been an OFSTED (Office for standards in Education) inspector of schools. He has served on a number of committees: for the Milton Keynes Council, MK Thames Valley Police Independent Advisory Group (IAG), Founder member and strategic advisor to the Hindu Forum in the UK. Others include the MK council of faiths, serving on Local Strategic Partnerships, Board of Trustees of the Fremantle Trust - a care organisation. He is recognised as a champion for equality and diversity, making valuable contributions in the media.*

Mr. Dudakia began with an energising interpretation of the core values that are important to him: Truth, Right Conduct, Love, Non-Violence and Peace. He asked, *"Must we tell the truth all the time?"* It is important to remember why we tell the truth, and who will benefit from it as it is the truth that helps to discriminate between right and wrong. He quoted Aristotle:

*"Excellence is an art won by training and habituation. We do not act rightly because we have virtue or excellence, but rather we have those because we have acted rightly. We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, then, is not an act but a habit."*

He concluded with an essential Human Values Tool kit for life, "a tooth pick to remind us to pick on the good qualities in us and others; a rubber band so we are flexible; bubble gum because life is going to be tough but we should stick with it; a paper clip to unite all our thoughts, words and deeds; and a pencil to help list all our blessings at the end of each day." Through the many obstacles we face in life it is this 'toolkit' that can help us and remind us never to give up, because over time, our dreams and visions can be realised.

### **Reverend Michael Roden**

*He is team rector and rural dean, St. Mary's Church, in the historic town of Hitchin. He is also the Chair of the District Church Council, a lead member of the North Hertfordshire Faith forum, and is involved in various community service and humanitarian initiatives.*

Rev. Roden posed a very poignant question, "Do we know who we are? We are suffering from an identity crisis." Today's society is troubled by many underlying disturbances and anxieties which have lead to a sense of fear for the future that limits the visibility of our potential. "How can we be ourselves if we don't know who we are?"

The current economic downturn has had a major impact on our society, for example, with prices decreasing why do we spend more and more? Our materialistic desire to have everything has over-shadowed our lives." Rev. Roden related this deterioration in society to the 'affluenza' theory by applying the following three descriptions to life today.

- "1) The bloated, sluggish, unfulfilling feeling from the constant competition we face with each other.
- 2) The epidemic of stress, overwork, weight and debt caused by the constant need to seek happiness.
- 3) An unsustainable addiction to economic growth.

Our lives are distorted by 'affluenza', but what is the solution? Our identity is lost and the constant competition and need to strive for bigger and better things, inevitably leads to more conflict and unhappiness."

He stressed that the answer again comes from within us. **"It is the interior world of prayer and reflection that will guide and help us reconnect with our true identity, it is here where our values come from."** We should enjoy discovering this interior world and be able to use it anytime without the worry, competition and exploitation that we face in the exterior world.

By placing a 'ceiling on our desires' and knowing who we are as individuals we can make a meaningful and positive impact on our lives and those who come in touch with us. It is from here that we begin the path of righteousness and non-violence.

### **Mr. Ali Sheriff**

*A resident of Hitchin, Hertfordshire, he represents the Muslim community on the North Hertfordshire Faith Forum. Mr. Sheriff is a personal careers adviser, working with young people (13-19 years old), offering a values-based career advice. He also runs a charity which conducts training for careers advisers and teachers in Tanzania, East Africa.*

Mr. Ali Sheriff offered his understanding of human values in relation to his Islamic faith. He began by looking into the definition of vision and values. "If vision is the ability to imagine how a country/society can develop and plan for the future and, values are ideals, customs and institutions of a society, then **who are the potential stakeholders and providers of visions and values?** The fallibility of man today and the chaotic life we lead makes us prone to errors, and thus inaccurate role models; therefore society is even more prone to errors and destruction." He continued, "In the Islamic faith God, the creator of all creatures, guides us human beings". Mr. Sheriff stressed the importance of truth and how through adherence to Truth we can discriminate between right and wrong actions, thereby be righteous, non-violent, and show peace, respect and goodwill to our fellow-beings. Accountability of our actions is crucial in modern society particularly with conflicts of greed, envy and

ignorance ever prevalent in the world. The power of positive culture and the value of belief will guide us in the decisions we make.

## Questions and Answers

*The audience participated with great enthusiasm in a Question and Answer session following the stimulating talks by the panellists and covered a wide range of questions on burning issues. Dr. Trivedi opened with the first question:*

"If as individuals we grow up, in a negative environment which impacts on our lives, and if then we become defined as 'negative' how can we develop a positive and a healthy vision?"

Rev. Michael Roden gave an example gained from many prisoners who struggle to see a way forward but through spirituality find an inner freedom and liberty. "Our values are deep inside us all; prayer is a useful way of releasing them." By applying this to our troubled lives we can find our inner peace and calm, and discover our inner dignity from within.

A member of the Welwyn & Hatfield Interfaith group asked: "What do the panel think about what is happening in schools today and whether they wish something different should be happening?"

Having previously worked in schools as an OFSTED inspector Mr. Kapil Dudakia asserted the important role education has in society. It is his belief that in western society education is failing as the pursuit of academic excellence overrides character formation amongst the young. There is a need to build a person's character to reveal their inner truth to develop as a strong individual, with strong will power and the ability to make decent decisions. It is the combination of social, moral and spiritual education that can lead to a correct character formation.

Cllr Tony Skottowe, from Welwyn & Hatfield district council asked: "How do different religions break barriers and come together to prevent different religions from disliking each other and using it as an excuse for destroying each other?"

Mr. Ali Sheriff emphasised the important difference between religion and culture, and said that in order for us to live in harmony we must be respectful of other faiths. Mr. Kapil Dudakia added, "Faiths don't kill, people kill. When we blame faiths for killings and violence, we do not want to take responsibility. Individuals must be made accountable for their actions not religion, or faith." Rev. Michael Roden stressed on the need to move away from self-centredness (Ego) and focus on compassion (Love). These are the fundamental messages of human values found in all faiths and must not be forgotten. In order to reshape our vision we must focus on the similarities and not the differences within our society.

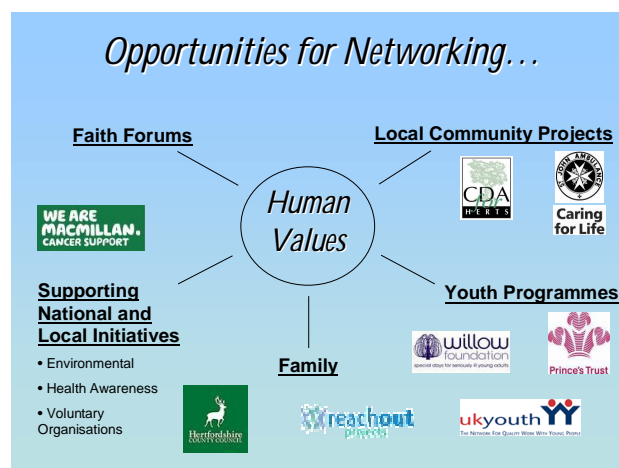
This engaging discussion highlighted our responsibility as individuals and our collective responsibility as community stakeholders, in breaking down barriers within society and ourselves. By sharing common ground and treating everyone as equal we can embrace each other and eliminate ignorance, which will have a positive influence on the decisions we make. This is vision with values.

## Points of View

This session was facilitated by Mrs. Rani Naidoo (Hertfordshire) and Mr. Pradip Trivedi, (Managing Director, Hertfordshire) who focussed on the role of families and youth in the betterment of society. Three questions, keys to the development of a healthy vision for life, were put forward for discussion with the participants and the members of the panel:

1. What are family values?
2. How can families cope with external influences, the pressures on individuals and on families in this current climate?
3. What is being done to promote the health and well being of young people?

*The session ended with an opportunity for all community groups and participants to continue this dialogue during a 'meet and greet' session that followed. There were various comments from all participants discussing several initiatives and programmes within the local community where there is an active involvement of youth. By taking an active role in the community, together we can not only share our values, faiths, and cultural differences, but begin to formulate joint plans to bring about a change. Requests were forthcoming for networking and working together to deliver human values programmes in different organisations (slide 1)*



The evening concluded with a sense of hope, that amongst all our anguish and worries we are not alone. It is through effective communication that we discover the similarities in our concerns and the values we share. Guided by

our conscience and faith, we can look forward and have a clearer vision for the future. By moving away from greed, negativity, confusion and anxiety we can unite our vision and embark on a journey of respect, understanding and happiness, and thus fulfil our responsibility as stakeholders of society.

### **What did the Participants Say?**

Feedback received from participants, both physical and virtual was highly encouraging.

*"It is a great service to convey this message at this time, as many people are in difficult situations; What we need is for all the youths to come together to create and share a common dialogue because they are our future." Dr. Anwer Usmani (Luton Council of Faiths)*

*"We would be glad to have a Sathya Sai Human Values Team representative to join and attend future Interfaith group meetings. I think this would be a splendid way to do some interfaith work and meet with a wider and different community that is full of young people and actively doing positive things in the world." Mr. Nick Heap, Welwyn and Hatfield Interfaith Group.*

*"Excellent evening bringing up such diverse and yet diverging ideas. I am going home to change my sermon for tomorrow, and leave with more questions than I came with. Thank you." Mrs. Jane Weedon, Welwyn Garden City*

*"Very good - well worth coming to, lots of ideas that I found helpful. If another workshop is run locally I would like to attend." Mr. Bertie Everard, Welwyn Garden City*

*"Very well organised and the speakers were brilliant. Need even more young people." Mr. Bharat Ganatra*

*"A most enlightening evening which has broadened my mind to the same values from which we all have come from and are united by." Mrs. Dipika Mistry*

*"It was a very informative and well conducted programme, my local church would like to see more young people involved in this type of forum." John Scott, Letchworth, North Hertfordshire*

### **Web-response from the USA**

*"I believe that our responsibility to the world in solving the current, global economic crisis, along with every other crisis that befalls humanity, is to spread the concept of education in human values to all corners of the earth in a way that is simple, practical, and fit for the times.*

*While democracy and capitalism are powerful macro-level political/economic*

*constructs because they are based on freedom, they are missing the element of social responsibility at the micro-level and a true and practical understanding of human values. Before Adam Smith, the Father of modern-day Capitalism, wrote the 'Wealth of Nations' and introduced the world to the concept of the 'invisible hand,' he wrote the 'Theory of Moral Sentiment,' which was a discourse on the goodness of people. Because he came from the vantage point of the inherent goodness of humanity, he overlooked the possibility for the demonic and animalistic tendencies of people to manifest and control society to the point of destruction. This is what has led to the current economic crisis today - too much greed, too much consumption, too much of everything. There is no 'ceiling on desires.'*

*Karl Marx believed that democracy and capitalism would topple due to the evolution of people or revolution due to structural inequalities that would manifest in society. However, Karl Marx didn't realize that if 'consciousness' was infused into a 'free' social/economic order, then humanity would transcend the limits of the constructs and use them for what they are – tools. What is meant by this is that if individuals can transform themselves at the individual level and win 'revelation' through an infusion of consciousness, then the global society will elevate to new heights of cooperation. Thus, evolution and revolution are not the only potential outcomes of free systems; there is also revelation and elevation.*

*How do we infuse the consciousness into the people? We must begin with human values and end with human values. In fact, the spread of human values are the key to bridging the mundane to the spiritual for they spiritualize all activity.” Vinesh (USA)*

## **What Next?**

What emerged from this workshop was the need to work together with various organisations within our communities to help our young people build a life full of purpose, especially in the current climate of uncertainty. Encouraged by this workshop, participants from several organisations came forward with a view of working together to develop integrated human values programmes within Hertfordshire and Bedfordshire. They particularly mentioned the need for a youth-led panel based on this model. An example would be to create a values based peer group to make representation to the various sources of external influences in an effort to bring about a change in the way influential organisations make decisions.

Thus the one-day workshop in Hatfield did open the hearts of the participants and convinced them the need to find answers for all our problems, individual and social, through the human values perspective, as that is the only way the world today can find lasting solutions to our common problems.



## **HARNESSING THE HEART - PART 18**

### ***Living Up to the Challenge of Conscience in Daily Life***

*Dear Readers, in this series, we offer you real life stories from contemporary heroes who have demonstrated the courage to follow their conscience when confronted with difficult dilemmas or challenging circumstances in their daily lives. This segment is an ode to the strength of the brave-hearts who chose to listen to the voice of their conscience, thereby abiding by the values of Right Conduct, Truth, Love, Peace and Non-violence, even though the choice had appeared tough.*

*In our previous issues, we brought you inspiring stories from around the globe. These included the experiences of Mrs. Priya K-Alldis, Mr. Dev Taneja, Mr. C. B. S. Mani, Mr. Karthik Ramesh, Mr. Amar Vivek, Mr. Krish Venkatasubramaniam, Mr. Hiten Morarji, Mr. N. Prabhakar, Mr. Sathya Jambunathan, Mr. U. Pardha Saradhi, A courageous woman executive (Part 11), Mr. Shalabh Mittal, Mr. P. S. Kannan, Mr. Sai Mudigonda, an anonymous charity board member (Part 15), Mr. Vivekananda Sahoo and Mrs. Annapurna Shankar.*

*What do you do when you are confronted with a situation where you have to choose between surviving in your company and confirming strictly with your personal values? Can you be firm like a rock about following your principles while your career takes a downspin putting your entire life in disarray? What is the wise and practical thing to do? Read this real life account of Mr. Venkatraman Krishnamoorthy and you will have plenty to ponder which will lend your life greater clarity.*

### **THE MIGHT TO FOLLOW THE RIGHT ...at the cost of money, position, power or whatever**

*By Mr. Venkatraman Krishnamoorthy*

*An alumnus of Sri Sathya Sai University, Mr. Venkatraman Krishnamoorthy joined the Prasanthi Nilayam campus to pursue his Masters in Business Management during the years 1998-2000. After completing this degree, he joined one of the largest private sector banks in India. Currently he is the Associate Director at Standard Chartered Bank and is based in Mumbai. Additionally, he plays an active role in the service projects of the Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organization, Maharashtra.*

*In grueling moments, we realize that the competence which our ordinary business books provide is not enough to enable us to make the right decisions. It's then we feel the need to reach the source of all knowledge – our heart – and draw from there the required solution.*

*As Prof. William Miller, a respected management consultant, says: "Our conscience provides guidance that comes directly from our inherent spiritual*

nature. It is more than just discerning right from wrong. It is the voice of our spiritual heart, our truest Self.”

### **A Commitment in Letter and Spirit**

This incident is from the time when I was with a leading private sector bank. I had joined in August 2000 and had spent almost a year in the new electronic banking team and with the buildup we had created, the bank decided to hire 3 more people to handle the volume we expected. The recruitment was completed in September 2001 and on the basis of the strength of the new team our management took up a large number of projects.

Our immediate business head had committed the team to the new targets with the bank's Managing Director. But to everyone's surprise the three newly recruited employees in the team left the bank one after the other in a gap of 15 days. Each of them mentioned a reason such as a better offer, or the new job was different to that described to them, or they had to move due to family reasons. The organization realized the consequences of their loss and tried to stop them from leaving, but with little success.

Our bank was already committed to its customers on certain time bound projects on the basis of the new staff strengths and there was no way to get out of those commitments. We looked for temporary resources but that too did not work. The next 3 months were going to be a struggle for my boss and I, since we both were the only ones left in the team. Two of us had to do the work of five. I was already putting in many hours overtime and this extra workload I realized would push me to the limit and I wondered how I was going to cope. My manager spoke to me for half an hour about the difficult times ahead and told me how we had to take things in our stride and get through it as best as we can.

It was at that meeting that I told him I had an offer from a leading MNC bank (an offer I had without attending an interview, since a few colleagues from my bank who had joined the new organization had spoken about my performance in the current bank). But I also informed him that I had decided to stay on despite the tough conditions, since it would be highly importune if I too left at that critical time.

I silently remembered Bhagavan Baba's words when He spoke to us in the Institute auditorium on the MBA Anniversary Day: **“You should work hard in an organization for a minimum of five years to prove your competence. Never demand an increase in salary and don't change jobs every now and then for a few more rupees.”**

My boss was at a complete loss for words, and seemed rather emotional. He was just silent for 5 minutes and then quietly said, “I have worked for 25 years but this is one moment I will always carry in my heart.” It was evident that he was bowled over by my decision to stay and help the company, but frankly I had no other choice, as it was the voice of my conscience that was telling me not to be selfish but to apply the sacred principles of loyalty,

conscientiousness and diligence. I knew that I had made an important choice which not only would affect my future but also defined me as a person. Truly it is in these times of crisis that we discover who we really are and I was convinced that I made the right decision.

We struggled hard for the next 5 months reporting to office at 8:45 a.m. in the morning and returning home at 11:00 p.m. at night, sometimes stretching to 1:00 a.m. It was a testing time for both of us, but we were highly motivated and fired up by the challenge. In the end we completed all the outstanding commitments to the full satisfaction of our customers and only then could return to a normal working environment.

I stayed in that bank for 6 years and finally moved to Standard Chartered Bank. My boss too moved to another department but before I moved, on the last day, he took me out for lunch and as we walked towards the exit, he kept his hand on my shoulder and reflected on that day and said, "Four years after that incident has passed, my mind still lingers on that one moment. Not one person of your age would have taken that decision. I have seen many hardworking compatriots come and go but none of them practice the axiom of 'Keeping the organization interests before one's own interest'. This mettle does not even come after many years of work. You were able to do it only due to your educational background at Sri Sathya Sai University". He held my hand for a minute and said, "Your Sai Baba will be very happy with the way you have worked here. You have fully lived by HIS words".

***Courage is the greatest of all the virtues. Because if you don't have courage, you may not have an opportunity to use any of the others.***

### **Morality and Principles vs. Money and Position**

During the early days in my career as an Assistant Manager I was dealing with a very important client, one of India's largest private sector conglomerates. The business from this client used to be extremely valuable and hence was earmarked as an important and prestigious business relationship.

Along with a female colleague I used to visit different departments in the corporate head quarters of this client. While returning from one such visit, the girl burst into tears and confided that she was being harassed by a Senior Vice-President of that company. I was shocked and felt that this issue must be addressed immediately. However my colleague was uneasy to take up this matter with our boss. I felt indignant at this lewd behaviour and took courage to bring the issue to light, despite knowing that my career might be at stake for taking on this powerful corporate honcho. My courage however came from doing the right thing, from following the Master within.

When the matter was raised, our business head advised the female colleague not to visit this particular client, and so I had to take up her role. When I visited Senior Vice President he was livid and behaved indecorously. He even

threatened that he would no longer have business with our bank unless the girl came instead of me to deal with the company.

The client went further and complained to the country head about me, alleging that I had misbehaved with him. It was a tense time for me as I was at the mercy of powerful interests that did not care two hoots about me or my female colleague – money was the god here and not the feelings of any individual or morality. To placate the client and safeguard the business relationship, my bank removed me from that particular assignment. The business head called me and said, "I have no option but to shift you from this role because if we don't, the bank will be hit and we can't afford to lose this important and profitable client."

I felt I had taken the ethical course of action but I had to live with the repercussions on the worldly plane. My career took a downturn with promotions suffering for the next two years. My colleague then adjudged that my course of being truthful and practicing values had cost me dearly, promotion as well as career wise. She seemed to be preaching from the school which believes that "Good guys finish last".

But in all sincerity I was hardly perturbed by the turn of events, as I knew this was just a temporary setback and the path to virtue was always strewn with stones. What is the chance for greater remuneration compared to keeping my heart's cherished values? I do not ever want to compromise on these precious principles to jump up the career ladder. I recall my stand for *Dharma* with a glow, as I know that if I had not acted according to my conscience I would not be the man I am today, and being true to myself is what is most essential to me.

I made this right decision as my values have never been corroded by desire for money. My attitude has always been Spartan. I have learnt not to be interested in the accumulation of money for the sake of luxury or power. As Bhagavan Baba says, "Money is like blood and it should be in circulation if our health has to remain good". I am never elated by material profits. I think this is a very important trait, particularly when one is working in an industry which is driven only by hard crunching numbers. Looking at my stressed colleagues I realize that this quality keeps me in a state of absolute peace.

In any case, to continue my story, a few months later I received a new offer from another leading MNC bank which compensated me twice over, not only in terms of salary but also in designation.

Justice seemed to be done when after some time the same Vice President's misbehavior with another lady employee came to light and led to a huge uproar in that company. He was demoted and sent packing to a remote place to operate.

### **Getting the Correct Marks and Remarks**

When I look back on my life I can see that receiving grounding in values right from childhood has what helped me greatly in the development of my

personality. Without early value education, how can these virtues take root in our lives? I am reminded of an incident that happened while I was studying in my 4th grade in the primary school. Though I was only 8 at the time, I was able to pass through a challenging situation in the class room with flying colours, thanks to my parents' training and family values which were engraved deep in my heart right from my childhood.

I had scored 31% in the Geography paper examination. As per the school practice, every student was given the corrected answer sheets to verify the answers. When I received my paper, I went to a corner of the classroom and focused, calculating the exact marks, and to my dismay found that the result actually summed up to only 11 out of 100!

At that point I could see the beeline of students trying to increase their marks. But even at that young age, my heart directed me to take the paper to my teacher to let her know that the marks were wrongly calculated and was much below the accepted criteria.

My teacher was pleasantly shocked and very appreciative of my honest and truthful approach. And despite my low marks, she made me stand right next to her and addressed the whole class lauding me and the example that I had set. It is this righteousness which has helped me succeed in my life till date.

### **The Unfolding of a Glorious Journey...**

I was unaware that the Avatar of the age was walking on two feet in a humble village in South India, till one day He decided to intervene. My younger sister was a Bal Vikas (Sai Human Values Education) teacher and one fine day she brought a MBA application form of the Sri Sathya Sai University for me to apply to. I submitted my application and was miraculously selected. In as much as I was in love and awe of witnessing the *gurukula* system of education, it was very difficult for me to understand the concept of Avatar and accept that God indeed is walking in flesh and blood right in front of me. I struggled to establish a relationship with Bhagavan Baba in the first few weeks. I had searched and studied the scriptures for months to make sense of all that I "knew" about God and our relationship with Him. I understood the basic tenets of spirituality but had never been touched by any moving experiences. But under His lotus feet as time went by, I came to find significant insights into life and truths about myself that I had never before understood. And the greatest insight of all is this: My blossoming relationship with God. Through this new found awareness, something changed deep inside of me, leading me to grow in ways I had never imagined.

Looking back, I know what happened to me is the most beautiful thing anyone in this Universe can experience. It was real, but I also know that I probably wouldn't have believed it unless I had experienced it myself. And what I have shared in this article are a few insights and experiences of this wonderful journey, an odyssey of pure love and righteousness that only gets exciting and illuminating every passing day.

## **SERIAL ARTICLES**

### **SPIRITUAL QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS - PART 7 (Continued from the previous issue)**

*By Prof. G. Venkataraman*

*Since Heart2Heart started in 2003, readers have very often written to us seeking answers to many spiritual questions. We have answered them at times through appropriate articles in H2H. However, there are still many that have to be explained carefully and in detail. And in the recent past, a lot more queries have arrived on varied topics concerning spirituality and personal growth.*

*We have now meticulously compiled and categorised these questions, and Prof. G. Venkataraman has offered to answer all these queries in a structured and systematic way as a series on Radio Sai as well as in H2H. In this way, these answers now remain always on our website as a ready reckoner on spiritual doubts. This is a suitably adapted transcript of our radio series bearing the same name.*

Loving Sai Ram and greetings from Prashanti Nilayam. It is question time again and for today's session, I have picked up three questions, which are as follows:

**QUESTION 1: How is man a “Cosmic Creature”?**

**QUESTION 2: What is the Cosmic Connection that man has?**

**QUESTION 3: It is said Man = Body + Mind + *Atma*. If any of these three is not proper, what would happen?**

Let me start with the first question, which is:

***How is man a “Cosmic Creature”?***

For the benefit of those who might be somewhat puzzled by this question, it might be helpful to give a bit of background. As all of us are aware, humans are the last species to appear in the long sequence associated with the evolution of life here on planet earth. The first form of life is believed to have been quite primitive, barely a large molecule, which fulfilled the technical definition of a living being. From that time, life is supposed to have evolved to more and more complex forms, largely as Charles Darwin first described over a hundred years ago. Today, we have a better understanding of this evolution, thanks to great strides in molecular biology and all that. The questioner is perhaps asking, “All that is fine and I am in fact aware of that. But why call man a Cosmic Creature?” I shall presume that is what the question is and proceed to answer on that basis.

Life as we know it is confined to planet earth and certainly, we humans live on Planet Earth. That is why humans are often described as earthlings. It is true that Planet Earth is a part of the solar system, that our Sun is a star, that there are billions of such stars in the galaxy Milky Way [to which we belong], and that in fact, there are billions of galaxies in the Universe. By the way, I hope it has not escaped your notice how big our Universe is; and yet so many of us strut around with Himalayan egos, as we if matter a great deal! That, however, is a different point.

Let us get back to the question and ask: "Is man a Cosmic creature merely in a rhetorical sense or is there a deeper meaning to it?" I submit there **is** a deeper meaning and wish to explore that a little, starting with a purely scientific examination of man's relationship to the Cosmos. Other aspects could be taken up later.

### **Atomic Traffic**

Let me start with the fact that everyone of us is made up of molecules, bio-molecules in particular. This is true of every cell of our body, whether the cell is a part of a hair, a bone, an organ or even blood. Next, we note the fact that molecules, no matter of what type they are, are all made up of atoms. So the first thing we learn is that every one of us is packed with atoms, in fact trillions and trillions of them; and these atoms are of different kinds. While atoms like hydrogen, carbon, calcium, are abundant, many are found only in trace quantities.

It is fascinating to think about how these various atoms entered our body. Most of them no doubt, enter our body via the food that we eat and the water that we drink. That is only to be expected, but if we pause to reflect on it, it would be stunning to realise that the atoms within us might have come from an apple from New Zealand, from a chocolate made in Belgium with cocoa from Africa, sugar from France, milk from Holland, and so on. We hardly ever think about such things, but if we do, we would find it quite amazing. The water we drink might have been drawn from a tap, but that tap might have got the water from a river, the river might have got it from monsoon rains, and the rains might have brought the water from a far-away ocean; so on it goes.

But this is not all. We are not only taking in atoms from various sources all the time, but we are also losing atoms all the time, millions of them, without being aware of it in the least. For example, do you realise that when you breathe out you are sending out via the carbon dioxide that you exhale, thousands and thousands of carbon atoms that earlier were in your body? These atoms could have come from some bread eaten earlier and so on. We lose atoms in many different ways, when we exhale, and via sweat and other excreta. If you rub your hands, that very act removes so many thousands of cells. When we cut our nails or our hair, we are again losing atoms. I am told that during the lifetime of a person, the blood renews itself many times, so does the skin; the bones too renew themselves to some extent.

To cut a long story short, there is an unimaginable amount of atom traffic all the time, across the entire biosphere. That may be obvious, but not so obvious is the fact that when we say “my body”, we really do not have any control or any ownership over any of the atoms within us. On the contrary, second to second, every one of us is gaining atoms and also losing atoms in plenty.

Do any of us ponder over that? I may talk of my body as though I own it hundred percent, but truly speaking, I don't own a **single** atom in my body. A particular atom may be with me this minute but who knows how and where it would go the next? A and B may hate each other bitterly and never exchange a word, but via the global atom exchange that operates all the time in the biosphere, they may be exchanging atoms! Did you ever think of that? I raise all these points for a very definite reason and I shall now come to that.

### **Parts of the Original Big Bang**

All this atom traffic that I have been trying to impress you with, is confined to Planet Earth. Let us now ask: “How did Planet Earth get its atoms in the first place? In other words, where did the Earth itself come from?” This is where the Cosmic link of man slowly becomes evident. Those of you who have been following the *In Quest for Infinity* series in *Heart2Heart* might be aware, according to our current understanding in Cosmology, our Universe came into existence about 13.8 billion years ago via an event popularly called the Big Bang. At the time of its birth, the Universe was not only incredibly tiny but there were no atoms, as we now know them. In fact, there was no matter at all but only energy. However, thanks to the wonderful laws of Physics now being rapidly unravelled, matter quickly emerged, the very first atoms appearing in the Cosmos within minutes at the most, after the birth of the Universe. What happened afterwards has been described in many previous articles of this series and so, I shall skip the details. Let me just say, although it all started first with just hydrogen atoms, other types of atoms from helium all the way to iron were later formed, in stars that acted as cauldrons.

Now, as any school student knowing a bit of chemistry would tell you that we have many more atomic species that are heavier than iron, like silver, gold, mercury, uranium and so on. Where did they come from? That too is a long story, but in brief, these heavy atoms are believed to have been formed in incredible stellar explosions called super nova explosions. By the way, the super nova explosion business is not a cooked up story; there is hard scientific and irrefutable proof for it, amazing proof in fact.

If you put all this together, it turns out that in fact, the atoms in our bodies in particular and on Planet Earth in general, can be traced in some manner all the way to the very birth of our Universe! Did you know that? Perhaps, that should make us feel a bit proud. By the way, whether we are or not a movie star or sports star, this thing is for sure; all of us without exception can trace our ancestry to a star that lived long ago, and donated its atoms to help the formation of our solar system. I think I have said enough to explain that at least at the physical level, we are indeed not only a part of the Cosmos, but



have directly come from the very seed from which the Cosmos itself was born. I could perhaps add further remarks, but shall stop here because all that would form a natural part of the next question which is:

### ***What is the Cosmic Connection that Man has?***

I think the best way of responding to this question is to say that whether we are aware of it or not, there are four C's that rule our lives. These four C's, as I call them, go beyond mere physics, cosmology, the so-called Big Bang, etc., all the way to Vedantic fundamentals. In fact, Lord Krishna Himself taught these four C's to Arjuna. Of course, Krishna did not quite put it the way I do, but then my remarks are based on what Swami has said in His Discourses, to which I shall maybe make a reference later.

The four C's that I just referred to are:

1. **The Cosmic origin of man.**
2. **The Cosmic connection of man – the question I am dealing with is related precisely to this.**
3. **The Cosmic responsibilities of man, and**
4. **The Cosmic Destiny of man.**

If we look at our present question in this larger context, then the answer would become a lot clearer. **As far as the Cosmic origin of man is concerned**, not only are humans derived in a gross and material sense from the Big Bang, but, in a Causal sense, descended from God Himself. That exactly is what Krishna says, when He declares that He is the Primordial Divine seed from which everything in the Universe has come into being, including us. In other words, just as we have biological genes derived from our parents and ancestors, we also have within us a Divine Gene derived from God, although we are hardly conscious of it. It is to draw attention to that fact that almost the very first thing Krishna told Arjuna was that he, namely Arjuna, was the *Atma* and **not** the body. Swami too reminds us of that very same fact in many different ways. So much for our common and Cosmic origin.

Turning next to the Cosmic connection, I have already explained parts of this while dealing with the previous question. Krishna too refers to it, though briefly. The reason why Krishna calls attention to it is for stressing the fact that we are not only connected to many things in this Universe but also heavily dependent on them. Take for example the Sun; if the Sun were not there, there would be no life on Earth. That is why ancients in almost all lands paid homage to the Sun god in different ways. *Vedanta* goes much further by regarding the Sun as an aspect of God, and that the power radiated by the Sun is a mere manifestation of a tiny portion of the Infinite Power of the Supreme Lord. Thus, when one worships the Sun, one is in fact adoring the Lord Himself; and this worship must really be an expression of gratitude.

That is precisely the point Krishna makes. He says [in effect], "O man, you do not know how much you are dependent on so many things in Creation that you take for granted. You breathe non-stop from birth to death; but do you

take a moment off to thank the Blessed Lord for providing air for you to breathe and that too free? Not only do you forget to express gratitude but in fact you are positively causing harm to the atmosphere by polluting it so badly." Looked at in this manner, modern man has, I must say, sunk to very low depths in not only being callously ungrateful, but even spoiling what the Lord has thoughtfully provided.

To put it differently, our Cosmic connection imposes upon us a Cosmic responsibility, caring for our environment being one of them. Instead of doing that, we are, in the name of material progress, being utterly indifferent to the damage we are causing to the biosphere and the natural habitat in so many different ways. We hardly realise that everything in Creation, from the tiny bacteria and the ant to the elephant and indeed even the stars, serves a certain purpose, even though we might not be aware of it. However, imagining themselves to be the lord and master of all that they survey, humans today are causing reckless damage to land, sea, water, and untold harm to so many species that are being thoughtlessly and even mercilessly exterminated. This is the height of Cosmic irresponsibility.

It is time to bring in Swami who, in recent years, has been referring often to four words that are most important in the present context. They are: *Vyashti* meaning the individual, *Samashti* meaning Society, *Srishti* meaning Creation, and finally, *Parameshti* meaning God. **Swami says the individual is a limb of Society, which is a limb of Creation, which in turn, is a limb of God. What it all boils down to in practice is that no one shall, under any circumstances whatsoever, do anything that would cause harm to Society and/or disturb Nature.** Such actions would be nothing short of a crime against God! But look around; is that happening? I leave you to ponder over that. I hope I have said enough at least to stimulate your thoughts on this important point, if not answered the question included in our question bag.

**All of the above, brings me quite naturally to man's Cosmic Destiny.** It is simple: Since we all have come from God, our ultimate Destiny is to merge back with God. I hope that is not difficult to understand.

I now turn to the last question for today, which is:

***It is said Man = Body + Mind + Atma. If any of these three is not proper, what would happen?***

Frankly, I am not sure if the way question has come to me via our long pipeline has got garbled *en route*, or if this was the way the question was originally posed. I will tell you what the problem with the question is, as I see it. Yes, it is a fact that humans are a composite of three distinct entities, these being the gross body, the subtle Mind and the even more subtle *Atma*, which in fact is the source of everything in Creation.

So far everything is fine. The difficulty arises in the second part of the question where it is asked what would happen if one of these three is not proper. I do not understand what is meant by 'not proper'. I mean, take the

*Atma*. As Krishna makes it very clear, no one can do anything to it. He says explicitly that it cannot be cut, burnt, made wet and so on. *Atma* is God and we simply cannot imagine anything being wrong about God – it is as simple as that. That being the case, what is meant by saying if the *Atma* is not proper? I would say such a question is in fact illegal! Hope you agree with that!

Let me now turn to the gross body. Unlike the *Atma*, things can happen to the body and interfere with its normal function. The hand could be broken, the brain might get damaged, and so on. In such cases, we essentially have a handicapped person, that is all. As for the Mind, plenty can go wrong and this part of the question is very relevant. Before I deal with that, let me speculate what the questioner perhaps wanted to ask. I think he or she wanted to ask what would happen if instead of the *Atma* being in overall charge of the trio, it is the body that dominates, or the Mind that dominates. Then what? If that is the question that is being asked, then I would say it is a very important one.

My response would be: "Yes, God did intend the *Atma* to be in the driving seat. If the word *Atma* frightens you, think of Conscience. As Swami often tells us, 'Follow your Conscience. Your Conscience is your Master.'"

Suppose a fellow does not follow the Conscience? Then what? Then there is trouble for sure. And the problem is that right now, the world is full of such people! In earlier times too there were such people around; however, because of the overall discipline that prevailed then, things were not as bad as they are now, in the sense that the percentage of people ignoring their Conscience was small. Maybe you would not agree; in any case let us not waste time in arguing that issue. The important question is: "If a person fails to obey his or her Conscience, then what?"

There are two possibilities. If the Mind dominates, the person would, in the worst case, be close to a demon. He maybe very intelligent, clever and all that; but a person without a Conscience is a person with a hardened heart. And such a person would stop at nothing. Tyrants, ruthless dictators, venomous terrorists, all belong to this category. What about the case where the body dominates, rather than the Mind? Such a person also exhibits many undesirable traits such as laziness, crudity, cruelty and so on. In many respects, such a person maybe likened to an animal. Actually, that is an unfair remark because animals are far more reasonable than we imagine them to be. But figuratively speaking, a person dominated by body instincts and the senses is often compared to an animal and said to exhibit animality, while if the Mind dominates, the person is compared to a devil.

From this I hope it is clear that the Mind should not be allowed to get into the driving seat reserved for the *Atma*. Today, when it has become fashionable to sneer at Spirituality and summarily dismiss God, the Mind is gaining ascendancy. When that happens extensively, that too with all kinds of dangerous and hazardous technology so easily available, it is not difficult to imagine the kind of problems that can arise.

Once again, I am not sure what exactly the questioner meant but I do hope I have adequately explained why the question, as available to me, seems to have problems. I have therefore tried to guess the correct question and, assuming my guess to be OK, answered it.

Well, that is all for this session and more questions next time. Till then, all the best. Jai Sai Ram.

## THE DRAMAS OF LIFE DIVINE – PART 5

*Dear readers, till the December 2008 issue, in this section we serialized for you “Shirdi Sai Parthi Sai”, the glorious saga of Shirdi Sai and the divine life of Sathya Sai till His early childhood. This series continued for 48 episodes, and we received very positive responses to this serial. In fact, now that the script is available, this television serial has been re-enacted as a play in many Sai centres.*

*Encouraged with this, we decided to continue this section and offer something in a similar format. And now, after the Divine Life story of Bhagavan Baba, it is the innumerable dramas presented in the Divine Presence by the students of Bhagavan's Schools and University, as well as by the Bal Vikas students and Sai devotees from all corners of the world. We hope the current series, which is accompanied with lots of pictures and video stills/clips, will not only make an enriching and edifying reading experience, but also will help devotees everywhere to redo these inspiring plays in their own settings with little effort. So, enjoy these divine dramas where the Divine was a keen spectator and the hidden director!*

*The current drama, which was staged by the students from the Prasanthi Nilayam campus of the Sri Sathya Sai University on January 14 2009, drives into one the profound messages enshrined in the Bhagavad Gita through many scenes from the grand epic Mahabharata.*

### **FULL CAST:**

**Lord Krishna**

**Vidura, the noble minister in the court of Hastinapura;**

**Gopalas, the devoted cowherds of Brindavan;**

**Uddhava, childhood friend of Lord Krishna;**

**Maitreya, a noble sage;**

**Dharmaraja (Yudhistira), the eldest of the Pandava brothers;**

**Bheema, the strongest among the Pandava brothers;**

**Nakula, one of the younger Pandava brothers;**

**Sahadeva, the youngest of the Pandava brothers;**

**Draupadi, the noble wife of the Pandavas;**

**Disciple, the disciple of Sage Durvasa;**

**Durvasa, a noble sage;**

**Suyodhana, the eldest of the Kaurava brothers;**

**Bheeshma, the great, uncle of both Pandavas and Kauravas who was one of the greatest warriors;**

**Drona, the teacher of Pandavas and the Kauravas;**

**Sakuni, the brother of Gandhari, the mother of the Kauravas;**

**Karna, a great archer and a friend of Suyodhana, who was actually the sixth brother of the Pandavas;**

**Arjuna: the master archer among the Pandava brothers.**

## **SRI KRISHNA TATTWA DARSHANAM - Part 1**

### **Sportsmeet Drama 2009**

#### **Scene 1a: Meeting of Vidura and Uddhava**

*Background Commentary –*

The purpose of every person's birth is to embark on a journey – from 'I' to 'We' to 'He'. And the map for this journey was provided by the merciful Lord in the form of the Song Celestial – the Bhagavad Gita. The paths may be different, yet the destination is the same. Mahatma Vidura too is on this great spiritual adventure starting his sojourn from the holy land of Brindavan...

*[Vidura enters as the telugu poem “**Kasturi Tilakam...**” goes on in the background and enters in complete bliss lost in the contemplation of Krishna]*

**Vidura:** How fortunate is the earth of Brindavan for it carries the memory of the Lord's footsteps for eternity. O Brindavan, accept the salutations of this humble servant of the Lord, Vidura. Ah! The breeze of Brindavan carries the fragrance of devotion and the environment is suffused with Krishna Rasa.

*[Vidura closes his eyes in ecstasy and Krishna comes and closes His eyes. Vidura opens his eyes to witness the unfolding of the Rasa Leela.]*

*[Rasa leela ends and Krishna disappears. Vidura is shell-shocked]*

**Vidura:** Krishna! Krishna! Where are You? Even after all these years of association, the pain of separation from You scorches my soul. Oh! How the Gopals and Gopikas who consider You as their life-breath must be suffering.

**Gopala1:** O Holy Sire! Who are you? Are you searching for something?

**Vidura:** People identify me as Vidura, but I identify myself as a Krishna *sevaka*. Please enlighten me, O Gopalas as to how you are able to bear the suffering of not having Krishna amidst you.

**Gopala2:** Mahatma, you must be mistaken. Krishna has never left us. In the bright rays of the morning Sun, He showers warmth on all of us.

**Gopala3:** In the cool waters of Yamuna, He slakes our thirst and satiates us.

**Gopala4:** In the pleasant breeze, and in the flowers and the trees, He plays the nectarine tunes of His flute to us.

**Gopala1:** When He is everywhere, how does the question of His absence even arise?

**Vidura:** O Gopalas! I am blessed to be in the company of enlightened souls like you. You have shown me that I have not yet understood the Krishna Tattwa. You have given a purpose, a goal, a quest – to discover the true *Brahmajnana* (Ultimate knowledge).

**Gopala2:** What do we simple cowherds know about such great things, Mahatma? Look, Vidurji, there comes Krishna's intimate friend and confidante, Uddhava. He might help you.

**Vidura:** *Pranams* (salutations), Krishnasakha Uddhava.

**Uddhava:** Pranams Dharmatma Vidura. I was just returning from Dwaraka, blessed with the sweet and sublime wisdom from Vaasudeva.

**Vidura:** Then, kindly, share this wisdom with me, so that my quest for liberation shall culminate on the holy soil of Brindavan.

**Uddhava:** Dharmatma, Krishna had predicted this tryst between us. He wanted me to convey on His behalf that you must meet Maharishi Maitreya and it is from him that you will receive the true knowledge.

**Vidura:** Gopala, I am indeed gratified realizing that your divine hand has held me and guided me all through. Thy will be done. *Dhanyosmi* (thank you very much) Krishna, *Dhanyosmi*.

### Scene 1b – Meeting of Vidura and Maitreya

**Vidura:** Salutations, Maharishi Maitreya. I have come by Krishna's command to receive the true meaning of *Brahma Tattwa* from you. Please bless me with that nectarine knowledge and liberate me.

**Maitreya:** Mahatma, you are already a great *jnani* (man of wisdom). What extra learning can I think of imparting you. But as, Krishna willed this meeting, let us discuss about His glory, His *leelas*.

**Vidura:** Krishna is the sanctuary of sweetness which gets distributed to all through His *leelas*. His message is like a song that takes the listeners to a different world.

**Maitreya:** But the greatest song the master musician had ever composed is the Song Celestial, the Bhagavad Gita. But Gita was not just a compendium of verses delivered on the battlefield, it is His Grand Orchestra, His glorious life. His Life is His message.

**Vidura:** True, *Mahatman*. The canvas of His glory is painted with incidents in which He fulfilled the promises He declared in the Gita.

**Maitreya:** His thought and deed were always for the welfare of the devotees who displayed total surrender. Experience His glory, relive the experience. Watch as the Pandavas surrendered to His Lotus feet, and sought shelter from the anger of Durvasa.

### Scene 2a – The Durvasa Episode

**Suyodhana:** If not for us, who else would have rendered such impeccable service for four long months to the hallowed sage and his entourage of 10,000 disciples.

**Karna:** It is true, Suyodhana. Hospitality is the hallmark of the Kuru dynasty.

**Shakuni:** My dear *bhanje* (nephew), Suyodhana. Hospitality is the best way to end hostilities. This is the best chance you have to annihilate the Pandavas once and for all.

**Karna:** Enough of your crafty stratagems, Gandhar Naresh (King of Gandhara, that is, Shakuni). For once, Suryodhana, let us fight like Kshatriyas on the battlefield and end this conflict in a royal way.

**Shakuni:** Radheya, a simple throw of dice had achieved what your arrows could not. Do not underestimate the power of statecraft, Karna.

**Suyodhana:** Karna, *Mamashri* is correct. Tell me, *Mamashri*, what do you have in mind?

**Shakuni:** Suyodhana, use Durvasa's *agraha* (affection) as the *astra* (weapon) against the Pandavas. Let the curse at the tip of Rishi's tongue become the bane for the Pandavas and a boon for the Kauravas. The Rishi is pleased with your hospitality and he will grant you a boon...

**Suyodhana:** Understood Mamashri, leave the rest to me.



*[Sage Durvasa approaches with a contented face...]*

**Durvasa:** Yuvraj Suyodhana.

**Suyodhana:** *Pranams* munivarya (Salutations, O noble sage).

**Durvasa:** *Ayushman Bhava* (live long).

**Suyodhana:** Dushasana, did you make arrangements for mahatma's rest?

**Dushasana:** Every arrangement has been made brother, and I have personally...

**Durvasa:** Don't take any more pains for me, *vatsa* (son). It is time for me to leave. I am extremely pleased with your devotion. Ask from me any boon, no matter how valuable or hard. I shall grant it.

**Suyodhana:** Maharshi, the opportunity to serve saints like you is itself a great blessing. I have just one small request. Just as you blessed us with your *darshan*, I desire that my brothers, the Pandavas too must be given a chance to serve your lotus feet. And...

**Shakuni:** Duryodhana, do not hesitate. Rishi Maharaj is benevolence personified. He will definitely heed your prayer.

**Suyodhana:** And *munivarya*, one last request. Please visit the Pandavas only after sister Panchali has had her meal.

**Durvasa:** So be it. I shall definitely bless the Kaunteyas with my visit.  
*[He leaves...]*

**Shakuni:** Very soon, the Pandavas will be burnt to ashes in the fire of Durvasa's temper. And Yuvraj Suyodhana shall become...

**Suyodhana:** Maharaj Suyodhana. Ha Ha Ha!

## Scene 2b

*[All the five pandavas are seated in a pensive mood, with Bheema pacing restlessly about]*

**Bheema:** *Agraja* (eldest brother), with every passing day of exile, my mace is getting more and more eager to cleanse the Bharatavarsha (India) of the evil Kauravas. If only you would have permitted, I would have finished the task long ago.

**Dharmaraja:** Have Patience! Bheemasena. If we too are ruled by the surging emotions instead of inner conscience, what is the difference between us and Suyodhana. This is a trial of fire from which we shall emerge purified.

**Bheema:** But, what about the comforts in which our evil cousins are rejoicing and the misery in which we are languishing.

**Dharmaraja:** Hmm... Bheemasena, as our beloved Vaasudeva has said, 'That too shall pass! This too shall pass'.

*[Durvasa enters with some of his disciples and Dharmaraja receives them along with all the five pandavas]*

**Durvasa:** Om Namah Shivaya...Om Namah Shivaya!

**Dharmaraja:** *Munivarya* (o noble sage), your visit to our humble hermitage has sanctified all our lives. We will be eternally grateful for the opportunity...

**Durvasa:** Dharmaraja, all the pleasantries can wait. First, my 10,000 disciples and I are suffering from deep hunger. Make arrangements for food to be served. We will go to the river for bath and return.

**Nakula:** But, *agraja*, it is well past noon. Panchali must have had her food by now and the power of *akshayapatra* (vessel blessed with unlimited food) would be over for the day.

**Sahadeva:** Then, how are we going to feed the massive entourage of the sage? He has a short temper and moreover, he is hungry. God knows what terrible curse he will hurl on us.

**Dharmaraja:** Draupadi! Draupadi!

**Draupadi:** *Natha* (Lord), What is the matter?

**Dharmaraja:** Devi, Maharishi Durvasa has arrived with his disciples. If we are not able to feed them, we are bound to be cursed by him.

**Bheema:** What is this play of destiny, *agraja*? The ruler of the world and torch bearer of righteousness is not able to feed a hungry Brahmin.

*[a telugu poem is rendered here]*

**Dharmaraja:** Bheema, *Dharmo rakshati rakshitaha* - One who follows *dharma* shall never be harmed. And, where there is *dharma*, there is Krishna. He is our sole refuge. Let us all pray to Him.

*[A telugu poem singing the praise of Lord Krishna]*

*[Krishna comes and smiles, and the poem ends, he enters]*

**Dharmaraja:** Krishna

**Bheema:** Madhusudana!

**Nakula:** Janardana!

**Sahadeva:** Keshava!

**Krishna:** *Sodari* (sister) Panchali. I am very hungry. Please serve me some food.

**Draupadi:** Even now you are testing us, Krishna. Hey *Hrudayavasi* (indweller of our hearts)! You know our inner torment. Please rescue us.

**Krishna:** First feed me, then we will discuss about all your problems.

**Bheema:** There is nothing left, Vaasudeva. Only the empty vessel and our empty hands.

**Krishna:** I don't believe that. There must be something, at least a grain of rice. Get the vessel, sister.

*[Draupadi goes and gets the vessel. In the meanwhile a telugu poem goes on in the background. Krishna picks a grain, smiles and eats it.]*

**Krishna:** May this grain of rice satisfy not only Me, but the entire universe. Bheemasena, go and fetch the venerable sage and his disciples. Aaaa... Do not accept any excuses from them. Did you understand?

**Bheema:** Understood, Vaasudeva. Years of your company has rubbed a little bit of Your mischief in me too. *[Bheema leaves]*

**Dharmaraja:** Krishna! *Apadbandhava* (redeemer of troubles)! You have rescued us yet again. Any words of gratitude would fail to quantify Your infinite love for us.

**Krishna:** It is not just Love, Dharmaraja, It is My duty too. For those who have contemplated on Me ceaselessly, their protection and well being becomes My responsibility.

*[A Gita sloka is rendered in the background]*

**Disciple:** Gurudeva! Gurudeva! Though we have eaten nothing, our stomachs seem to be bursting with food. Help us, Gurudeva.

**Durvasa:** What nonsense are you talking? Just a minute ago, you were so hungry. Now, what happened?

*[Suddenly his stomach becomes full and he burps...] Shiva Shiva..*

**Bheema:** Munivarya, *Agraja* has prepared a variety of dishes to serve you, Your holiness. Please bless us by accepting our hospitality.

**Durvasa:** Bhimasena, there is no place in my stomach for even a rice grain. I am not even in a position to walk.

**Bhima:** Maharshi, if you don't mind, I shall carry you on my back and take you to our hermitage in a moment.

**Durvasa:** Please leave me. Understand my plight, I cannot accept your invitation.

**Bhima:** That is not possible, Munivarya. My brother will take me to task if I reach the hermitage without thy hallowed Self. By the way, Madhusudana is also waiting for you.

**Durvasa:** Madhusudana! Krishna! Ah! Now I see that this is all Your divine *leela*. I was tricked by that evil Suyodhana who convinced me with all his sweet words soaked in hypocrisy.

**Bheema:** That *dusht* (evil) Suyodhana again! Why is he so adamant in accelerating his doom with all these cheap tricks?

**Durvasa:** All those who have sent me with wicked intentions will be destroyed. Please send my sincerest apologies to Vaasudeva. As long as He is by your side, crisis shall shudder to come near you. Vijayi Bhava (victory to you)! Sri Krishna Kataksha siddhirastu (May the kind grace of Lord Krishna always be on You)!

## **PRASHANTI DIARY**

### **May 6, 2009 – Easwaramma Day Celebrations**

Like any other day, the Sun peeped over the hills in the eastern direction. The birds stirred from their nests and their sweet songs and cheerful chirps filled the morning air at Puttaparthi. Like any other day, the Nagar Sankirtan and Veda chanting rounds went on and people got ready for *darshan*. And, like any other day at His lotus feet, the celebration of the glorious concept of Motherhood began. Only that, as a reminder to humanity of the great debt it owes to mothers, Swami has earmarked the May 6 as Easwaramma Day or Mother's Day in Love, Grace and Homage to the mother of God, Easwaramma.

The previous evening, Swami had it announced that there would be the *Burrakatha*. Bhagavan had specified that it would be the narrative of Karnam Subamma and Mother Easwaramma. How apt! While Easwaramma, like Mother Devaki, the mother of Lord Krishna, was the chosen first "home" of the Avatar, Karnam Subamma, like Yashoda, was chosen to play with and raise the Avatar in all love. And a Burra Katha on both these wonderful and wonder-witnessing women was to be performed.

In the morning, Swami made a visit to the *Samadhi* of His earthly parents, Easwaramma and Pedda Vankamma Raju. The narrow lane leading up to the *Samadhi* had been cleaned and decorated with buntings and floral designs. All the shops *en route* were shut and people lined up against the roads to catch a glimpse, and if possible something more too, of Swami as He passed by. The *Samadhi* premises had been opened only to the students who were in the *bhajan* group and the Veda chanting contingent. The main area of the *Samadhi* had been occupied only by the members from Swami's family - a privilege that the Lord has conferred on them! It was about 9:05 a.m. when Swami reached the *Samadhi*. A small procession led Him in and to the glee of everyone present, He was dressed in a resplendent yellow! The car halted and as Swami's chair came out, the golden rays of the summer Sun kissed His feet and the hem of His robes. It was only after paying salutations at His feet that the Sun slowly looked up and gazed at His face! Sunlit, Swami looked really beautiful and sublime. A hush of awe seemed to descend as everyone marveled His magnificence.

Swami slowly moved into the *Samadhi* building, blessing many members of the family on the way. *Bhajans* on Easwaramma were on continuously and the boys sang with vigour and vitality. Once inside, Swami's face suddenly seemed to change and it looked as though the Mother and Son were in a silent communion. Swami's face had that tender emotion and it was hard to tell whether that look of Love was that of a child or of a mother! The story of the relationship between Swami and Easwaramma is so unique. [To get a glimpse of the glorious virtues of Mother Easwaramma, please read the cover story "Easwaramma – The Crown of Motherhood" from H2H Archives, May 2006]. It is hard to tell who actually mothered whom! Swami lit the lamps that

had been placed on the *Samadhi*, and also blessed the garlands to be laid on it respectfully.

Then, from a jewelry box, Swami took out a huge golden necklace and asked for it to be placed on the *Samadhi* of the Mother. All this while, the *bhajans* were on and even though they were being held outside without any mikes, they were heard inside the *Samadhi* building. Whenever the word, Easwaramma, appeared in the *bhajans*, Swami seemed very moved and touched. All the members of the family who had gathered inside took their turns to offer salutations at His feet and seek His blessings. Two huge garlands were placed on the *Samadhi*. But they kept slipping down every time they were kept. Swami told them to cut the thread that had been knotted to make the garland a complete circle and place the two ends of the thread on the two corners. The garlands now stayed in place. After a wonderful twenty minutes or so, Swami moved out of the *Samadhi* building, into the car, blessing everyone along the way.

As Swami moved along the road, the devotees who had crammed there just to see Him, were thrilled and excited. They stood on their toes and on anything that could lend them some support and more importantly a little height, and stretched out their hands as if to receive the abundant Grace that seemed to pervade the very air as the car passed by. Swami moved into the Mandir and went into the Bhajan Hall. There, He blessed the *prasadam* for Narayana Seva. Then, He moved to the stage. A massive painting of the Mother had been reverentially placed and it made a picture perfect as Swami sat beside it. Well, actually, His chair was placed in the centre, in front of Her portrait. But Swami specifically wanted to be moved to the side. He gave the Mother her due and seemed to want her to occupy the centre stage.

Veda chanting was on and soon the *prasadam* distribution began. *Chitraannam* (tamarind rice) and sweet pongal were distributed by the efficient Sevalal volunteers. It is wonderful the way these volunteers work so silently and efficiently. They are subject to various difficulties throughout their day starting with language barriers to being taken for granted! But their love for Swami and Swami's love for them is so immense, that they continue to toil and slog thinking of Him ceaselessly and with all Love. It is no exaggeration to say that we must all daily spend a minute silently expressing our gratitude to these volunteers in our heart at least! As the distribution went on, Swami received *aarthi* and retired for the morning.

As announced the previous day, everything had been kept in readiness for the *Burrakatha* in the evening. Swami arrived in the chair and moved through the entire Sai Kulwant Hall granting *darshan* to the sizable crowd that had gathered there. It is amazing how Puttaparthi, with such a sparse population a few days ago, was buzzing agog with devotees everywhere, now that Swami had returned. Swami moved towards the interview room. He entered the Bhajan Hall where the three students who were the artists of the day were seated. Swami examined their costumes and asked them about their evening's performance. Looking convinced that everything was in order, Swami moved out to the stage and then called for the performers to come too.

As the mikes were being placed down, Swami asked for the mikes to be brought up on the stage and wanted the artists to take the centre stage. That was done and then they began, with the wonderful portrait of Easwaramma forming a splendid backdrop for their narrative!

The *Burrakatha* began with a prayer to Lord Ganesha. Then, it was the Sai *Bhagawatham*! However much one may attempt to tell the story of Easwaramma or Subbamma, one ends up narrating the story of dear Swami, for, it is Swami who makes lives fruitful and wholesome. The story of the divine Mother and Subbamma is very inspiring as they were so closely associated with God. The three artists narrated how the mothers were privileged to witness the divinity of little Sathya. Hailing victory to Mother Easwaramma, the students gave a brief chronology of events in her life. She was born in the year 1890 to Sri Subba Raju. When she was only five years old, the family migrated to Puttaparthi. Her name now finds a place in the list of illustrious mothers of Avatars – Kausalya gave birth to Sri Rama, Devaki to Sri Krishna and Devagiriamma to Shirdi Sai. Swami was born in the Ratnakara Vamsa (clan) to Pedda Venkama Raju and Easwaramma.

Continuing their narration, the students said, it was Subbamma, the first wife of Narayana Rao, who named Swami as Sathyanarayana Raju. One day when Subbamma wanted to feed *pakodas* to Swami, she saw all the fourteen worlds in His mouth as Yashoda saw in Lord Krishna's mouth in the Dwapara Yuga. Karanam Subbamma experienced great joy in serving food to the devotees of Swami. Referring to the three wishes of Mother Easwaramma, the students said the present Sri Sathya Sai University, Super Speciality Hospitals and Sri Sathya Sai Ganga Water Project bore fruit due to the humble wishes of Mother Easwaramma. In those days, Bhagavan used to do Narayana Seva to the villagers of surrounding villages while Mother Easwaramma distributed clothes. On May 6, in 1972, when the Summer Course was in progress in Brindavan, Bangalore, Mother Easwaramma left her mortal coil. She called out, "Swami, Swami ..." And Swami responded immediately. He came to her, and she breathed her last. The Burra Katha artists narrated that though 37 years have passed, Mother Easwaramma is still ever fresh in everyone's minds. A few days ago in Kodaikanal, Bhagavan inaugurated a *panchaloha* statue (made of five metals) of Mother Easwaramma. The students concluded with a prayer, "Oh Mother! Please return to earth again. Your sojourn here has blessed us with unimaginable bounty."

As the students concluded, Swami seemed so overwhelmed and nostalgic. It is said that a pin drop silence is a greater ode to a performance compared to a deafening applause. So it was with Swami sitting almost motionless before calling the students to Him and speaking to them. He did not lavish any presents or gifts but the sparkle in His eye said it all. Then He motioned to Mr. B.N. Narasimha Murthy, Warden, Brindavan Campus to announce the names of the Burra Katha artists – Mr. Prabhakar, MA in economics, the main narrator; Mr. Arvind Sai, also an MA in economics, the student responsible for the comic element; and Mr. Raghuram, M. Sc. in Bio-Sciences who assisted in the presentation. Then Swami got announced that the same students would

perform again the next day on the life of Shirdi Sai Baba. *Bhajans* were on and after a while Swami received *aarathi*. Swami then got it announced that the President of India, Mrs. Pratibha Patil, would be arriving to Puttaparthi the next day. It was well past 6 p.m. when Swami retired for the day.

### **May 7, 2009 – President of India Visits Prasanthi Nilayam**

As announced in the previous day and the day before, the President of India, Her Excellency Mrs. Pratibha Devisingh Patil was to visit Puttaparthi on May, 2009. India, being the largest democracy in the world, boasts of a system of governance that is impossible to comprehend in any other part of the world. With four national parties and more than 40 regional parties, it indeed requires huge maintenance in all respects to keep the cogs of the democratic machinery in place. And with the elections in progress and expectations of no single party becoming a majority, the President's role in determining the destiny of India cannot be over emphasized. The President seemed to have taken the perfect first step in deciding to meet Bhagavan, and Swami in all His Love and Grace had permitted that she visit Him.

Also scheduled for the day was a *Burrakatha* on the life of Shirdi Baba. The trio who had performed well the previous day were ready in their costumes in Bhajan Hall by 3:30 p.m. itself. At about 3:50 p.m., Swami arrived for *darshan* and took a detour after the ladies side. Moving into the Bhajan Hall, He interacted with the *Burrakatha* artists for nearly half an hour. Meanwhile, a delegation had left to the airport to welcome the President with honours and greetings. At about 4:00 p.m., the special Indian Air force flight descended in the Sri Sathya Sai Airport and the presidential convoy of more than 21 vehicles wended its way to Prasanthi Nilayam.

It was indeed Swami's Love, for the President and the Nation, that He waited for her to arrive. He moved out to the stage and sat listening to the Veda chanting. He looked lovely and a gentle smile seemed to adorn His face. There are those times when Swami does something so casually that we fail to see the Divine power needed behind that act. That day, there was at least there was one such act. After sitting on the stage for a while, Swami turned and so casually said that it was time to move into the interview room. No sooner that Swami entered the interview room, the President entered the Mandir premises! She was led to the portico where she sat waiting for about 5 minutes. The interview room door opened and Swami beamed a loving smile at her. He came out and greeted her. As per tradition, the President presented Swami with a basket of fruits and a shawl. Swami told her staff to keep the gifts to the side and immediately asked her how she was. He also asked the names of a boy and girl who were by now standing by her side. Then indicating towards the interview room, Swami asked her to go in with her family.

Then, an interesting episode occurred - a kind which happens so regularly in Sai circles yet so beautiful to recapitulate. As the interview was in progress, the Presidential staff waited in the Bhajan Hall. The aide-de-camp (ADC) to the President, Capt. Shiv Shankar, wanted to ask Swami a few things that had



been troubling him from quite some time. They concerned matters of health, career decisions and personal growth. While speaking to one of the students in the Bhajan Hall, he was given a packet of vibhuti and told, "Whatever be the problem, a pinch of this taken with a prayer in the heart, will definitely resolve it." With great reverence, the ADC accepted the precious little ash that the packet contained. Meanwhile, the interview concluded and the President walked out of the interview room. Swami agreed to bless all the Presidential staff with *padanamaskar*. The ADC now was the first to go in and after he bowed to Swami, Bhagavan asked for the vibhuti basket and handed to him a dozen or so packets of precious ash, with a twinkle in His eyes. The ADC was thrilled and did not see the need to tell anything to Swami. There are numerous such instances that keep happening day in and day out. It is only His Love that some of them at least come to light and we delight in sharing that experience. Swami blessed all others too, one by one, ever so patiently and lovingly. The Presidential convoy soon departed towards the airport and Swami moved to the stage.

*Bhajans* had begun at 5:00 p.m. as is the regular practise. He immediately commanded the *bhajan* singing to a halt and asked for the *Burra Katha* trio to occupy the centre stage. The three students arrived and began to relive the life of Shirdi Sai Baba. As is the custom, the artists began their performance by offering their salutations to Lord Ganesha. Soon, the traditional garlanding took place and they began their interesting narration supplementing it with songs and humour. Delineating on the birth of Shirdi Sai Baba, they said that He was born to Hindu parents, Devagiramma and Gangabhavadia. The Divine couple Parvati-Parameswara appeared before them and foretold that Lord Shiva would be born to them as their third child. The couple, who were childless till then, gave birth to a daughter and son. On September 28, 1835, Shirdi Sai Baba was born in the village of Patri. Though born to Hindu parents, Shirdi Sai was brought up by a Muslim couple. As a child, He used to go to a Hindu temple and proclaim about Allah and at the same time speak about Rama in a Mosque. He advocated the concept "Sabka Malik Ek Hai" (One God governs all).

From the year 1858, Baba lived in Shirdi. He spent his early days under a Neem tree and later lived in the Masjid which he named as Dwarakamai or Mother Dwaraka. Baba used to feed the fakirs and devotees, and even cook for them. Baba had a profound love and compassion for suffering humanity. The Master used to personally attend to the needs of the sick as a Physician and a Nurse. Baba distributed the holy 'Udi', the panacea for all troubles, to His devotees. 'Udi' is the ash from the perpetual sacred fire, the Dhuni, lit by Baba. The Udi is the token of His divine grace to all who come to Him for help. He begged for alms and shared what He got with His devotees and all the creatures around him. Once during the festival of lights, Deepavali, Baba wanted to light lamps in Dwarakamai. As the shopkeepers refused to give Him oil, Baba just poured water on the lamps and lighted them. Baba performed many such miracles in His lifetime. He lived for 83 years and attained Samadhi in the year 1918. The narration concluded in 40 minutes with a prayer for Universal peace.

Swami seemed so pleased with their performance (which was in fact their third or fourth encore in the divine presence!). As soon as the *Burra Katha* concluded, Swami asked for *aarthi*. He retired to Yajur Mandir at 6:00 p.m.

### **May 8, 2009 – Buddha Poornima in Prasanthi Nilayam**

Vesak is an annual holiday observed traditionally by practicing Buddhists in South Asian and South East Asian countries like Nepal, Singapore, Vietnam, Thailand, Cambodia, Malaysia, Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Indonesia, Pakistan and India. It falls on the full moon day of the lunar month Vaishaaka. Sometimes informally called "Buddha's birthday," it actually encompasses the birth, enlightenment, and passing (*Parinirvana*) of Gautama Buddha. In India, it is celebrated as Buddha Poornima. And in Puttaparthi, where one gets to see the potpourri of all festivals in the world, Buddhists from all the above mentioned nations congregate to celebrate their festival in the divine presence. The whole of Prasanthi Nilayam, the Mandir especially, had a transformed look. The theme of the 2009 celebrations was, "*Ahimsa Paramo Dharmah* (Non-violence is the highest conduct of righteousness). This message was liberally splashed in multi-coloured banners everywhere and festoons hung from the top adding to the gaiety.

The programmes were scheduled for the evening in the Sai Kulwant Hall that looked on that day like a Buddhist temple. Chinese decorations hung everywhere and a beautiful statue of The Buddha adorned an altar that had been specially erected on the main stage. More than thousand Buddhists were seated in the hall. The celebrations had been organized by the devotees from Indonesia and Malaysia. The women devotees from Indonesia were in the traditional golden attire and they played the Gamelan music to welcome Swami into the hall as He arrived at 4:30 p.m. This beating of the traditional drums in wonderful synchronization created an atmosphere wherein one really felt that he/she was seated in some far-eastern country. As Swami arrived on the stage, He seemed to observe the altar for a while. He then lit a candle which was used to light the other candles in the altar.

It is traditionally (wrongly) considered that the Buddha criticized the Vedas. Actually, He was against the misinterpretation and the wrong practice of the Vedas that the people indulged in out of ignorance. Hasn't *Ahimsa*, the central principle of Buddhism, always been one of the five fundamental values of the Sanathana Dharma? And on that day, it was such a beautiful experience as the chants of *Buddham Sharanam Gacchami* mingled with the chants of the Vedas. The traditional Buddhist chant had new additions - *Satyam Sharanam Gacchami* and *Premam Sharanam Gacchami*. It was indeed the experience of the brotherhood of man and the fatherhood of God. A delegation of Buddhist monks who were seated in the centre of the hall on the gents' side added to the wonderful flavour.

Swami then signaled for the programme to begin. Dr. Raveendran, the regional in-charge spearheading the operations, offered salutations and

gratitude for His magnanimity for permitting them to celebrate the occasion in His Divine Presence. He introduced the two guest speakers for the evening session, to speak on the theme, "Ahimsa Paramo Dharma", Non-violence is the Supreme *Dharma*. The first speaker was Dr. Art Ong Jumsai from Thailand, a scientist and educationist par excellence whose contribution to Sathya Sai Educare has been commendable. Dr. Jumsai made a mention about the central teaching of the Buddha, the four noble truths, namely, there is suffering in the world, there is a cause for this suffering, there is a way to get rid of this suffering, and the way to do it. Referring to the common man's slogan "I want Peace", Dr. Jumsai, highlighted on the importance of cutting the 'I' and the "want" to earn Peace. Man has to have control over his senses to achieve the much sought after Peace, said Jumsai narrating the often repeated story of Bhagavan which revolved around a king and his five wives with bundle of desires.

Talking about the famous Sathya Sai School in Thailand, which is in its 17th year of running, Dr. Jumsai highlighted how the school evolved into a role model educational institution, of course, by His Divine Grace and Guidance, winning awards galore and continuously transforming young hearts and minds through the most effective tool, Sathya Sai Education in Human Values.

The next speaker was Allen Yeoh, a practicing advocate from Hong Kong. He said that the heart is the seat of non-violence; a person with love will not entertain any thought of non-violence. Quoting Bhagavan's teachings, the speaker said, "Non-violence is to be loving in thought, word and deed, and not merely refraining from inflicting injuries in the physical sense. Non-violence has to be practised with purity of thought, word and deed." He urged each one all to pose the question unto themselves as to how best to put into practice Bhagavan's teachings, for we all have the greatest opportunity of living with the Avatar. Both the speakers were lovingly blessed by Swami, and then Bhagavan was requested for the divine discourse. Swami pointed to the children in costumes saying that the little ones were eagerly waiting to perform in front of Him. Thus, it was that the programmes began.

Representative children moved up the stage with details of the programme and floral offerings to Swami. The Lord blessed them and then there was the announcement about the programme about to take place. This was followed by a colourful display of Indonesian traditional dance by Sathya Sai Balvikas, Denpasar, and the Sathya Sai School, Denspasar depicting the life and spiritual attainment of Gautama Buddha who became Lord Buddha by attaining Nirvana. It was done to the rhythmic beating of the traditional drums, and singing and chanting by the ladies who were dressed in golden attire. The dance was short and sweet, and had a moving backdrop comprising of toy birds, bees and butterflies.

This was followed by a repertoire of songs by the Malaysian Choir in Chinese and Sanskrit conducted by Stanley Cheong. They were accompanied by Aung Chan Chooi on the piano and the songs were in devotion to the Buddha and Swami. Most of them were in the foreign tongue, Chinese, but their sweetness was unmistakable as Swami sat listening to them. Many of their songs were

adaptations of popular Sai *bhajans* and everyone in the audience recognised the tunes, and in turn, the feelings, though they could not grasp the meaning of the words. Midway through the programme, Swami moved into the interview room. But as He did that, He signaled to them to continue singing and that He would soon be back. The choir went on and concluded, but obeying Swami's instructions, began to sing the last song, once more. It was the Hindi and Chinese rendering of the *bhajan*, "Yuga Yuga Ke Avatara." Soon Swami arrived with a smile on His face.

He called the conductor and materialized a *Navaratna* (nine-gem) ring for him. The conductor was happy beyond measure. Meanwhile, the devotees began to sing *bhajans*. The second *bhajan* was being sung by a lady. Swami saw her singing and seemed drawn by it. He asked to be taken to the ladies side of the stage and He sat on that side. Midway through the *bhajan*, Swami called that lady and materialized a gold chain for her. The lady and everyone in the audience let out gasps of joy as Swami put the chain around her neck very lovingly. He then sent clothes, sarees for the ladies, and safari pieces for the gents, to be distributed to all of them. As they were all celebrating this outpouring of love, Swami said that He would move down and grant group pictures to all of them! Like bees rushing to the Lotus, the devotees buzzed around His lotus feet. Many had tears of joy at this unexpected bounty. Some of them wept and did not seem to know how to channelize their joy! Swami posed with all of them and then granting the *Abhayahastha*, slowly moved back to the stage. *Prasadam* was then distributed and *Aarthi* performed.

### **May 9, 2009 – Buddha Poornima Celebrations in Prasanthi Nilayam**

The Vesak celebrations are considered as thrice blessed by the Buddhists, for it is in this period that the Buddha was born, gained enlightenment and also attained Nirvana. In Puttaparthi, it became thrice blessed as the Buddhists who had gathered on May 9 were blessed with the opportunity to see their Sai Buddha thrice during their short two day stay! At 8:20 a.m. in the morning, Swami arrived for *darshan* amidst great rejoicing by devotees who were least expecting it. The day also happened to see the Chief Minister of Maharashtra, Mr. Ashok Chavan, in the divine presence of Bhagavan Baba seeking His blessings. Swami completed the *darshan* rounds and then blessed him with an interview.

*Bhajans* began as usual at 9:00 a.m. After the interview, Swami came onto the stage and spent a few minutes listening to the *bhajans*. After this, He accepted *arathi* and moved to the Yajur Mandir. The celebrations for Vesak and Buddha Poornima continued in the evening of May 9. Over 820 devotees from over seven countries, namely, Indonesia, Singapore, Malaysia, Brunei, Thailand, Nepal, and Bhutan were present for the two day festivity. A group of 16 Lamas from Nepal was also present in Prasanthi Nilayam enjoying the bliss of the presence of the Avatar on the occasion. Swami arrived for *darshan* by 4 o'clock and moved to the interview room. From there, He asked for the Buddhist chants by the devotees to commence. The first programme in the evening was the sacred chanting by the Youth from Jakarta, Indonesia.

Starting with the propitiating Ganesha hymn, "*GananamTva....*", the group of 22 comprising ladies, gents and children continued chanting *Ratana Sutta* followed by the great compassionate *Heart Dharani* mantra of Aryan Avalokitesvara (Tibetan), starting with *Namo Ratna Trayaya...* The devotees were too happy at the golden opportunity bestowed on them to chant these sacred hymns in His presence.

It was 4:30 p.m. when Swami arrived on stage from the interview room. He heard the chanting for a while and then asked for the drama to begin. "Siddhartha" and "Gautama Buddha" moved up to the stage and made the initial offerings. Then, the presentation entitled "Ahimsa Paramo Dharma", by devotees from the Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organisation began. It sought to bring out the relevance of the teachings of the Buddha and Sai on non-violence in modern life. It was threaded by a conversation between the modern youth and a wise uncle who shows them the relevance of Buddha's teachings in the present-day world by way of inspiring anecdotes from the life of the Buddha. The drama concluded with Swami's teachings, and how Swami always encourages a Buddhist to become a better Buddhist.

As the drama concluded, Swami moved down the aisle and lovingly granted group pictures. He asked the photographers to go to the right and then to the left, and ensure that everyone is in the frame! He materialized vibhuti and distributed it among all the participants who eagerly stretched out their hands for it. The devotees who had engaged in the chanting arrived for pictures too. Swami obliged them and also collected letters from many of them. And then *bhajans* by the devotees began. Clothes were distributed to the participants and *prasadam* too was given to everyone present. Twenty minutes later Swami accepted *arati* and returned to His residence at 5.35 p.m.

### **June 13, 2009 – *Burraakatha* by University Students**

It was a beautiful and special Saturday at Prasanthi Nilayam. On June 11, Swami had asked for three students to present the *Burraakatha*. However, He kept postponing the performance till it was finally fixed for June 13. Bhagavan has always encouraged traditional art forms and *Burraakatha* tops in this list.

Every action of Swami has the undercurrents of profound wisdom and Love. The reasons why He does things are multi-dimensional for He achieves many objectives with a single action. Different people perceive different reasons and all of them are right if not comprehensive. One of the reasons of Swami postponing the *Burraakatha* recital became obvious with the arrival of the new students from the Brindavan campus of the university. Having been admitted freshly, they wanted to start their academic year with a *darshan* of Swami. And so, in His very loving and sweet self, Swami seemed to have planned for a programme when these students too are there in Prasanthi so that they too could participate in the joy and have a wonderful *darshan* too. The students from Brindavan had taken up their places in the Mandir. The Sai Kulwant Hall was quite full, it being the weekend. People come to His feet on "weekends" to get "strengthened" or recharge their spiritual batteries as Swami puts it!

It was past 4:40 p.m. when Swami arrived for *darshan*. He took a complete round and then moved into the interview room for a short while. Soon, He went into the Bhajan Hall where the three performers sat, costumed and ready for His command to begin their performance. An interesting fact is to be mentioned here. One of the trio has been blessed by Swami to pursue higher studies in medicine. This boy has finished his Masters in Bio-Sciences and is determined to serve Swami in His hospitals, and Bhagavan has been his pillar of support, in the face of many trials, financial or administrative. In fact, Swami is sponsoring the entire medical education of this student and though he is already 22 years old, he is determined and steadfast in his objectives and the Lord has blessed him. Swami lovingly enquired about whether all the admission procedures had been completed. The boy told Swami with gratitude that he was the eldest in the class and that the management had stated their great expectations of him. Swami advised him to be sincere and good. That is all God asks for always - sincerity and goodness - and He does everything else giving the credit to us! Swami blessed them to do well in the *Burrakatha*. The warden too was present there and he requested Swami to visit the hostel once before he retires from wardenship on July 1. Swami nodded His head in consideration.

At about 5:15 p.m, Swami arrived on the stage and asked for the warden of the Brindavan campus to introduce the programme. The three students, Prabhakar, Aravind Sai and Raghuram, were introduced and so was the art form. The trio arrived and offering their salutations to Swami, took their positions. The theme for the day's performance was the same as the one on Easwaramma Day, that is , on Mother Easwaramma.

The *Burrakatha* began with a prayer to Lord Ganesha. After that, the narrators were garlanded in the manner that tradition demands. Then, it was the Sai *Bhagawatham*! However much one may attempt to tell the story of Mother Easwaramma or Subbamma, one ends up narrating the story of dear Swami, for, it is Swami who makes lives fruitful and wholesome. The story of the divine Mother and Subbamma is very inspiring as they were so closely associated with God. The three artists narrated how the mothers were privileged to witness the divinity of little Sathya.

Hailing victory to Mother Easwaramma, the students gave a brief chronology of events in her life. She was born in the year 1890 to Sri Subba Raju. When she was only five years old, the family migrated to Puttaparthi. Her name now finds a place in the list of illustrious mothers of Avatars – Kausalya gave birth to Sri Rama, Devaki to Sri Krishna and Devagiriamma to Shirdi Sai. Swami was born in the Ratnakara Vamsa (clan) to Pedda Venkama Raju and Easwaramma. Swami was so full of nostalgia and emotion, it seemed. When one sees Swami's reaction to the narratives about His mother, one wonders at the joy that the Mother would be feeling to be remembered so by the Lord. There have been many avatars but no avatar has been recorded to have been so emotionally bonded to the Mother. Of course, He is beyond emotions and it is merely a pointer and a lesson to the whole humanity about the respect and position that has to be accorded to one's parents.

The three of them narrated about the birth and infancy of Swami. When they hushed the whole audience into silence to sing the lullaby song to put the "baby Swami" to sleep, it was such a fulfilling and love-filling experience. It is said that the baby, at birth, is an exactness of God till the parents humanise it with their upbringing! Imagining the divine baby, infant Sathya, and hearing the lullaby was a very special experience indeed. Further, they described in a beautiful verse, how Sathya, the baby, was! For those who understood Telugu, it was so elevating and enthralling, for Swami matched that description even the present day, after 83 human years! This was another insight as to why God is called timeless and ageless. Continuing their narration, the students said, it was Subbamma, the first wife of Mr. Narayana Rao, who named Swami as Sathyanarayana Raju. One day when Subbamma wanted to feed *pakodas* to Swami, she saw all the fourteen worlds in His mouth as Yashoda saw in Lord Krishna's mouth in the Dwapara Yuga. Karanam Subbamma experienced great joy in serving food to the devotees of Swami.

Referring to the three wishes of Mother Easwaramma, the students said the present Sri Sathya Sai University, Super Speciality Hospitals and Sri Sathya Sai Drinking Water Project bore fruit due to the humble wishes of Mother Easwaramma. In those days, Bhagavan used to do Narayana Seva to the villagers of surrounding villages while Mother Easwaramma distributed clothes. On May 6, in 1972, when the Summer Course was in progress in Brindavan, Bangalore, Mother Easwaramma left her mortal coil. She called out, "Swami, Swami ..." And Bhagavan responded immediately. He came to her, and she breathed her last. When this episode was being narrated, Swami was very emotional. Looking at Him, it was so difficult to say whether Easwaramma had mothered Him or He had mothered Easwaramma, for in the glistening teardrop at the edge of His eye, one could see the reverence of a Son and the selflessness of a mother, both at the same time.

Mention here must be made of the wonderful work done by the accompanying artists on the harmonium, keyboard and the mridangam. They built up the entire mood and the twain between the east and west was met with the wonderful chords on the keyboard blending 'harmoniously' with the 'key' notes of the harmonium! The *Burrakatha* artists concluded with a prayer that though 37 years have passed, Mother Easwaramma is still ever fresh in everyone's minds. "Oh Mother! Please return to earth again to see the wonderful transformation that has affected Puttaparthi. Your sojourn here has blessed us with unimaginable bounty." It is often said that service is more of an attitude rather than an action. It was indeed a noble act of great service that these three boys did. They filled thousands of people with joy and Love for the divine. Their song acted as a balm for stricken hearts and panacea for the pained minds. The vibrations were so holy, pure and joyous that everyone benefitted from the glory of the Divine story. It was a physical expression of the prayer, "*Samastha Loka Sukhino bhavanthu*" as the trio did their bit to bring happiness and Love to humanity through their soulful rendering.

As they completed their act, Swami went to the interview room and brought white safari pieces to gift to each of them. Swami blessed them and said that

He was very happy. They told Swami that the accompanying artists had also worked very hard. Swami said that He knew and He called them and blessed them too with the same. Swami asked them whether they had written the scripts themselves. They said that their teacher had done so and he was currently working on a script about the Ramayana. Swami promised to guide him on that script. Then, when Swami asked as to what he wanted, the lead singer, Prabhakar prayed, "Swami grant *Sadbuddhi* (good intellect) to everyone here especially the students." Such a noble prayer! Swami nodded and said that His Grace was always there. He asked him to sing an encore of a part of the Burrakatha. The singer moved down and sang out the verse describing the beauty of the divine babe Sai. Everyone thundered in their joyous applause. Again Swami told the three of them to sing in unison and so they did. The applause was even greater this time. Swami told them that their voices gelled very well with each other. He granted them group photos. They prayed that they should get more such opportunities to make Him happy and Swami promised them that He would surely grant them.

Swami then asked for a *bhajan* to be sung. "Hari Om Namah Shivaya" filled the air as everyone enthusiastically joined in the singing. After that He asked for *aarthi*. Swami had only words of praises for the trio as He received *aarthi* and was leaving. He blessed the card that the deputy warden of the Brindavan campus showed Him. He looked surprised that there was no *prasadam* to be distributed! But He only gave a sweet smile and blessing everyone, retired for the day at 6:40 p.m.

### **June 18, 2009 – Cultural Programme by Bal Vikas students from Gujarat**

"Let the programmes for the year begin!" That seemed to be the statement to describe June 18, 2009. A set of cultural programmes by the devotees from Gujarat had been approved for presentation and they waited in readiness for Swami's arrival. A contingent of over hundred students had arrived from the two schools in Gujarat: the Sri Sathya Sai Vidyaniketan, Navsari, and the Sri Sathya Sai School, Surat. A huge backdrop carrying the words, "Samastha Lokaha Sukhino Bhavanthu" stood in the centre of the hall. Just for the information of those who have come in late, the widely accepted universal mantra, "Lokah Samasthah Sukhino Bhavanthu" got a twist almost a year ago when Swami advised the students to chant it with a wider universal appeal, modifying the same to "Samastha Lokaha Sukhino Bhavanthu" and ever since, this has been the Universal Mantra for the Sai fraternity all over the globe.

Swami arrived into a packed Sai Kulwant Hall and moved through the ladies side blessing them. As always, He had a good look at the backdrop that had been erected. Moving through the gents' side and the students' area, He reached near the Primary school children. The tiny tots from the first standard were seated separately in sky blue shirts and they too sought His blessings at the beginning of their beautiful sojourn at the school. The headmistress spoke to Swami and prayed on their behalf. The kids did not voice their feelings but it was evident in the way they were craning and bending their little bodies over



one another to get close to Swami! The Lord was so happy and He moved up and down the little corridor where these children were seated. He asked many of them their names and places from where they had come. Many of the kids also took *padanamskar* and Swami all the while was beaming so happily. God loves child-likeness and these innocent children, with a perfectly round, huge vibhuti dot on their foreheads and close cropped hair, won His heart instantly.

Swami moved to the stage and as He sat there, the children participating in the first part of the programme came up to Him with offerings. Then there was a dance invoking the blessings of Lord Ganesha. Picked from the popular album, "Vishwa Vinayaka", the song had a brisk pace and was impressive. The children danced in uniformity. The second part of the programme was a drama that was more of a group discussion amongst the "intellectuals" and "luminaries" of the world. They come together to discuss means to get peace and love in the world when two beings, Love and Peace, descend and inspire a simple school teacher to speak out his heart. Through two songs with dances, the conclusion they arrive to is profound, "The best and only transformation that man should bring about, is self-transformation. Inner change will inevitably result in an outer change too." The final part was a presentation on Patanjali Yoga. The protagonist, Rahul has a dream where sage Patanjali guides him through the eight steps in Yoga and also shows him *asanas* (postures) and *pranayamas* (breathing exercises) that he can easily practise. The students from the Sai School at Surat displayed amazing postures holding yellow cloth pieces, depicting the various religions of the world. Much to the thrill of all assembled, the holy symbols of all religions were depicted beautifully. It was "bending the body" portraying the message to "mend the mind" to live in religious harmony. During the programme, Swami went briefly into the interview room and as He returned, He arrived with packets containing safari cloth pieces!

The end of the drama saw a beautiful moment. The protagonist, Rahul told Swami, "Swami, you answered my mother's prayer so immediately. Please answer mine too. Give me a place in your college after I finish my schooling." Swami burst into peals of lovely laughter and nodded in assurance! Whenever anyone asks Swami for a place in His College, they actually are asking Him for a place in His heart! He seems to smile because everyone already has a place in His heart! Else how could one develop Love for Him? Let us remember, if we Love Him, we already have a place in His heart, for hasn't He Himself said, "If you need me, you deserve me." The students then rolled a red carpet inviting Swami into their midst. With a smile and an *abhayahastha*, Swami moved down the stage.

He posed with the children for photos. Then He asked for the safari cloth pieces to be brought, and began to distribute them personally. When the 'mother' came forward to take it, Swami asked, "Are you a boy?" He seemed to have a surprised look which unfolded into such a beautiful smile that the answer was of no significance. The boy was mute as the others around answered, "Swami, he is a boy!" As Swami has said, everything on which His eyes fall upon is transmuted; He alone knows of all that would have happened within to that boy who was the beneficiary of those loving words and

bewitching smile. The other group of children who performed the drama too came next and posed with him for pictures. Swami distributed clothes to them too. Finally, the girls who had danced were given sarees after their picture-moment with Swami.

Swami moved back to the stage and then blessed *prasadam* to be distributed. The Bal Vikas girls from Gujarat were blessed with the opportunity to sing two *bhajans* after which Swami asked the students to sing. One *bhajan* later, Swami received *aarthi* and after blessing everyone retired to Yajur Mandir at 7:15 p.m.

## **SWAMI AND ME**

### **SCINTILLATING MOMENTS WITH SWEET SAI Part-1**

*By Mr. Mayur Pandya*

*An alumnus of Sri Sathya Sai University, Mayur joined the erstwhile Sri Sathya Sai Arts, Science and Commerce College in Brindavan, Bangalore in 1978 for his Bachelors in Commerce. Later, he pursued his Masters in Commerce in the Bangalore University. After Bhagavan unfurled the Sri Sathya Sai University in 1981, Mayur served as a lecturer in the Brindavan campus for a year. Later, he moved to the Prasanthi Nilayam campus and completed his Ph. D in the area of Banking in 1989. After this, he served for a year and half in the Prasanthi Nilayam campus as a lecturer, and later, moved to the corporate sector, and since then has held managerial positions in various companies in Mumbai, Los Angeles and Vancouver. Currently, he works as a Technical Writer in the HSBC Bank of Canada. Additionally, he is also the President of the Vancouver Sai Centre.*

1978. I remember the year vividly. It was a time when my entire family - my parents, elder brother and younger brother – were devotees of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba. But I was the black sheep in the family. In fact, each time my mother urged me to come into Swami's fold, I would walk up to His picture anchored on the wall, reverse the photo, and tell my mother, "If Swami is God, let Him turn the picture around. Then I will believe." And my mother would shake her head in resignation, saying "this boy is a write-off".

At that time, I studied in a college in Bombay (now Mumbai) which was reputed for its fashion shows rather than academics. And I had a lot of friends. So I did not really care about spirituality. But after such a frivolous time, I felt some kind of a vacuum inside. So I began to frequent a beautiful Shiva temple right on the ocean in Navy Nagar (in suburbia Colaba). I would pray to God to help me out and would even shed tears in agony.

#### **The Transforming Telegram**

It so happened that my neighbor's son wanted to go to have Swami's *darshan*. As he was a young boy, my neighbour requested me to chaperon his son to Bangalore. This was a few days before the festival of Shivarathri in 1978. We reached Brindavan (Baba's *ashram* in Bangalore) but found that Swami had left early in that morning for Ooty with a group of students. I was nonplussed. I couldn't care less because I was off to do sightseeing. We returned to Bangalore, had a good time, and then a few days later we learnt that Swami was back.

Soon, we were sitting in the *darshan* lines in the Sai Ram shed. Swami came out of the Brindavan gate and as He passed by, He gave me a very casual glance. It did not have a deep impression on me, but I did feel something happening inside. That, perhaps, was the turning point.

We went back to Bombay. But I still continued with my flippant ways until the following June. Meanwhile, my elder brother, who was spending a lot of time with Swami, was deeply impressed by the students of Baba's college in Brindavan. So what he did was this: he took an application form, forged my signature and submitted it at the college. I did not know about this.

I still remember the Thursday in June 1979 when a telegram suddenly came from the Principal of Baba's college, Prof. Narendra, saying, 'Come immediately for interview'. I do not know what happened; I was not ready, and it was just any other normal day. I read that telegram and simply broke down. I decided I wanted to go. I went downstairs, grabbed a few clothes and left. I had a hippie look then. And as I had been told that sporting long hair was not permitted in Swami's college, I put a lot of oil to flatten it out. As I went and sat in the unreserved compartment in the train, I felt as if some power was taking over me.

### **Welcome with a Bang**

I remember seeing the beautiful woods of Brindavan, sitting in the autorickshaw itself. At that time, the big and striking cement lotus on the crest of the college building could be seen from many miles away. When I saw that, my heart was filled with excitement.

I remember I had to sleep overnight in Kadugodi village because the interview was scheduled the next day. Then, I found to my surprise that no telegram had actually been sent out from the Principal's office! Nevertheless, I got admission, and the first thing Principal Narendra said to me was, "Go to Kadugodi village and get your hair cut." I can never forget the feeling when I joined the hostel. It was as if I was born again, because everything there was so new and different.

My first *darshan* as a student of Bhagavan was also very unique. It was about three weeks since Swami was in Puttaparthi, and the college had already started. It was morning. I had just finished my shower, and was combing my hair, a towel wrapped around my waist. Suddenly there was a thundering sound and I was alarmed because it seemed like an earthquake! I looked out of the window and I saw everybody charging out of the rooms. The Brindavan hostel has three flights of steps, two on the sides and one in the centre, and I saw boys pouring out of their rooms and sprinting down the stairs.

Out of sheer impulse, I ran out myself only to be caught by my room leader who said, "You are not wearing your trousers!" So I ran back and put on my clothes, and in time reached the door of the hostel to see Swami's car. We all ran behind the white Mercedes Benz. The car reached the Brindavan portico and stopped. Swami stepped out. He then climbed on to the foot board of the car, looked over at all of us and said, "Horses, horses." And then He asked, "How many new boys?" The next moment, looking at each of us with a beaming smile, He said, "Very happy, very happy." That was my first close *darshan* of Swami. I remember it very vividly.

## **The Enigmatic 'Window *Darshans*'**

Days went by, and it was a sweet saga of getting oriented to an altogether different routine. Interestingly, when Swami was around in Brindavan, the highlight was not the regular *darshan*, but instead, the window *darshan*. This was something unique to Brindavan. The *mandir* was such that there were so many windows on all sides and one could have *darshan* throughout the day - six, seven, eight times – depending on how savvy one was with regard to Swami's movements – knowing where to stand, what time Swami came and the like. It was almost like a research project. Each of us vied with the other to get the coveted *darshan*.

I remember the first two years of my college when we undertook extensive gardening, that too by Swami's window. Gardening was the extra-curricular activity Swami chose for me because I just took a liking to it. As we would be tending to the garden there, very often, Swami would come up to that window. The moment Swami came there, all of us would stand up. The moment two or three of us did this, it was a cue for everybody that Swami was giving *darshan*. So all would come running and enjoy that special *darshan*. It happened almost every day, especially in the afternoons when very few boys were around. It was the time when Swami would be getting ready to come out for tiffin. And He would part the curtains and give this *darshan*.

Young and raw that I was, somehow, it got into my head one day that I should have *Ekaanth Darshan*, meaning, I should have the fortune of a special *darshan* of Swami exclusively for myself. So one day when Swami was up there, the moment Swami gave *darshan* I hid behind the wall so that Swami could see me but none of the other students could. And, from up there, Swami held the curtain and kept staring at me for what seemed like eternity. It was the most beautiful feeling; of Swami's eyes looking deeply into mine. I was alone and Swami was not in a hurry to go away. After quite a while, He finally dropped the curtain. That image is still vivid in my mind.

## **Hide and Seek**

Swami would even play tricks on us occasionally, when He would have us sprinting from the front to the back windows, and the vice versa. How it worked was like this: Whenever Swami would drop the curtain, it was a cue (for us) that we could seek Him at the next window. Sometimes, Swami would drop the curtain, and knowing we would all make a beeline to the other window, remain there and open the curtain again. Meanwhile, realizing that we had been 'duped' by the Divine Trickster, the thirty or forty of us would rush back to the previous spot, only to find that Swami had left that window and gone to the other window! And then He would open that curtain again and call out 'horses, horses'. Occasionally He would press His nose against the grills and smile at us. We even got scolded many a times.

## Cultivating Cosmic Lessons

Coming back to gardening, there were three gardens we were working on – the Brindavan *mandir* garden, one in the hostel quadrangle, and also a botanical garden spear-headed by Dr. Lakshminarasimham, our Botany professor who was the Head of the Department. There was a huge tract of land just outside the Botany department that had a lot of cement because ours was a newly constructed college. We took it upon ourselves to make that into a botanical garden, even getting some UGC (United Grants Commission, a government body) funds. So those three gardens were a full time effort for us. We were a whole group of students, who would spend every moment of the time available on these plants, forsaking even leisure and play for manual labour and hardwork.

And Swami would appreciate us working. When we would be watering the garden, He would look from the *mandir* window to see how hard we were at our job. We would bring the first rose to Him and He would say, “Yes, isn’t this the first rose?” When the botanical garden came up, He inaugurated the garden by planting the first Tulasi plant, spreading a few seeds for the flowers. He constantly gave a lot of encouragement. And this became a conduit for even some spiritual awakening.

I remember a time when Swami would come out of the interview room and call for me, “*Eh, Mayur idhar aao* (Mayur, come here)”. And I would walk up to Him. He would then ask, “How is your garden?” So I would give a detailed explanation of the progress at the garden – ‘Swami, I just weeded this place, we were watering this plant ...’ and the like. After a full five to ten minutes of patiently hearing me out, He would again ask, “How is your garden?” And I would be left wondering as to what I had missed out! By the time I found a satisfactory explanation, Swami would walk away. I would then start replaying the conversation in my mind. And then the answer would strike me, from a discourse given by Bhagavan earlier, of how we should cultivate the seeds of devotion in the garden of our hearts. Thus, the next time Swami asked me the question, I would be ready with the answer He desired. Pleased with my response, He would say, “*Ah, manchide*, very happy” and would walk away.

In the same strain of initiating introspection, He would enquire, “Where is your father?” And again the answer would elude me. I would reply, ‘Swami, he is a lawyer, he is in Bombay, fighting all these cases, etc..’ and again He would say, “How is your father?” until I told Him, “Swami, You are my father.” Those were the first seeds of educare, wherein He could have given me the answer but, instead, He chose to, sort of, bring it out of me.

## The Lord on Patrol

Giving second chances was typical of Him. I can never forget the day He gave me a glimpse of His omnipresence. Our money orders from our parents would arrive at the Kadugodi post office. Whenever these money orders arrived, we had to seek permission from our teachers to collect them, as we were generally not allowed to leave the campus premises. That particular

afternoon, I still remember, none of the lecturers were available. Finding a valid excuse to go, I decided to finish off my work, come back and then inform my teachers. After all, I had been informing them every time.

So I set out all alone sans permission. As I was walking in front of the portico, I reached a particular spot when something impelled me look up. Good grief! It was the good Lord! Swami was standing in the balcony looking at me! I froze in terror because I was caught. And I knew what I was doing. Swami saw my face and the reaction. And to my utter astonishment, He smiled, diffusing away all the stress. Swami continued smiling and then walked inside the building. I headed back straight to the hostel, only to get caught red-handed! Swami had let me off, no doubt, but not without a little chastening to remember.

### **The Omniscient Master and Mentor**

If He chastised on one hand, He also counseled and corrected. Yoga classes were an integral part of our hostel curriculum. In fact, after I had joined Swami's college, I learnt about Hata yoga, the various *yogasanas*, and also about the Kundalini Shakti. So I was really fascinated by it. I read a lot on the subject and I yearned for a mystic experience. Just around that time, Swami gave a luminous discourse about Jyothi Meditation. I really took it very seriously and set off on a determined mission of a transcendental expedition. At that time, the main hostel building was completely occupied but the S. N. Singh block, next to that, was free. So I would go into one of the empty rooms there, lock the door, light a candle, and sit down for meditation. Initially, the candle flame kept flickering. So I took a 200 paged, hard cover note book and positioned it like a 'V' behind the flame so that the candle would not flicker and would continue to burn for at least an hour.

Months passed. I still had not got 'that' experience. Then one day while I was meditating, the flame became brighter and brighter, and much warmer. It got so hot suddenly that I opened my eyes thinking that this was 'the experience', only to see the card board, the candle and everything caught up in flames! Evidently, the thick cover had caught fire, leaving behind only cinders of my unfulfilled aspirations. I was so thoroughly disappointed that I gave up the meditation.

One day, a few days later, I was standing in the portico along with 300 others, waiting for Swami. Those were the portico sessions, precursors to the Trayee sessions, wherein Swami would come down the stairs and spend a lot of time with the students in the portico, just before He went to the Sairam shed. Swami would stand there, joke with all of us, and would spend so much time. We would vie with each other to grab that fragrant green creeper with the flower, which grew on the arches, and offer it to Swami. And Swami would smell the creeper and give it back. That day, when Swami was standing in the portico, He suddenly said, "Eh Mayur, come here. *Neeku knack ledu ra. Nuvvu crack ayi potadu* (You do not have the knack. You have become a crack.)" I was completely taken aback, wondering why Swami was calling me such in front of so many people. Then He called me closer and said, "If you go

on staring at the candle, you are going to become a nervous wreck.” After this, He gave a beautiful discourse for an hour and a half on Patanjali's Ashtanga Yoga. He spoke of the eight-fold path to yoga and emphasized that first the foundation had to be very strong. Only then could one progress to the higher stages.

This was really another telling incident of the Lord's omniscience. I was thrilled because I was doing some wrong *sadhana* (spiritual practice) in a corner, unknown to anyone. But Swami, who was aware of everything, corrected and taught me in His own unique way.

**(To be continued)**



## THE INEXPLICABLE CALL

*By Ms. Nooshin Mehrabani*

*Ms. Nooshin Mehrabani was born in Iran and worked as a reporter for Iranian National Radio and Television. She continued her career with an Iranian TV station after moving to Los Angeles, USA. Since 1991, when she first heard about Sai Baba, she has made many trips to India and has been blessed with several chances of interaction with Bhagavan Baba. She now lives in Puttaparthi.*

I was born in Iran, worked in Canada and USA, and since January 2007 have been living in Puttaparthi, basking in the bliss of being in the physical presence of Bhagavan Baba, my Spiritual Father and Master. In July 2008 I received many phone calls from my mother asking me to visit Iran and stay with her for a couple of months. It had been over two years since I had seen her and she was getting older, so I seriously considered making a trip to Iran. During one of those days I went to sleep with this heavily on my mind and Swami appeared in my dream. I saw myself in typical western clothes, ready to leave for Iran, when Swami walked into the room and stood right in front of me. Before I even opened my mouth to ask for permission, He shook His finger at me, and firmly said, "No! Don't go to Iran to see your mom."

When I woke up, I was both happy and a little sad. Happy that Swami had come in my dream but sad for my mother. How could I give her this message? She is very attached to me and has always worried about my life in India. Also she was not a devotee of Sai Baba and there was no way I could explain to her that I was following Baba's directions. The idea that I have surrendered my life to my guru and that I seek His permission before making my decisions was completely unacceptable to my family. Now, I had no other option, but to pray to Swami that my mother does not insist on my visiting her.

### **Mutually Mysterious Calls**

A few months later, one day as I was cooking in my apartment in Puttaparthi, the cell phone rang. I washed my hands and went to the drawing room to answer the call. No one was on the other end; instead, I heard the sounds of an Iranian television program. After a few seconds, I did hear a voice. It was my mother. She was asking who was calling her. When she found out that I was on the other end she was extremely delighted, but wondered why I had called her cell phone instead of the landline. I was really surprised – I told her that I did not even know that she had a cell phone, let alone calling that number. I had to convince her that not only had I not made a call, but also that

I was busy in the kitchen when my own cell phone rang. Then she told me that her cell phone too was also in another room and the maid had pushed the answer button and brought it to her.

In fact, it was a new phone and she had not yet given her number to anybody. That is why she persisted with her question "How did you know this number?" It was very difficult for her to accept these mysterious happenings as Swami's miracle, even though I knew this to be the case firmly in my heart. I did try to explain to her that there is nothing that Swami cannot do. We talked that morning for 45 minutes and during the course of this conversation, she revealed to me that just two days prior to that day she had visited a holy shrine in Tehran and prayed to God saying how much she missed me and sought His divine intervention to see me. And in the next 48 hours God had connected us so amazingly!

I had no doubt that all this was the making of Sai Baba. This was more proof that God is only One and there truly is no separation whatsoever between Allah, Jesus or Sathya Sai Baba. And now it was up to the Lord to make my mother believe this miracle. As we talked more that day, she again asked if I could come to Iran to see her. I had to let her know that this was not the right time for me to make a visit. Then, without having any real hope, I asked, "Mom, why don't you come to India and see me?" Immediately she said, "When should I come?" I was really amazed. In fact, I had been requesting my family to come and see Baba for quite some time but they had always been against my spiritual path. Now, seeing her interest, I was pleasantly surprised. I let her know that November and December would be busy months in Puttaparthi and she could come in the January of the next year.

Then I asked my mom to remember the date of this conversation. I knew that if I was not charged for this call, and if my mother too was not billed for this long conversation, it was surely Baba's grace. After a month I received another phone call from my mother letting me know that she had purchased a ticket to India. **She also told me that when she received her telephone bill, there was no record of our conversation!**

### **Sai Needs No Instruments**

Many a times I have thought of myself as being an instrument in the Divine Hands. But, this incident was a revelation. I realised that Swami does not need any of us as His instruments. It was His invisible hands that dialed the

phone. And it is His Grace that gives us the pleasure of imagining that we are His instruments. In reality, He doesn't need anyone.

My mother arrived on January 2, 2009 and stayed in Puttaparthi with me for two weeks. I don't know if this turned her into a Sai devotee, but what I do know is that she felt a lot of peace in India staying with me and it was Swami who had answered her prayer quite inexplicably. When she finally left for Iran, she was more confident than ever that God was indeed looking after her dear daughter.

## **H2H SPECIAL**

### **ENTHRALLING REMINISCENCES OF THE DAYS OF YORE**

#### ***From the mental diary of Mrs. Karunamba Ramamurthy - Part 5***

*Extremely fortunate to come to His lotus feet when she was just a tiny girl in the 1940s, Mrs. Karunamba Ramamurthy, lovingly addressed as Kannamma, has a priceless treasure trove of incredible memories of the yester years. She is also the author of the famous book "Sri Sathya Sai Anandadayi - Journey with Sai". This is the fifth part of her wonderful reminiscences.*

#### **A Life Transformed by the Lord's Forgiveness**

The owner of the house we had rented during those days at Bangalore had a friend who was very vociferous in his anti-Swami sentiments. He often even argued with my mother regarding this.

In those days, before the advent of the Second World War, the military office at Shimla (a city in North India) was in need of clerks for the armed forces. Our house owner's friend wanted to join, and so he applied for a position. There was a rule in the services at that time that married employees may return home after a stint of two years and enjoy service benefits such as claiming travel expenses amongst other benefits for self and family for the rest of their lives. However, non-married members had to serve for a longer period.

However, some unscrupulous applicants lied to the management stating that they were married, while in fact they were still bachelors. The house owner's friend was one such. After a two-year period, he returned home and got married. In due course he and his wife had some daughters.

One day through a couple of friends he came to know that his previous employers had set the police in search of him having come to know of the truth. This news rattled this person to the core. He was afraid that his and his family's reputation would be at stake if the police found out his address and arrested him. Though he was not financially well off, his family had a good reputation. To top it all what would become of his daughters in case of such an eventuality?

He rushed to my husband to help him and in desperation, requested my husband to take him to Sai Baba. However, my husband, knowing the truth behind the desperation, refused to take him to Puttaparthi as he had cheated the government. So this person left for Puttaparthi alone.

During *darshan*, Swami saw the man in the lines but did not take notice. The person too was afraid of approaching Swami. So he remained alone and slept

away the entire day. Next morning Swami asked him in the mandir, "Did you join the army?" When he replied in the affirmative, He told him that he had made a big mistake by fraudulently leaving the service.

"What is point of weeping now? You have committed a major blunder right at the beginning. However, as you have made such as mistake for the first time and because you have daughters whom you must get married off and settled, I will forgive you. Go back home. The police will not arrest you. I shall see to it."

After repeated assurances by Swami, the person left, but with still some doubt and fear in him. He spent a fortnight of sleepless nights, and then received a letter from a friend which said that the army office is not keen on punishing him and has in fact forgotten the issue!

Swami at that time was in Mysore. This person rushed to Swami and prostrated at His feet and sought His pardon for his misbehavior.

Swami forgave him advising him to practice truth. Having said this, Swami wanted to meet the person's wife. So he rushed home and brought his wife. When Swami saw her, He said that she was a chaste woman. And added that if the wife is chaste whatever difficulty comes to her husband will vanish.

Finally, before they returned, Swami blessed them with vibhuti. This person was totally transformed.

### **Even Iron Girders Obey Swami!**

When the new mandir in Prasanthi Nilayam was being built, there were no cranes to haul the iron girders above the walls. So they were hauled up manually. Women performed *puja* before they were lifted. Turmeric and vermillion were applied on them and coconuts were broken. The girders were rested against the walls. Swami then commanded the iron girders to rest snug on the walls – and they did!

### **Mother First, *Sadhana* Next**

Once a man of about 25 years of age came to see Swami and Bhagavan had given him a room in the Patashala block. One day Swami beckoned the young man and asked him to go and buy a pant and shirt from a shop outside. The man questioned Swami, to which he was told to go back to his ailing mother. The young man protested. "I have come to You for a monastic life. Instead, you tell me to go back to a worldly life!" Swami replied to him that no amount of *sadhana* would procure merit if one's responsibilities are not met and that anyway he was not qualified for such a *sadhana* as a monk. "Your mother did menial labor in many households to feed you. Now you forsake her. How can I shower on you any grace? Go back home and look after you mother well."

## **You Are Amruta Swaroopas!**

While performing *pradakshanam* (circumambulation) we traditionally chant, “*Papoham Papakarmani*”, which means that we are sinners, and thus ask for pardon. Swami warned us not to chant the *mantram* so, but to chant “*Prapthoham Prapthakarmoham*” (I shall accept the consequences of my actions). He said, “All of you are not sinners, but *amruta swaroopas* (embodiments of the nectar of immortality). In our daily deeds we should worship and gain the grace of God.” Swami then approached the temple priest, Sri Padmanaba Sastry, and instructed him to chant likewise. Swami asked him to learn the *mantram* first and then teach it to all the devotees in His presence.

## **‘I Am the Mantra and the Lord!’ - Baba**

A group of scholars once visited Prashanti Nilayam, the leader of whom was a well-educated individual. This person who accompanied this group approached Swami and told Him, “This group chants the Krishna Purana *mantras* very well. I brought them here with me as the group that chants the *mantras* here often make mistakes. This group with me will teach them the exact nuances of chanting the *mantras*.”

Swami at once replied, “Oh, they make mistakes, is it? Let it be so. I don't notice technical mistakes made while chanting. I only see the intense devotion inherent in them. I am the *mantra* and the Lord. I am both! Despite the distance of the Sun, when you keep a pot of water exposed to the Sun, the water gets heated. So too those who live here will become holy souls even without their knowledge.”

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I once asked Swami to initiate me and give me *mantra diksha* (initiation into a *mantra*). Swami told me that He would do so only if I stop traveling continuously and stayed in Puttaparthi for a month. “What is the point if you do not concentrate?” He asked me and advised me to pray for a steadfast mind.

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My sister's son was a very weak child and hardly had any flesh on his thin body. Though we tried various means to help the child put on weight, we were not successful. We took him to Swami and asked for His blessings. Swami asked us to consult His *Gruham Ammai* (Mother Easwaramma). When we visited her, she suggested to give the child porridge made of ragi (a type of food grain) seasoned with salt. We fed this to the child for six months and he put on normal weight. When we went to Swami later, He enquired about the child and then told us, “You people always prefer English medicines (allopathy). You believe in those chemically prepared foods only.”

**‘How Can I But Not Listen?’ - Baba**

A person, Lakshminarayana, had a daughter who was married and was living with her husband. Her husband however was not a good person as he used to fight with her often. Once when she had visited Puttaparthi, Swami gave her a photo. She told Swami that she has a lot of His photos and hence did not want one more. Swami, however, forced her to take it and asked her to keep it with her. She then accepted the picture.

Her father, Sri Lakshminarayana, later visited Swami and stayed for a couple of months. Every day Swami narrated the quarrels that his daughter had with her husband.

After a few months, his daughter came to visit him and narrated to her father all the quarrels she had had with her husband. Later when Sri Lakshminarayana asked Swami how He was able to narrate everything so clearly and accurately, Swami replied, “How can I but not listen when I am there in your daughter's kitchen through the picture that I had given her? I was hearing all their quarrels and was observing everything through that photo.”

**(To be continued)**

## **SAI WORLD NEWS**

### **SAI SCHOOL STUDENTS STAND OUT FOR THEIR EXCELLENCE**

The media hailed it as “a school with a difference”. India’s leading news daily the Times of India announced “Puttaparthi school shows the way”. Making headlines for its outstanding academic results, the Sri Sathya Sai Higher Secondary School, nestled in the valley of Prashanthi Nilayam has made history yet again.

The hard-working and dedicated students of the unique school founded by Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba have pulled off another stunning performance in the recent Central Board of Secondary Education or CBSE exams announced in May 2009.

In the combined Grades 10 and 12 external board exams which are held nationally across India, not only did the 215 out of the 216 students secure a first division, but more significantly, ninety seven percent of the students achieved distinction or above 75% marks, with almost half of the students scoring more than 90% in aggregate. Truly, it is an amazing feat which brought joy to the teachers, students and parents.

#### ***The CBSE Results of Sri Sathya Sai Higher Secondary School, Prashanthi Nilayam, for the academic year 2008-2009***

#### **School Toppers:**

	<b>XII Grade</b>		<b>X Grade</b>	
1.	C. Sai krupa	98.2 %	Sai aditya nagaratnam	97.6%
2.	Gokul Jayaram and Saru Trikha	96.4 %	Rohit Kumar Chawla, Preksha and Debadrita Saha	97.0%
3.	L. Naveen	95.6 %	Ashwin R.	96.2%
<b>Results Summary:</b>				
		<b>XII Grade</b>	<b>X Grade</b>	
1.	No. of students appeared	116	99	
2.	Number of students securing 1st Division (> 60%)	116	98	
3.	Number of students in distinction (> 75%)	113	86	
4.	Number of students securing above 90%	48	25	



<b>Other Highlights:</b>		
	<b>XII grade</b>	<b>X Grade</b>
1.	Two students, Sai Tejan and C. Sai Krupa are awarded 100% in Sanskrit	Four students, Rohit Kumar Chawla, Vignesh, Ashwin and Duvva Sai Bhavana get 100% in Mathematics
2.	Rohit Kumar Singh gets 100% in Computer Science	Sai Aditya Nagaratnam gets 100% in Social Science and Sanskrit, while Y. Urmila does it in Social Science and Vivek Raju in Sanskrit

This joyful news was picked by both the English language and Telegu media, praising the school's academic record, especially observing how children from economically weak backgrounds find success here. Their news article also interviewed the brilliantly able school topper, **Ms. C. Sai Krupa**, who scored a remarkable 98.2%. In response to media queries on her success, Ms. C. Sai Krupa exemplified the humility which marks the Sathya Sai Education model.

The Times of India quoted her as saying: "The school's dedicated teachers and their continued support, along with a conducive environment for academic and personality development was the key to my performance." She went on to say: "Bhagavan's constant interest in our welfare and progress, His selfless love towards our well being, inspired me to do my very best as my offering to Him. Where can we get such concern and care at no cost, only expecting us to become good and responsible boys and girls?"

In an exclusive interview with H2H, the respected Principal of the Sri Sathya Sai Higher Secondary School, Prashanti Nilayam, **Mr. Y. Shivaramakrishnaya**, explained the outstanding academic results thus:

"Human excellence is achieved by the collective development of the body, mind and heart. Our schedule is planned in such a way that all the three fields – the physical, mental and spiritual - are taken care of simultaneously.

"The main feature of our system is that many of our teachers stay with the students in the hostel. They keenly observe the students, identify their deficiencies and guide them regularly to bring about human excellence. They instil self-confidence in the students by integrating values in the system, but more importantly, by their personal example.

"It is because of such integral education, and of course our Bhagavan's Grace, that the students, both boys and girls, put in sincere efforts and achieve such best results, year after year."

Another top scorer, **Gokul Jayaram**, who came second with a remarkable score of 96.4% excitedly told H2H:

"22nd May - that day will remain etched in my memory forever. I can still imagine the emotions that crept through me as I typed my board exam roll no: and found it was 96.4%...Surprise, happiness, gratitude...within one hour, I came to know, to my astonishment, that I was a Sri Sathya Sai Higher Secondary School (Boys wing) topper!

Now, as I ponder upon this, I realize, and my parents do too, that all this wouldn't have been possible if not for Swami and His infinite grace working out its magic through me. Had I studied elsewhere, I don't think I could have produced such a marvel. I completely dedicate this achievement to the hostel routine and its unique and multifaceted approach towards academics. A special mention of thanks to my ex-wing teacher, Mr. Sailesh Srivastava, for the important role he played in honing and crafting my skills. Last but not the least, I would like to bring forward my approbation on the way the students are coached here for the examinations, in spite of the various diverse activities that hold them engaged and demand attention."

While explaining the school's winning formula which draws out such excellence from the students, the aforementioned teacher, **Mr. Sailesh Srivastava**, said:

"Students learn to lead a simple and disciplined life, devoid of distractions and that itself sets their entire day. Right from the early hours of the morning, to bedtime, the student performs various activities and duties - be it early morning prayers, silent sitting, jogging and exercises, games and sports, or attending classes – every activity is performed with one-pointed attention, channelled by discipline and devotion.

"The students derive precious experiences, normally unavailable at the school level, through their involvement in diverse cultural and spiritual festivals and activities. They learn how to live together and work together and the strengths of various cultures and traditions. At others times, students go out for village service – *grama seva* as we call it – in a spirit of 'love all and serve all'; on other occasions they are fully involved in the school's sports and physical activities, and then the year ends with what we call the Board Exam, where the entire student community is busy with academics. This moral and spiritual lifestyle, regulated by discipline, is what sets apart our students from others.

"In fact, many a time, teachers from other schools have wondered how our students are able to perform so well in the board examinations, in spite of their many extra-curricula activities! The answer is in the lifestyle that the students lead. While other people outside may have to study 18 to 20 hours a day to achieve similar results, our students are able to achieve the same or more with a mere 2 to 3 hours a day! They have no distractions, and have one-pointed attention to focus on their subjects.

"Swami is teaching us that if a man leads a disciplined life devoid of distractions, and with single-pointed attention to his duties, he can perform multiple tasks in a day and achieve success in all of them.

“Apart from this, leading a moral and a spiritual life, confers self-confidence upon the individual. And it is this self-confidence which really instils some kind of energy and spirit in every activity that we undertake. And that is why every hour of study or of sports and play becomes very useful and productive. While a distracted mind wastes a lot of time, a one-pointed, focused mind achieves every second! And I think that is the secret of integral education. Be engaged in many useful activities, but when you do a particular thing, have one-pointed attention on that, with self-confidence, in a spirit of ‘love all and serve all’.”

Another topper, **Naveen Lingam**, a student who came a close 3<sup>rd</sup> with 95.6% gave the following poignant reflections on his exhilarating time at the school:

“Hard work rewards. And if the universal guide, our Swami is there to guide, hard work has to reward. The marks which I recorded are not because of my effort alone; it involves the sweat and blood of all the teachers who are the best in their respective subjects. Their consistent struggle to make the subjects easy and understandable has borne fruit. This great effort includes enormous paperwork, a lot of practice, regular assignments, extra classes, and so on.

“It is said that to gain something you have to lose something. But I can proudly say I have not lost anything studying in the SSSHSS - I have only gained more and more. Not to forget my hostel, the SSS Junior Boys' Hostel informally called as 'home away from home', is just the best place to live. If I integrate all the moments I spent here I feel that it was the best part of my life. The brotherhood, the care, the spiritual atmosphere - anyone will find it tough to get these anywhere in this world.

“Every activity we undertake, small or big, starts and ends with God's name. Activities like Gram Seva, Sports meet, etc. keeps us busy throughout the year. Believe me or not, the time we get for studies is less compared to other schools, but our performance in the exams is no doubt much better. This is because of God's physical presence. However talented a person may be, ultimately he needs God's grace to get the best.

“I believe that getting good marks is relatively easy, but maintaining it is much tougher. I extend my best wishes to my juniors and hope that they reach new heights in the coming years.”

Another year has brought yet more accolades to the Sri Sathya Sai Secondary School, which can only affirm that its unique educational system created by its beloved founder, Bhagavan Baba, is the most lucid and enlightened way to raise young men and women of character.

In India, there are 99 Sai schools which follow the Sri Sathya Sai Education in Human Values approach. They bring Bhagavan's teachings of universal love and selfless service to life in the minds of the nation's children. Similarly, there are many such Sai Schools dedicated to the impartation of such value-based learning in many countries all over the world.

From educators to policy pundits, the Sai Education model is being keenly studied as an ideal one for meeting the needs of today's world. It is being seen as the blueprint worthy of dynamic replication, for the larger goal of character building. It brings many successes in its trail including academic excellence. Explaining the results achieved by the Sai schools, and the international recognition and acceptance of Bhagavan's Educare Programme, one of the senior teachers of this school, Mr. Venkateshwarlu said:

"Whatever Bhagavan does, He wants it replicated all over the world. He sets an example for others to follow. So certainly, this particular Institution has been initiated so that it will set an example. And at this juncture, as we know, there are many such institutions, following Bhagavan's model, not only in this country, but the world over.

"Any learning institution has got four important components, all of which must flower if there has to be success - the management, the parents, the teachers and the students. If the management sets the goal and if the parents support the cause whole-heartedly, then the job is half-done. Then comes the role of the teachers for translating this ideal by their personal example, by devoting all their time and energy for the benefit of the students, guiding them and helping them to achieve this goal. Last, but not the least, the role of the students, who should be prepared to work hard with a feeling of dedication. This achieves the objective 100%!

"Many of Bhagavan's Institutions all over this country and abroad, achieve this objective to a large extent, to name a few, Sai Schools in Muddenahalli, Alike, Vishakapatnam and Rajahmundry."

The goal of the Sri Sathya Sai Educational Institutions is to create ideal citizens who combine academic excellence with spiritual values, and a yearning for selfless service. Once duplicated globally, students all over the world will graduate with the clarion call to 'love all, serve all' on their lips instead of the present day mantra of 'let me get all for myself'. Such broadmindedness will lead to a revolution of love on this planet. Amidst the chaos that rampant materialism has unleashed on humanity, an education based on human values is the only hope for the well-being of all our children and the planet.

The consistently high academic performance of the school as highlighted by the recent results has not been lost on students, educators or parents. What the world needs is more Sai Krupas, Naveens and Gokuls to realize their full potential as future Indians and global citizens. And most importantly, students of a divine school attached to an ashram in remote and rural India where the rich and poor, Hindus and Muslims come together to work hard with unity, simplicity and discipline to achieve personal and collective goals of excellence. But do everything as an offering to the Divine.

## **GET INSPIRED**

### **THE RULE OF LOVE**

A mighty king was marching home after a triumphant victory in a gruesome battle. He had slain the ruler of the neighbouring kingdom and had captured their crown prince too.

The army, on its way back, passed through a dense jungle. As it was eventide, the army decided to halt for the day, and began to set up camp.

Close by in the forest was a hermitage, the abode of a famed sage and his disciples. Deciding to pay his respects to the sage, the king sent his minister and soldiers to the hermitage, directing them to seek an audience with the holy man. "Maharaj wants to meet the sage," they told the disciples there. The disciples, however, requested them to come the next day saying, "Guruji has retired for the day. Please come tomorrow."

The next morning, the King went to the hermitage attired in his regal paraphernalia, and accompanied by his retinue of ministers and attendants. The sage was sitting under a tree, scattering millet seeds. All around him were hundreds of birds of different kinds, pecking at the seeds and filling the air with the music of their twittering.

The King walked up to the sage whose attention remained on his birds.

"Pranam (salutations), Guruji!" the King said. There was no answer.

The King raised his voice, "Pranam, Guruji!" Still, no answer.

"Guruji, I said Pranam!" the King said in an angry voice. The sage looked up and said, "Stop shouting, you are frightening the birds away."

That made the king even more furious. "Do you know who I am?" he yelled. The sage said calmly, "Yes, I do. You are the one who kills for the love of power. You are the one who knows not that this power is temporary. One day, another king shall kill you in the same way. Your love of power shall bring about your downfall."

The king was beside himself with rage. He said, "Your impertinence is intolerable. I shall kill you right now!" He drew out his sword and raised it to strike the sage. In an instant, hundreds of birds flew from all sides and attacked the king. They flapped their wings vigorously and fearlessly on his face, jabbed at his arms, and pecked at his legs and body. The desperate king flailed his arms up and around to ward off the fowls, which had suddenly become ferocious and dauntless. But the birds wouldn't leave him.

Finally, the sage called out, "Leave him! Leave him! Come to me, my dears!" All at once, the birds quietened down and sat meekly at the feet of the sage.

The sage then said in a grave voice, a voice which commanded authority and spoke of his great wisdom, "All I ever gave these birds is love. Oh King! Realize the power of that love. Conversely, the love of power has blinded you, and brought you to the level of a killer. These birds would have killed you – a reflection of your own misdeeds – had it not been that they love me. I rule over them like a king too, but the only power I exercise over them is the power of Love and that is the greatest power on this Earth."

This story's potent affirmation has been reiterated innumerable times by Bhagavan Baba who constantly exhorts us to foster love. In His divine discourse in November 23, 1996, Baba said, "Transform your entire life into a saga of Love. You will then lack nothing to make you happy. All wealth and position will be added unto you, for Love conquers all!"

But what exactly is this love that Baba refers to? He has Himself explained, "Pure, unselfish Love towards all living beings, considered as embodiments of the Divine, with no expectation of reward, is true Love... Happiness will come in the same measure as your love for God."

*- Story adapted from SSS Bal Vikas, April 2009*

## **GOD'S WAY OF GRANTING GRACE**

There was an illustrious devotee in Guruvayur (a famous Krishna temple in Kerala, South India) by name Poonthanam, who lived in the 16th century. He was so devoted to the Lord that Lord Guruvayurappan would converse with him everyday.

In the same town, there was a man who was afflicted with a grave disease. No medicine gave him relief and he became quite depressed. One day, when the man could bear his affliction no longer, he approached Poonthanam and told him about his ill health. He requested Poonthanam to ask Sri Guruvayurappan if he would ever be cured of his disease.

That night, when Poonthanam spoke to Lord Guruvayurappan, he asked the Lord if the patient would ever be relieved from his pathetic condition. The Lord told Poonthanam that the disease cannot be cured.

The next day, Poonthanam met the ailing man and communicated the Lord's message. No sooner did he hear of the Lord's word than the sufferer burst into tears. He cried all day lamenting that even the Lord had forsaken him.

That was when he met Kururamma, a humble devotee of the Lord who hailed from a very poor family. Although she did not have any preeminent status in the society, she possessed a special place in Sri Guruvayurappan's heart. The Lord would talk to her as regularly as He spoke to Poonthanam.

Kururamma heard the patient's story and assured him that she will take his case to the Lord. The very next morning, Kururamma came down to greet the sick man. She said enthusiastically, "The Lord spoke to me. When I asked Him about you, He said you should chant the Divine Names, 'Achyuta Anantha Govinda' continuously, and your disease shall be cured!"

At these kind words, the man's joy knew no bounds. He implicitly followed the Lord's instructions, chanting the Names of the Lord with complete faith. As the Lord had predicted, the man was cured eventually.

Later on, the man went to Poonthanam's residence and told him what had happened. He felt aggrieved that Poonthanam had advised him wrongly in such an important personal matter. "You lied to me!" he incriminated. "Lord Guruvayurappan has indeed cured my disease!"

Though happy that the man had been cured by his Lord, Poonthanam could not bear the allegation that he had spoken untruth. He wept to the Lord, "Oh! Guruvayurappa! Was it not You who told me that the man would not be cured? Today, I am being blamed for uttering lies. Did I really speak a falsehood? Is this fair?" Poonthanam kept sobbing at the feet of the Lord.

That night, Sri Guruvayurappan spoke to Poonthanam and pacified him. He said, "Do not doubt Me, or even yourself, my son. It was indeed I who told you that the patient will not be cured. This is the truth! You had come to me and

bluntly posed a question whether that ailing person will be cured or not, and I replied to you appropriately.

"But what did Kururamma do? She beseeched me, 'Oh Guruvayurappa! Today a devotee came and asked me if his disease would be cured. Lord! With Your grace, is there anything that is impossible in this world? Pray tell me what he should do to be cured!' and I told her the way!"

God undoubtedly listens to each one of us and answers our wishes when we pray to Him sincerely. So, whenever we chant the Divine Names of the Lord and say our prayers, we should be careful to ask the right thing of the Lord. There is nothing impossible for the Lord, and for us too, when we rely on His Name and His grace. Faith can indeed move mountains.

Bhagavan Baba says, **"When losses or calamities occur, when plans go awry, the devotee blames the Lord. Some on the other hand, pray to Him to save them. If complete faith is placed in the Lord at all times, why should He deny you His Grace?"** (*Prema Vahini*)

- Adapted from 'Sri Sathya Sai Bal Vikas'



## FINDING ABIDING ABUNDANCE

After years of searching, the seeker was told to go to a cave, where he would find a well. "Ask the well, 'What is truth?' And the well will reveal it to you," Thus was he advised by a wizened old lady who, he surmised, was a seer. Struck by this tantalizing remark and full of curiosity, he looked for the cave and found it amidst a dark forested valley hidden by creepers. Water dripped from its walls and ran down to a hole which formed the well. Gathering up courage, though feeling a little silly at the same time, he asked the well the fundamental question.

Instantly came the answer from the depths, "Go to the village crossroads: there you shall find what you are seeking." The seeker was astonished at the stentorian reply and questioned the voice's origin. "Who are you?" he called out. But no reply came and none, even after several minutes elapsed. Realizing that the taciturn oracle did not waste words, the seeker proceeded to his next destination.

Full of hope and anticipation, he ran to the nearby crossroads only to find three rather uninteresting shops. One shop was selling pieces of metal, another sold wood, and thin wires were for sale in the third shop. Nothing and no one there seemed to have anything to do with the revelation of truth. He even spoke to the shopkeepers in a vain attempt to glean some clue to the oracle's meaning. But illumination lay beyond his reach. Stroking his chin in perplexity, he wondered – was he missing the point or had the oracle taken him for a ride?

Disappointed, the seeker returned to the well to demand an explanation. 'You will understand in the future,' came the terse reply. When the man protested against this clearly unhelpful response, all he obtained in return were the echoes of his own plaintive questions.

Indignant at having been made a fool of, the seeker left the cave in a huff, and continued his wanderings in search of truth. As years went by, the memory of his baffling experience at the well gradually faded away...

...Until one night. A luscious moonlit night, when a gentle breeze wafted the soothing sounds of a sitar in the dark and brought the footsteps of the wayfarer to a halt. Somebody was playing a soulful composition with brilliance and inspiration.

Profoundly moved, the seeker felt drawn towards the sitar player. He beheld the fingers dancing nimbly over the strings. He then became aware of the sitar itself. And then, suddenly, he exploded in a cry of joyous recognition: the sitar was made of wires and pieces of metal and wood just like those he had once seen in the three shops years ago, thinking them to be of no significance.

At last, the message of the well dawned unto him, loud and clear:

God has already provided us with everything we need. But we ignorantly perceive lack and disunity when God has created abundance and unity. In fact, His creation is Divine, Perfect and Blissful. If only we had the eyes to see it, and perceive it in the right manner. Bhagavan Baba always says that most often the mistake lies with our drusthi (vision) and not srushti (creation). Creation is a sublime symphony of unity, purity and divinity, and when we have the right vision we can live in a state of perennial serenity and peace.

Nothing is meaningful so long as we perceive only separate fragments. But as soon as the fragments come together into a synthesis, a new entity emerges, whose nature we could not have foreseen by considering the fragments alone. We have already been given everything we need. Our task is to assemble and use it in the appropriate way....

On one occasion, Baba said, **“Nothing is meaningful so long as we perceive only separate fragments. But as soon as the fragments come together into a synthesis, a new entity emerges, whose nature we could not have foreseen by considering the fragments alone. We have already been given everything we need. Our task is to assemble and use it in the appropriate way.... Liberation comes through the intellectual awareness of the Unity that underlies diversity.”**

## **TEST YOUR SPIRITUAL QUOTIENT**

### **MULTI-FAITH QUIZ ON SACRED WATERS**

*Since the dawn of human time, people have described certain places as being holy or magical, as having a concentrated power or presence of spirit. Ancient legends, historical records and contemporary reports tell of extraordinary, even miraculous happenings at these places. Devotional sentiments permeate throughout sacred places. In the current quiz, we have picked up such sacred spots from different religions; the special feature, however, is that the sites chosen here are based on a sacred water resource associated with these holy shrines than for any other reason.*

1. For centuries, Lake Manasarovar has been considered as a sacred lake by followers of Buddhism. Literally, Lake Manasarovar means 'everlasting jade lake' in the Tibetan language. Buddhists also associate the lake to where Queen Maya is believed to have conceived Buddha. The lake has a few monasteries on its shores.

In the Buddhist scriptures, what is this lake also named as?

- A. The Eternal lake
- B. The Healing Lake
- C. The Sacred lake
- D. The Mother of the Rivers in the world

2. Lourdes has developed into a major place of Christian pilgrimage and is visited by millions of pilgrims each year.

Lourdes water flows from a spring in the Grotto of Massabielle in France. The water has become a focus of devotion to the Virgin Mary at Lourdes. Ever since Her apparitions, many people have claimed to have been cured by drinking or bathing in it.

While the pilgrims are invited to wash and drink while walking, what else are they invited to do?

- A. To confess their sins
- B. To listen to the priests sermons
- C. To meditate on passages from the Bible
- D. To record their illnesses in a special book

3. Hemkund Sahib, the sacred and most revered shrine of Sikhs is situated on a very high altitude along the banks of Lake Hemkund.

The holy lake is associated with one of the ten Sikh Gurus who in his autobiographical poem '*Bichittar Natak*', wrote that in his previous life he meditated on the shore of a lake that was surrounded by seven snow-capped mountains. The bank of the Hemkund Lake is believed to be this place. A dip in the waters of the lake is considered sacred by the Sikhs.

To which one of the ten Sikh Guru is this sacred lake associated with?

- A. Guru Nanak Dev
- B. Guru Gobind Singh
- C. Guru Tegh Bahadur
- D. Guru Arjan Dev

4. The Well of Zamzam is a sacred well located within the Masjid al Haram in Mecca, near the Kaaba, the holiest place in Islam.

According to Islamic belief, it was a miraculously-generated source of water from Allah (God), which began thousands of years ago when Ibrahim's infant son Ishmael was thirsty and kept crying for water and his wife Hajar was desperately seeking water for their infant son, but could find none, as Mecca is located in a hot dry valley with few other sources of water.

How did the miracle of the sacred water suddenly springing out of the land take place?

- A. Ibrahim accidentally fell into a pool
- B. Ishmael scraped the land with his feet where suddenly water sprang out
- C. Hajar frantically beat the land with her fists
- D. People gathered and held hands and prayed fervently to Allah for mercy

5. Historically and religiously, the Jordan River is considered to be one of the world's most sacred rivers. There are countless references to the Jordan in the Hebrew Bible for its significance as also the baptizing place of Christ.

The Jordan River is first mentioned in the Book of Genesis where its flourishing grounds are likened to those of the "Garden of God" (13:10). In the Book of Joshua it is said that, like the Red Sea, the Jordan River parted before the Israelites so that they could cross it and enter the Promised Land.

How do the Jews view the crossing of the Jordan River as?

- A. Completion of journey to Christ
- B. Shedding of one's ego
- C. Leaving behind all sins seeking redemption
- D. A renewed opportunity to express devotion

6. The long riverfront of Yamuna has a plethora of fascinating rows of temples. One of the most famous and magnificent cities of ancient India, Shaouripur, is considered to be a famous Jain pilgrimage centre and became sacred because one of the great and omniscient Jain teachers Lord Neminath, was born here.

The Yamuna is considered one of the most sacred rivers in India. According to the legends, Yamuna was the daughter of Surya, the Sun God, and a sister of Yama, the God of Death. Consequently, popular belief is that those who take a dip in its holy waters are not tormented by fears of death.

With which other sacred River does the Holy Yamuna River finally merge in?

- A. Godavari
- B. Ganges
- C. Saraswati
- D. Brahmaputra

7. Bahá'í's consider the Tigris River as very sacred to them because it was here that before leaving Baghdad for Constantinople (Istanbul), Bahá'u'lláh and his companions camped in a garden on the banks of the Tigris River for twelve days. While meditating on the banks of the Tigris River, Baha'u'llah revealed some "gem-like utterances".

What did Bahá'u'lláh say to his companions on this sacred Tigris River that changed the course of their lives forever?

- A. He asked them to give up all their material possessions and follow him
- B. He declared that he was 'The Promised One'
- C. He prepared them to wean off of him from then on
- D. He announced that these companions would be the future Messengers of God

8. Zarathushtra wandered about in search of the Truth for ten long years. He wandered through the land, studying the mysteries of nature. One day, he came to the river Daiti. As he crossed it, his body submerged into the water - first upto his knees, then upto his waist, then his neck, but no further. When he reached the other side, he stepped out, glowing with a new light.

What miraculous episode took place at this Daiti River that it became deemed as sacred?

- A. His entire being was filled with spiritual knowledge
- B. He lived without food or water after that
- C. God revealed Himself before him and asked him to spread His message
- D. People surrounded him for 40 days!

9. The Ganges River is one of the longest rivers in the world. It has long been considered a holy river by Hindus and worshipped as the Goddess *Ganga* in Hinduism. It is repeatedly invoked in the Vedas, the *Puranas*, and the two Indian epics, the Ramayana and the Mahabharata.

According to Hindu religion a very famous king did penance for many years constantly to bring the river Ganga, then residing in the Heavens, down on the Earth to find salvation for his ancestors, who were cursed by a seer.

How did he finally succeed to have the sacred Ganga River be brought down to Earth?

- A. By forcefully separating it from another auspicious river
- B. The seer finally took back his curse
- C. Lord Rama was appeased by his penance and released the Ganga from Heavens
- D. Ganga descended to the Earth through the hair of Lord Shiva

10. All Sai devotees know about the famous Chitravati River, on the bank of which is located Puttaparthi. In our November 2003 H2H issue, Professor G. Venkataraman shares with us an unprecedented event that took place in 1973 that revealed Swami's Infinite powers:

Sai Baba used to take the devotees out almost daily to the sands of the Chitravathi River, and prayers were held there under the stars with the hills as venerable listeners and the river murmuring response. ...Sitting on the sands, Sai Baba teaches the devotees new songs He has composed for their elevation and edification, and He encourages people to ask Him any questions regarding spiritual matters, for which He gives satisfying answers.

Swami has the power to control Nature but He rarely interferes with natural phenomena. His argument is very simple. He says, "I have ordained the forces of Nature and they have their duties to perform. However, when it becomes absolutely essential for the welfare of mankind, I intervene in a benign manner."...That year, thanks to very heavy rain, there was an unprecedented flood in the Chitravathi River.

When the waters of the Chitravathi River were almost threatening to enter the Ashram premises, how did our compassionate Bhagavan make the waters recede?

- A. He raised His hand and a lot of sand appeared all around the Ashram
- B. He blew hard and the waters kept receding
- C. He whispered Shanti three times to calm the River down
- D. When He stood in front of it, suddenly the River changed her course!

#### **ANSWERS:**

1D. The Mother of the Rivers in the world.

**In Buddhist scriptures, the lake is named the "mother of the rivers in the world".** The lake is sacred because it has been mentioned in many religious classics or legends.

Buddhists believe that the Lake Manasarovar has the power to cleanse away a person's sins, either by drinking or bathing. Many pilgrims come to Lake Manasarovar to be healed of their illnesses.

Early legend has it that there are countless treasures at the bottom of the Lake. All the pilgrims consider a bath in the lake as the happiest thing in their life because they believe the water here can cleanse 'five poisons' in people's spirit (greed, anger, attachment, ego and envy).

2C. To meditate on passages from the Bible.

Since the apparitions, many thousands of pilgrims to Lourdes have followed the instruction of Our Lady of Lourdes to "drink at the spring and wash in it". **As they walk, pilgrims are invited to wash or drink, and meditate on passages from the Bible.**

Various unusual occurrences are often reported to take place, not only subsequent to bathing in or drinking the water of the Lourdes Spring, but also during the daily Eucharistic procession.

Traditionally, pilgrims collect gallons of water at the taps to be given to family and friends unable to make the trip to Lourdes.

3B. Guru Gobind Singh.

**As mentioned in the holy Granth Sahib, Guru Gobind Singh, the tenth Guru of the Sikh faith had meditated on the bank of this lake in one of his earlier births. The sacred place is truly recognized as an abode of**

**meditation for Guru Gobind Singh, the tenth and last of Sikh gurus to seek unification with the Almighty.**

The star-shaped *gurudwara* (Sri Hemkund *sahib*) located on the banks of the lake is one of the most important pilgrimage sites for the Sikhs. Circumscribed by the enchanting snow covered peaks and the glaciers, the Gurudwara reflects the serenity of the surroundings.

Hemkund Lake is also called Saptashringa Lake. It seems in a clear sky you can see the reflections of seven mountain peaks surrounding the lake.

4B. Ishmael scraped the land with his feet where suddenly water sprang out. Muslim traditions say that Hajar ran seven times back and forth in the scorching heat between the two hills of Safa and Marwah, looking for water. **Getting thirstier by the second, her son, Ishmael, anxiously scraped the land with his feet, where suddenly water sprang out.**

Millions of pilgrims visit the Well each year while performing the Hajj or Umrah pilgrimages, in order to drink its sacred water.

5A. Completion of journey to Christ.

In the Bible, the Israelites viewed the Jordan River as an obstacle between them and the Promised Land, where God had called them to live. "Now then, you and all these people, get ready to cross the Jordan River into the land I am about to give to them ..." Joshua 1:2.

The crossing of the Jordan River signifies that one must die to self, forsake one's own will, and plan to walk in the newness of Life in Christ. **To cross the Jordan River refers to Freedom, the final step of a journey to Christ, which is then complete.**

The most common explanation for the name of the river is that it derives from the Hebrew words "Yored" and "Dan" ("descending from Dan"). The Sacred River is also a frequent symbol in spiritual music, poetry, and literary works.

6B. Ganges.

The source of the Yamuna River is in the western Himalayas. It is from here the river starts her journey flowing towards south and southeastern parts and flourishes the places on her way. Reaching the Prayag, one of the most sacred places in India, she joins with Ganges. Then they both flow together till Ksheer Sagar.

People from all walks of life flock to River Yamuna for a dip. It is based on a strong religious conviction that ablution in River Yamuna on the occasion of certain sacred days, cleanses one's soul. In the Jain scriptures too, Shaouripur on the banks of River Yamuna holds a prominent place.



Jains believe that one who takes a holy dip in the Holy River Yamuna of Bateshwar in Shaouripur - a place of salvation and miracles - is purged of all sins.

7B. He declared that He was 'The Promised One'

It was during this time that Bahá'u'lláh declared to a small group of his companions, his perceived mission and station as a Messenger of God.

**Bahá'u'lláh told these few friends that He was the Promised One foretold by the Bab.** The declaration in the Garden of Ridván was the beginning of new phase in the Bábí community which led to the emergence of the Bahá'í Faith.

Eventually Bahá'u'lláh was recognized by the vast majority of Bábís as "He whom God shall make manifest" and his followers began calling themselves Bahá'ís.

Today, the most joyous of Bahá'í holy days is the Ridván Festival, which Bahá'ís regard with great significance and celebrate the twelve days that Bahá'u'lláh spent in this Garden by the sacred Tigris River, in contemplation of the Divine.

8C. God revealed Himself before him and asked him to spread His message. This miraculous episode indicated that the new religion he was going to found would spread through the world. **Soon a very brilliant and glowing entity made his appearance and asked him what he wanted.**

Zarathushtra expressed his desire to understand the "Truth". He informed him about all the questions that tormented his mind and said that his desire was to learn about the Nature and Will of the Supreme Being. The glowing entity was the divinity of the Good Mind, who told Zarathushtra to close his eyes for a minute, and then told him to open them.

Zarathushtra heard the words: **"I am Ahura Mazda.** The righteous man is the one who is truthful, just and charitable. He looks after all my creations, respects them and protects them. He is the man I shall bless forever. **Go forth Zarathushtra and spread My message "**

Then Zarathushtra went back to his people and taught them the importance of Humata (good thoughts) Hukhta (good words) Hvareshta (good deeds).

9D. Ganga descended to the Earth through the hair of Lord Shiva.

**Because of the intense penance done by King Bhagiratha, Ganga descended to the Earth through the lock of hair (Jata) of Lord Shiva to make whole earth pious, fertile and wash out the sins of humans.**

For Hindus in India, the Ganga is not just a river but a mother, a goddess, a tradition, a culture and much more. Babies are baptized in the river because they believe it cleanses the child. Some Hindus also believe life is incomplete without bathing in the Ganga at least once in one's lifetime. Many Hindu families keep a vial of water from the Ganga in their house. This is done because it is prestigious to have water of the Holy Ganga in the house, and also so that if someone is dying, that person will be able to drink its water.

Many Hindus believe that the water from the Ganga can cleanse a person's soul of all past sins, and that it can also cure the ill. The ancient scriptures mention that the water of Ganges carries the blessings of Lord Vishnu's feet; hence Mother Ganges is also known as *Vishnupadi*, which means "Emanating from the Lotus feet of Supreme Lord Sri Vishnu."

10 C. He whispered *Shanti* three times to calm the River down.

Professor's narration continues: Water submerged all the low-lying parts of Puttaparthi, and came right up to the Ganesha and the Gopuram gates. The Ashram being at a relatively higher elevation, the flood waters had not yet entered its premises, but were threatening to do so. Meanwhile, all the villagers flocked into the Ashram seeking shelter. The compassionate Bhagavan not only allowed the villagers to take shelter but also provided them with food.

The weather continued to be inclement, and it appeared as if the water level might rise even further. At this stage, **Baba went to the East Prasanthi block of flats, and climbed up to the terrace. From there He looked down at the overflowing river, and whispered something. People nearby could not make out what Swami was saying but they could clearly hear the word *Shanti* being repeated three times. While 'advising' the river to calm down, Baba also raised His hands in a gesture of benediction.**

Miraculously, the flood waters began to recede immediately, and within a few hours, the people huddled in the Ashram could go back to their homes.

## QUIZ BASED ON DIVINE DISCOURSES ON THE SRI SATHYA SAI WATER PROJECTS

*Bhagavan Baba has been continuously engaged in relieving the suffering of humanity throughout His sacred life. But the 1900's saw the manifestation of His in gigantic proportions, first with the huge Super Specialty Hospitals and then the mammoth drinking water projects in Anantapur, Chennai and in the East and West Godavari districts. When people close to Swami doubted whether the Central Trust could execute such massive schemes He simply brushed away the doubting Thomases by saying **"I will demonstrate that good work combined with Total Purity would always find fruition...Water is very essential for the survival of everyone. It is the sustainer of life. What else can be of greater service than providing drinking water to the needy? It is the source and sustenance of life. That is why I have resolved to provide pure drinking water to the needy."***

*It is this sacred determination originating from Pure Love that has made every massive project a model for humanity. In the cover story of the current issue, we have a comprehensive account of the East and West Godavari Water Project. In the below quiz, we take you through what Swami has Himself said about His water projects on many occasions.*

1. Bhagavan Baba used His birthday celebrations of 1994 to set in motion His massive drinking water projects. In the presence of the then Prime Minister of India, Bhagavan referred to the problems of perennial water shortages and inter-state quarrelling between states over water resources.

To which specific area of the country did Bhagavan refer to as particularly in need of water, marking the beginning of a new mega project of stunning proportions?

- A. The areas of the east and west Godavari.
- B. The city of Anantapur.
- C. The area of Rayalaseema.
- D. The city of Chennai.

2. In a Divine Discourse in 1995, Swami reveals the real cause behind calamities, particularly water shortage: "Today righteousness has declined among the people. As the level of righteousness goes down, the water level also goes down! If good qualities arise in men, the water level will also rise. What is the reason for the failure of timely rains and the shortage of food crops? It is \_\_\_\_\_."

- A. Global weather changes
- B. A decline in morals
- C. Incompetent administrators
- D. The collective bad karma of humanity

3. In a Divine Discourse delivered in 1997, Swami revealed many global reasons for water shortage problems: "What is the cause of droughts and floods which occur in the world? Man seeks to enjoy the benefits of Nature, which has grave consequences. Here you have a globe; if you hit it one way, its balance is disturbed. We should always see to it that in the utilization of natural resources a proper balance is maintained. Excessive use in any one direction will result in harm in another direction."

According to Swami, what leads to the exploitation of natural resources?

- A. Ignoring our responsibilities
- B. Laziness
- C. Taking God's gifts for granted
- D. Ignorance of nature's limits

4. During a Divine Discourse in 1995, Swami stated how to ensure there are no water shortages: "We have many perennial rivers and vast areas of fertile land. But these resources are not being fully used. The nation's perennial rivers should be treated as national property. Then there will be no room for inter-State disputes. All river waters should be used for the benefit of all the people. It is because of lack of unity and the assertion of separatist claims that a good deal of river water is actually getting wasted. If the Prime Minister endeavours to promote a national approach to the harnessing of river waters, the nation will prosper."

According to Swami, to avoid any water shortages, what attitude should the neighboring States adopt for the welfare of the society?

- A. Rigid alertness
- B. Trust the Government
- C. Contribute funds continuously
- D. A fraternal attitude

5. In a momentous speech in 2002, delivered during the celebration of the first year's anniversary of the Bangalore Super Specialty Hospital, Swami made a historic and far-reaching declaration about the launching of a water project. To which area did He refer to in this discourse?

- A. The people of the coastal regions of Tamil Nadu.
- B. The people of the city of Chennai.
- C. The farmers surrounding Puttaparthi.
- D. The populous of Hyderabad.

6. During a Divine Discourse in 2002, Swami related how the World Bank was approached for funding the Drinking Water Project in Chennai: "At present, the people of Chennai are suffering from scarcity of drinking water. The rich

can afford to buy water and quench their thirst. But what about the poor? They are drinking impure water and spoiling their health. Hence, I have decided to provide them pure drinking water so that they can lead a happy and healthy life.

In this connection, Chakravarthi (Secretary, Sri Sathya Sai Central Trust), V. Srinivasan from Chennai (President, All India Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organizations) and Indulal Shah from Mumbai (Chairman, Sri Sathya Sai World Council) met the World Bank authorities yesterday and explained to them about the selfless service activities and we did not expect anything in return. They repeated what Swami had told them to convey.”

What was the response from the World Bank when the Sai Organization presented the selfless and noble intention of undertaking the project of providing pure drinking water for the poor?

- A. They agreed to provide funds for the project
- B. They sent engineers to help out with the project
- C. They were very skeptical about the project
- D. They asked for a detailed report of the project

7. In a Divine Discourse delivered in 2001, we learn the depth of the stupendous expansiveness of Swami's Love when He undertakes such humanitarian projects: “Take the water project in Anantapur. Even now there are some areas where there is scarcity of water. I have spent 300 crores of rupees and made water available to the extent possible. Take Mahboobnagar; it is another water-starved area in Telangana. I asked the Chief Engineer, Kondal Rao, what it would cost to arrange for water supply there. He gave an estimate of about 60 crores of Rupees. I told him not to bother about crores but to go ahead and carry out the project. There is no point in putting up a project from a depleting source like bore wells and pumps...”

What alternative and innovative method did Swami use to make fresh water available to those water-starved areas?

- A. From an underground storage tank
- B. By fitting tubes out of a well
- C. By bringing it from a full-fledged river
- D. By converting sea water to potable water.

8. In a Divine Discourse in 2001, Swami conveys His advice to the rich: “The pollution of food, air and water is the main cause of the diseases. That is why I have resolved to provide pure drinking water to the needy... Wherever there is scarcity of drinking water, one should make every effort to provide it. We need not give money; it is enough if we provide safe drinking water to the people. **There is no dearth of rich people in the country....**”

What message does Swami convey to the rich for how they should be utilizing their money?

- A. For making more money morally
- B. For sacred purposes
- C. For their family's needs first
- D. For depositing it in national banks

9. In a Divine Discourse in 1995, Swami shares another effective method for overcoming the calamity of water shortage apart from channeling water from rivers: "Rendering service whenever it is needed, you must be prepared to dedicate your life for service. You can become a leader only when you are filled with the spirit of service. Today you pray to a river: 'Oh river! Overflow with water.' Don't pray to the river."

Then to whom does Swami want our prayers to be addressed, to alleviate the drinking water problem?

- A. The Wind God
- B. The Ocean
- C. The Rain
- D. The Fire God

10. In a Divine Discourse in 1997, Swami reiterates what can raise our awareness and consciousness to take part in noble tasks thus: "I wish to assure you of one thing. Whether in India or in any other country there will be no lack of resources for carrying out welfare schemes."

According to Swami what can impede others from undertaking such noble tasks successfully?

- A. Lack of impulse
- B. Lack of time
- C. Inadequate man-power
- D. No back up plans

### **ANSWERS:**

1C. The area of Rayalaseema.

In a pointed reminder of Prime Ministerial duties, Bhagavan informed the PM about the sufferings of the Rayalaseema people of Andhra Pradesh, and then made the incredible declaration that if the government refused to help, He resolved to complete the project!

"I wish to draw the attention of the Prime Minister to the age-old drinking water problem that is affecting most parts of Rayalaseema, especially the remote villages, where people have to walk several miles to get a pot of drinking water. This needs immediate reversal. Rivers are gifts of God. In rivers like the Krishna and the Godavari, a lot of water is allowed to flow into the sea. There is no point in every State claiming rights over the river waters and quarrelling with each other over riparian rights. The waters of the Krishna and the Tungabhadra rivers can be harnessed to supply much-needed water to Rayalaseema. If there is constraint of finance, Swami is ready to help, in fulfilling this dire need of the Rayalaseema people."

2B. A decline in morals.

Swami continues: **"It is the decline of morals among the people which is the cause of natural calamities.** The people must cherish sacred thoughts. Then people's aspirations will be fulfilled. All natural resources of the country should be enjoyed equally by all the people, regardless of caste or community."

3A. Ignoring our responsibilities.

Swami elaborates: "In the exploitation of natural resources, people are observing no limits in the name of their *hakku* (right) to act as they please. I do not understand wherefrom this 'right' is derived. In reality, there is no such thing as a 'right'. In fact, what they have is responsibility. **If one's responsibilities are properly discharged, some rights may emerge from them. If responsibilities are ignored, what can be the outcome? Only disorder and lack of peace.** ...you have at the outset to discharge your duties and then you will secure your rights."

4D. A fraternal attitude.

Swami explains further: "The States also are prone to put their claims against the claims of others. **They should adopt a co-operative and fraternal attitude towards each other and behave as good neighbours. If this is done, there will be no shortage of food or water** in this country. The people also should develop this co-operative attitude.

"It is well known that quite often, sections of the public adopt an adversary attitude towards measures taken by the Government. The people should recognize that these measures are taken in their interest. Moreover, the public should not remain idle, leaving everything to the Government. They have to do their duty. They have to live up to certain ideals. The body should be used for rendering help to others. The spirit of helpfulness must be fostered."

5B. The people of the city of Chennai.

Bhagavan declared that His next intention was to provide water to the suffering people of an entire city!

"On this sacred occasion, I have decided to undertake yet another service project. In Chennai, there is scarcity of drinking water. The rich can afford to get water through tankers and lorries, but what about the poor? They spoil their health by drinking polluted water from ponds and puddles. Hence, whatever may be the difficulty, I have decided to provide drinking water to the people of Chennai. This project is bound to be successful. There is no doubt about it."

6A. They agreed to provide funds for the project

Swami conveyed what happened further: "The World Bank officials were very much impressed. They said they had never heard about, or seen such stupendous service activities undertaken by a charitable organization anywhere else in the world. They were happy that Sathya Sai Baba was providing drinking water to a distant place like Chennai. **They have agreed to provide funds for this project.**

"On this sacred day of *Ugadi* before I came out to give *darshan*, we received a telephone call at about 7 a.m. conveying this message. If the feelings are sacred, the result is bound to be sacred. They told us, 'You don't need to be concerned about the funds and you don't need to come to us again. We are prepared to meet all your requirements.' **With broadmindedness, they have come forward to extend their help.**

"When you undertake any task with a sacred heart, you will certainly meet with success. I am the living proof of this ideal."

7C. By bringing it from a full-fledged river.

Swami shared His hearty plan thus: "**There is no point in putting up a project from a depleting source like bore wells and pumps, and so I arranged for water to be brought from the Krishna River at a cost of about 110 crores of Rupees.**

"Now we have gone to Medak district and the project for water supply there is in progress. Many other similar projects are coming up and will be dealt with in a similar manner. These hands are forever engaged in helping not in hurting.

"Love is My wealth. Sacrifice is My enjoyment. What greater joy do I have? I have been spending all this time in the same state of joy and all My actions are fruitful. All I do is for the good and good actions should not be criticized. Good actions always succeed."

8B. For sacred purposes.

Swami prods the rich: "**There is no dearth of rich people in the country. But of what use is wealth if it is not used for sacred purposes?** No one can carry even a fistful of dust at the time of departing from the world.



Otherwise, there would have been rationing even for dust in the country. So, money should be utilized for the benefit of society.

*Hastasya Bhushanam Danam, Sathyam Kanthasya Bhushanam, Srotrasya Bhushanam Sastram* (charity is the true ornament for the hand, truth is the true necklace and listening to sacred texts is the true ornament for the ears)."

9C. The Rain.

Swami helps us further: **"Don't pray to the river. Address your prayers to rain.**

When it rains, there will be water in the channels. How can you hope for water when there is no rain? Hence, you have to pray at the outset for rain. Only then you can enjoy the flow of water in the rivers.

"When the rain responds, the rivers will get filled automatically. Likewise, when you serve society as the Divine, automatically your desires will be fulfilled.

"Spend your money to help the needy. Assist in the provision of water. Meet the educational needs of the people and provide medical relief. Do everything for the good of society and not for the sake of an individual. Have the nation's welfare in your mind."

10A. Lack of impulse.

Swami says: "Resources are available in plenty. **Only the impulse to undertake such schemes is not present. When that impulse is there, anything can be achieved.**

"If people can go to the moon, cannot they make the journey to their hearts? When I took up the drinking water project, our Trust members told me – 'Swami! There are not enough funds in the Trust. How are we to embark on this gigantic project?'

"I assured them – 'That is My concern. I shall see that this good project is completed.'

"And that has been accomplished without any impediments."

## **H2H QUIZ ON BHAGAVAN BABA'S SACRED DRINKING WATER PROJECTS**

*H2H has always taken great pleasure in presenting to you Swami's mammoth drinking water projects which have brought relief to millions of people in India. We now offer you a quiz based on our cover stories on this topic to refresh your memories of the unique approach Bhagavan Baba has taken to answer one of humanity's most pressing and perhaps most ignored shortcomings – the provision of free and clean drinking water to all.*

1. In our cover story "The Sri Sathya Sai Godavari Drinking Water Project" from the December 2005 issue, while giving a brief sketch of the Godavari River, we stated: 'Godavari is one of the great rivers of India, mentioned in the scriptures and considered sacred. Rising in the Satmala Hills in the Western Ghats close to the city of Nasik in the State of Maharashtra, the 1450 km long Godavari, flows in a southeasterly direction, picking up many tributaries on the way. Entering Andhra Pradesh, it cuts right through two Districts, East Godavari and West Godavari, appropriately named, and then empties into the Bay of Bengal.'

What was one of the chief reasons we mentioned in our article for the sacredness of River Godavari?

- A. It is associated with the incarnation of Lord Rama and legend has it that it was here that Ravana abducted Mother Sita.
- B. Adi Shankara won a philosophical debate with a renowned pundit on its banks.
- C. The water never gets polluted.
- D. It is the home of thousands of peacocks who nest in nearby wetlands.

2. In the same cover story, we specified the variety of difficulties that the poor people were facing regarding the water shortage problem: 'In the East Godavari District especially, which is full of forests and populated largely by tribals, people living just about ten or fifteen kilometres from the river faced an acute drinking water problem.'

What system of water usage were the poor people mainly depending on?

- A. Rain harvesting.
- B. Tanker deliveries.
- C. Mostly on borewells.
- D. Water collected from dirty pools.

3. While proudly sharing the delightful news of the prospective completion of the immense Godavari water project, we mentioned some astonishing facts: 'When completed, **about five hundred villages in the two districts** are expected to be benefited and about half a million people would receive Sai water to drink every single day!'

By the way, if one counts all the people benefited by the Sai Drinking Water Projects [including the seven million or so in Chennai], then in the last one decade, Swami has provided drinking water to about \_\_\_\_\_ people!

- A. 7 million
- B. 8 million
- C. 9 million
- D. 10 million

4. We also informed you of Swami's account of a fascinating event that took place during the memorable Godavari Project: 'Recently, in His Guru Poornima Discourse on 21st July 2005, Swami said, "Recently, a strange incident took place. Subramaniam of Larsen & Toubro and Chief Engineer Kondal Rao had gone to East Godavari and West Godavari region in connection with the Water Supply Project works. As they were conducting a survey in a forest area, they were confronted by a group of naxalites (terrorists). The naxalites questioned them, "Who are you? Why have you come here? Who has sent you here? How dare you enter our area without our permission?"'

After learning that it was Bhagavan who had sent the engineers, how did the naxalites react?

- A. They ignored them.
- B. They banned their entry into their region.
- C. They guided the engineers as to where to lay the pipes.
- D. They threatened to kidnap them.

5. In *Love Story Revealed*, part of the cover story from the December 1st 2003 issue, we presented a digest of remarks made by Prof. Anantaraman about his experience in Kyoto, when he went there on account of an invitation sent to him by the UN HABITAT for a panel discussion, in which they wanted him to discuss the financial aspects of the Sri Sathya Sai Anantapur Water Project.

Prof Anantaraman shared: 'The panel presentation was on the next day. I was the fourth speaker in a panel of six speakers. Most of those who spoke before me, talked about Financing Models, Pay-back methods, Cost of Recovery, etc. I had prepared a Power Point presentation but after seeing the children's

ballet I realized there was no point in making this presentation because financing was not the important part of Sri Sathya Sai Water Project. So in the last minute I decided not to do my Power Point presentation. Instead I began by saying that I am no expert on water, in fact, I don't even know why I am here. Therefore I am not going to make a presentation on financing to you; instead what I am going to offer you is a case study.'

So instead of making a presentation on financing, what was the case study based on?

- A. On how lack of water affected one family.
- B. On Swami's Compassion and Love.
- C. On how society's welfare depends on recognizing the divinity of God's creation.
- D. On how the power of prayer can bring help.

## ANSWERS

1A. It is associated with the incarnation of Lord Rama and legend has it that it was here that Ravana abducted Mother Sita.

**'Being a sacred river there are shrines all along, starting with Panchavati near Nasik, where Lord Rama is supposed to have lived in exile for a while. Legend has it that it was here that Ravana abducted Mother Sita.'**

Unlike many other rivers in India, the water flowing in river Godavari has not been harnessed to the same extent, and Swami has often referred to the enormous amount of water flowing into the sea [the Bay of Bengal]. Some time after the massive drinking water project for Chennai was completed Swami decided that something ought to be done for the poor people in the East and West Godavari Districts.'

2C. Mostly on borewells.

**'They depended mostly on borewells, most of which are drying up due to excessive use of ground water.'** Moreover, in some pockets, the borewell water contains harmful chemicals. In some places in East Godavari District, the tribals used to draw water from nearby streams. However, the natural water from the streams is bacteriologically unsafe. In short, for a variety of reasons, the poor people in these districts were facing difficulties.'

3D. 10 million people!

**'If one counts all the people benefited by Sai Drinking Water Projects [including the seven million or so in Chennai], in the last one decade, Swami has provided drinking water to about ten million people!'**

To give you an idea of what this means, please note that the population of New Zealand is about 3.8 million, the population of Belgium is about 10.3 million, the population of Hungary is about 9.8 million, and the population of Sweden is about 8.9 million.

Just think about it: Has any private charitable trust anywhere in the world done anything like this? And please note, EVERY SINGLE PROJECT DONE BY SWAMI IS GIVEN AWAY FREE TO THE STATE CONCERNED. The State may get it free but Swami's Central Trust has spent hundreds of millions of dollars. Does He take one cent back as repayment? No, never! We all know mothers sacrifice for their children. How many know what this Universal Mother of us is doing for humanity? While we may describe this as sacrifice, Swami never uses that word. For Him, it is always an expression of His Boundless Love!

4C. They guided the engineers as to where to lay the pipes.  
Bhagavan continued to relate this wonderful story:

'They replied, "We have come here in your own interest. Because there is scarcity of water in this region, Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba has sent us to make arrangements for the drinking water supply."

On hearing this, the naxalites were stupefied and overjoyed. They said, "We are living in the forests and hence are not aware of the magnificent service activities that Swami has undertaken."

**They guided the engineers as to where to lay the pipes and fix the taps.**  
They are all coming here for Swami's Darshan.'

5B. On Swami's Compassion and Love

Prof. Anantaraman continued: 'It is not merely a case study; it is also a Love Story. It is not only a story of Love but also one of Compassion. It is the story of how one compassionate individual found it necessary to bring water to a parched land and quench the thirst of over a million people. That is what my story of Compassion and Love is all about.

The moment I said that there was immediately a lot of attention and after that my presentation went on very well. Subsequently, there was a lot of interest concerning what the project was about, and what Swami was saying. The press was immediately after me and wanted to know many things like what was this project about? Who is Sathya Sai Baba? And so on. There was also an invitation from the Osaka Students Union asking me to come and talk to them about the water project. Not merely that. A Minister from China and the whole delegation from China wanted to hear my presentation. The Minister wanted to discuss with me about this compassion that I was talking about, and about the whole project. In short, Swami's Love Story was a real hit!"

## **HEALING TOUCH**

### **THE NEW LIGHT IN THE EYES OF LITTLE SAI**

*A little one was born; he was bright, bubbly and beautiful. He crawled towards his mother at her faintest call with vigour and joy. But when someone offered a colorful candy, it did not seem to interest the four-month old. Only later, the parents realised, to their horror, that their precious one, Sai, was actually blind. They were poor and clueless. But soon, thanks to grace of the Lord, they did find light at the end of the tunnel, and little Sai today, full of smiles, never fails to latch on to his mother's saree! How did this happen? Read this 'eye-opening' account.*

Though she could not put her finger on it, yet Janaki knew something was wrong with her son, V. Sai. She lived in Bedupalli, a village adjacent to Puttaparthi and worked as a daily wage labourer.

Sai was Janaki's first baby. He seemed different from the children of his age. Why, her own sister had delivered a baby girl the same day and that too on the bed right next to her in the Sri Sathya Sai General Hospital (SSSGH), Prasanthi Nilayam, and the girl, Vijaya, would react instantaneously to all her mother's gestures. Anything bright, the girl would try to catch and put in her mouth, like all babies did.

Sai, however, would just sit at one place looking up, stubbornly refusing to respond to any gestures whatsoever. Even brightly wrapped candies and chocolates did not seem to interest Sai. He, however, would respond to Janaki's voice and try to crawl to her.

Initially Janaki's family thought Sai would get better as he grew up. They did not suspect that something could be wrong with Sai's eyes, because they were big, beautiful and looked healthy. "Eyes could hardly be a cause for concern," they thought. Even when Sai was around 4 months old the problem seemed to persist.

#### **Eyes that Did Not Know Light**

Alarmed, Janaki went back to the SSSGH, Prasanthi Nilayam. The doctors there did a check up and referred Sai to the Ophthalmology department of Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Medical Sciences (SSSIHMS), Prasanthigram.

In October 2008, Janaki brought Sai to SSSIHMS, Prasanthigram. One look at Sai's eyes and the alarm bells started ringing. The doctors found that though Sai's eyes looked healthy, he could not see anything due to congenital cataract in his eyes.

Eye surgeon, Dr. K.S.R.K. Prasad from the Department of Ophthalmology explained that cases such as Sai's are serious and had to be taken up as an

emergency. "Due to the cataract in the eyes, light does not enter into his eyes, and as a result the visual centre of the brain does not get activated. If left unattended, the visual centre of the brain would become totally unresponsive leading to suppression of vision," he explained.

After a thorough check-up of her child, Janaki was given a date to bring Sai for surgery. She was obviously concerned. "None of the people in our village had ever undergone a surgery. And mine was a child of such a tender age. I was terribly concerned," she said recalling those painful moments.

But Janaki knew once the surgery was over, a new world would dawn upon Sai, which had been kept hidden from him.

According to the ophthalmic surgeons at SSSIHMS, surgery on children is challenging. "Children's eyes are delicate. So, extreme precaution has to be maintained on the part of the surgeons, while performing the surgery," they added.

### **"Your son will see!" – Sai Hospital Surgeons**

Throughout the surgery, Janaki and her husband sat outside the operation theatre, waiting anxiously. As the surgeons emerged from the operating room, Sai's worried parents rushed to the surgeons, seeking to know whether their beloved son will be able to see again. "There is nothing to worry about. Your son will see." The surgeons' confident reply immediately lifted the pall of gloom from their faces. "We felt as if we had been relieved of some great burden," Sai's parents said. What added to their relief was the fact that they did not have to spend even a single paisa for the surgery. Following Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba's philosophy of free health care, Bhagavan Baba's Hospitals provide treatment totally free of charge.

After the bandages were removed, Sai's parents were advised to exercise extreme caution with Sai's eyes to make sure they remained free from infection. And soon, Sai could see clearly. His parents were ecstatic. **"It was such a great feeling when Sai looked at me with inquisitive eyes. It was the first time he had seen his own mother! It was like my son had born again,"** Janaki said.

A few months after the surgery, Janaki, accompanied by her father, Ganganna and her son returned for a review. The doctors were pleased with the difference the surgery had brought about in Sai's life.

Janaki, while trying to draw away Sai, who was pulling hard at her ear, said he had become extremely playful after the surgery. According to Janaki, Sai is now able to identify things clearly and also respond to gestures. Even as she said this, Janaki showed a candy bar to Sai which he caught hold of immediately and began feasting on it. Now, Janaki wanted to get up from her chair, but Sai was not ready to dismount from her lap; he latched on strongly to his mother's hand, much to her delight. "Did you see that?" Ganganna

asked. "How clearly he is able to see now! That is the change brought about by the grace of Bhagavan," he added, his face filled with excitement.

"Eyes are vital organs of the body. The work done by the ophthalmology department at SSSIHMS, Prasanthigram, is changing people's life completely. Take for example the case of Sai," Dr. Prasad said, "with the surgery performed by us, he will not have to depend on anybody in future and he can become an able breadwinner for the family."

### **Success Comes with His Grace Alone**

Outside the ophthalmology operation theatre complex at SSSIHMS, Prasanthigram is a board displaying the words, "Sai is the Surgeon," which, in simple words, summaries the philosophy of the Hospital.

According to the doctors of the ophthalmology department, there have been several cases since the inception of this discipline in November 1994, where even the most complex and difficult surgeries have been carried out without a hiccup. "Many a times, only after the surgery is over, we have felt that we could not have performed the surgery without a divine force guiding us. It is clearly Bhagavan Baba who has been directing us through out, invisibly," they said. "For everybody in the Hospital, Bhagavan Baba is a Living and a Moving Presence," declare the doctors summing up their heart-felt views.

And in the ward, Sai was excited and too busy playing with his mother, while she was just grateful to the Lord after whom she had named her son with the hope that He would always take care of his little one, and He really did!



## **“THREE SECONDS FLAT!”**

*By Mrs. Devika Gunasena*

*The Sri Sathya Sai General Hospital, Prasanthi Nilayam is the first institution established by Bhagavan Baba way back in 1954 to come to the rescue of poor and innocent villagers of Puttaparthi as well as the increasing number of devotees to Prasanthi Nilayam. Everything about this hospital has been a divine miracle, right from the fact that it was constructed just 6 years after Indian independence and had just two doctors and a single nurse to start with, to now when there are over hundred beds and scores of doctors and surgeons. The greater miracle is of course the amazing healings that happens in this hospital every single day. It baffles the doctors. The patients needless to say have no words to express their gratitude. One such story is of Mrs. Devika Gunasena. Her experience is simply thrilling!*

I am Devika from Sri Lanka. It all started on May 18, 2009; it was a Monday. I went shopping in Sri Lanka with one of my friends for a particular Sai work. On the way I ate a guava. By evening, I was down with stomach cramps, vomiting and diarrhea. I was scheduled to travel to India to see Swami on Thursday and I wanted to get rid of all this and be fit before I travel. So I went to the doctor and was given medicines but they didn't improve my condition; it just got worse.

### **A Tortuous Journey**

As time went on, my stomach started swelling up and I still had terrible contractions with a lot of pain. I took the flight on Thursday with my husband and son and throughout the journey I just consumed a little bit of lime juice and no other food. There was a taxi waiting for us and I came to Puttaparthi. I felt every bump on the road because my stomach was so swollen. It was a terrible pain and I cannot express in words the trauma I went through.

We entered Puttaparthi ashram and found our room. My husband said, “Let's go to the Hospital”. I said, “No, we will go in the morning because the doctors wouldn't be there in this late hour.” That night, Swami came in my dream. My husband and my son were sleeping on either side of me. I have this history of strangulation of the bowels, and once when we had an interview with Swami, my mother who was very worried about me, had asked Swami about this problem and He had said, “It's gastric.” And whenever I used to have this kind of pain, it always used to be gastric – something like gastroenteritis.

### **Fast Track Clearance**

I knew that there was something radically wrong with me that night. So I had a talk with Swami. I said, “Swami! You gave word to my mother! Why are You breaking it?” **And I drifted off to sleep. In the night, Swami appeared in my**

**dream and said: “You have an obstruction; but I can clear it in three seconds flat!”** I didn't know what He meant but those were the very words that He used! So I thought everything would be fine in the morning. But it wasn't. I was still bloated up and the pain was worse! I was thinking: ‘Oh my God! Swami! What is this! You came in my dream and told me that You will take care of it and how come I am still having this pain?’

I sent my family off for *Darshan* and told them I will be okay, but I was so sick! I just brought out everything that I had taken in. Nothing was going through! There was some block somewhere and so, I just threw up anything I ate. After my husband and son returned from *darshan*, I was ready to be taken to the Hospital. I said: “Let's go, I just can't bear this anymore.” There were very kind people nearby who arranged for the ambulance to come to the doorstep and I was admitted to the Sri Sathya Sai General Hospital.

### **Into the Divine Care of Sai Hospital**

Dr. Uma saw me and I had to relate my history of this strangulation problem because there were scars all over my stomach! She confirmed what Swami had already said: “There is an obstruction which is why food is not passing through and that's why you are simply bringing it out. There are three options now. You can either fly back to Sri Lanka immediately, or go to a premier hospital in Bangalore, or we can keep you here and try to flush it out with just liquids.” She wanted my family to make the decision. They said: “We will keep her here.”

So I was just brought into this room and given this bed. And what do I see? **You won't believe it! This is the exact picture; the image that I saw in my dream!** It was as if Swami was there by me all the time! It was amazing! Then they started the treatment. They gave me bottles and bottles of saline but the obstruction just didn't clear. Then, on Friday morning, the two doctors went for *Darshan* and after they returned, they examined and said: “I think you will have to be moved to the Bangalore Hospital because your intestines are dormant; they are just too tired and have just given up. I don't think they can do the work on their own of pushing and getting rid of the obstruction.”

That was just hell for me because now the condition was getting worse; the pain was severe and my stomach was just bloating out. They said they would prepare me for the three-hour journey to Bangalore and then inserted a tube through my nose which was just agony! I have had it twice before which is a procedure to take the gases out. I had sworn before that I would never go through that again but I here I was undergoing it again! It was sheer anguish! I can't tell you in words!

Anyway, they started pumping out the gas but it didn't help much. Then, they gave me some more bottles of saline. They were pumping it fast and preparing me for the journey and asked my family to make arrangements for a taxi to rush me to Bangalore. But my husband was adamant. He wanted to stay for *darshan* to ask Swami. But Dr. Uma said: “It might be too late! Why are you delaying? It might be 10:30 p.m by the time you reach there and the

doctors may not be available then". But my husband was unyielding! They made all the arrangements and they came just before *Darshan* to tell me that everything had been organised.

### **Inexplicable Relief at the Ultimate Moment**

Just before they were about to return from *Darshan*, I had a sensation in my stomach and therefore visited the bathroom. And everything was cleared! It would have taken Swami just three seconds as He had told me, and His words came true! The two doctors came and I said: "I just went to the toilet and it's fine." They said: "My goodness! Cancel your taxi! Put back everything because you are going to stay here!" At this point, my husband and son walk in and heard these words! They had prayed to Ganesha and their favourite Gods, and the moment they stepped into my room the doctors tell them that Swami has done it!

Dr. Uma said, "You know, Swami waits for the eleventh hour and the 59<sup>th</sup> second to do it!" which is true! And it's marvelous! I am perfectly alright, thanks to Swami! And I thank Him from the bottom of my heart.

Also I must mention that the care and the attention I received in this Hospital was absolutely wonderful! I don't think I can get it anywhere. Even if I go to any other hospital in the world, I don't think I can receive the treatment I did here. The attention and the care they have given me is unbelievable – it's absolutely unbelievable! The doctors, Dr. Uma and Dr. Hema, have been so wonderful. I have no words to express my gratitude for what they have done for me.

### **BAFFLED BY HIS UNBELIEVABLE LOVE**

*In the first part of this story, we had the thrilling tale of how Mrs. Devika Gunasena from Sri Lanka was cured of her painful abdominal trauma quite unexpectedly and amazingly. Now, we continue her story where she relates another interesting account – the story of her incredible journey to Swami and the several instances how she has felt His Love, care, protection and guidance. Miracles, in Mrs. Devika's life, have happened in dozens, and time and again.*

**H2H:** Tell us about your journey to Swami?

**Mrs. Devika Gunasena (DG):** We were on a pilgrimage to see Sai Baba in 1980. We are Buddhists and we believed in astrology. There was this friend of ours who read our horoscopes and said we need to do some *pujas* and this was our third trip performing all these rituals. We heard of Swami, and we were in a hotel in Bangalore and I told my husband I would like to see Him. Swami happened to be in Whitefield. So we went there and saw Him. He looked like a fashionable guy! We didn't have any faith at all! We were

wondering why people were worshipping Him and why was He just walking around as if nothing affected Him!

We happened to give a ride back to Bangalore to this couple who were lawyers from America and we got talking. She asked if we had read anything about Swami and at the time we had not. Then she recommended "Sai Baba: Man of Miracles" by Howard Murphet and we agreed to look it up.

### **Sai Baba: Man of Unending Miracles**

After we returned to Sri Lanka, within a week this book was in my hand! It was such a miracle! My sister-in-law, who happens to be a foreigner, heard that I had been to see Swami. She had this book and she instantly gave it to me. It was truly the turning point; this book was such an eye-opener! **Gradually, we developed faith and the first time we went to see Swami, my son was very small and was asthmatic then; he couldn't even breathe! And Swami cured him with that first *Darshan*! He blessed us thrice raising His one hand in blessing! We didn't even have any faith!** We were standing outside at the gate, and as He went out in the car, He just blessed us! The railway crossing gate there was closed and He had to come back again and He blessed us again! Then He blessed us one more time while going out after a few minutes! So He blessed us three times and that was the last attack of asthma that my son ever had! It was such a miracle!

Then, in the 1990's I had this Doberman dog that attacked me, and something snapped and my thumb just collapsed. I went to the doctor who said that the tendons have to be stitched to the base and that I will have to be in plaster for six weeks. However, he still couldn't guarantee that it would work. But he said I have to decide quickly because every passing day would make the operation more difficult. But I wasn't taking this seriously as I didn't want any surgery.

It has been my practice to make garlands for Swami every Wednesday, and it was such a strain to hold the flowers with only four fingers and one of those days I almost fainted making the garlands for Him. This was three weeks after the accident. **And then I thought to myself: 'Oh Swami! Why am I going through all this?' When I went to sleep that night Swami came in my dream but I didn't see Him, I just heard His voice: "Everything will be alright." In the morning when I woke up the finger was fixed and it was working perfectly!**

I have been keeping all this to myself because I thought it was such a personal thing and I have been sharing this with very few people! After hearing this story, some have developed faith in Swami. Suddenly, last morning (May 20, 2009) I was thinking to myself: 'This is wrong! I should not keep all this to myself. I should share this; people should know about Swami and His love.'

When my son came in the evening, I mentioned this to him and he thought I was crazy! 'What's wrong with my mother? Suddenly she has this urge to tell everyone about this!' And I feel I must tell everybody about Swami, this Divine

Doctor of ours to the world; people must know about Him. And in the morning, without my knowing, Dr. Kamala has called you, the Radio Sai Team! It is all Swami's doing! Stories of Swami's love and grace are endless. Since I have known Swami, He has made me a better Buddhist, I have become vegetarian.

### **Needing His Assurance**

Once when we were in Whitefield, my daughter came and told us she wanted to marry a foreigner, which was shocking! I knew I had to ask Swami first and get His blessings. So, I wrote a letter to Him, and took it with me to *Darshan*. Many doubted I would have any success, saying: "Swami never takes letters in the afternoons, He just comes on the stage. He doesn't walk around in the evenings; there's no point in taking letters!" But I still took it with me for *Darshan*. I was sitting not too far, but at the same time not in any corner; maybe just about five people away from the aisle from where Swami usually came.

That afternoon, quite unexpectedly Swami enters from the front entrance and not the stage. Next, He stops next to my row, looks at me and just asks for the letter! I am so shocked! I remember I couldn't even hold the letter properly or even reach out! He Himself reaches out and takes the letter from me! And that is the only letter He takes that evening and walks to the stage. And then, keeps this letter on the stool placed beside His chair. Now, I am praying: 'Oh Swami! What if You forget it! You haven't even read it! What if You leave it on the stool!'

Meanwhile, my son who is on the men's side does not see it was me from whom Swami took the letter, and talking to two other guys seated beside him, he says: "Oh my! Who is this lucky person! Swami has taken only one letter!" He doesn't know it's mine! It was fantastic! This was just the answer that He gave: "Go ahead, You have My blessings for the marriage." My husband still didn't believe it; he had his doubts! "Swami hasn't approved this marriage!" he said and wanted more proof.

So, they get engaged in Sri Lanka and we return to Whitefield. I say, if there is His approval, He will come and bless the rings. So, we are at our first *Darshan* with the rings in our hands. And Swami comes up to me that day and blesses them! My husband sees it from his side and becomes convinced. At that time, I had six *padanamaskarams*! That was the last I ever had, in 1999. We had a group interview with Him then. He had called all the Sri Lankan devotees and when I asked Him for a date for the marriage, He just said: "Very happy! Very happy!" and went on.

### **Passports Delivered from Heaven**

Once I had gone to Hong Kong with my children. They were all small then and my husband wasn't with me on that trip. We got into this hotel and were going to a market, and everyone was saying: "You have to be very careful in that area, because there are pickpockets all over." I had my handbag with me and we were traveling in a train there. I had all my passports and travelers checks

in a case and I used to put my hand inside the handbag very often to check if everything was there.

After we returned from the market, we went to a restaurant nearby for our dinner. And then, when I opened my handbag to pay, the whole passport case was missing! It was gone! I only had a little money to settle the bill. It was a very difficult situation. Here I was, in a strange country, all alone, without my husband, with these three small children. What could I do? Call out to Swami! Who else but Swami! "Swami! Please help me! What do I do at this stage?" I get back to the hotel and there, on a beautifully made bed, on the center, is my passport case! He has placed it right in the middle – the whole passport case, with the passports, the traveler's checks, everything – perfectly intact! The way He had laid it on the bed, it was absolutely marvelous! Oh my God! I don't have words enough to thank Him!

**H2H:** How often have you been coming to Puttaparthi?

**DG:** Very often! People must be wondering why we don't travel the world because whenever we get the chance, it's only to Swami's Feet that we come! We take two to three trips a year. We were here till He went to Kodai Kanal, in April 2009, and we returned again now in May.

### **At the Hour of Need He is There...**

Swami had called us for an interview on one occasion. That was a very tragic time for us because my husband's sister, who was married to my brother, was caught in one of the bombs that went off in Colombo. And that was very devastating for us. I was so worried about my husband because he was just not sleeping for weeks! And then we - he, myself and my youngest son, and my mother - came here to Prasanthi Nilayam. And the Lord just made him sleep! From the time we came here, he wouldn't even come for *Darshan*, he just slept and I too did not force him to come for *Darshan*! The day before we were to leave Puttaparthi, he went to *Darshan* with my son, and Swami came to my son and said: "I will see you tomorrow." He did call us the next day. He actually called my husband and son first and as I saw them getting up, I took my mother along and joined them. But Swami came to the ladies side and said: "Ceylon (Sri Lankan)! I will see you tomorrow!" It was so embarrassing to go back! But then my husband got up from the other side, went up to Swami and asked, "Swami! Can my wife please come along as well?" And then He taps him on the back and says: "Yes, yes!"

Years earlier, my husband had seen Swami tapping a foreigner on his back exactly in the same manner, and he had thought to himself: 'I wish Swami would do that to me!' So it was a play that Swami wanted us to re-enact! That's why probably He asked us to go back so that He could tap like that to him! It is amazing what He does!

So we were called in and He said: **"Forget about the past; past is past! Carry on with your lives."** That was the most crucial time of our lives that He called us in. He knew it was so bad for us. He was like a Mother!

**He was so close to me! He used to ask everything from me! He materialized a Buddha pendant for my son, and asked, "Buddhist?" He then took him in for a personal interview and came out holding a chain, said: "I have corrected him." And then He put the chain around him and everyone in the interview room started applauding! I never shared this with anyone because I thought it was so personal! This is the first time I am sharing this.**

**H2H:** How was the experience of being in the Sri Sathya Sai General Hospital?

**DG:** Oh my god! It is such a privilege to be here in this General Hospital! I think even eating that guava was a marvelous, divine play! I think it was going to happen sooner or later, and He wanted it to happen here. The doctors and the care here is amazing!

**H2H:** People say whether one believes in His materializations or not, the miracle that is obvious to everyone is that everyday thousands of patients walk out of His Hospitals, cured in body and elevated in spirit, absolutely free of cost. Rajiv (Mrs. Devika's son), why don't you share how your asthma was cured?

### **The First Miracle in Rajiv's Life**

**Rajiv:** Thirty years ago, we didn't have any faith in Swami. We were in Bangalore and we had two days left and had nothing to do. So we thought: "Let's go see this magician Sai Baba!" That's the mentality with which we went to Whitefield. I clearly remember this particular incident where all of us were standing and the rail gates were closed and **He just passed us in His old Mercedes and from the rear view mirror, He just raised His hand and blessed us. And I have never had an asthma attack ever since! I never even asked Him to cure me! I didn't even believe in Him so why would I even ask!**

**Actually, the very night before, I had a very bad attack in the hotel. A doctor was called in and I had great difficulty breathing. But after that day, I do not know what is asthma.**

And a week later, the first book on Swami arrived to the house and everything just fell in place! I am a Buddhist but I feel, after coming to Swami, I am a better Buddhist. I didn't know much about my religion; I actually know more of Swami's teachings and I like the practicality of His message. After following Swami, personally I have become a better Buddhist, a better human being. And I think this is great!

**H2H:** What do you like most about Swami's teachings?

### **Overwhelmed by His Love**

**Rajiv:** The concept of Universal Love and service. Earlier, we were never told how valuable service is. I mean, service is not gaining something; but just acting out of compassion. That's the concept and that's where the selfless part comes in, where you don't expect anything in return because when that happens, it's not service. Service is compassion. And the greatest concept in Buddhism is compassion; and behind this is the concept of love.

A year ago (in 2008), we came here during Christmas. My father-in-law had a sore eye; he couldn't even see properly. We got an appointment with a specialist at the Super Specialty Hospital in Puttaparthi. So we went there and the care we received there was unbelievable! That's the first time I actually experienced that kind of concern.

I remember they did all the tests and the eye specialist, Dr. Prasad was very gentle. He put the eye-patch on and said: "You can go." I asked: "How much for the medicines?" because I didn't know how the system worked. Then he turned around and asked: "What do you mean?" I said: "I understand maybe your service is free but what about the medicines? I am sure I have to pay for the medicines." And he said: "No. No one pays for the medicines, Baba will take care of that." So I was amazed; I was surprised because I had learnt it the first time that it is absolutely true that Swami doesn't take a red cent from anyone!

My in-laws are definitely not Sai devotees, but they were too impressed to see, first hand, the way the ashram is run, and the concept of Universal love in practice! Even in my mother's case! How wonderful the doctor's were! I mean, forget the saline, medicines, etc.; they were speaking so kindly! I think that's what heals people. The love, the attention! You should see how much care the boy who made soup for my mother took in preparing and serving, without we even asking!

Last evening, my mother had her first solid meal. She asked for toast, but the amount of butter he had put on the toast was amazing! I mean, that's what appeals finally. It's absolute truth when someone says it's Swami's love! I think this is the miracle! If people would actually come and experience this, they would realize this concept of universal and unconditional love.



## YOUR SAY

### ***Feedback from our readers on the May 2009 issue***

#### **Feedback on the Cover Story *Where Love Greeted You And Grace Cures...The Sri Sathya Sai General Hospital, Prasanthi Nilayam - Vol II***

Dear All,

I'm writing those few words from Canada. This story indeed uplifted my spirit - it is too beautiful to be true, but it is true. The devotion of the workers in this hospital, the atmosphere, treatments, and the strong confidence of everybody involved in this work of service is really amazing! It is not to be compared to anything we observe anywhere else. The place where I live is so different and very materialistic. I believe there is no place for such a hospital here! I'm glad that I know about this and at least a little about Swami.

Betty

*(Dear Ms. Betty, thank you for sharing your heartfelt thoughts. We are touched by your sentiments. But we disagree that 'there is no place for such a hospital here'. We believe that there are countless numbers of men and women of goodwill who are just waiting to participate in such noble endeavours. Society's structures are changing and hopefully very soon we will see many such worthy philanthropic ventures springing up to usher in a new world of caring and sharing, based on Bhagavan's teachings of "love all, serve all" - H2H Team)*

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Going through this cover story is inspiring...ordinary people like me with the blessings of Baba are doing such a great service to humanity...it teaches me a lesson: smile not superficially but with love. I know this is possible if I start seeing Swami in everybody.

Prashant Durgam

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Keep writing about the seva that is being done by our fellow Sai brothers and Sisters at God's Hospital. The experiences and stories are very inspiring to us here in Malaysia. Please keep the good work at H2H going.

Anbukkarasi N Mathavan,  
Penang, Malaysia

The articles about the Seva in SSSGH touched my heart so deeply and inspired me so much. Not only the words spoken by the varied staff members and patients but also your sweet, loving and thorough way of narration and work. Please carry on with more articles about Sai Seva for the poor in India, including the medical seva.

Hodayah

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What a wonderful story about the General Hospital. When I saw Dr. Vasundhara and Gloria Blake, it brought back fond memories for me of the time when I was blessed with the opportunity to volunteer with Mrs. Bose in the physical therapy department. The photo of Gloria in her room actually conjured up the alcohol scent that I remember in that room. I can still see and feel the semi-cool tile floor under my feet with that pretty pinkish color. What a wonderful life it is to be able to serve in Swami's Hospital. As Gloria says, it feels like heaven.

Michele Hammerton

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I want to express the joy I feel when I read those fantastic and mind-blowing stories and facts on the H2H journal. When I read about the Sai Hospital, I feel a great desire to serve there and help people out, and make them have a smile on their face. I hope Baba will allow me to do seva there.

I know Baba since my birth and I find that my faith has grown by reading H2H. I thank the whole team for the brilliant work you are doing.

Manish Dumur, Mauritius

**Feedback on the Sai Seva article *How a 'Hell of Pain' Became a 'Heaven of Love'***

I have read this article and it's truly helped me to open my heart to do more Seva, or at least to be less ignorant. I'm in Malaysia and we don't get to see this type of situation (like in Orissa) much. It's truly moved me. I'm nothing compared to those selfless volunteers. Please do keep these articles coming as I believe it inspires many more souls like me.

Gayathri, Malaysia

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This story was entrancing. It is such a perfect illustration of Swami's influence and Love. I think that it is only in India that one can find such dedicated youth and it is only in India that someone like Swami can spread His message so effectively. Carry on, Mother India! You are an example to the world.

Jacqueline Trost, Australia.

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It requires a lot of mental courage and unlimited faith in Swami to serve these patients. Thanks to Bhagavan Baba's angels in the form of these dedicated Sai-volunteers, there is now hope for them. As Swami declares, "Hands that help are holier than lips that pray", and these young seva workers are true messengers of Swami. It is a highly inspiring story with the message of *manav seva* is *madhav seva*.

Gopal Mehta, Canada

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This is really inspiring. Throughout the article, tears kept flowing constantly. I felt that as I was reading about their work and experiences, my being was actually getting purified. So powerful is their service.

Ramesh

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I am deeply and truly touched and I am unable to find words to describe the effect reading the article has had on me. There is no doubt in my mind that the Sai Youth offering their selfless services at the hospital are truly the chosen few - chosen by our very Swami Himself to offer their dedicated services. They are divine beings indeed.

I truly hope that many more (including "yours truly") are inspired to follow suit, sooner than later. This would certainly make the world a much better place to live in.

My most sincere thanks and warmest regards to H2H team for providing such wonderful "eye-opener" articles.

Prem, USA

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Words are inadequate to describe the feelings welling in my heart when I read this article. Truly Bhagavan is reaching and touching those helpless people through the Sai Youth. The hands that serve are holier than the lips that pray.....I thank your team for this inspiring article.

Jayalakshmi

**Feedback on the *Spiritual Questions and Answers* series**

This series by Prof. G. Venkataraman is wonderful and easy to understand. I look forward to it every month.

As the Devotional Coordinator of the Washington DC Sai Center the articles help me in understanding the Study Circle material and explaining it to others. Keep up the good work!

Michael Rakoff

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Prof. Venkataraman's articles are my favourite read on the net.

Severin, Slovenia.

**Feedback on *Enthralling Reminiscences of the Days of Yore, Part 4***

I have found the divine accounting described by the disciples of Shivananda very interesting and directly related to Swami's teachings on selfless service. I have been inspired to redouble my efforts to "Love all and serve all." This article has been of great inspiration to me.

Wilbert M. Stephenson, Brooklyn, New York.

**Feedback on *Mother Supreme... Mother So Sweet, So Dear***

This and many other articles that I have found in H2H throughout the years have been like having darshan from Swami! Thank you for making Swami's Love available in such sweet treats.

Jonathan, USA

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Thank you for that wonderful account of Swami's Divine Motherly Love and Omniscience. I read it because my earthly mother died April 22, 2009. She was a Christian and read the Bible when she could. A double amputee and paralyzed on the left from 1988, she always smiled, never complained, and was loving to all. As a Christian, she would pray to Jesus for comfort and for the benefit of others. In her final days she advised me that she had been

calling on Swami to come and help her, and she said that every time she called on Him, He came.

Swami is the Mother of all mothers. I am certain that my earthly mother of 89 years merged with my eternal divine Mother, Sai Ma. Thank you for your inspiring story.

Jeanne Marshall, North Carolina, USA.

### **Feedback on *Prashanti Diary***

Om Sri Sai Ram,

The daily coverage in Prashanti Diary about Sri Sai Bhagavan's leela and Prashanti *Samachar* fills our heart with inexpressible joy. And to miss it is indeed a huge miss.

Dinesh Mohapatra

### **Feedback on the *Quiz on Mother Easwaramma***

Sai Ram,

I found this great and enjoyed reading the answers, very refreshing and fun as well as moving. It is a good idea to do more of these. Swami's message and life is experienced with fun and in a very interactive way! Thank you dearly.

Prema Ram, Belgium

### **Feedback on *Sai Inspires*, the inspirational daily e-mail service**

Sai Ram to all of you,

Actually I am amazed by the stories and messages from H2H. First thing in the morning, I always open my mail and look for the H2H emails. It is simply great and brings peace of mind in the morning. Therefore I would like to thank all of you for your great job and service.

Anilarasu Amaranazan, Penang, Malaysia

Sai Ram,

From the deepest of my heart I would like to thank you for emailing me everyday the message of Sri Sathya Sai Baba Bhagavan (Sai Inspires). Everyday I wait impatiently to check my mail to read Baba's messages - it is like nectar for me. It gives me an answer for all the questions which I ask myself, it is like a guide for me in this material world. Baba's messages make me feel very near to Baba. You are really doing a great work. You are guiding us, showing us our path and approaching us to our God, our Baba.

Thanks again and again Heart2Heart team,

Sharmila

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Dear Sir/Madam,

Thank you very much for your informative sayings on "Baba". Each morning I look at his photograph as well as his profound sayings.

Being of a different faith, ie Muslim I acknowledge and adore his teachings, because it consoles and comforts me most of the time.

Long live Baba and Radio Sai,

Thank you once again,

Fatimah

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Greetings,

I'm very grateful to receive Sai Baba's spiritual messages. They have been a great help for me.

Thank you all, love and light.

Isabel Pina

### **GENERAL FEEDBACK**

Sai Ram,

Greetings and Love from Kobe. Dear brothers, thank you very much for sending me this wonderful Heart to Heart May issue which is full of

the divine grace of Bhagavan. Every article we read is wonderful - inspiring us to share with others.

The Heart2Heart issue you send monthly is highly inspirational and it encourages love and service to mankind. May the Lord's messages reach every home and Swami's blessings be showered on your team for such a wonderful job.

Ram Chugani, Kobe, Japan

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Reading through your Heart to Heart magazine on the internet, I must congratulate you and your team for a job well done. I am sure this is all through the Grace of Sri Sathya Sai Baba. Truly I am very much inspired.

Gopal, Pinetown, South Africa