

HEART 2 HEART

VOL 4 ISSUE 3, MARCH 2006

TABLE OF CONTENTS

<u>Page No.</u>	<u>Section</u>
3	BETWEEN YOU AND US
5	YOUR SAY – FEEDBACK FROM READERS
	SPIRITUAL BLOSSOMS
9	SATHYA SAI SPEAKS – Compassion, the Hallmark of Devotion
11	CONVERSATIONS WITH SAI – Part 18
16	CHINNA KATHA – This Belongs to My Dear Devotee
	COVER STORY
18	A PRASAHANTI NILAYAM IN CHENNAI
	FEATURE ARTICLES
43	4 MS – MAN, MONEY, MYTH AND MORALITY
53	I CAME WITH YOU – THE UNCHANGING ‘I’
60	THE VEDAS – THEIR EVOLUTION AND SIGNIFICANCE
	SERIAL ARTICLES
68	SHIRDI SAI PARTHI SAI – Part 15
70	THE GITA FOR CHILDREN – Part 17
	WINDOW TO SAI SEVA
73	STIRRING SAI SEVA IN MALAYSIA
76	PRASHANTI DIARY
	SWAMI AND ME
98	THE MOST PRECIOUS GIFT – THE AVATAR’S TIME
106	WHEN HE TOUCHES YOUR HEART
111	EXPRESSIONS OF LOVE III – A VALENTINE’S CARD
	H2H SPECIAL
114	UNFORGETTABLE MEMORIES

GET INSPIRED

- 118 CARROTS, EGGS AND COFFEE
- 119 THE 99 CLUB
- 121 SHARPEN YOUR AXE

TEST YOUR SPIRITUAL QUOTIENT

- 122 SPIRITUAL QUIZ
- 126 SPIRITUAL CROSSWORD #5

THE HEALING TOUCH

- 130 THE HOSPITAL HAS GIVEN ME... TIME
- 131 A DEDICATED DOCTOR COUPLE DRAWN BY THE DIVINE
- 135 HOSPITAL STATISTICS

BETWEEN YOU AND US

Dear Reader,

Among all the festivals in Prashanthi Nilayam, the most ecstatic is perhaps the festival of Shivarathri. It is an occasion which no devotee wants to miss; in fact, for some a trip to Prashanthi Nilayam during this festival is their 'yearly Haj'. Like every year, the experience this year was magical. Thousands seated in Sai Kulwant Hall went into blissful frenzy when Baba held out the nearly 4-inch resplendent oval shaped golden Lingam for all to see. What a breathtaking moment it was! You could see the great sense of fulfillment and joy coupled with awe and wonder on the devotees' faces as they witnessed a glimpse of Divine Mystery and Power that is Sai. And the compassionate Lord went to the devotees holding that 'inscrutable symbol of cosmos', as it were, and needless to say, the cups of the devotees' hearts were full. For those who could not witness it live, we have lots of pictures and a beautiful account in our Prashanti Diary. The whole event is going to come alive in front of you!

Sai is Shiva, the supreme consciousness. He is Truth, Goodness and Beauty - *Sathyam, Shivam, Sundaram*, as is it called in Sanskrit. These three words so beautifully define Divinity and significantly these are so much a part of Baba's life and mission. Not only do the volumes of Baba's biography carry this name, but also His abodes at various important cities in India bear a part of this name. In Mumbai, Dharmakshetra, Baba's abode - one of very first outside Puttaparthi and Bangalore - is called "Sathyadeep". Going South, to Hyderabad, the lingam shaped residence-cum-mandir of Baba is named "Shivam" and in Tamil Nadu, the land of numerous world-famous temples known for their distinctive style and architecture which have a rare beauty and serenity of their own, Baba's beautiful 55-feet tall abode is called "Sundaram." Very recently Sundaram celebrated its Silver Jubilee and many people, especially non-Indians, know little about it. Even many people in India think of it only as Baba's dwelling-place in Chennai – yes, it is surely that but it is much, much more.

When the Tsunami struck Tamil Nadu, Sundaram transformed itself into a beehive of continuous activity organizing relief-operations; if hundreds of auto-rickshaw drivers ferrying people in the busy streets of Chennai today are conscious about their health and drink only boiled water; and if Durga, an unlettered girl coming from one of the poorest economic backgrounds with no father to take care of her is today teaching Sanskrit to the young and old and receiving acclaims and awards; and if hundreds of Sai devotees in India and abroad fill their hearts and homes with the purifying vibrations of Sai Bhajans and even learn to sing them at their Sai Centres; and if thousands of people have experienced what 'divine love and peace' is and seen themselves transform from complete agnostics to ardent devotees and found a sense of purpose in their lives - **it is all because of the Sai suffused Sundaram.**

Sundaram is all this and more. No wonder, the Governor of the state, Sri S S Barnala, moved by the dedicated spirit of the Sai Volunteers in Sundaram, recently said, "This army of peace can do anything with their commitment to

serve.” You will know what it is that makes Sundaram so special that for the people of Tamil Nadu it is no less than another Prashanti Nilayam. All of the above will become apparent to you when you read our comprehensive cover story.

The Avathar comes down to give joy to thousands and millions. While everybody is benefited and blessed with His advent, there are some fortunate ones who are doubly blessed to witness Him at very close quarters and bask in His love and grace. One such devotee is Mr. Chidamabaram Krishnan, who has had remarkable experiences with Sai from the 1960s. In the H2H Special section, you will find the first part of a serial which will be a very extraordinary journey of Sai *Leelas* and *Mahimas*. This is going to thrill you!

Money rules the world, they say. Do you think it is true? Is morality a myth in the current society? Well, you can find this out when you read our interesting feature article – Man, Money, Myth and Morality. In the same section, there is also another revealing article, throwing more light on the most ancient of Indian scriptures - the Vedas. In the last issue, we had only a basic introduction to the Vedas; in this issue there is precious information on the significance and composition of these sacred divine revelations of God to Man. This is surely going to broaden your understanding of these immortal ‘words of God’.

How devotees all around the globe become inspired by Swami’s message and do things they have never imagined themselves to do is amazing! The story of a young doctor couple who, in the middle of their flourishing careers, gave up everything to serve at His Lotus Feet, which you will find in the Healing Touch Section, is really a great myth-buster proving that for money’s sake people will **not** just do anything. It is also a morale-booster for people who many a times succumb to situations and are not able to follow their heart. This couple’s dedication is exemplary.

This issue also has a lot of other interesting articles - inspiring Seva done in Malaysia, a beautiful Photo Album of Swami in glittering yellow and lots of other sweet articles in the “Swami and Me” section including a nice story of a valentine card presented to Swami by the boys! (You are going to get a whole new perspective of Valentine’s Day celebrations).

Before we leave you to explore this issue, may we inform you we are deeply grateful to all the readers for their continued support and positive feedback. To express our gratitude, we have published a sample of these letters in our new section “Your Say”, starting from this issue. Please do have a look at it and keep telling us about how you think we can serve you better.

May Sai rule every moment of your life,

Yours in Sai Seva,
H2H Team.

YOUR SAY

Dear Reader,

We at Heart2Heart feel ourselves very fortunate that we are able to serve you in whatever way we can. We are doubly blessed when we receive feedback from you as not only are we encouraged by your response, but we can make also changes to our format and content according to your suggestions. It is therefore with a feeling of great gratitude that we publish these letters from you, both to say 'thank you' and to confirm to you that we read them all and take note of the contents! Please keep them coming!

- Heart2Heart Team

ON LAST MONTH'S COVER STORY - BEHIND THE 80TH BIRTHDAY

Today Feb 8, the "cover story" arrived on my email server. Since Swami's Birthday celebration I have been looking for this kind of report. The celebration report confirmed what I imagined, "out of sight." Earlier I had downloaded attachments with celebration pictures, but this gives me the greatest satisfaction. I am experiencing an inner glow from the report. My printer is a black and white laser and the results are less than what the web page shows.

I have been asking Swami for His grace to find my way there. I know when He sees me truly ready, nothing will stand in the way of my visit to Him. I work at making His residence in my heart a place of my loving devotion, and extend that to my fellow "temples." His patient love will get me there.

Thank you for sharing the report. The words and pictures conveyed so much but much more went on there, since words and pictures have limitations. This present report I treasure.

Love to all,
Carl Rosen

Sairam,

I have gone through the details of food arrangements made for the 80th Birthday at Puttaparthi and what an amazing effort of thousands of Sai brothers and sisters. Those who have and could participate are the really lucky ones who have the Divine grace on them. My words are not enough to praise the work done during the time, it is only Swami's miracle which has made this possible. Pranams to all those brothers / sisters who took part in the service.

Narayan S.N.S.
Bangalore

SAIRAM!

Dear H2H Team,

I have no words to describe my feelings regarding the cover story 'Behind the 80th birthday celebrations'. How nicely written for people like me, who were not there physically to feel SAI presence through the dedication, love and action of volunteers, Seva Dal members and delegates. So many times tears came to my eyes, reading the article, as if I was there personally visualizing everything. Amazed at the dedication of young devotees, who are so highly placed doing all work. Thanks for writing so beautifully everyone's feelings & experiences so people like me, who did not attend the Birthday was literally transported to the hill stadium in the presence of Bhagavan.

Thank you for the great work.
Love, Sairam
Rajesh, NY, USA.

ON 'MY INTRODUCTION TO THE VEDAS'

Dear Heart2Heart Team,

Your articles are always excellently done, with beautiful pictures as well. I particularly enjoyed the article called "My Introduction to the Vedas". Will there be more like it? I am a Sanskrit student here in Toronto, and Swami's revival of Vedic study is hugely exciting for me. It seems as if the emphasis on Vedic culture and cultivation in Prashanti has only become more intense with the passing of time, which is so very inspiring for all of us overseas. Indeed, Swami's approach to the Vedas is anything but dry and bookish. There is so much life and vibrancy and power that we can feel it all the way over here. Please do include more articles on the Vedas and Vedic study. They are much appreciated.

Sai Ram,
Ellesha Wanigasekera,
Canada.

ON THE DAILY INSPIRATIONAL E-MAIL SERVICE "SAI INSPIRES"

Hi - Sai Ram. I just have to thank you again for providing the beautiful daily photos of Baba and the quote (*Sai Inspires*). My 10 year old was just marveling with delight at how the quote so often is on a theme we were just discussing.

Thank you Baba and thank you Heart2Heart team!

- Janice Nigro, Ithaca, NY, USA.

Sai Ram I would like to express my gratitude to Sai Brothers and Sisters of Heart2Heart for your Love and Dedication to propagate Swami's Teachings. I am trying to do same too and your messages help me a lot to share with others our Sadguru's recommendations for a better world. Thanks again.

- 'Shrimatee', Mauritius.

Sai Ram H2H Team,

Our family waits eagerly everyday for the Sai inspires messages from the Heart2Heart Team. My day is not complete if for some reason or the other I am not able to access these inspiring messages. The Sunday specials are also eagerly awaited and convey profound messages of Swami. Please continue this good work which is of immense benefit to devotees all over the world.

One special request. Kindly update the Prashanti Bulletin which has not been updated since Swami's 80th birthday. These bulletins which give us a vivid description of Darshans literally transport us to Prashanti Nilayam and give us a feeling of having had HIS darshan in person. Please do not discontinue this service.

Jai Sai Ram
Aparna Siva.

(Since Aparna's letter we have been regularly updating Prashanthi Bulletin within 1-2 days of any major event happening in Prashanthi Nilayam – H2H Team.)

Loving Sai Rams to the Heart2Heart Team for charging my daily mornings with Swami's inspirations. The special messages sent along with Sai Inspires are also an occasional booster which strengthens our virtues. I wish the newsletter to grow and inspire more and more people across the world with Swami's golden messages. Thanks for allowing me to share the Divine Bliss.
Jai Sai Ram

NareshKumar B
Ruwais, UAE

.....

ON THE SPECIAL SUNDAY WRITE-UPS DELIVERED WITH "SAI
INSPIRES"

Dear brothers, Om Sai Ram

I would like to thank you very much for the beautiful article on Education. Being a teacher myself, I find that you express very accurately the modern educational crisis and the means to get over it.

May our beloved Swami always inspire you, so that you inspire all. His Divine teachings are indeed the only way out of the present havoc that has afflicted humanity. Jai Sai Ram

George Bebedelis
SSE Coordinator, Greece

Dear Editors of H2H,

Sai Ram. Thank you for your invaluable service. Yes, I enjoy the Sunday Specials and look forward to reading them every week. ...I had come across the word "kshama" many times but had not quite understood the meaning until now. So thank you for explaining it so well ...

I am curious: why the need for feedback? Why do you worry if your work is "serving its purpose" or not? Your job is just to scatter these beautiful thought-seeds as far and wide as you can--they will sprout in each reader's mind and heart when the time is right, is it not?

Lots of love
Jeroo

(Dear Jeroo, we appreciate your comments. Feedback helps us know your opinions and thoughts so that we can serve you better. – H2H Team).

SPIRITUAL BLOSSOMS

SATHYA SAI SPEAKS

COMPASSION IS THE HALLMARK OF DEVOTION

Giving up narrow ideas and feelings, people should show compassion towards their fellow beings. Compassion is the hallmark of *Bhakthi* (devotion). No one can hope to please God without showing *dhaya* (compassion) towards his fellow men. **A loving heart is the temple of God. God cannot dwell in a heart without compassion. God is one.** The goal is one. People have to change their outlook. They have to develop love towards all. There is nothing greater in the world than this *Prema dhrishti* (feeling of universal love).

There are many eminent scholars and intellectuals in the world today who are adept in seeing the diversity in the world. But why don't they try to see the unity that underlies this diversity? **They alone are good who see the unity in the apparent diversity. But those who see only the diversity in the One are mere clever intellectuals.**

The uniqueness of every being is one of the marvels of creation. No two persons are entirely alike. There are differences even among twins. People differ in respect of talents. But it should be realised that all talents are derived from the Divine. How are we to recognise unity in diversity? Birth and death are common to all beings. Whether one is a millionaire or a pauper, both are brought forth from their mothers' wombs. Hunger and thirst are common to all. The kind of food that is eaten may vary, but hunger is the same for all.

Likewise thirst is common to all. These basic common experiences point to the unity that underlies the diversity. The Upanishads have emphasized the spiritual oneness of all beings. The life force is one and the same, in all. The *Aathma* is the same in all. How, then, it may be asked, there are differences in the bodies? These differences are the results of differences in the thoughts, feelings and actions of the individuals concerned. The indwelling spirit is the same in everyone.

Make Every Act Holy

By developing attachment to persons and possessions men created causes for their sorrow. By reducing their attachments and developing love for God, they can reduce their misery and increase their happiness. The more they love God, the more the bliss they will experience. Men are plunged in misery because they hanker after the physical instead of yearning for God. If men convert their desire for material objects into the desire for the Supreme they will enjoy immense happiness. All that is necessary is for them to see the Divine in everything in the phenomenal world. That will be true devotion. And work will be turned into worship. Make every act holy...

The Power of Prayer is Incalculable

Pray for the welfare of all. The power of prayer is incalculable. Everyone should pray every day for the welfare and happiness of all people everywhere. This is true spirituality. To render service to others to the limit of your capacity is real spirituality. The body has been given to man for serving others. If one has a compassionate heart, is truthful in speech, and uses his body for serving others, he needs nothing else to redeem his life.

Regard every moment as new. Live in the present. Have good thoughts and do good deeds. Cultivate good company. Act according to the dictates of your conscience. The secret of happiness lies within you, not outside. Pray for the welfare of all... In fact, you are all embodiments of peace, bliss and Divine. Everyone of you should make efforts to develop inner peace individually. Then the whole world will be peaceful. Don't yield to any fear or anxiety. Develop love. Hatred breeds disaster. Shed feelings of hatred. With love, the country and world will prosper.

- Discourse in the Sai Ramesh Hall, Brindavan, on 20-3-1996 .

- Heart2Heart Team

CONVERSATIONS WITH SAI

Part 18

(Continued from the previous issue)

H (HISLOP): What did Baba mean about the spiritual rays that comprise a human being, being projected into the vastness, instead of the limited ego?

SAI: When the world melts away, when there is bliss or even when there is a temporary feeling of happiness, hold to that state and stay with it, and do not allow yourself to fall back into ego, emotions and thoughts. From man comes a series of spiritual rays whose quality is delight and bliss. All man need do is to manifest that bliss. The idea of search is an error. Everyone already knows the truth. All that is needed is to put that truth into practice and to manifest it. The humanity of man is just these spiritual rays of delight. It is very easy to crush a flower, or to wink an eye; Self-realization is as easy as that.

BE HAPPY

H: Swami said that it is man's duty to be happy.

SAI: Happiness is essential for God-realization. It is one of the major gates to divinity. It is not just a fault if a person is not happy; it is one of the most serious of all faults. It is a barrier to Realization. Mostly, people are unhappy because of worldly pursuits, attachments, enjoyments. Too much interested in the world. To get free of this fault, a person has to be told of the seriousness of the fault. **He should realise that desire is never-ending, like the waves of the sea.**

H: Swami says that pleasure or happiness is the interval between two sorrows. What is the implication?

THE CAUSE OF SORROW

SAI: Pleasure is an interval between two sorrows. Remove the sorrow and only pleasure, and delight remain. But nobody troubles to find the cause of sorrow. It is like the lady who went to look for a lost needle under the street lamp because there was no light in the house where she had lost the article. The house is lit by the light of wisdom. The lost item must be found where it was lost. **Actually, sorrow and pain are caused by desire. The cure is to use that same desire and turn it to God, to desire God.** Instantly, suffering will cease because the cause, turning from God to worldly desire, has been eliminated. The incidents that caused sorrow will cease to cause sorrow. If a person called 'my' suffers, there is a direct pain in oneself. But if one's desire is for God only, that pain will cease.

H: But one suffers also because of the pain he is aware of in another.

SAI: The suffering one feels for other people whom one sees suffering, is from imagination. That sympathetic suffering will leave, but the sympathy remains. Compassion is when love is mobile and flows. Personal love is when love is not mobile but remains fixed on husband, wife, child, etc. Devotion is that free mobile flow of love to God.

CAUTION WITH OVER FAMILIARITY

H: Last night, in speaking to the students, Swami said something very puzzling, that another person's sins would pass to oneself through the touch of that person's skin.

SAI: For that reason it is that some Swamis will not allow devotees to touch the feet. Since one cannot be sure who is bad and who is good, it is best to refrain from touching.

A Visitor: Is that why Indians greet people by that kind of salute, instead of by much handshaking as is done in the West?

SAI: No. That is not the reason.

H: Does Swami mean that if I touch a person, I then commit sin in the same way as he?

SAI: When the tender plant of devotion begins to grow, it must be protected. When a young tree is growing various animals will eat it and may kill it. For this reason a fence is placed around the young tree to protect it. When the tree is grown it needs no protection. The same animals which would have first destroyed it now seek and find shade and shelter beneath its branches. When devotion is grown strong and intense, it will burn all sins. Until then, the person whose devotion is just new must see bad as bad and good as good. The person grown strong in his devotion may see bad as good and see good only.

It is not just physical touch wherein lies the danger, but in mental intimacy also bad influences may flow from one person to the other. Your children are not your children, they are God's children. You should love them, but your thoughts should not pass to them. There is body relationship with mother, from whose body you came, and with grandmother from whose body mother came. Sisters and brothers are to be treated with respect. But with other people there is no body relationship.

H: I gave Swami a ring created by a yogi. I did not want wear it and I didn't know what to do with it. That is, I sent it up to Swami by a messenger with a note about it.

SAI: That was another attempt aimed at you by other interests. You are known as a devotee to Baba, and it was an attempt to interest you elsewhere. Like that western city matter. You should reject such attempts out-of-hand.

H: But that man from there said Swami stayed at his house.

SAI: Not true. That area is strongly Communist. At one time Baba did bring about genuine evidence of His *Sankalpa* there, but ego and money-making arose, so Baba stopped things. Again He allowed it, and now He has again stopped it. Those people, in fear of loss of reputation, are now doing things by tricks.

H: The man seemed a very nice fellow.

CHALLENGES WITH EVERY AVATAR

SAI: Not so. There is always good and bad in dualistic phenomena. When there is an Avatar, there must always be bad. Rama's foster-mother was his enemy. Krishna's uncle was his enemy even before he was born. Shirdi Baba was much abused.

Not long ago, there was a man who challenged Swami to some tests. Stories appeared over a broad area, even in other countries. This man had some foreign people in his camp. Some of Swami's devotees urged Him to reply. But to reply would have been shameful. This yogi was eating nails and glass and so on. He created a special tank for a test of water walking. Why a special tank? Something crooked. He sold tickets to spectators for up to 100 rupees and more per ticket. On the appointed day he stepped on the water and sank in the water. The police had to put him in a cell to protect him from abuse, and all the money was refunded. Now, people said, what a fool he had been to challenge Swami. His disaster was a result of the foolish challenge. Later, the man wrote to Swami disclaiming any serious intent to challenge, and confessed that he had used Swami's name just to increase ticket sales. The man is gone and now nothing is heard about him.

H: But Swami, why would the man be so foolish as to try to walk on water without practice beforehand?

SAI: The man was walking on water. But ego and greed arose, and that finished it. Thought, word, and deed must be the same.

H: In the car en route to Anantapur, an American who was teaching at the Sathya Sai College at Brindavan said, 'Swami, I feel guilty at leaving my classes.'

SAI: Duty in the world carries no force or weight when God calls. God is the goal of life. When in His company, there is no duty. When He is absent on tour, etc., then duty comes into full play, because duty is God.

THE COMPOSITION OF MAN

H: When I am absent from Swami's physical person and far away in America, I know of His actual Presence by the jasmine perfume. Someone said it was smelled by the smell-sense of the subtle body, is this correct?

SAI: No. Senses are in the physical body. Subtle body does not have senses. The perfume is known by the physical senses.

H: Does man have three bodies?

SAI: Yes. Body, Mind and Soul. Physical body, subtle body and causal body. On death, the physical and subtle bodies disintegrate, but the causal body remains.

H: How about the five *kosas*, the five sheaths?

SAI: The food sheath, life sheath and mind sheath are impermanent. The intelligence sheath and bliss sheath remain. The body is mud. Out of the mud everything grows. Only the body dies. Life and all the senses merge into mind. Mind merges into wisdom. Wisdom merges into bliss, into God. Thus there are five sheaths.

H: What are the 14 *lokas*, the 14 worlds?

SAI: They are really thoughts. There are seven levels of thought ascending upward and seven downward.

H: Swami, some people claim to travel on the astral plane by projecting their minds.

SAI: It is like dreams or visions; it is not real. However, if vision appears in meditation, it is of something real.

OUR LOOKS AND SWAMI'S LOOK

H: Time is set by the clock, and on the clock each minute is the same as the next. But in one's life, time goes slow in one experience and extremely fast in the next.

SAI: Hislop goes to sleep in Bombay. He dreams that he is born in California, and he lives through 65 years of life. Yet this entire 65 years takes only two minutes of clock time. Hislop has gone to sleep in Bombay, but, the Bombay body is left behind. This is proof that Hislop is not that body. To the *jnani* (Wise man), who has wakened to wisdom, 65 years of 'waking life' is just a moment-like the dream to Hislop.

H: What is this present moment?

SAI: God is omnipresent. He is the ever present. This moment is God. There is only God. **Truth is the same in the past, in the present, and it will remain the same in the future. Therefore, the time sequence of past, present, future is just imagination. But 'I' am timeless, beyond time. 'I' look at past, present, future; they are not me.**

Of course, past, present and future must be taken into account in daily affairs. These two aspects of time must be mixed and in operation at the same time. The perception that the time sequence is only imagination that 'I' am timeless and beyond time, both should be there at the very moment that one is using the time sequence in his daily affairs.

H: In terms of the unreality of time, how are we to experience past, present, future?

SAI: They are unreal. But at the same time the *Atma* is real. Hold to that central reality. There need be no confusion. The inward intelligence may harmonize the experience of the relative time and the permanent self. Even now you are hearing and seeing, yet the inward intelligence co-ordinates the two.

H: At this moment we seem to be as we are at this moment. When Swami looks at us with His eyes, what is it that He sees?

SAI: Man has two eyes; he sees only past and present. God has three eyes. God's eyes are spiritual. He sees in front, behind, above and below. Like the garland pulled over the finger – the finger is the present and it is in touch with past and future. God is the present. He is omnipresent. As Baba looks at people, he sees the past, the present moment, and the future, and everywhere in every direction.

(To be continued)

- Heart2Heart Team

CHINNA KATHA

- A Little Story From Bhagavan

THIS BELONGS TO MY DEAR DEVOTEE

One day in the sacred shrine of lord Viswanath at Kasi, all the devotees and temple priests were immersed in singing hymns and reciting chants. All of a sudden, they heard a metallic sound. When they turned their heads in that direction they saw a shining gold plate on the floor of the Shrine. It must have fallen from the sky through an open space in the centre of the hall leading to the sanctum sanctorum. All of them gathered round with wonder, while the chief temple priest went close to examine it. He found some letters inscribed on it. "This belongs to my dear devotee."

The priest read the inscription loudly. All the temple priests vied with one another to snatch the plate with the feeling, "Who could be a greater devotee than myself. I spend my time, talent and strength only to offer worship to the Lord Viswanath." But the plate changed into an earthen one the moment they touched it one after another. News spread like wild fire about the golden plate. Several scholars, singers, poets and preachers came and tried their luck but in vain. Days, weeks and months rolled on but the plate remained there without a claimant.

One day, a stranger came to the temple. He stood at the entrance and tears gathered in his eyes when he saw beggars, blind, dumb and lame piteously pleading for alms. He felt ashamed of his inability to relieve them of their hunger and agony. He wanted to pray to the Lord and so stepped into the temple. He saw people gathered round and discussing something. He tried to squeeze himself into the crowd to find out why they were standing there.

He saw a golden plate in the centre of that enclosure. He enquired and was told about the episode of the golden plate. He was rather surprised and sad at the attitude of the people and the priests. Instead of praying to the Lord of the Universe and trying to possess Him, they were eager to possess the golden plate. Observing his nonchalant attitude, the high priest requested him to try his hand. The stranger replied, "Oh Revered one! I do not care for either gold or silver, what I long for is God's Grace." The priest's esteem for that man increased. So he once again pressed him, "At least to satisfy us, please try your hand." The stranger touched the plate without a trace of attachment. Lo! It shone forth with redoubled effulgence. All the priests gathered round and queried, "Sir, where do you come from? What are your qualifications?"

What are the branches of learning you have mastered? How many years did you do penance?"

The stranger replied calmly, "I don't belong to any place. I just manage to earn my bread by hard labour. The only *Sadhana* I do is *Namasmaran*. This has perhaps rendered my heart pure and filled it with love and compassion. It has enabled me to control my mind and the senses. I have not read any book or mastered any science. The only art I know of is chanting the Name Divine. The only act I do is to be kind to the poor."

So, the only qualification to become dear to the Lord is to acquire a compassionate heart and sense control. These two can be acquired through *Namasmaran* – chanting the name of the Lord, with full faith in the Lord.

-BABA

COVER STORY

SUNDARAM

- A Prashanti Nilayam in Chennai

'Once You Are Inside Sundaram You Forget Everything!'

"After my delivery of twin-boys I did not go straight home. I wanted to get Swami's blessings for our new family first. So I, along with my husband, took our children to Sundaram because we feel Swami's presence is always there. Instead of going to Parthi, we can just sit and talk to Swami in Sundaram and He blesses us. **Though the doctors advised us not to take the children out, we took them to Sundaram because we felt that it is the holiest place for our new-borns to visit before taking them home.**" This is what Mrs. Mona Duseja, a decade-old resident of Chennai and an ardent devotee of Baba, says with a beatific smile on her face.

Yes, Sundaram, the beautiful adobe of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba in the city of Chennai, the capital of the state of Tamil Nadu, India, is truly a 'Prashanthi Nilayam away from Prashanthi Nilayam' for thousands of Sai devotees. "Sundaram fills us with peace and strength," says another devotee, Sri A K Kumar. **"Once I started coming to Sundaram," he continues, "my life has totally changed! It's a university, a temple, a rehabilitation center - it's everything! Once you are inside Sundaram, you evolve, you forget everything! You are in total bliss, it's so refreshing! You are filled with so much strength."**

This is the experience of every Mona and every Kumar who has stepped into the holy precincts of this hallowed abode of their Lord Sai in Chennai. Thousands throng into this heavenly abode on every Thursday and Sunday and if you are around after the evening bhajan session in Sundaram you can see that by the time they leave the holy precincts of this 'heaven-in-Chennai', their faces are red with emotion and radiating a rare kind of serenity and joy...it is as if they had had an audience with their Lord and all the travails and trials of life have just melted away... they are revitalized and invigorated with the power of the divine! They have been touched by His presence.

Why is Sundaram Special?

Sundaram, the magnificent edifice, which literally means "Divine Beauty" is special, indeed very special. But what is it that makes it so special? Why is it that all - from slum dwellers to sitting judges of the Madras High Courts, from street hawkers to top industrialists - make a beeline to Sundaram for the Sunday bhajans? Why do Sai devotees from Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand, Australia, etc. make it a point to visit Sundaram when they stopover in Chennai en route to Puttaparthi? Why is it that it is often hailed as "heaven in Chennai" and "a beacon of light" by social workers and statesmen as well as by agnostics?

It is to unravel and reveal the glory of Sundaram to our readers and also equally important, to celebrate the completion of 25 years of its existence, that we have this cover story. Sundaram is special simply because it is an indelible part of Swami's glorious mission. It has not only housed the Lord whenever Swami visited the city after its existence, but also provided comfort and care to thousands of troubled hearts and mangled minds over the last two and a half decades. Miracles have happened at Sundaram. Minds have been moulded and the Lord's presence felt every moment. We will tell you stories of all this and more as you journey along with us on this spiritual voyage of experiencing the sublimity that is Sundaram. Let's start with the very beginning - how did it actually come about?

THE SUNDARAM STORY

The Beginning - Swami First Came To Chennai in 1945!

Not many will know that Swami's physical association with Chennai dates back more than six decades now! Swami first stepped in Chennai, then known as Madras, as a nineteen year old young charismatic boy in 1945. Since then He has blessed the city of Chennai with any number of visits, sometimes staying for months together - as in 1950 when He stayed from January to March, or in 1954 when He was there from January to April. Between 1945 and 1997, Swami blessed Chennai with more than sixty-five visits, touched the lives of thousands and gave the opportunity of being His host to many ardent devotees like Mr. Hanumantha Rao, the Raja of Venkatagiri and Sri Venkatamuni, in whose residences Baba stayed in 1950's.

In fact, Chennai had become His temporary headquarters while visiting other places. Be it His visit to Rishikesh and Hardwar in July 1957, or to Tirupati in March 1960 or to Badrinath in June 1961, Chennai was the take off and return station. Even the first All India Conference of Sai Organizations was held in Chennai on 20th and 21st April 1967.

While all this was happening, Swami inaugurated "Sathyadeep" – His abode in Mumbai in 1968 and this was followed by the unveiling of "Shivam" in Hyderabad in April 1973.

The Longing of the Devotees for Sundaram

The devotees in Tamil Nadu longed for Swami's blessings to complete the trilogy [of *Sathyam*, *Shivam*, *Sundaram* – the title of Baba's biography] by having "Sundaram" in Chennai. This fervent desire to build an abode for their Lord was there actually even before Shivam was inaugurated. In 1970 itself, a little over six grounds of site became available, but the devotees felt it was not enough to erect an imposing structure. In 1971, by divine design, another six grounds of the very adjacent site along with a building became part of the 'Sundaram site'. But no construction actually began.

Years rolled by. Though there was clear indication from Baba that "Sundaram" was certain to come, nobody knew when. In 1976, during Summer School in

Ooty, when Swami materialized a medallion marking all the future Sai Centres, devotees could easily spot Chennai. Their happiness was tinged with sadness - happiness that it was sure to happen, but sadness over it not yet getting started.

The impatience of the devotees got the better of them and they renovated an existing building in April 1976 and even did a “*Gruhapravesham*” (house warming ceremony). This became the centre of the organization’s work but the building was not to be Swami’s abode during His visits. “Sundaram” had not yet arrived. **Swami even remarked, “It is not Sundaram” with gentle irony! But after that Bhagavan took over.**

The Blossoming of Sundaram

Those who were fortunate enough to be present in those days know how Swami’s involvement with the design and construction of the new edifice was comprehensive and complete. As the old timers say, **“Swami shaped Sundaram brick by brick. He was in fact the architect, the engineer and the builder. Every detail – be it the doors, the imposing gopurams, the frescoes, the Statue of Shiva-Parvati at the entrance, the lotus shaped Darshan balcony or even the gates and the visitors’ lounges – are all what He fashioned.”** And Sundaram, true to its name, blossomed with beauty and splendour! And why should it not, with the Loving Lord blessing it with His constant loving gaze and caring touch!

The much awaited day finally dawned. On the 18th of Jan 1981, the “*Kalasha Puja*” (preliminary worship before inauguration) was done and on the next day, the 19th of January Bhagavan consecrated Sundaram as His “Mandir” when He made it His abode. It was a red-letter day in the history of Chennai and Sai devotees celebrated it in the grandest way possible. Sweets were distributed, clothes were given away, all the workers were handsomely felicitated and there was joy all around. On the 55th year of His advent, the 55ft “Sundaram” paid her obeisance to her Lord with gratitude and reverence.

The divine rays emanating from Sundaram since then have attracted many spiritual seekers to this holy abode. If we have to describe Sundaram in one phrase, it is ‘Beauty with Sublimity’.

Literally ‘Sundaram’ – Every Detail is Beautiful

Once you cross the threshold of the two gates at Sundaram (one for gents and one for ladies) what welcomes you is a large expanse of sand just like it used to be in Puttaparthi years ago. This is the Darshan ground where the Lord moves among the crowd during His stay in Sundaram. What was once a sprawling area of 30,700 square feet is now a trifle too small to hold the overwhelming crowd that throng on special festival days like Baba’s Birthday, Shivarathri, New Year, Christmas, etc. or during everyday Darshan sessions when Swami is physically present in Sundaram.

Be it the captivating idols of Lord Ganesha and Lord Subramaniam at the frontal corners of the building, or the beautiful statue of Lord Shiva and Mother Parvati to the left of the entrance to the small prayer hall facing east, or the ornate and exquisite teak wood doors at the Main Darshan Hall with intricate wooden carvings of various deities and religious symbols, or even the aesthetically sculptured two “Yelis” (celestial beings) on the outer entrance to the Main door - every detail of Sundaram is beautiful. Sundaram is ‘vibrant’, yet ‘still’ and ‘silent’ in the serene peace that pervades.

“We Know Swami Is Always There In Sundaram” – Mrs. Mona Desuja

Anyone who has entered the rectangular-shaped main Darshan Hall, knows why it is compared to the mythological “Vaikunta” - the serene abode of Lord Vishnu. As one devotee says, **“A sense of peace engulfs you and you can feel the mysterious hand waiting to come to your rescue as you enter the Hall. One look at the breathtaking photo of Swami standing in a background of greenery with a gentle smile on His face and a fully blossomed rose clasped in His hands ...combined with the stage décor becomes such an overwhelming experience! It is as if Swami is beckoning you! It provides immediate relief.”**

“Even though I am tied up with 3 children and take care of home needs, still I find time to go to Sundaram. Because I know my problems are solved in Sundaram,” says Mrs. Mona Desuja. “My Swami is always there in Sundaram”, she continues and says, **“And when I sit there and start chanting His 108 names, I can feel that He responds immediately. I will know instantaneously that my problems would get solved as I see Swami smiling at me. We see to it that any good thing we do or any property or car we buy, we go to Sundaram first, even if it is very late in the night.** If anything adverse happens then too we rush to Sundaram, be it related to our business, or our children’s health. We know Swami is there to help us. Sundaram has given me so many things in life.”

It is not uncommon to find devotees’ cheeks wet with tears of joy and bliss during Bhajan sessions in Sundaram which happen every Thursday and Sunday evenings and also on special festival days. More than the quality of bhajans per se it is the sublime ambience of Sundaram radiating positive energy which touches the core of every devotee’s heart.

“It’s Like Stepping into a Temple of Peace.” – Dr. Mohan

As Dr. V Mohan, a diabetologist by profession, who has been visiting Sundaram for more than a decade and a half now, says, “Many times when I have gone to Sundaram with a disturbed state of mind, the moment I enter Sundaram, it is like going into a temple of peace. In fact to be honest, I prefer Sundaram and Puttaparthi to regular temples (even though I may be biased in my opinion being a devotee of Swami) because I think the way things are conducted here is so unique! Everything happens smoothly without much noise, without much paraphernalia, without much fuss in doing things. **You**

go there and sit in meditation and observe the rules and discipline and take part in the Bhajans and read the thought for the day and peace comes to you automatically! You are filled with positive vibrations. You feel like doing something more, your feel recharged completely after listening to bhajans and satsang. This has been a great source of inspiration to me. In fact, when we were deciding to move our house, we chose a house which was relatively near to Sundaram.”

SUNDARAM – ITS BEAUTY WITH SUBLIMITY

The Blessed Darshan Hall

Well, that is the extent to which Sundaram has influenced minds and changed lives. The 25-ft Main Darshan Hall, the focal point of all activity in Sundaram, with nine ornate windows, five entrances and embellished with symbols depicting all religions of the world is spacious and tranquil. On the stage, apart from Swami's picture in the centre, there is a beautiful statue of Lord Ganesha in the front as is in most Sai temples and also on either side of the dais are arched decorations of Lord Shiva and Lord Vishnu on glass with beautiful wall inscriptions of Dasavatar (the ten incarnations of Lord Vishnu) on all sides of the glass. Among the rarities that can be noticed here is the image of Lord Shiva holding a conch in one hand (generally Vishnu is associated with the Conch). Incidentally, these glass panels serve as a door when Swami comes to the stage for giving Darshan in the evening during His stay in Chennai.

The stage also has the Lord's 'Padukas' (Sacred Sandals) embedded in gold inside a golden lotus in the forefront and the usual cushioned chair with a foot rest - all dedicated for Baba.

“The arathi at the end of bhajan or other spiritual sessions in Sundaram is an electrifying experience”, says a regular visitor to Sundaram. “With the majestic chandelier being lit during arathi, the huge bell (made specially in Kumbhakonam) resonating with “Aum”, and nearly two thousand devotees joining in with great gusto and devotional fervor, the arathi is an indulgence of mysticism.”

Apart from the Main Darshan Hall there is also a small prayer hall with a beautiful picture of Swami in “Abhayahasta” (blessing with a raised hand) and an impressive wooden carved statue of Dakshinamoorthy (Lord Shiva) and also other matching architecture of Lord Ganesha, Lord Muruga and other deities. It is here that Bhajans are conducted on all days other than Thursdays and Sundays by groups from Sai Centres across the length and breadth of Chennai.

The Hallowed Shirdi Baba Temple

Another significant structure in the Sundaram compound which deserves a special mention is the “Shirdi Temple” located at the northern end of the campus. They say that the peace that pervades the atmosphere here is to be experienced to be believed. It is special because Swami has blessed and

spiritually charged this temple profusely by materializing a nine-gemmed flower-shaped jewel which He pressed on the forehead of the marvelous sparkling white Shirdi Baba idol. Besides this idol, there is also a miniature idol made of *panchaloha* (five metals) for the purpose of *abhishekam* (doing worship with flowers, milk, etc.) which is performed every Thursday and on all festival days. There is also a beautiful 'shaligram' (a lingam), again manifested by Baba, which is placed before the silver *padukas* (sandals) in front of the idol with a metal-snake hood over it. No one can be untouched by the soothing divine vibrations emanating from this place.

Shanthi Vedika – The Lord's Durbar

"Shanthi Vedika", the raised platform facing south in the open sands outside the main building is another important structure in Sundaram, because it is here that Swami usually gives discourses to the crowd when He is in Chennai. With a beautiful sculpture of *Garuda* (vehicle of Lord Vishnu) holding the platform from below and its pillars decorated with symbols of all religions, this picturesque venue is where Swami has spent hours speaking to the devotees, seeing the performances of Bal Vikas children, distributing food and clothes to the poor and guiding the Sevadals during His numerous visits to Chennai.

SAI DEVOTEES AND SUNDARAM

"Sundaram is Like My Home." – Sri A K Kumar

Many longtime devotees now joyfully narrate how Sundaram actually brought them close to Swami. Sri A K Kumar who has been a devotee for more than two and a half decades now and regularly sings during the bhajan sessions says, "My journey to Sai began in Sundaram in 1980. One of my close associates in my school asked me if I would like to sing in Sundaram. Then I thought, 'what is so great about this place but maybe I will try to make it once a month, that too just for listening' - but now Sundaram is almost like my home. You will not believe it, but one day I had to go to hospital for some registration and quite unknowingly I landed in Sundaram and went inside and only then I realised I was supposed to be heading somewhere else! That is the affinity I have for Sundaram."

And this special relationship with Sundaram is because as already mentioned it is at Sundaram that many people have basked in His love and grace, as Kumar recalls, "**Whenever Swami comes to Sundaram, the first thing He does is He steps inside, comes near us, enquires about us and only then He proceeds. How can we ever forget the golden moments we have had with Swami...He used to spend so much of His time with us, almost play with us!**"

"We Associate Swami with Sundaram." – Dr. Mohan

Speaking about His association with Sundaram, another longtime devotee, Dr. Mohan says,

“Several times when Swami has come to Chennai we had the good fortune to have the Darshan of Swami in Sundaram. So next to Puttaparthi, which we visit several times year, our association with Swami is at Sundaram. We associate Sundaram with Swami and all the good things, all the teachings which Swami stands for, and to us it is a great source of mental peace, inspiration and above all sets to us the right ideal.”

IN SUNDARAM - WORSHIP TRANSFORMS INTO SERVICE

So, Sundaram is not all about serenity, peace and beauty alone. It is a bridge between the devotee and the Lord. What is more noteworthy is how all this devotion to the Lord gets translated here into concrete action. To quote from Dr. Hiramalini Seshadri's article “Sundaram – A Haven of Love And Peace at Chennai” which appeared in the Hindu, on 8th Jan 2006,

“The first Chennai organization to rush with food for those affected on that fateful Boxing Day, 2004; the silent hub through which a crore worth of relief materials were disbursed to the tsunami affected of Tamil Nadu; the on-the-spot agency that coordinated efforts to get water to parched Chennai through the Sathya Sai Ganga Canal; the venue for over 200 marriages of people of all faiths conducted totally free of cost with clothes and gifts to set up home for the newly weds; the chapel that puts up the finest Christmas tree and manger in town; the Masjid from which men sally forth laden with eats and drinks to greet their Muslim brothers as they walk up from the Marina sands after the daylong Ramzan fast and prayers; the temple where *upanayanams* (Hindu thread ceremony) are done free for all, irrespective of caste and creed; the *Veda Patashala* (vedic school) where women are taught to recite the *Vedas*; the divine 'hospital' that has been conducting free weekly clinics for 25 years; the NGO that has arranged for over 7000 cataract surgeries at Chennai; the 24 hour 'liquid love' helpline that connects volunteer blood donors to needy patients and hospitals; the 'school' that not only helps slum children with lessons but imparts education in human values, and Sanskrit (later we will relate the moving story of how one of the kids, Durga, is now doing a degree in Sanskrit at QMC (Queen Mary's College) and even teaches other slum children spoken Sanskrit!); the centre where since 2002, at Baba's behest, Disaster Management Teams have been trained so that during calamities trained youth can plunge into disaster management rather than just hand out some relief (the tsunami saw exemplary disaster management by these teams at Nagapattinam and Colachal); the hallowed grounds where divine all-faith bhajans resound every Thursday and Sunday; "Sundaram" is all this and more.”

Sundaram – The Nodal Point of Sai Organisation Activities

Yes, Sundaram is much more. Sundaram is a synthesis of peace, love and more importantly, service. And it is this service, done with great discipline and dedication, which has made Sundaram a very unique spiritual centre. It has inspired thousands to feel for their fellowmen and extend their loving hand selflessly to other thousands who have no shelter, no basic education or

healthcare facilities. Every activity is done strictly according to the guidelines laid down by Swami from time to time. It is this disciplined approach to service and spirituality which has caught the attention of many. As one devotee says,

“The moment we started attending the bhajans there and got to see some of the activities taking place at Sundaram, a great transformation came in our lives because we realised not only the spirituality which pervades this place, but also the strength of the Organisation, its discipline and its character and the way things are done within the Sai Organisation really made a deep impression on us.”

With the Sai Organization spread in every district of Tamil Nadu, there are more than 700 Sri Sathya Sai Centers in the state and Sundaram is the nerve centre of this entire network. The concept of service was enumerated and emphasized by Swami by practice and precept in Chennai more than four decades ago. In fact, the first All India Conference of the Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organisations was held in Chennai in April 1967. And since then, service has been a continuous activity by the Sai Organization in Chennai, receiving added impetus in the form of better infrastructure and resources after Sundaram came into being in 1981.

“Liquid Love” – A 24/7 Supreme Service

Among the various service activities that go on continuously in Sundaram is the all-year-round-the-clock service of organizing blood donors for patients undergoing surgeries in the city hospitals. Rechristened as “Liquid Love”, this started in a small way on 6th Dec 1998 in Sundaram and now has an elaborate information counter and a data bank manned by three volunteers, 24-hours 7-days a week. **With a need-based software and a database of more than 3000 donors comprising of all blood groups which is constantly updated, it serves on average 100 patients a month undergoing surgeries with some receiving 2-3 units of blood, including rare blood groups.**

The way this service operates is this - the moment there is a request for a blood donor from any of the city hospitals, the enlisted blood donors are immediately contacted who readily volunteer to donate at the respective hospitals/blood bank with fervent zeal. Thanks to frequent interaction with the hospitals, there is excellent coordination and the needy are served at the required moment. A number of shields, trophies, and citations awarded by the Madras Voluntary Blood Bureau stand as testimony to the yeoman service being rendered by this set up in Sundaram.

In fact, this service is there even in the Railway Station in Chennai. Christened as Sri Sathya Sai Public Utility Services, this counter in the railway platform provides a host of voluntary services to people landing in Chennai from all parts of the world including first-aid, city info, etc. Many people visibly moved with this service say, ‘it is such a comforting feeling to know that there is always a “Sai Brother or Sister” in Chennai ready to help you in your times of need including arranging for blood, if required.

The Amazing Sai Krupa – Heaven for the Poor and The Sick

Another regular free medical service which is run every Sunday is at a place adjacent to Sundaram called “Sai Krupa.” With doctors from all disciplines of medicine treating several hundred poor patients every week here, this is a godsend for the underprivileged and the sick. And this was going on as early as 1977, that is, much before Sundaram came into being. Dr. Prabhu, Director, Advanced Nuclear Medicine Research Institute, Puraswalkkam, Chennai, who has been serving at Sai Krupa for many years now, recalling his first experience at the centre says,

“The Patients Come Here For Love.” – Dr. Prabhu

“The very first experience was very encouraging and all the paramedical and the volunteers were so friendly with me. Motivated by the will to serve and through their love and affection I decided to come every week. I even shifted my residence to T. Nagar which is nearer to Sundaram, so that I will not miss any Sunday.... I came across a lot of patients, about 300 to 400, most of them suffering from various degrees of illness. One may get the impression that these patients are being cured by the medicines which we give. But actually this is not true. The patients who come here are not coming for the medicines that are being dispensed here, but for the love. It is really the love of our beloved Swami that heals them. Slowly we started getting higher medical specialists like cardiac thoracic surgeons, plastic surgeons, vascular surgeons, who started coming regularly. And this kept us motivated further and we kept improving our care to these people.”

“Even if Out of station, I Do Not Miss Sai Krupa”. – Dr. Kumari Menon

“Even if I am out of station I make it a point to come to Chennai on Sunday so as not to miss the Sunday at Sai Krupa,” says another doctor, Dr. Kumari Menon, a pediatrician in Vijaya Hospital, Chennai who has also been associated with Sai Krupa for decades now. “I remember” she continues, “once there was a child who had obstruction in cerebro spinal fluid in the brain. We had done a shunt (bypass) for the child. The child used to come to Sai Krupa every Sunday for regular check up and by Swami’s grace was cured without any complications. On one of the occasions, I remember, we had lunch with Swami. While interacting with us, He said, ‘it is better to go and serve in the door steps rather than waiting for the patients to come.’ And so, we started Grama Seva (Serving in the villages). We not only were attending the patients there but also were giving them much-needed health education.”

The commitment of the doctors and their dedication to Sai and the service camps is exemplary, to say the least.

How Is The Sai Krupa Different?

How is it different serving in Sai Krupa than in their regular hospitals?

“Sai Krupa is more like a family,” says Dr. Prabhu. “Here, doctors not only give the required medical help but also patiently listen to all the difficulties of the poor patient. The very act of listening to their problems and pain cures 90 % of their illness.”

In Sai Krupa a concerned effort is made by all the doctors to understand the patient first before prescribing anything. Keeping their sensibilities, rural conditions and other factors in mind, a lot of thinking is done as to how the medicines are to be dispensed, how rural camps should be organized and how to better understand the pains and suffering of this often neglected and poor section of the society. And all this has resulted in better care to the patients and their numbers keep increasing every Sunday.

How Sai Krupa Grows...

In fact, impressed with the purity of the cause, many more doctors have joined Sai Krupa lately. Dr. Prabhu mentions about three of his friends. One is Dr. Jayavel Rajkumar, a plastic surgeon at the Madras Medical College (who in his younger days somehow was not influenced by Swami though he saw Him a couple of times, but is now a regular at Sundaram). “Similarly, Dr. Sundar, a Cardiac Thoracic Surgeon who has worked in the United Kingdom as a consultant for more than 9 years,” Dr. Prabhu says, “called me up one day and said, ‘Prabhu, I will be happy to do some work for poor people’. And I said, ‘why don’t you accompany me every Sunday to Sai Krupa’. He liked the idea but could allot only one day a month. But now Dr. Sundar is helping diagnose cardiac patients every week in Sai Krupa, unless he is out of station.”

The third on Dr. Prabhu’s list is Dr. Raghunath, a vascular surgeon with 13 years experience in UK, who is a consultant at Apollo Hospital. Like Dr. Sundar, Dr. Raghunath too was looking for something like Sai Krupa and after coming to know of it, visits regularly to see the patients. In fact, Sai Krupa, as somebody remarked, is now almost a super specialty centre!

Striving continuously to improve their services, the doctors at Sundaram have also recently started a “Young Adults Health Care Programme” to guide the youth in the villages who suffer from alcohol abuse, drug abuse, anemia and improper health education. **The idea is to make the youth physically, mentally and spiritually strong so that they can be socially productive. All media – from charts to audio-video CDs – are being used to effectively communicate health education to the youth.**

The Doctors serving in Sai Krupa also voluntarily participate in the Public Utility Services at the Central Railway Station. “This gives an opportunity to interact with passengers with varying difficulties. We were able to guide them as to where to seek medical attention, apart from rendering first aid services,” one devotee-doctor says.

Years ago when Dr. Rama Devi, retired Director and Superintendent of the Government Children’s Hospital, showed her stethoscope to Swami

to bless it after she completed her medical education, Swami said “*Praja Seva Chei Bangaru*” meaning “Serve the people, dear one”. And this is precisely what Dr. Rama Devi and all the doctors at Sundaram are engaged in - unmindful of their personal comforts and heedless of luxury.

Seva in Sundaram is not restricted to blood donation and a medical centre at Sai Krupa alone. There are a lot of other health camps being conducted at regular intervals like the screening camp for Auto-rickshaw drivers, Geriatric camps, Eye camps, Pediatric camps, etc.

Special Medical Camps For Auto Rickshaw Drivers

Recalling his first experience at the auto-rickshaw driver’s camp, Dr. V Mohan screens the drivers for diabetes says,

“I was a bit surprised initially, because I thought that these young auto rickshaw drivers are young and poor, but not obese. They also seemed physically active and so I thought that it would be a waste of time to screen these people for diabetes, even though the rest of the camp would be very useful since their blood group was being tested and they were also given a small pass book containing information about their blood group and blood pressure. But we were greatly surprised to find that in the first camp we conducted, we found that out of all the drivers screened, 7% of the drivers screened had diabetes! And then, the then President of the Tamil unit of the Organisation, appealed to us as to whether we could take on these drivers for further free treatment and we agreed. And drivers screened at the camp, who have been identified having diabetes, are welcome to our centre and we offer life long free treatment.”

Such lifelong treatment is now offered to several hundred drivers who have been diagnosed with the disease out of nearly 10,000 auto-rickshaw drivers who have been screened so far in such camps conducted at regular intervals. “I am happy to say that we are offering them free lifelong treatment and they come to our centre. Even though their follow up is not regular, quite a large number of them have been retained for follow up and they continue to receive good diabetic control,” continues Dr. Mohan and adds, “before this, their sugar levels were not controlled and used to be at 400 to 450 levels and the worse part of it was they were totally unaware of it! This not only posed a danger to themselves but also to the passengers of the auto-rickshaw they everyday ferried in the busy streets of Chennai.”

How Have The Auto-Rickshaw Drivers Responded?

How has this service affected the lives and mindset of auto-rickshaw drivers? “The transformation that has come about in them is very encouraging,” says Dr. P Rama Devi, “Many drivers who used to drink water from any street corner now carry boiled water, thanks to the pep talk on health in the screening camp.”

Dr. Hiramalini Seshadiri, a rheumatologist and writer, has another interesting incident to narrate - "I had to dash down from hospital to Sundaram once. I took an auto-rickshaw which true to Chennai tradition had no working meter. I was hoping the driver wouldn't fleece me. **To my amazement he charged me most nominally. The surprise must have shown on my face for the driver said with a shy smile, "Amma, you 'Sundaram' doctors arranged for my mother's free eye operation and I myself had a complete free check up here ..".** Needless to say, Dr. Seshadiri was moved and silently thanked Bhagavan for giving her the opportunity to be part of Sundaram.

One may ask why only auto rickshaw drivers and not others? Dr. Mohan, who leads the diabetic screening camps, answers this doubt, "Unlike train drivers, bus conductors and so on, who have ESI (Employee State Insurance) and other benefits, auto rickshaw drivers are one group of people who do not have any benefits. And when this project was presented to Bhagavan, the All-knowing-One had not only directed us to go ahead with the project but also said that it was a very good project. And no wonder," says Dr. Mohan, " - it has been a very satisfactory experience for all of us."

The Importance of Health Screening – One Youth's Tale

But having stated that, the Sai Organisation in Sundaram does not restrict itself to auto-rickshaw drivers alone. They also conduct a number of other camps for various other categories of people which includes even the Sevalal Volunteers of the Organisation. Recalling a particular case of a youth who was screened at Sundaram, Dr. Mohan says,

"I still remember at one of the camps organised at Sundaram, a young man of 22 years had his blood tested for sugar for the first time, and we discovered that he had a blood sugar level of 350. He was shocked and angry. He complained that the instrument was wrong. He could not believe he could be diabetic. We checked him again and showed him that his blood sugar was really very high. Then we went on to check his blood pressure and that too at around 170 by 110 was very high. Of course, this could also be because he was very excited, apart from the fact that he had a history of blood pressure.

But, this only upset him further and he just broke down and blurted out, 'I walked in as young man of 24, and now you tell me I have blood pressure and blood sugar'. He was inconsolable. It took a lot of patience and kind words on our part to explain to him what would have happened if he had not come to the camp? He would have been walking around with the very high blood pressure and blood sugar and probably would have had a stroke or a heart attack.

Slowly, the message did go home and he started visiting our centre regularly and by His grace soon we were able to bring his blood sugar down and his blood pressure was also brought under control. And this is just one example of the numerous instances of how Sundaram, serving as a nodal unit to reach out to society, has benefited hundreds of people with diabetes, blood pressure and similar ailments."

The Vision Restoration Project

And as just mentioned it is not only diabetes or blood pressure, there have also been many eye care camps and notable among those is the 'Vision Restoration Project 2000' which was undertaken during Baba's 75th Birthday to conduct 75,000 cataract surgeries in the state of Tamil Nadu. **However, sensing the great need for it among the poorer sections of society, this project is being continued even now and in the last three years more than 7,000 surgeries have been performed in the city of Chennai itself!**

Sai volunteers go to each and every slum in the city, identify the patients and convince the uneducated about the need for the surgery and personally bring them to the Voluntary Service Camps. Then, apart from the collective prayer that they do for their speedy recovery after their surgery, they also provide instructions and medicines for post operative recovery and even carry out the necessary follow up by visiting the patients frequently at their living areas. Dr. (Mrs.) Mohan, an ophthalmologist who is very much involved in all camps connected with eye care says, "This has been a very satisfactory experience for all us."

And Dr. Mohan, on his part, minces no words when expressing his deep interest in the service camps in Sundaram. Expressing his gratitude to Swami for the opportunity, he says, "We have been very fortunate to be blessed and be involved in Bhagavan's movement and we also have been very happy that Sundaram has been the nodal point for us - Sai brothers and sisters in the medical fraternity - to come together and contribute that little bit to society, though lots more needs to be done."

Responding Timely to Disasters, Such as the Tsunami

Is it not heartening to see so many distinguished doctors taking to selfless social service inspired by Swami? And that was only a glimpse of the Medical Seva being rendered by doctors operating from Sundaram. But service in Sundaram has much more to it. For example, the service done during natural disasters. The moving saga of service done by Tamil Nadu sevadals during Tsunami in December 2004, is another grand and inspiring tale by itself and we have already done a special issue entirely on this in March 2005.

Sundaram was the central hub in the mega operations that were undertaken on that occasion to disburse food, clothes and other basic necessities worth over a crore of rupees. Procuring all the materials, properly packaging and finally shipping 5,000 boxes of relief material to the affected location in Nagapattinam – every activity was coordinated from Sundaram and done with meticulous planning in record time. **There were hundreds of Sai volunteers who worked in the open sands of Sundaram forsaking food and sleep for days to see to it that the work is completed at a swift pace.** Dr. Prabhu who was a witness to the stirring service that was done by the youth during Tsunami, recalls that,

“On December 26th which happened to be Sunday on 2004, when we came to our regular service at Sai Krupa, we found that the Young volunteers were very active and running around busy with numerous tasks. **Our Sundaram volunteers were, in fact, the first people to jump to rescue the affected people in the Tsunami. They quickly organised the food and other relief materials and systematically distributed them to the affected, long before the other agencies could step in.** And all this was done very quietly, without publicity. The intention was only to serve and nothing else.”

Continuing further on how he became involved in the Seva, he says, “When I was reading the newspapers I was thinking whether I would get an opportunity to see how people have been affected at Nagapattinam. And just then there was a call from Sundaram, that I should go and take care of the volunteers who were serving at Nagapattinam. This was an enlightening experience. I was able to see in person how, well-to-do people were rendered homeless in a matter of a few minutes and how our Seva dals were active at the ground level.

Our job was primarily to take care of the Seva dals, especially the young boys who have not been exposed to any sort of difficulties during their career and now they were doing immense amount of distribution of relief material to the public. The relief material was very neatly packed at Sundaram, transported and the distribution at the end point was organised in such a way that there was not a single untoward incident. There was no requirement of any police or security personnel help and the way our volunteers conducted themselves is a really educational experience for any organisation.”

Like they say - success begets success - and in Sundaram selfless service propels you to do more and more service for the needy and grief-stricken. **And now there are regular Disaster Management Training programmes conducted in all 23 districts of Tamil Nadu for the Sevalal youth and ‘Disaster Awareness’ programmes being planned for college students.**

Thus, Sundaram has been the divine ground which has inspired hundreds and thousands to practise “Love in action” just like Baba does and more importantly, has sustained and augmented their passion and devotional fervor every passing year. No doubt, it has brought fulfillment in the lives of many and as Dr. Rama Devi says, “Sundaram is a Beacon of Light to people who have really lost their way. **People who cannot afford to go to Puttaparthi, or do not have the capacity, physical health and opportunity, come to Sundaram to reinforce themselves.**” Sundaram is truly a spiritual garage-cum-citadel. Dr. Rama Devi, incidentally is the first sevalal selected by Swami way back in 1970s.

SUNDARAM’S PRIDE - THE SUNDARAM SAI BHAJAN GROUP

Sundaram Bhajans – Indelible Part of Sai Devotees’ Lives

It is not only the continuous selfless service aspect which is appealing about Sundaram. There is also another very fascinating facet of Sundaram, an

aspect which has made Sundaram a household name the world over, where ever there are Sai devotees and that is the Sundaram Sai Bhajans. Known for their quality, purity and melody, the Bhajans of Sundaram have literally taken the spiritual practice of chanting the Lord's Name with music and feeling to a new level. If today, thousands of devotees are able to learn and sing Sai bhajans in their Sai Centres, it is because of the dedicated work of a group of trained men and women often known as the "Sundaram Bhajan group" who have been picked, nurtured and guided by Swami Himself during His numerous visits to Sundaram. It is this group which apart from singing in the holy Darshan hall of Sundaram on all Thursdays and Sundays, also has been regularly releasing bhajan cassettes and CDs since 1985. Till date, 56 volumes of Sundaram Sai Bhajans in Audio cassettes and 19 volumes in Audio CD have been released.

It will not be an overstatement to say that Sundaram Bhajans are an indelible part of the lives of Sai devotees. To get a real feel of it let us read what Dr. Mohan has to say. "Sundaram has always been a place which has fascinated me because of all the bhajans that I attend; I think the Sundaram Bhajans are very dear to me and somehow it appeals to the heart," says Dr. Mohan who has a large collection of Sundaram cassettes and never misses to pick up every Sundaram cassette or CD that is released. "The only music I listen to now ever since I stopped listening to any music eight or ten years ago," he continues, "is these bhajans and they go on almost throughout the day. In the morning when I get up I hear the bhajans and whenever I am in the car it is this which is put on; and again I hear it in the evening and even in my office I have some instrumental Sai Bhajans going on! **So virtually throughout the day it is Sai Bhajans which rule my day and mostly these are the cassettes bought from Sundaram. And I am deeply grateful to Sundaram for these lovely bhajans,**" Dr. Mohan concludes.

Why are Sundaram Bhajans Special?

To have a live experience of how these bhajans are influencing hearts and transforming minds, all one has to do is to visit Sundaram on a Sunday or Thursday. The number of people lined up to go inside Sundaram on these days is astounding. As Dr. Hiramalini Sheshadri says, "**From top industrialists to locals and nearby slum dwellers, doctors, lawyers, businessmen...all make a beeline for "Sundaram" for Sunday bhajans. Parking is a real problem on Sundays and when asked what draws them to Sundaram, the near unanimous answer is – they get 'peace of mind'.**"

And why not? 'Love as feeling is peace' Swami says and Sundaram is suffused with divine love coupled with genuine concern and discipline. Swami has visited Sundaram at least ten times after its inauguration and five of them in consecutive years. In every January from 1981 to 1986, Swami was in Sundaram and in each of these visits He spent a lot of time with the members of the Sundaram Bhajan Group. In fact, it is He who has literally composed the group and all the artists in the group are ordinary people who have blossomed into divine instruments, touched by His constant love and care.

“Bhajan Singing is Part of One’s Life” – Dr. Devanathan

Take for instance, the case of Dr. Devanathan, a very senior member of the Bhajan group who has been associated with Sundaram Bhajans almost since its inception. Recalling his first tryst with singing, this Ph. D from IIT, Madras, says, “I have had no formal training in music except that I had inherited a genetic characteristic for an affinity with music from my parents. But then, thanks to His grace, I did get a chance to get myself tested at Brindavan during the Summer Course Programme in May 1978. I was surprised and also a little nervous when I was asked to sit on the stage of the huge auditorium that was just inaugurated by Swami in the Brindavan campus. There were a lot of judges sitting and I was asked to sing. I was really nervous. It was a pleasant surprise for me when I heard that I was the only person who was selected in the very first round and was even given a clean chit to go and sing in Swami’s presence every evening during bhajans!”

But the story does not end there. Another beautiful thing which happened as a sequel to this, in Dr. Devanathan’s words, is this: **“In the year 1979 when Swami was talking to a group of people, He waved his Hand and materialized Vibuthi. While He was giving Vibhuti to everybody present, when He came near me He took a small quantity and rubbed it on my throat. I was thrilled! I feel that was the beginning of a long stint in bhajans. Bhajan singing is not a special talent or career. It’s part of one’s life.”**

“You Sing, I Will Listen” – Swami

Truly, for the Bhajan singers and other artists of Sundaram, Swami is their life and Sai bhajans their life-breadth. Every member of the Bhajan group has moving anecdotes of how Swami has touched their lives and motivated them to dedicate their lives for this noble endeavour. “I remember the first bhajan session when I sang in front of Swami,” says Mr. A K Kumar, “Actually, I was frustrated. I was waiting for the bhajans to start but everything else was happening except bhajans. There was a lot of activity going on and I was thinking my coming here has become totally pointless. A waste of time. And just then Swami came in. I did not know that. I realised it only when I turned around after feeling a tap on my back and saw Swami there! **And most wonderfully, like a small child, He said in Tamil, “Yenna innum bhajan aaramikkalaya”** meaning, **“You have not started bhajan yet?”** At that very instant I knew he knows what is going on in everybody’s heart. **The merciful Lord, then came near and very sweetly said, “Ni paadu na kekkaren”, that is, “You sing, I will listen”.** I was obviously overjoyed. And after I finished singing Swami refused to move. I did not know what to do! Swami’s plan, I guess, was to stay only for 5 minutes. But He was there for about 40 minutes! Later, people came and thanked me for making Swami stay for so long. But we know it was all His divine plan and play!”

Singing Under His Loving Care And Guidance

Swami has not only encouraged the singers at every step, but also corrected, guided and given very clear instructions on the procedure and conduct of the bhajans to the members on numerous occasions. “There are several instances that I can recall with nostalgia” says, Dr. Devanathan, “when Swami spent a lot of time with the bhajan group at Sundaram. There were occasions when He made corrections to our singing and perfected the way we rendered a particular bhajan. To quote an instance,

“It was the year 1985. Swami was seated on the chair in Shanti Vedika and it so happened that I had commenced singing the bhajan *Brahmanda Nayaka Baba*. It is a Hindi bhajan and one of the lines in this bhajan goes “*Ayodhya nagari tumne banaye, dwaraka nagari tumne banaye, shirdi parti tumne banaye*”. This apparently was not the correct version of the song. I had sung it as “*banaye*” in every phrase. **Swami took cognizance of this and while I was singing He was making gestures to me, nodding His head and pointing out a finger and trying to tell me something. I just could not get what He was trying to tell me. That night after making a visit to one of His devotee’s residences, on his way back, Swami drove into Sundaram. Swami got out of the car and came straight to me. In fact, He was looking for me in the crowd. He then called me and said, “Can you sing the song again?”**

I started singing the whole bhajan and He said, “It is not that way, it is ‘*Ayodhya nagari tumne banaye, dwaraka nagari tumne baithaye, Shirdi parti tumne basaye.*’ It is *banaye, baithaye* and *basaye.*’ When we look at the meaning of this line, there is a very strong message in this – ‘Ayodhya was made Him while Dwaraka was spoken of and Shirdi and Parti were established by Him.’

Just to demonstrate how much interest Swami used to take in His earlier visits in correcting and guiding the singers, Dr. Devanathan recalls another experience and says,

“It was in the year 1990. I was rendering the bhajan, “*Sai Hamara Hum Sai ke, yisa prem hamara*” in Abbotsbury, Chennai. Swami was moving among the huge crowds that had gathered that morning and I thought the bhajan was really getting lost in the din. But at the end of the bhajan, after Swami took the arathi while He was walking down, He again beckoned the bhajan group to come. **When we went near, He asked me to render the whole bhajan again. He listened to it very patiently and then said ‘You are cutting of the *hamara* too quickly. It should be “*Sai hamara hum sai ke yisa prem hamaraaaaa*’.** ‘We are yours, we belong to you’, that was the meaning of the line and Swami wanted the stress at the appropriate place. But the whole exercise did not stop at that.

The next morning when Swami came out and He was about to leave for Bangalore, bhajans had just begun. Swami came straight to me and asked me to begin the bhajan once again! He stood beside me again, watched me

sing the entire song and finally said 'Yes, correct' and only then He walked away with a gentle smile on His face."

Guidelines from Swami for Bhajans

So that is the kind of involvement that Swami has with the Bhajans and Bhajan group of Sundaram. From time to time in numerous interviews that He has given to the group, He has spelt out very clearly a number of directions regarding the conduct of bhajans like –

- **"When you practise, practise with a full throated voice."**

- **"You should all disperse immediately after the bhajan. You should not reveal your identity to any of the devotees. That would be a distraction to them. So make sure that people return home with the same vibration that existed during the bhajan."**

- **"You should be pure and good as you lead the bhajans. Unless you are pure, unless you have your heart filled with devotion and love, how could you expect the vibrations to flow among the crowd that follows the bhajan?"**

-**"Once you are in bhajan do not think about what others say, stay fixed to Me and Me alone. In that way you can practise well and you can sing well too."**

There was also an interesting interview when Swami taught the members of the group what effective communication is and how should the singers and other musicians communicate with each other during bhajans. Dr. Chandrasekhar, a tabla player in the group who was present in that interview goes down memory lane and says,

"I think it was the year 1993. The whole Sundaram Bhajan Group was called in for an interview. **In the interview room Swami was talking to us on various topics, but suddenly He asked, 'What is communication?' and then looking at me He said, 'Tabla, tell me what is communication?'** I just didn't know what it is because He was talking about various other subjects and I was wondering why is Swami suddenly talking about communication. I could not really understand. So I did not know what to say. Then Swami again asked me, 'Do you think what you do is communication?' I had absolutely no clue what to answer. Then He came to the crux of the matter and said, 'Look, while singing you show your hands. What is it for?' and mind you, we do that at Sundaram during the Thursday and Sunday bhajans in front of Swami's photograph and Throne. But Swami was asking us in Brindavan about it.

In fact, I have been doing that from 1984. And in 1993 Swami asks, 'what you do by showing hands?' Well, while playing tabla you show hands. I told Him that we try to tell the *Shruthi* or the pitch. Then He said, 'Is that the way to communicate? See communication is this. When an ant bites you at the feet, immediately the nerves take information to the brain. The brain sends some

commands to the hand and the hand removes the ant. Now this sort of communication takes places from the feet to the brain and from the brain to the hand. Does anyone other than you know about it?' I said 'No'.

Then He said '**Communication should be like that. When you communicate to someone the other devotees should not know what it is. When people sit for bhajan they look at you and see how you make faces. How you show your hands. When you assemble for practice before the bhajan, at that time itself write down on a slip of paper who is going to sing what and at what Shruti and then pass it around.**' This was a revelation to all of us in the group, not only because He was telling us how to communicate with each other in the group during the bhajan session, but also indirectly revealing to us that He is there at every bhajan session that happens at Sundaram."

SUNDARAM IS A PLACE OF MIRACLES TOO!

The invisible presence of Sai in Sundaram is an experience which many in Sundaram can vouch for. There are even people who have actually seen Him seated on the throne! And no wonder there are so many miracles that have happened in Sundaram.

No Surgery Needed For Mariappan

When 10-year old Mariappan was diagnosed with having a hole in his heart which needed immediate surgery, he and his mother who lead a hand-to-mouth existence, were devastated, to say the least. They knew that they could never afford the surgery. Their only refuge was Sai and so they came to Sundaram to surrender themselves to their Lord through prayer and devotion. In the meantime, the Sai devotee doctors at Sai Krupa advised them to get the surgery done at Swami's Hospital in Whitefield and even sent him to a city Cardiac Diagnostic Laboratory for preliminary tests and scans. **What the tests revealed startled everyone! There was no hole there! Mariappan's heart was found normal and there was no surgery needed!**

Glaucoma Gone!

And this is no isolated incident. **There is the incident of the devotee whose scheduled glaucoma surgery was called off after he prayed at Sundaram the day before the surgery; the eye simply turned normal!** The patient had in fact, deposited the amount in the hospital for the surgery the previous day, only to ask for a refund the next day! And now coming to what happened very recently, Mrs. Hyma Ramakrishna narrates how her sister-in-law's cancer was cancelled after she sent her Swami's blessings from Sundaram. Here is the interesting story in Mrs. Hyma's own words,

And Now Cancer Cancelled!

"At 6.00AM on September 29th 2005, I attended the 81-day continuous Homam (sacrifice) being performed in Sundaram to mark Bhagavan's 80th

Birthday. But I was there with a very special request to Bhagavan – to help out my sister-in-law Gita who was in the midst of very intense treatment for a very rare type of cancer. And that day was Gita's Birthday and I committed Gita to Bhagavan's Divine Care and prayed for His Mercy to 'Cancel her Cancer' as He has done for several devotees in the past. As the *Homam* was going on, the vibrations were so intense and as I sat there with eyes closed, I felt Bhagavan's presence right there. After the *Homam* was completed I was given vibhuthi to be sent to Gita, who lives in New York. The next morning I sent the vibhuthi by post to New York and it reached Gita in a week's time. Gita applied the vibhuthi everyday and she called me to say, she felt immense strength. I was happy but it did not end there.

Gita was scheduled to take 12 courses of chemotherapy spread over a period of 6 months. After every course, her energy level would go down tremendously. The 11th course took a toll on her and she started feeling very low. As I prayed to Bhagavan beseeching Him to grant Gita energy, I felt a strong message coming through, that Gita need not go in for the 12th course. I called Gita and my brother Ramaswamy and conveyed this to them. But the doctor advised Gita to complete the 12th course. When the 12th course commenced, Gita developed high fever and the doctor had to stop the course immediately. Gita and Ramaswamy too at that time were convinced that it was not God's will to go through the 12th session.

In the first week of February 2006, Gita had a complete Cat Scan and colonoscopy done. **And you will not believe it, there were no traces of cancer in both the investigations! I thank the Lord for His immense grace."**

CONSTANT SPIRITUAL ACTIVITY AT SUNDARAM

Stories of grace and divine love flowing out to devotees from Sundaram like this are many. The purifying divine energy prevalent in Sundaram is an experience shared by everyone. Apart from the bhajans there are always a number of spiritual activities that devotees in Sundaram are always engaged in like chanting the 1008 Names of the Lord; conventions on Vedic Literature and Learning; Akhanda Bhajans (Continuous bhajans for 12 hours, 24 hours, etc.) on special occasions; regular study circle meetings conducted by and for the legal fraternity comprising of Supreme Court and High Court judges; there is another meeting held for High Ranking officials and bureaucrats (you will be surprised to know that more than 50 to 60 IAS officers regularly attend this study circle); while a third is for doctors from various disciplines.

In addition there are also Mass Marriages conducted for poor couples, Mass Upanayams (thread changing ceremony) for young children, and ceremonies honouring elderly couples aged 80 years and above, etc. Sundaram is a hub of Spiritual and Service activity and this is what makes the ambience in Sundaram so divine and pure. And these positive vibrations coupled with divine grace and the devotees' prayers create miracles. There is the instance of a devotee doctor who had been suffering from arthritis for years and who after participating in the in the *Sai Sahasranama Koti Archana* (Chanting of

Sai's name a crore times) on a few occasions started feeling better and to his amazement even found that he was able to squat on the floor which he had not done for years! "Is this not a miracle?" he asks.

How Sai in Sundaram Draws Devotees?

In fact, more than these miraculous instances of healing, what is more significant is the transformation in the heart that Sundaram has been bringing about in the young and the old. There are many who have come to Sundaram as skeptics and returned home as devotees. There are hundreds who have decided to never touch non-vegetarian food again, thanks to one visit to Sundaram. Ten years back Mona Desuja's husband never believed in Swami, but because of Mona's insistence and inclination, he promised to take her to Sundaram one particular Thursday. But in some way, tied up with his business, he could not return home on time that night. It was 9 PM by the time he returned from office and Sundaram regularly closed at 8 PM. But He somehow wanted to go and told Swami mentally, if he and his family have His darshan that day, he would follow Him blindly. And guess what? When he reached Sundaram way past 9 in the night that day, the lights in Sundaram were still glowing! Mr. Desuja had Swami's Darshan and needed no more assurances. For the Desujas now, Sundaram is another home. They say,

"We did not have a penny to start 10 years back. We used to go and talk to Swami in Sundaram and Swami used to come to our rescue mysteriously. We used to suddenly find new clients or business proposals and He used to even arrange finance and all other requirements for us. It is He who has done it all for us. We sit, relax and talk in Sundaram to Swami about our problems and our problems get solved immediately without saying! Any business which is going in losses, when we talk to Swami in Sundaram sells in double the prices!" The great sense of gratitude and reverence in Mrs. Mona's face is really moving. She now regularly helps in the cleaning of Sundaram and participates in all the functions at Sundaram.

SUNDARAM – THE GREAT MOULDER OF CHARACTER

How each individual is drawn into Swami's divine umbrella is fascinating. What is more wonderful is how little children coming to Sundaram are blossoming into beautiful divine instruments, thanks to "Bal Vikas" - the Child Development Programme in Sundaram. Inculcating love for God and all good things in life at an early age in children is perhaps the noblest and most satisfying contribution of Sai devotees in Sundaram. There are regular classes held on Sunday and other holidays where the immortal vales of Truth and Love are taught to the children through various innovative ways by dedicated Bal Vikas teachers.

In fact, some of the very senior members in Sundaram are actually products of the Bal Vikas Programme which like the Service activities in Chennai started much before Sundaram came into existence. Talking about the Bal Vikas programme of which he himself was a former student, Dr. Prabhu, says, "I have two girls - the elder one is 7 years old and the younger one is 4 years

old. Both of them have been regularly going to Bal Vikas like I used to. And what my parents have given to me is my duty to give to them so that they also enjoy the happiness and bliss that is contained in the Bal Vikas programme. And these children are very much happy and are able to sing bhajans very regularly and they have also been coming to Sundaram.”

But more than this what impressed Dr. Prabhu is their love for Swami. Citing a beautiful incident, He says, **“The amazing thing is that during the New Year, both these children got up at 3 o’clock in the morning and were promptly ready by 4 o’clock dressed in white to leave to Sundaram, to participate in the morning prayers - Suprabhatam and Nagarsankerthan.** This is what really moved me, because none of them get up before 6 o’clock in the morning. And the day before, I mentioned to them that if they get up early I would be taking them to Sundaram. And they were up on their own early morning that day! So that shows the involvement of the children and the love and affection they have towards Swami and how Swami personally takes care of these children in their upbringing.”

Ms Durga’s Stirring Story

Yes, once God enters into their lives, the children transform into gold. They glitter and shine radiating His love and grace. **Ms. Durga hailing from a very poor economic background whose mother worked as a servant maid to make both ends meet, is in her final year of graduation now pursuing a major in Sanskrit language in Queens’ Mary college in Chennai!** But this is not what is special about this brilliant girl who never missed the Bal Vikas classes in Sundaram. **What is amazing is that she is now teaching Sanskrit to even slum children!** Apart from this she now takes Sanskrit courses in Sundaram and with much humility and gratitude says,

“Swami has given me an opportunity to take Sanskrit class at Sundaram called ‘Dhasa Dhina Shibiram’, to see how much I am capable of. This class is for ladies and I took the class continuously for 10 days. Many of them told me, ‘We had an interest in speaking Sanskrit but we were not able to do it. Now we are lucky to learn from you.’ But for Swami’s blessings, this achievement would not have been possible.”

Ms. Durga has also been selected through her college for a first class course called, “Pradhana Deksha”. She passed in First Class in an exam conducted by New Delhi recently. And studying under her guidance 30 adults have passed in the Adult education programme. For this child who grew up in extreme poverty without a father, Swami has been the only source of strength. Says Durga, “I have no father. I have only my mother. My mother is a servant maid. Previously we lived in a hut. During rainy seasons there used to be severe leakages in our house. **Whenever there was a thundershower, we had a fear that our house might fall. My mother used to pray to Swami saying, ‘I am going for work. You only have to look after the children. You have to protect our house’. We always got the feeling that we are in the safe hands of Swami.** We saw houses which were in good condition, getting shattered in front of our eyes. But our house,

which was also in a poor condition, always withstood the thundershower, purely because of Swami's grace."

There are scores of cases like this where Swami has become the centre of children's lives. At Sundaram no stone is left unturned to see to it that the children get ample opportunities to grow into ideal citizens. When Swami is physically present, it is they who occupy the prime place in front of Swami in the Main Darshan hall, they learn to chant Vedic hymns, to act, to sing, to dance, to speak, etc. at Sundaram. And every time they have performed before Swami, Swami has showered them with gifts and much love. Almost every year they perform a full-fledged play in the divine presence taking stories from ancient Indian epics and other saints, be it the story of Prahalada, Ambareesha, Kanakadas, Shakubai or Lava-Kusha. In Sundaram, they are an indelible part of any celebration.

For the elders in Sundaram, it is really heartening to see how so many former Bal Vikas children are now occupying high positions in society and are role models in their own professional and personal life today. It gives them a great sense of fulfillment.

CELEBRATING THE SILVER JUBILEE

'Sundaram has been a great catalyst propelling thousands towards a Life Divine – a life of selfless love and service. And this has been possible because the soul inspiration has been Bhagavan.' This was the sentiment that was expressed by dignitaries who graced the occasion of the Silver Jubilee Celebrations of Sundaram on the 18th of January 2006 in the prestigious historic hall, The Music Academy in Chennai. Incidentally, it is at this venue that Swami has delivered discourses to the people of Chennai during His visits in the earlier years.

The Governor of Tamil Nadu, Sri Surjit Singh Barnala who was the Chief Guest for the occasion lauded the exemplary activities of Bhagavan and keeping aside his prepared speech, in a very cordial tone said,

"I See An Army of Peace" – Governor of Tamil Nadu

"I have myself seen the massive water project in the drought prone, water starved district of Anantapur (in Andhra Pradesh). I was so impressed that I wanted to convey my appreciation in person to Bhagavan. So I went to Prasanthi Nilayam. I felt greatly honoured when Swami spent an hour with me when thousands were waiting outside for His Darshan! To this day, I cherish that audience with Swami. He even presented me a ring and it is my most precious belonging and souvenir."

The governor also made a special mention of the Sevadals – the dedicated Sai Volunteers of the organization, and said,

"I admire the devotion and dedication of the Sai Youth and the numerous sevadals, both men and women, who are present all around the hall."

Comparing them to an ‘army of peace’ he said, ‘they could do anything due to their commitment to serve.’

The governor also earlier graciously released a colorful book titled “Sundaram – The Abode of Bhagavan” and also a DVD, a video documentary on Sundaram.

“I Am Impressed” - Chief Justice of Madras High Court

Another important dignitary who presided over the celebration as the Guest of Honour was the Chief Justice of Madras High Court, Sri. A. P. Shah. Though he has had no exposure to Sai organisation and its activities and has even never seen Bhagavan physically, Sri Shah said that he is more than convinced of the exemplary service projects being undertaken. Praising the services on the medical, educational and socio-care front, Sri Shah said, “The spiritual aspects too impress me and in particular, the words of Bhagavan ‘A Christian should be a true Christian, a Hindu, a true Hindu and a Muslim, a true Muslim’. He also mentioned that he went through the five-volume 80th Birthday souvenir set and was very happy to learn of Swami’s mega service projects.

Before the talks of these two dignitaries, the Hall reverberated with Mutli-faith Bhajans sung by the ‘Sundaram Bhajan group’. And later, Sri G K Raman delivered the welcome address and Sri V Srinivasan, All India President of Sai Organisations, in his keynote address spelt out very clearly the various activities and the mission of the Sai organization and Sundaram. The programme concluded with Sri Ramani, the State President of the Tamil Nadu Sai Organisation giving the vote of thanks.

Marathon Celebrations...

Well, this is only one of the major events that Sundaram had organized to celebrate its Silver Jubilee. There were many more, apart from various other service projects, spiritual activities and Bal Vikas programmes coinciding with Swami’s 80th Birthday celebrations; there were **80 concerts in Sundaram** by leading artists from Chennai like Ms. Sudha Raghunathan, Sri Madoline Srinivas, the Bombay Sisters, Lalgudi Jayaraman, Lalgudi Krishnan, to name just a few. For everybody, performing in Sundaram is a blissful experience and a privilege. For, there is something special about this place which stills the mind and confers peace so effortlessly.

SUNDARAM – A PRASHANTHI NILAYAM IN SPIRIT

For over 25 years now, Sundaram has been the lighthouse which has shown the path for enlightenment to hundreds of spiritual aspirants, it has been a divine channel which has given proper direction to hundreds of youth on how life is to be lead in a meaningful way. It has been a superb medium for the devotees to communicate with their Lord and seek answers. It has been a reservoir of peace bringing comfort and solace to many troubled

hearts and souls. It has been a centre for spiritual awakening. To put it in a nutshell, it has been a “Prashanthi Nilayam away from Prashanthi Nilayam.”

We are grateful to Mr Ramani, Mr SV Iyer, Sri Sai Shravanam, and so many Sai youth and also Seva Dals for their active cooperation and input.

-Heart2Heart Team

FEATURE ARTICLES

4 M's - MAN, MONEY, MYTH AND MORALITY

By Prof. G. Venkataraman

Introduction

This article is an extensive adaptation of a talk I gave in 2004 at a Conference of Economists, organised by the Economics Department of Swami's Institute. I am not an economist but since much of modern trade and commerce depends heavily on Science, I being a scientist was asked to air my thoughts on matters related to economics. It is not often that I find myself facing such a specialist audience and so I decided to provoke the pundits of economics with some unconventional ideas using Science and Technology as a mere excuse; and this talk was the result.

My central point was that when man goes avidly in quest of wealth, he quickly loses discrimination and begins to swallow all kinds of myths. This results in man abandoning scruples, if not wholly, at least in substantial measure, and in turn that leads to disaster. In other words, my pitch was that nobody, economists included, can afford to ignore Morality in the larger scheme of things.

Some Examples Of How Science Has Influenced Technology

Modern business, trade and commerce are all heavily dependent on Science and Technology. The linkage between these is elaborate and somewhat tenuous; so let us begin by trying to understand this connection, at least in outline. At one end, we have what is usually called basic research. Here, driven by intellectual curiosity, scientists explore and investigate various aspects of Nature purely for the sake of Knowledge – there is no ulterior motive, except maybe to achieve fame. Even that is secondary; the starting point is an irresistible and inner urge to know. However, not infrequently, discoveries made in this fashion make a huge impact on mankind. Let me illustrate with three examples.

EXAMPLE 1: In the first half of the nineteenth century, many people like Faraday, Ampere, and Oersted, to name a few, made important discoveries relating to the laws of electricity and magnetism. A few decades later, James Clerk Maxwell in England tied up all these into four fundamental equations known as *Maxwell's equations*. Today, a study of these is a must for physics students all over the world. So important are these that Richard Feynman, one of the great geniuses of physics, once told his students that a thousand years from now, while the American Civil War which was fought around the time Maxwell made his monumental discoveries might be forgotten, Maxwell's equations would not be – that is how profound they are.

At the time Maxwell discovered the equations now named after him, no one could imagine what an impact they would have on mankind. However, they have made an extraordinary impact, and it is to Maxwell's equations that we owe electric generators, motors, the telegraph, the telephone, radio, TV and what have you. However, in spite of this and other similar examples, until about the middle of the twentieth century, few understood the impact Science could have on Technology. On the contrary, Science was regarded as the pursuit of dreamers. But intelligent facilitators and inventors like Edison and Alexander Graham Bell, for example, clearly saw how Science could be harnessed for practical advantage. The story is told of one English scientist who demonstrated one of his discoveries to the British PM [I believe it was Gladstone]. The latter is supposed to have then asked, "Of what use is this discovery?" Pat came the reply, "Sir, one day you would be able to tax this!" In a way, that story summarises a large part of the connection between Science and Society.

EXAMPLE 2: Let me now move on to my second example. In the early thirties of the twentieth century, physicists began to apply the newly-discovered quantum mechanics to the theory of solids. This work got interrupted during the Second World War. After the War, three American scientists, Shockley, Bardeen and Brittain working in the famous Bell Labs were studying the current carrying capabilities of germanium, and in the process developed a device called the transistor.

It was the size of a pebble and a curio, but in accordance with the lab policy, the transistor was promptly patented. Thanks to this, the lab later reaped a huge reward, while the scientists named won the Noble Prize. Would you believe that the Intel Pentium chip that even school children now know about has packed within it several tens of millions of transistors? The transistor has done a thousand times more for communication and computer technologies than what the steam engine did for transportation, way back in the early eighteen hundreds.

EXAMPLE 3: My third and last example. In 1939, Otto Hahn and Lise Meitner in Germany discovered a phenomenon called nuclear fission. It was a very interesting scientific discovery, and no one knew then that this discovery would change mankind forever; but it sure did, via the atom bomb on the one hand and nuclear power on the other.

The Post World War Gold Rush

Till the end of the Second World War, Society admired scientists when they won the Nobel Prize but otherwise did not pay much attention to what they did. The Second World War changed all that. America as a whole and its military and political establishment in particular, quickly realised three facts:

- 1) Science can be used as a handmaiden to further military, political and economic agendas.
- 2) Science was too important to be left to scientists; Society must make Science Policy and heavily fund Science.

3) Science can help in making fortunes and money must be used as a bait to lure scientists.

Overnight, scientists lost their innocence and became putty in the hands of those who had money to throw. As a well-known physicist named Freeman Dyson once lamented, "We sold our souls to the devil!" The most spectacular example of this was seen in America in the post-war era where, dazzled by the power of the atom bomb, the Atomic Energy Commission, the Defence Department, the Army, the Navy, the Air Force and the Marine Corps independently began to literally flood scientists with fabulous research grants. In fact, these agencies were competing with each other in enticing scientists to work for them. Scientists could work on anything they loved to, and thanks to the Cold War, they could also get all the money they wanted. As if this was not enough, the Space Race brought in even more money. It was like a gold rush, and attracted by it thousands from everywhere flocked to America, including from India.

Research Today and its Relationship to the Corporate World

The dream days of the Cold War era have disappeared and lately, money for basic research is becoming quite scarce. However, big money continues to be invested in certain areas of applied research. There are other important differences. Earlier, research was almost entirely government funded, even in America, but now some of the big companies have got into the act.

However, they invest almost entirely on focussed research, research that would fetch returns for the shareholders. This has dramatically altered in substantial measure the complexion and even the culture of Science, so much so that many of the findings of basic research are now getting patented, especially in the field of molecular biology, something unthinkable fifty years ago.

Somewhere around the early nineteenth hundreds, when Sir. J.C.Bose founded the Bose Institute in Calcutta he proudly declared that the discoveries made there would be shared freely with the rest of mankind.

Today, not many would talk like that; if a discovery can be patented, it sure would be. In fact, in America, Universities **insist** on patenting discoveries with potential commercial fallout, even if the scientists who made the discoveries are not keen on it. The rule seems to be: if you can make a fast buck, don't wait!

So much for a thumbnail portrait of the way in which Science affects Society. In brief, during the last two centuries, we have witnessed the following:

1. The impact of the steam engine on transportation, and textile manufacture.
2. The impact of electricity in diverse areas ranging from domestic consumption to communication and transportation.
3. The impact of the internal combustion engine on all forms of transportation, surface, marine, and aerial.
4. The impact of solid-state electronics on everything from entertainment to computers.

5. The impact of nuclear energy both on power generation and military strategy. As regards nuclear power, France generates nearly 80% of the electricity it consumes via nuclear reactors.

And now, we are entering the era when bio-science is fast taking the centre stage.

Mass Production and its Impact

After this broad-brush view, I must next draw your attention to some important cultural aspects of the impact Science and Technology have had on Society. The automobile provides the classic example. The motor car was invented in Europe towards the end of the nineteenth century. Several versions were developed at that time, and entrepreneurs built a few hundred copies of each model. It was basically a curio for the rich.

Many in America followed suit, one of them being Henry Ford. Ford was not an inventor, but a businessman out to make money. He built garages, hired mechanics and machinists and turned out cars in hundreds. He was not satisfied; instead, he wanted to make cars in hundreds of thousands and to bring the price down so that the average American could easily buy one. With typical American genius, he invented an entirely new concept that had nothing to do with Science or Technology. It was more a case of daring innovation, driven entirely by the desire to make a lot of money. Ford realised that quantity comes only from mass production; thus it was that he invented the assembly line, which overnight dramatically changed the auto industry. When millions instead of hundreds of cars were built, the cost naturally came down and the auto revolution was ushered in.

This revolution had a tremendous impact across the board. First, there was a wave of immigrants who came to America seeking jobs, which now were available in tens of thousands. Next, assembly-line production meant one did not have to be a specialist. Instead, one had to do just one kind of job all the time but properly. This meant less training, less skills, etc. It also meant lower salaries. Further, more cars meant ancillaries, more jobs and more wealth generation. There was also the boom for the oil industry, highway construction, hotels, motels, tourism etc. Truly, Ford changed the American way of life.

However, Ford soon met with stiff competition, curiously in his own backyard. Competitor General Motors argued: "It is meaningless to produce the same model year after year. Why don't we introduce styling and keep changing models every year, enticing people to buy new models all the time?"

Thus was born the concept of planned obsolescence, which has now become a fine art. The story does not end here because after the Second World War, in far away Japan which was struggling to rise from the ruins, the man who headed a small company called Toyota asked: "How do I reduce costs further and make the car more appealing?" And he came up with wonderful innovations of his own. He said: "Cost can be reduced by using robots and tight inventory control [the just-in-time approach]. Next, let me make reliability

a corner stone. People would definitely like reliability. And why make only huge cars? Why not smaller cars too?" The Americans laughed but everyone knows what happened in the end, especially after the first oil crisis in the early seventies.

I am mentioning all this to drive home the point that the entry of mass production was a major revolution in innovation. It was soon realised that this technique could be applied across the board to all kinds of manufacture, from the apparel industry to the meat industry. Industrialists now realised that mass production alone was not enough. There is no use in making things in quantity if there are no buyers. The masses had to be constantly enticed into buying all sorts of things, including things they really did not need; and that is how marketing became an art of its own. Today, simple marketing has graduated into something much more sophisticated but that we shall consider a little later.

The Role of Synergy

A few quick words now about a new trend called synergy, wherein one brings together many skills already available to create a new product. In the old days, technological revolutions were ushered in by new inventions – that is how Edison, Graham Bell, and so on set in motion new waves. These days it is innovation rather than fresh invention that leads to many quantum jumps. The cell phone is a very good example. It was the result of a question one man asked. The question was: "How about linking the telephone with the wireless?" Actually, this was not at all a new concept because wireless phones were already in use during Second World War; they were called walkie-talkies.

Later, Motorola developed much smaller units that police and security people began to use extensively. However, these were meant mainly for short-range and point to point communication. The man who invented the cell phone linked all this to the regular telephone exchange, taking advantage of the miniaturisation now possible. Once the cell phone was invented, there was a stream of add-ons, so much so one can now even take a digital picture with a cell phone and send it to someone else in some other part of the world. This is how synergy works in modern industry.

There are any number of such examples. What I am trying to drive at is that new needs are constantly being created in a clever manner to promote more and more consumption and thereby not only expand but also create new markets. The net result of all this is that the entire sociology of production, distribution, etc., is constantly undergoing changes. All of this is not only affecting the entire financial system but even the way people think and work, as dramatically illustrated by the internet. This precisely is where mass opinion-moulding enters the picture.

The Dynamics of Wealth Distribution

Thus far, I have essentially talked about man, mass production and money, that is to say, about wealth generation, or to express it in terms of the title of this article, about man and money. Generation is one thing and distribution is another, and the latter is governed by the various socio-economic forces. For example, water comes down from the sky as rain. What happens subsequently to that water depends very much on the nature of the terrain. In some cases, the water collects locally while in other cases it flows away to other parts. The forces that govern wealth distribution are entirely man-made and this precisely is where manipulation comes into the picture. What is normally called creating a market is basically achieved by manipulating opinion, the opinion not only of the potential buyer [as it once used to be] but these days also of Governments, world bodies and Society at large. Thus, opinion moulding goes far beyond good old advertising. For example, where transport is concerned, what India badly needs are a) good roads, and b) a good public transportation system. Instead, the automobile has made its appearance in a big way. Rather than solving the problem, it has in fact made the situation worse, with traffic jams, unwanted accidents and of course pollution.

I won't go into all this in detail but it should be obvious that mass production is closely coupled to the mass manipulation of public opinion through heavy advertising. This is where myth enters the picture. The advertisement industry attracts the best of creative talent, and, by skilfully capitalising on the human weakness for desire, delivers buyers in millions to the Industry. It used to be said by the Nazis that if a lie is repeated often enough, it becomes truth! Western pundits often used to quote this line to decry Nazi propaganda but in the post-war world, that precisely is what the ad industry is doing in a big way, much to the detriment of Society and humanity. In short, the ad industry is essentially a myth-generation industry!

A special word now about the Media, since that is the prime vehicle for advertisers. Originally, this so-called Fourth Estate represented only the print media or the Press as it is generally referred to but now it not only covers the written word but also the radio, TV, internet and so on. Practically every Constitution in the world provides some kind of checks and balances to the agencies associated with governance and the rule of law. But where the Media is concerned, it does not.

Nor will the Media ever accept any control by anybody. It claims it knows its business, it knows how to police itself, that people have a right to know, that they are answerable to the people and people alone, etc. So cleverly has the Media manipulated all sections of Society that it has become holier than the proverbial Sacred Cow. Commenting on the recent tussle about privileges between the Legislature and the Courts, Justice V.R.Krishna Iyer, formerly of the Supreme Court of India writes, "We must not forget the words of Coolidge J. in *Stockdale v/s Hansard* that 'it is in the very nature of irresponsible power, particularly in the hands of a large body, to run into excess.'"

The Media is not a large body but unquestionably a very powerful one, in all Societies. Especially in rich and powerful countries, it has an understanding of sorts with the Establishment. Using its tremendous clout, the Media manipulates opinion and does heavy brain-washing, pretending all the time to be free and fair. The Media has become extremely self-serving, and most unfortunately, also rather irresponsible. In short, it is one of the prime engines of myth generation and opinion manipulation, working in unholy alliance with money power and the ad industry.

Escaping from Myth to Morality

Let me now come to my main point. I would like to begin first with a few observations made recently by Prof. Indiresan. Professor Indiresan is an electrical engineer by training and served for a while as the Director of the prestigious Indian Institute of Technology in Madras/Chennai. An intellectual of the highest order, these days he often comments on the Indian scene. Writing recently after an important decision by the Supreme Court of India, Prof Indiresan said:

When rulers first came into existence, they took away power from the people and used it supposedly for and on behalf of the people. Subsequently, elected governments began to do this. In the process, they could exercise power in such a manner that the individual could not. To give an extreme example, if an individual kills a person it is a crime; it is murder. But the state can execute a person and it is all legal.

Now of course, this surrender of power by the individual to the State has occurred with common consent and supposedly for the benefit of Society as a whole. This is what is referred to as the consent of the governed. But there are some disturbing factors related to this also. At the same time, philosopher David Hume was intrigued by the "easiness with which many are governed by the few, the implicit submission with which men resign" their fate to the rulers. He concluded that Government is founded on control of opinion, a principle that "extends to the most despotic and most military governments as well as to the most free and popular."

What was my point in offering the above quote? Simply this: earlier, we surrendered power to the State so that we may be governed. But now, through clever generation of myths, we are asked to surrender power to a conglomerate of vested interests, which together form the Super State of global commercial interests. As the American savant William Appleman Williams once wrote, modern day commercial interests want "the rewards of an empire without paying the costs of empire and without admitting that it was an empire".

The eclipse of moral authority in public affairs and the incompleteness of what is often referred to as the rule of law are highlighted by remarks made by a leading newspaper in India, after the Supreme Court was forced to acquit a person on legal grounds.

The Court added that while the defendant might have escaped the clutches of the law, the person concerned was answerable to his Conscience. Commenting on all this, the newspaper I mentioned earlier wrote that it was a case of “comprehensive legal acquittal in the main combined with emphatic moral disapproval...” The paper added: “The Supreme Court finds that the Code of Conduct does not have statutory force, cannot be enforced in a Court of Law, and cannot be construed as imposing a legal prohibition....”

These remarks pinpoint the fundamental crisis of modern times. Gandhi often used to say, as indeed we have believed in this country for thousands of years, that there is a Moral Law governing the Universe. And now, the highest Court of the India, which Swami hails as *Dharma Bhoomi* or the Land of Dharma, says that Moral Law is between a person and his or her Conscience, having little to do with the Law of the land. So the basic question is: “Which is superior? Moral Law or Law passed by Legislatures, International Bodies that are in collusion with global commercial interests, and so on?”

Driven by greed and the unprincipled quest for money, man has started swallowing huge myths and has created laws that would enable him to wriggle out of Morality. As the French philosopher Jacques Saurin observes, these days “law often permits what honour forbids.” Honour places a premium on duty and responsibilities. Today, however, as Swami often remarks, it is almost invariably rights first and duties later, if at all.

The point that I am trying to make is far from academic. Nor is it very original. Intelligent people the world over know all about what I am saying, and maybe much more; yet, few are crying foul. That really is my point. I maintain that this is the time for intellectuals to speak out and speak out boldly. To remain silent knowing fully well what is happening would be as inexcusable as Bhishma’s silence was during the public humiliation of Draupadhi. Indeed, I believe that is one of the cardinal lessons taught to us by the *Mahabharatha*, namely that intellectuals must be the Conscience-keepers of Society and NOT shut their mouth when there is a Moral crisis.

Swami says that there cannot be a mound without a pit. Yes, if some are very rich, it is because some others have been ruthlessly exploited and mercilessly driven to extreme poverty. Many may contest this and argue that the software industry, for example, cannot be accused of generating poverty. Yes, locally there might appear to be no connection between the amassing of wealth and the growth in poverty. However, at the macro level, wealth generation is never altruistic and invariably involves exploitations of various kinds, some very evident and others not so evident and happening via an invisible chain. All this being done by the so-called market forces that, in collusion with mass media, have perfected the art of mass deception through mass myth generation, that is, by saying that greed is good, that being rich is great, that market forces are good for Society and must therefore have their play even if some are forced to starve, and so on.

Raanan Weitz says, “Humanity shares one planet but on this planet there are two worlds, the world of the rich and the world of the poor.” Let us not delude

ourselves into the belief that these two worlds can co-exist peacefully. As Alan Greenspan, former Chairman of the Federal Reserve Board in America once remarked, "One cannot have an island of prosperity in the midst of a vast ocean of poverty." A Cardinal from Honduras puts it more pungently – I heard him in an interview broadcast by the BBC. This Cardinal says that three most dangerous weapons of mass destruction are: poverty, corruption and grave social injustice. Are we so blind that we cannot pin-point what produces these weapons? Where does the problem lie? Swami gives us a clear answer. In earlier years, Bhagavan Baba often used to come to the College to give private discourses to students, especially at the Business School. Speaking on one such occasion many years ago, He said:

Today, industries are declining on account of their excessive emphasis on finance and economics. They enjoy too much freedom and as a consequence have lost all sense of morality, ethics and balance. In fact, civilizations the world over are on the decline because morality is on the decline. That is why the relationship between man and man, man and Society, man and Nature are all degrading. All these ills are the consequence of erosion of moral and ethical values.

In every sphere, be it economics or academic, spiritual values are important. Even business and management must have its roots in Spirituality. A person without a spiritual background cannot be considered a true human being. The decline of social institutions is but a natural consequence of the overall decline of ethical, moral and spiritual values.

Given today's somewhat dismal situation, you might wonder whether all is lost and that there is no hope. Not at all; there is hope for sure because there **is** something **greater** than gold and gun put together; and that something is God. We just have to return to the moral path in individual and national life. That and that alone is the way to realise *Rama Rajya*, as Gandhi clearly saw a long time ago.

As Swami often reminds us, the ancients in India strictly followed a four-point code of conduct. This rule, termed the *Purushaarathas*, was distilled into four words: *Dharma*, *Arthaa*, *Kama* and *Moksha*, that is, righteousness, quest for wealth, desires and the yearning for Liberation. The ancients of India declared: "Man can aspire for wealth and have some desires; however, these must be bounded by righteousness on the one hand and a yearning for God on the other, that is to say, *Dharma* and *Moksha*." If man lives within these bounds, then the life of the individual would be balanced and harmonious. If the individual strictly adheres to Moral Principles, then Morality would automatically prevail in Society. And when that happens, one would have *Rama Rajya*, the Indian phrase for Utopia.

Swami puts it all neatly and crisply. He says we must first have Love for God followed by a fear of sin. If these two are present, then Morality in Society would automatically follow. If there is Morality in Society, most of our present problems would vanish. Mankind has thus far tried every possible kind of economic and political ism all of which have ultimately failed, because in

every single case, greed swallowed the proponents of the particular creed espoused. What we need is not any new ism or any new economic order but a return to basic human values that Swami constantly advocates. Money and myths such as the magic of the market place, will not work in the long run; Morality alone will. That is the way I feel; do you agree?

Please do write and let us know. As always, we can be reached at:
<h2h@radiosai.org>

Thank you and Jai Sai ram.

- Heart2Heart Team.

"I CAME WITH YOU..." - THE UNCHANGING 'I'

By Dr. Sara Pavan

***"I came with you when you came into this world.
I am always within you, above you, below you and around you.
I have saved you from many a danger and you did not recognise Me.
Father, mother, son, daughter, husband, wife;
Brothers, sisters, nephews, nieces, cousins;
Uncles, aunts, grand-parents, grandchildren;
I have specially chosen them all for you,
So that you will grow together,
Experience each other and evolve;
But not remain attached together for ever;
For, I take them away one by one,
As they fulfil their roles in your life.
Friends! They will be with you,
So long as you have wealth, position and power;
But will vanish even before you lose them.
I am still waiting for you totally unchanged
As I was when you came into the world.
Come nearer and nearer to Me, serve Me
And be answerable to Me and to Me alone."***

These words of Bhagavan Baba gave us a glimpse of reality, spoken to a small group of us sitting at His Lotus Feet in December 1984. They were God's words of supreme Grace. We were a group of sixteen devotees from Australia, my family and a few members of our Sai Centre. On the very first Darshan itself, Swami glided towards me and said, "Go," even before I could say a word! It was afternoon and some of our group weren't ready for Darshan, as we had just arrived. During the interview I informed Bhagavan that we had come as a group from Sydney, most of us Australians of European decent and prayed to Swami to grant our group an interview and bless us with a discourse in English. We also promised Him that we would not trouble Swami with personal problems. Swami graciously replied, "Tomorrow."

The very next morning Bhagavan swiftly asked me to take the group in. In His inimitable routine of ushering in His devotees, Swami asked us to go inside and He followed us into the room. We were beginning to sit on the floor while He closed the door and switched on the fan Himself. With a circular motion of His hand thrice, Bhagavan materialised vibhuti and poured it into the hands of most of us before He sat on His throne. He looked into each one of us penetratingly, like a divine scanner switched on to probe into the past of each one of us. Then, by His tender looks, He melted away our fears and agitations to make us feel at home with Him, many of us with tears breaching its bounds. In contrast to His apparent formality and 'distance' at Darshan He was very informal and 'intimate' with us in the interview room.

There was such stillness in the air and Bhagavan broke the silence with His soft melodious voice. He spoke to us in chaste English without interruption for a very long time, starting with the words quoted above: ***“I came with you when you came into this world ...”*** We were riveted to Bhagavan, as the heavenly river of Eternal Truth kept flowing from His divine lips, and the veil of ‘maya’ momentarily lifted. We were in heaven and we could have stayed there forever. He let us have a peek into our Reality, the unfailing, eternal and unsullied Love, which we truly are.

It took me several years to digest what Bhagavan had revealed to us that day. I prayed and earnestly sought for the deeper meaning of what Swami had revealed. By His grace alone I stumbled upon some subtle and deeper insights into the Truth of who and what we are. Even a voluminous book cannot be comprehensive enough to answer these fundamental questions. In this article, let me confine myself to clarify my own understanding of the Divine revelations that day.

“I came with you when you came into this world.”

Who is this ‘I’ and who is this ‘you’ in this context? Bhagavan has always told us that there are three persons in one:

- The one you think you are – the bodily aspect, the physical body, the individuality.
- The one others think you are – the mental aspect, personality, perceptions of others.
- The one you really are – the ‘I’, the Divine Principle, the imperishable ‘Self’.

The ‘I’ is the eternal, unchanging Self, the Atma or the Divine Principle within, which we truly are. The ‘I’ is the Spirit, which gives life to the body and makes it function. It is the kernel within the body-husk. The ‘I’ is the finest and highest level of consciousness, which is the ONE all-pervading essence, the source of everything. The ‘I’ is non-matter, neither mineral nor organic, not even biological. It is the Soul alone. The soul enters the foetus and takes residence in the ever-changing physical body, from infancy to old age or any time in between, when it gets released from the ‘body-prison’ at the time of transition or death, when the body is no longer habitable, due to disease, injury or decay.

From the very beginning, the developing foetus in the womb is merely made of matter, comprising of the five elements – space, air, fire, water and earth. It grows on the food consumed by the mother and that is why we refer to it as the food-sheath. The foetus starts its life from a single fertilised egg cell in the womb and it keeps multiplying into trillions of cells, which differentiate into different clusters to form different organs. There is some kind of intrinsic ‘intelligence’ that governs all this.

Up to 20 weeks of pregnancy the foetus is purely biological, which means it is without a soul. It is not different to any developing embryo of the lower

species of life, like a developing calf in the uterus of a cow. Unlike the lower species of life, the human alone has an individual soul. The soul enters the 'biological' foetus around the 20th week of development in the womb. This corresponds with the onset of foetal movements, which we refer to as quickening. In the beginning the soul flits in and out of the body and finally stays put in the foetus before term. At birth the soul, which is the 'I', came along with the newborn. That is what Bhagavan had meant by saying: *"I came with you when you came into the world."*

"I am always within you, above you, below you and around you."

In this context the 'I' represents the all-pervading consciousness, which is Divinity Itself. Swami once gave Isaac Tigrett an example of the 'I' principle: Bhagavan said, "The fish that is swimming in water is surrounded by an ocean of water and is itself made mostly of water. You are like the fish, God within and 'swimming' in the ocean of Divinity ." The implications are that the 'I' in each one of us is the same 'I' that is in every being around us. In other words, 'I' that stands for Divinity or Sai, is in everyone and that is why Swami exhorts us to see Him in every person. He also cautions us: "When you hate someone you in fact hate Me!"

"I have saved you from many a danger and you did not recognise Me."

This 'I' is in every person all the time. In bondage and ignorance we live in a limited circle of individuals and keep investing our love and resources on them, even if they are a thousand miles away. This kind of love is a bodily relationship called attachment. However, in times of desperate need those attached to us may not be near us to help us or rescue us from danger. It is then whoever happens to be in the vicinity that can come to our rescue, be them strangers or not.

We may amply illustrate this by this example. A man has to make an urgent trip over mountainous roads in wintry conditions in the middle of the night. The roads are icy and the driving conditions are treacherous, with snow falling. The car skids off the road and tumbles towards a deep ravine, but for his luck the car hits a tree stump down the slope and dangles precariously, a few metres down the edge of the road. There is no one in the vicinity and the driver is dazed, unaware of the impending danger. At this odd time a truck passes by and its driver notices the blinking tail light of the car. The truck happened to be a tow-truck and had the necessary gear to winch the car up. Regardless of the weather conditions the truck driver takes the risk and fastens the cable to the car and winches it to safety. The truck driver came from nowhere and is a stranger. Who is this saviour? This saviour is not another person, a far off and unrelated individual, but the very Self, the same 'I' that indwells in another body whom we call a stranger.

"Father, mother, son, daughter, husband, wife, brothers, sisters, nephews, nieces, cousins, uncles, aunts, grand-parents grandchildren; I have specially chosen them all for you, so that you will grow together, experience each other and evolve ..."

Every birth has a purpose in life. Each individual has to play his role and fulfil his assignment on earth. We take on the earthly life to fulfil the causes generated over a multitude of past lives - all the unfinished businesses, the debits and credits, the unfulfilled dreams and desires. In spiritual parlance no one whom we encounter in our life is a stranger. The cosmic intelligence is beyond the ken of human intelligence for each birth would provide us with bodily relationships in such inscrutable ways as to provide us with a perfect match in every relationship, thus giving us another opportunity to redeem ourselves.

No two individuals would encounter any similarity in purpose and circumstances. Therefore it should not be far fetched for us to believe that every connection we have with another individual in this life is merely a follow on of a previous connection. Bhagavan often reminds us that everything in the vast universe is Action, Reaction, Reflection and Resound, the law of cause and effect, and deed and destiny.

“... but not remain attached together for ever, for, I take them away one by one, as they fulfil their roles in your life.”

Everything manifest has a beginning and an end with a period of existence in between. This existence is subject to change with time. There is nothing unchanging and everlasting in the whole of creation. This principle applies to everything created, the ever changing manifest form of the formless source of all. From birth to death a human goes through relentless changes in all facets of life on earth, which is akin to a school of experiencing, learning and realising. Each one of us is born with a syllabus, as it were, to fulfil the purpose of each sojourn on earth. All events in life and every relationship are transient. Therefore it is imperative that we learn this fact early enough and play our respective roles well in the game of life or better still, in the earth-school of learning. All attachments are enslaving and hence restrictive for soul evolution.

What does Bhagavan mean by saying, *“I take them away one by one, as they fulfil their roles in your life?”* It is quite obvious we have to let go of our relationships one by one, one day or the other. Is God so merciless to take away our loved ones and let us drown in deep sorrow? The fact is that each one's life on earth is road-mapped even before birth! Accordingly, when the parting time comes, it can be in one of the following ways:

1. Death.
2. Migration to far off lands.
3. Strained relationships over such things as money, marriage, etc.

Ultimately we need to realise that these relationships and friendships exist only in our mind and the trauma of separation fades away with the passage of time. They do not go beyond the mind. Let us try to understand enmities at this point. Can we ever be an enemy with a stranger or could an enemy appear from outer space? The enemy is in the mind and has come from the mind, which dwells in the past and full of desires and expectations. Someone

close to us yesterday alone can become our enemy tomorrow! Our mind alone can develop enmity with another person on account of classifying his action as a gross betrayal of trust or denial of an expectation. Wars are waged in the minds of men before they actually eventuate in life.

Friends! They will be with you, so long as you have wealth, position and power; but will vanish even before you loose them.

How true it is? Caught up in the illusions of worldly attainments, men and women run after wealthy people, who are in positions of authority, wielding power and influence. They do not realise the real seat of power, which is divinity itself, the power of love, behind and beyond all other power. I am reminded of a poem I learnt at school:

*Everyone who flatters thee,
Is no friend in misery.
Words are easy like the wind,
A true friend,
Tis hard to find.*

Who is a true friend? Is he another individual, an outer being? Can there be any permanent friendship with another? We know far too well that all external friendships are conditional and a kind of barter. Can anyone make an enemy out of a stranger? Or, is it the friend of yesterday, who has turned an enemy today? Our true friend is God and He is nearest to us as our conscience. Conscience is one and the same in all, and it is the light of consciousness within, the *Chaitanya*. But why does this one conscience dictate differently in each individual? It is because it is interfaced through the mind. The mind, which is tainted and restless, cannot reveal one's conscience without distortion. Hence to develop a true and lasting friendship with God within is to develop purity and steadiness of mind. Then the true friend will always be revealed. Worldly friendships cater to the senses and the mind and have their limitations. Only by practice and experience can one nurture this eternal and pure friendship with God.

I am still waiting for you totally unchanged as I was when you came into the world.

Can water be anything but water, whether in the ocean, river or in the flood waters. Water remains pure in rain-cloud and is free of impurities. Once it falls as rain upon the soil it is bound to dissolve all the constituents of the soil – colour, minerals, organic matter etc. The ravaging flood is also rain-water, but has taken on the colour as well as other properties of the soil upon which it had fallen. Thus, rain water will appear differently according to the surface upon which it falls - mountain slopes, rocks, barren lands, rivers, lakes, etc. It is bound to evaporate into pure cloud once again in the intense heat of the sun. Likewise, all through our life, pure, unsullied divinity is the basis of our life, irrespective of who we appear as and what role we play. Divinity, which is our essence, has ever remained unchanged, just as the water remaining as water, however discoloured and contaminated it might be.

Swami says:

“There is one thing that comes into man from the outside. That thing is the ego which is formed by attachment to outside objects. With desire for the world cut, ego automatically vanishes . Impressions that are taken into man from outside, if taken as the reality, are harmful. Because man looks at something outside and then creates, he thinks he is reproducing the outside, whereas, in fact, the outside thing being seen merely recalls to memory that which is already within. When the eyes are open, one sees creation. All beings are created by the help of the eyes. The source of all that you see is the eyes. All, so seen is impermanent. The three letters in 'eye' represent the three gunas. But with 'I', the Self, one can see something quite beyond the transient .”

While addressing the doctors and staff at the Super Speciality Hospital in Prasanthi Nilayam on a visit in December 2004, Swami spoke about our possessive qualities: *“You are doing good work by alleviating the suffering of patients. Swami is very happy. These are positive qualities. But you also have undesirable qualities such as ego, rivalries and dissatisfaction over trivial things. These are negative qualities. With passage of time you must give up such feelings and develop more positive qualities. In other words collect more ‘pluses’ and eliminate your ‘minuses.’ What is this ‘minus’? It is this ‘my-ness’”* (Pointing His finger at His chest, Swami punned the word meaning “MY-NESS” – ‘I’ and ‘Mine’)

This ‘I’ and ‘Mine’ feeling is widespread, even in the animal kingdom. The following is an amazing anecdotal account about Swami’s tiny puppy: Dr. H.S. Bhat, a veteran devotee of Bhagavan, and a very senior specialist at the Hospital, was once summoned by Swami to meet Him at Trayee Brindavan, His residence in Bangalore. Swami was standing near the steps at the Trayee and His tiny puppy happened to be with Him. As Dr. Bhat approached Swami, the tiny pup barked furiously and savagely jumped at the doctor. With one word from the Lord the pup piped down. Swami remarked, “Look at the ego of this tiny creature, which can be crushed with two fingers!” Until the possessiveness goes one cannot aspire for the real proximity to Bhagavan.

Come nearer and nearer to Me, Serve Me and be answerable to Me and to Me alone.

When Swami uses the words, “Me” or “I”, it refers to the unchanging Reality, God. ***“Come nearer to Me,”*** means shift your focus from the worldly paradigm to the spiritual. The mind is the barrier to the Light within. All the vagaries of the mind make us succumb to the inevitable events in our life that causes grief. As we give less importance to such mental vagaries we will begin to experience the Divine strength within and the stormy mind gets subdued. That is to surrender to the Supreme Will and leave the past behind. ***“Answerable to Me”*** means that we live by our conscience, which is God. Conscience is one and the same in all. But, why do different people do conflicting things and claim to follow their conscience? Let us explore this question in a different way.

If conscience is God and there is only one God and only one conscience, then why do people have divergent views and opinions? They claim that they are following their conscience. Is there a 'filter' or an interface one's conscience as God deep within has to negotiate to be revealed? Yes, the mind is the sole interface between God and man. As is the perversion of the mind so is the degree of distortion of conscience, which emanates from the one Atma within. Hence the conflict rests within the mind. Every personality operates at the level of the mind, while every person is truly divine. All action is God's will and all reactions to preordained events are attributable to the mind. Spiritual training of the mind alone can help us overcome its negative impact. Therefore, Bhagavan lays great emphasis on the purity of mind, to free us from the 'discolouration' and 'turbulence' or restlessness of the mind; in other words, develop **Constant Integrated Awareness**.

Hence, the real nearness to the divine is the attainment of purity and tranquillity of the mind, which will not discolour and distort the Light of Consciousness (*Chaitanya*) or Divinity within. There lies the key to liberation or freedom from bondage to the past, thus enabling us to live in the effulgent presence of the present. This alone is the true proximity to the Divine, the non-dual feeling (*Advaita bhava*).

Whatever path we may follow and whatever means we may adopt, the sole purpose of Bhagavan Sri Sathya Sai Baba's descent is for our **ascent**, to awaken our inherent divinity.

Jai Sai Ram.

Dr. Sara Pavan is an Anaesthesiologist from Australia, serving at the Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Medical Sciences, Prashanthi Nilayam since 1993.

MUSINGS FROM PRASHANTHI NILAYAM
CONCERNING THE VEDAS – 02

THE VEDAS - THEIR EVOLUTION AND SIGNIFICANCE

By Prof. G Venkataraman

Loving Sai Ram and greetings from Prashanti Nilayam.

This is the second of my talks on the *Vedas*. As I told you last time, my basic aim in this series is first to give you a broad flavour of the *Vedas*, and then take you on a journey across the *Vedas* as they enter a man's life. That part would come a little later; right now, I am in the process of setting the stage for that.

In this talk, I intend to say something about the *Vedas* themselves. Given my limited knowledge of the subject, I shall naturally confine myself to just the basic and elementary aspects. Let me start with what Swami has said about the *Vedas*. This is what He says:

The Vedas are the most ancient among the world's scriptures. They are a vast storehouse of wisdom. Manu has declared, "Everything is derived from the Vedas." The Vedas are immeasurable, unrivalled, and filled with Bliss. The word Veda is derived from the root word Vid, which means to know. Knowledge of the Supreme is Veda.

The Vedas – A collection of Divine Revelations

The *Vedas* consist of hymns, thousands and thousands of them. They represent an ocean to which countless Sages have contributed, going back to a period when there was only the spoken language and no script. The hymns of the *Vedas* represent thoughts and revelations that came to the Sages of yore during their meditations. These revelations were in the form of hymns, which the Sages transmitted to their disciples. Thus it was that they were passed from generation to generation. For centuries, all this happened entirely by word of mouth. The written version came much later. Thus the growth of the *Vedas* is like a series of small streams joining to form tributaries that feed big rivers, the rivers all finally merging into the ocean. This analogy is very apt, because the water that the streams get is from the rain, whose source is really the ocean. In the same way, the revelations that the Sages had were from the Divine; and the Ocean made up by the collection of revelations that constitutes the *Vedas*, is also Divine.

The Sound Aspect of Vedic Hymns – It's Significance

I must pause here to make a few important comments. The first is that the *Vedas* exist in the form of chants, and the sound aspect is therefore very important. The *Vedic* hymns must be chanted properly and there is a spiritual

significance to the chant, which the late Paramacharya of Kanchi explains as follows:

Vedas must be chanted with grandeur so that the sound can be properly heard. Vedic Mantras not only produce beneficial vibrations in the pulse of the one who chants them properly, but also similar vibrations in those who may hear them. Since it is spread in the atmosphere, it ensures wellbeing here and hereafter. The outstanding feature of the Vedas lies in the fact that the sound of the Mantras by itself when chanted has a meaning, apart from the words themselves, which too are pregnant with significance.

The sound aspect has been preserved from very ancient times and that is something remarkable. The sound aspect is linked intimately to the words, and the two, namely the sound and the word together have been so intertwined that over time, Vedic hymns have defied corruption and mutation. This is an important point and needs some reflection.

Let us take any language, including English. All languages have evolved. If say, an Englishman who lived fifteen hundred years ago were to suddenly appear before us and start speaking, I am sure most of us would not be able to understand what he is saying. The words would be different and so also the style. This is true of almost all languages. Languages evolve with time, these days over even short periods, but the *Vedic* language has remained invariant over the several thousand years during which the *Vedas* evolved.

How Have the Vedic Hymns Remained Uncorrupted

I once asked a scholar how this was possible since languages have all evolved the world over. The answer he gave was interesting. He said that the *Vedic* hymns have remained uncorrupted because of the sound aspect. They had a particular metre and when chanted, they had a certain completeness of their own. Any mutation or distortion of the words would severely disturb the sound aspect, and this disturbance could be easily detected. Since the sound aspect was dominant, corruption could be spotted and eliminated immediately; this is how, I was told, the pristine purity of the *Vedas* had been preserved. Sounds plausible I would say.

Anyway, the fact of the matter is that the way the *Vedas* are chanted now, as, for example, in Swami's presence everyday during Darshan, is the same as the way they were chanted thousands of years ago. I must of course qualify this by adding that there are some special schools of *Vedic* chanting but I am not considering that here; rather, I am confining myself to the standard method of chanting.

Just to make myself clear, let us say there is a *Vedic* Pandit from the East Godavari District in Andhra Pradesh and another from Kerala. East Godavari District and Kerala are at least a thousand kilometres apart. The respective *Vedic* scholars would have imbibed their tradition from their ancestors in those two widely separated parts of the country, parts, which, until recently, did not have good communication between them.

Suppose these two scholars meet and one of them starts chanting say the *Taittiriya Upanishad*. The other would have absolutely no difficulty in joining the first scholar in the recitation. That is because the recitation tradition is the same for both, and that is because the recitation is fixed and has remained invariant through the ages. I hope you get the point. If you reflect on it, you would find this aspect unique.

Swami On Why The Vedas

Let me now go back for a minute to the Divine revelation aspect. Such revelations are not as rare as people might imagine, and have occurred to people in various places at various times in history. Indeed, even in science, such revelations have occurred. Of course, historians of science would not record it that way. They would instead say that Archimedes had a flash of discovery, Einstein had a flash of intuition, and so on. However, these flashes are nothing but the revelation of the Divine, maybe in relation to the material world, but revelations nonetheless. Back to Swami and let us find out what more He has to say about the *Vedas*. Here is a quote:

The Vedas took form, only to demonstrate and emphasise the existence of God. The Veda is a collation of words that are the Truth, which were visualised by sages who had attained the capacity to receive them into their enlightened awareness. In reality, the Word is the very Breath of God, the Supreme Person. The unique importance of the Veda rests on this fact.

Why are the Vedas called Sruthis

Because the *Vedas* originally existed only in sound form, they are sometimes referred to as *Sruthi*. In scriptures, *Sruthi* means that which is heard. The real reason for giving the name *Sruthi* to the *Vedas* is that Cosmic Vibrations which are inaudible and cannot be seen were heard by the mediating Sages as sound. That is also one of the reasons why the sound aspect is given so much importance. Great stress is therefore laid by the teachers of *Vedas* on the correct pronunciation of the word and the intonation while chanting. Listeners who have heard the extended *Vedic* chants by students before Swami, would be able to appreciate what I mean.

The ancients of India devised elaborate recitation drills so that through the ages, the chants would remain the same, without mutation and corruption. This is something remarkable, and I am not sure if there is any other comparable example.

The Structure of The Vedas

I must now say something about the structure of the *Vedas*. It is usually said that there are four *Vedas*. Yes there are, but this classification came after several thousands of years. Before that, it was, shall I say, a period of discovery? Revelations came to people belonging to different times, and these were encapsulated into *Vedic* hymns. There were thousands and thousands of hymns but unfortunately, most of them have been lost in time.

What has survived is only a small part. Even so, they are not only grand in themselves, but tell, in their own way, the story of the evolution of human thought. I shall come to that aspect a little later but for now, I shall stay with the topic concerning the structure of the *Vedas*.

Today we recognise four *Vedas*, the *Rig Veda*, the *Sama Veda*, the *Yajur Veda* and the *Atharvana Veda*. Apparently, it was Sage Vyasa who made the compilation and classification of *Vedic* hymns in this manner. It is customary to identify in each *Veda*, three portions known respectively as: *Samhita*, *Brahmana* and *Aranyaka*. Thus, the *Rig Veda* has its own *Samhita*, its own *Brahmana* and its own *Aranyaka*. The same holds for the other three *Vedas* also.

The Division within Each Veda

Now what do these three portions signify? Why this division? That is the question I shall address next. In a sense, the three portions are indicators of evolution of *Vedic* thought. The word *Samhita* means that which has been collected and arranged. The *Samhita* portion of a given *Veda* contains the *Mantras* belonging to that *Veda*, arranged in a systematic manner. These *Mantras* comprehensively convey the main objective or the purpose of that particular *Veda*. The *Vedic Mantras* that we often hear come mainly from the *Samhitas*.

Turning next to the *Brahmanas*, these spell out how certain rituals ought to be performed. About the *Brahmanas*, Swami has this to say:

The Brahmanas constitute an important part of the Vedas, and deal with the correct procedures for performing rituals like the Yajnas and Yagas. Being ceremonial rites for acquiring mundane pleasures, such ceremonies, however, cannot offer Atmananda or the Pure Bliss of the Atma. They can only enhance sensory enjoyment and provide epicurean pleasures, which are intrinsically transient. The search for pure abiding Bliss of the Atma led the ancient Rishis to the solitude of the forests.

This leads me on in a quite natural fashion to the *Aranyakas*. This word is derived from the word *Aranya*, which means forest. Thus, the *Aranyakas* are sometimes referred to as forest books and with good reason. As already pointed in the quote from Swami, neither the *Samhitas* or the *Brahmanas* ask a person to give up everything and retire to the forest in order to contemplate on God and focus totally on spiritual development. No doubt chanting *Mantras* from the *Samhitas* does promote some purity of mind, but where spiritual development is concerned, they can take a person only so far.

The *Aranyakas* have a different objective. They are meant for people who wish to reach higher levels of development through intense contemplation and meditation of the Supreme One in His most abstract aspect. The famous *Upanishads* come at the end of the *Aranyakas* and represent the quintessence of *Vedic* Knowledge. As Swami puts it, "Ancient Sages have

communicated the spiritual wisdom revealed to them through the *Upanishads*.”

Evolution Of Vedic Thought – The First Step

The above brief introduction to the *Vedas* also enables me now to comment on the evolution of *Vedic* thought. If one goes carefully through the *Vedic* texts that span the ages, one can see a clear line of evolution. The very early hymns are in the *Rig Veda*, and they not only express ancient man’s sense of wonder but also reveal how he identified specific deities like Indra, Agni, Vayu and so on with forces of Nature. About all this, Swami says,

The very first experience in Indian thought is the thrill of wonder. This is expressed in the hymns or Riks found in the Rig Veda. The Riks are all about the deities or the Devas, like Indra, Varuna and so on.

From this we see that the very early seekers did not straightaway understand Brahman, the Ultimate and all that. Like people elsewhere, the ancients of India also were struck with wonder about Nature and all the forces that formed a part of her, like thunder, lightning, wind, rain, etc. They also understood, perhaps in their own imperfect way, that there was a subtle synergy between the various agencies of Nature that promoted the sustenance of life on earth.

Everything from the ant to the elephant was seen as a part of some mysterious Cosmic cycle. And so, the very first thoughts related not only to the inevitable sense of wonder but also to an important question of logic. If there were forces in Nature, there ought also to be agencies that controlled these forces. It is these that were identified as *Devas*, and the *Devas* in charge of different departments, shall I say, were given different names like Indra, Agni and so forth. This is what I would call the first level of thought in a long evolutionary process.

It is interesting in passing to note that the Greeks also went through almost a similar thought process. As would be recalled, the Greeks too had a god of fire, a god for this, a god for that and so on. In fact, tribes everywhere had their own spectrum of deities or spirits, be it in Africa or North America. What this shows is that ancients everywhere had the implicit belief that there was something in the Universe more than what one could merely see with the eyes and experience with the senses.

The Second Step – Worshipping the Elements

Having decided that there were *Devas* who controlled various aspects and forces of Nature, the next task was to worship them and perform various rituals to propitiate them. Thus it was that rituals came into existence, almost soon after the *Devas* were accepted. Listeners may recall, for example, that Emperor Dasaratha performed a ritual called the *Putrakameshti Yaga* for having children. By the way, this ritual is sometimes performed even these days by the childless.

So the first step in the evolution process was to identify *Devas* and worship them. In due course, the more intensive of the *Vedic* seekers decided to probe further beyond the *Devas* and concluded, in the first instance, that there must be an overlord for these deities. The deities were like Viceroy, and there must be a Rex or a King who ruled over them. Thus it is that they convinced themselves about a Power superior to the deities. That power was called God.

Now arose an issue. Whom to worship? Some said, "Worship the deities for particular favours, and worship the God who ruled them when the deities were unable to deliver the goods." Thus in ancient India, many started worshipping *Varuna* the God of Rain when the monsoon failed but prayed to another God when they wanted progeny or cure from illness and things like that. This is like going to different counters in a bank when one needs different kinds of service.

At this stage, some thinkers said, "Hey wait a minute. Let's examine this business in some more detail." They did so and came up with an answer that is best illustrated by using the analogy of a Bank. Just go to, say, the main office of the State Bank of India in Prashanti Nilayam during the working hours. You will find that many customers are seated with the Manager. Often, these are people from overseas who have big deposits in the Bank. They may have things they want to do like withdrawing some money, getting some foreign currency cashed, making new deposits and so forth. For every such activity, there is an assigned person and a counter for conducting the transaction; yet the VIP customer gets all his jobs done simply by sitting with the Manager. In the same way, these profound thinkers in ancient India came to the important conclusion that though there were deities who took care of limited portfolios, all the favours one wants can in fact be granted directly by God who ruled all the *Devas*, and that there was no need to separately take these issues up with the lesser deities or *Devas*.

The Final Understanding – The Existence of The Supreme One

In short, step by step, the seekers realised that there is a Supreme One who is beyond this world, beyond the Universe in fact, and beyond Space and Time too. The seekers also realised that this Supreme One who was beyond Space and Time itself, could not be described in words, and could not be cognised by the Mind too. We have heard so many speakers quote this *Vedic* phrase:

Yato vaache nivarthante aprapya manasachaha.

This phrase refers to Something that is beyond description and even thought.

Space-Time is a curtain that divides the Creator from the Creation. Creation is on this side of the curtain, while the Creator in all His absolute and pristine glory is on the other, so to speak. In short, slowly but surely, the seekers were zeroing on the existence of the curtain and the presence of something

Supreme beyond that curtain. That something is God, whose children we all are, irrespective of race, religion, creed or nationality.

The Vedas Are Universal

In this sense, the Vedas are Universal and it is for that reason that Swami makes it a point to draw attention to the Vedas, and NOT because they are Indian in origin. To repeat, the Vedas focus on a MYSTICAL ETERNAL SOMETHING that is beyond this world, beyond this Universe, beyond Space and Time itself, and is changeless. It is that Something beyond words and even the Mind that the *Vedic* seers were in quest of, and with good reason too. Indeed, across the ages, seekers elsewhere too have been engaged in this very quest, though by different means. Einstein was one of them, and he gives expression to this beautifully. Explaining why he pursued Science, Einstein once said:

A knowledge of the existence of Something we cannot penetrate, which only in their most primitive forms are accessible to our Minds – it is this Knowledge and emotion that constitute true religiosity. In this sense, I am a deeply religious man.

Einstein tried to catch a glimpse of Cosmic Infinity through Science while the seekers of the *Vedic* age sought that very same ETERNITY via the path of devotion and Spiritual inquiry.

The Supplementary Units of The Vedas

I will have more to say about the *Vedic* concept of God and related subjects later, but for now, let me for the record mention that in addition to the four main *Vedas*, there are many supplementary units that include six *Vedaangas* and four *Upaangas*. The word *Anga* means a limb; thus the *Vedaangas* represent, so to speak, limbs of the *Vedas* while the *Upaangas* represent subsidiary limbs. I shall not go into details concerning these but I must mention one important *Upaanga*, and that is the *Puraanas*. The *Puraanas* are important because they cater to the masses. The late Paramacharya of Kanchi has this to say about the *Puraanas*:

The Puraanas can be called the magnifying glasses of the Vedas as they magnify small images into big images. The Vedic injunctions which are contained in the form of pithy statements are magnified or elaborated in the form of stories or anecdotes in the Puraanas.

This is an important point. Take *Sathya* or Truth, for example. The importance of adhering to *Sathya* come what may is wonderfully exemplified by the story of King Harishchandra, which, until recently, used to be regularly performed as a drama in villages all over India. That is how ordinary folk learnt the importance of abiding by Truth. I have myself seen unlettered villagers say, “I am bound by Truth.” We should also not forget that it was one such village drama depicting the story of Harishchandra that made a profound impact on

Gandhi when he was a young boy, making a difference not only to his own life but, in some measure, to humanity as well.

Swami on How The Vedas Help Man

I think it is best for me to bring this talk to a close with a quote from Swami:

The Vedas teach man his duties. They describe his rights and duties, obligations and responsibilities, in all stages of life – as a student, householder, recluse and monk. In order to make plain the Vedic dicta and axioms and enable all to understand the meaning and purpose of the do's and don'ts, the Vedaanagas, the Upaangas, the Puraanas and the Epic texts appeared in course of time. Therefore, if man is to grasp the significance of his existence and his own reality, he has to understand the importance of these later explanatory texts also.

I guess that places the Vedas and all the supplementary compositions in their proper perspective. Next time, I shall give you a glimpse of one of the interesting *Upanishads*.

Jai Sai Ram.

SERIAL ARTICLES

SHIRDI SAI PARTHI SAI – Part 15

(Continued from the previous issue)

ACT II - SCENE 1

Easwamma is offering ritual worship in her house, and at the end of it, is offering Aarathi to the deities.

ESWARAMMA: Seshamma Raju, Seshamma!

SESHAMMA: Coming mother.

ESWARAMMA: Venkamma!

VENKAMMA: Coming mother!

ESWARAMMA: Parvathamma! Receive the *Aarathi*.

ESWARAMMA: Now receive the *Prasaadam*, and after that go to school. Be careful. Inform your father before you go.

CHILDREN: We will do as you say mother!

FATHER: Seshamma, come back quickly.

After the children leave, a lady named Subbamma comes to the house. This lady is a noble one. She loved Swami very much right from the time of birth. She instinctively knew that, He was Divine. Subbamma walks in calling out the name of Eswamma, and the latter welcomes the visitor.

SUBBAMMA: Easwamma!

ESWARAMMA: Come Subbamma, come!

SUBBAMMA: Easwamma, we are performing the worship of Lord Sathya Narayana in our house. All of you please come, witness the function, and receive Prasaadam.

ESWARAMMA: Certainly! I am very happy. It is a great blessing to witness the Puja of Sathya Narayana. I shall most unfailingly come.

SUBBAMMA: It is all the will of the Lord. All preparations for the Puja have been completed. Please finish your work and come quickly! I take your leave now, Easwamma.

SCENE 2

Sometime after Subbamma leaves, a man and a woman come to the Raju house. Venkama Raju (V RAJU) is seated outside, and he greets the visitors.

V.RAJU: Come, come please, Mr. Raghava Rao.

RAO: Salutations.

V.RAJU: You have come at an odd time!

RAO: Pardon me for that. I had to see you. Tomorrow, I am going to Madanapalli to celebrate the marriage of my daughter Rajeswari. Your father Kondamma Raju is the village elder. His blessings are most valuable.

V.RAJU: Is that so?

RAO: Your revered father came and blessed her when she was named and when she was admitted in school. If the hands that built the Temple of Sathyabhama were to bless this wedding necklace made for my daughter, she would lead a happy married life.

V.RAJU: My father is ever ready to do good work, and does not wait for a specially auspicious time. Please come inside.

RAO: Thank you.

All three go inside to meet Kondama Raju, who is seated there.

V.RAJU: [*to Kondama*] Father, this gentleman has come to seek your blessings for the marriage of his daughter.

RAO: [*to Kondama*] Salutations sir!

K.RAJU: Rajeswari is like my grand daughter. My blessings are always there for her. Venkamma, in the old box inside, there is a Dharmavaram silk saree. Bring that and give it to this couple.

V.RAJU: Certainly.

Venkama Raju goes inside and fetches the saree. Kondama gives it to the couple.

K.RAJU: May the couple lead a long and happy married life.

RAO & HIS WIFE: Sir, we take your leave.

K.RAJU: Goodbye.

END OF SCENE 2
(To be continued)

GITA FOR CHILDREN - Part 17

(Continued from the previous issue)

Chapter 7

1. Krishna says to Arjuna, 'Having given you the assurance that I shall certainly protect you if you repose faith in Me, let Me now describe how I pervade this Universe.'

2. 'Arjuna, I am not only Eternal but also Formless and beyond both Space and Time. Space and Time have meaning only when there is Creation. I create the Universe according to My pleasure, and I dissolve it when I feel it is necessary. Space and Time are born at the instant of Creation and cease to exist when the Universe is dissolved. However, I the Creator always exist.'

3. 'When I create the Universe, I basically project Myself on to Space and Time. I cannot be directly seen but I can be experienced by humans if they make the effort. People may not be able to see Me in a physical sense but they certainly can FEEL My presence.'

4. 'I manifest in Creation in a million different ways, as I shall explain in detail later. Everything you see and experience in the Universe is merely an aspect of Me. In other words, there is nothing but God everywhere and in everything, both seen and unseen.'

5. 'What I have just described may be called Manifest Divinity. There is a higher aspect, Unmanifest Divinity, that transcends Space and Time. This Unmanifest Divinity is known by various names such as *Brahman*, *Atma*, Absolute Reality, Pure Consciousness, and so on. Don't be scared by all these names! Just think of the Unmanifest as God, and keep Him always in your mind.'

6. 'As you know, there are both inanimate and animate entities in the Universe. Minerals, ocean, mountains, etc., are inanimate while insects, birds, animals and humans of course are animate.'

7. 'Just as a house is built by assembling bricks, so is all matter in the Universe made up of atoms. Thus, atoms are the building blocks of matter. No wonder then that atoms are to be found everywhere, from here to the very edge of the Cosmos.'

8. 'Living beings too are made up of atoms but there is something very special about them; they have this mysterious thing in them called life. No one can see life directly or touch it but everybody can experience life. You can also see life in other beings not only through their actions but also through their growth and decay.'

9. 'This life-principle is sometimes called *Jiva*, and is an aspect of Unmanifest Divinity. Earlier I described a living person as the *Atma*

“trapped” in a cage or the body. The embodied *Atma* is also called the *Jivatma*. Thus, Arjuna, you are a *Jivatma*.’

10. Arjuna asks, ‘Krishna what about You? Are You also a *Jivatma*?’

11. Krishna replies, ‘No way! I am special; I am the *Paramatma*! Don’t ask Me for the difference right now! I shall come back to that later perhaps.’

12. ‘Getting on with what I was telling you, let Me now describe how I pervade the Universe. To start with I must remind you that everything in the Universe has come out of Me and Me alone. In other words, I am the Creator. Don’t get fooled by the fact that right now I have a body like yours, and eat, walk, talk etc., like humans do. In fact, this is how humans get deluded by appearances where *Avatars* are concerned.’

13. ‘Let Me stress that I am not only the Creator but in fact the Ultimate Ultimate, if you will! There is nothing beyond Me!! Remember that.’

14. ‘In the physical Universe, I pervade everything that you can think of. I am, for example, present in all the five elements – sky, air, fire, water and earth. But here I must caution you. To describe Me as being present in this or that is only a limited way of looking at things. It is more appropriate to say that God IS the sky or the ether, God IS air, God IS fire and so on. In fact, everything in the Universe IS God!’

15. Arjuna asks, ‘Krishna, if everything in the Universe is God, then why don’t people see God everywhere?’

16. Krishna replies, ‘Ah, that is because God disguises and hides Himself to see if you can find Him! It is a game He likes to play! Consider a garland with many beautiful flowers. Can a bunch of flowers form a garland all by themselves? You need a connecting thread don’t you? Yet, when you see a garland, is that connecting thread visible? No! I am the foundation and the basis for the physical and manifest Universe. Can you have a house without a foundation? It is the same thing here; and like the foundation of a house, I remain hidden!’

17. ‘However, this does not mean My presence cannot be felt or experienced. Let us say you are very thirsty and your throat is absolutely parched. You see a clear stream with cool water flowing in it. You drink that water to your heart’s content and find it very refreshing. But you do not know that the sweetness of that cool and fresh water is Me! It is I, latent as sweetness in that water that brings joy to you.’

18. ‘Another example. It is a hot and humid day and you are perspiring heavily. Suddenly there is a gust of cool breeze and you feel relief. Arjuna, I am that breeze, giving you that refreshing experience.’

19. ‘I am the brilliance of the blazing fire and the radiant blue of the sky. Time being short, I won’t give more examples, though I can go on and on till the

end of Time! It is enough for you to know that all excellence and beauty in the Universe flow directly from Me. If you see a very intelligent person, know for certain that this person's intelligence is not his own but flows from Me. Your brother Bhima is very strong; you know that; but do you know that his strength is really a tiny part of My strength, reflected via him?

(To be continued)

WINDOW TO SAI SEVA

STIRRING SAI SEVA IN MALAYSIA

Two Inspiring Accounts

Here are two accounts of seva carried out at mammoth gatherings of devotees at Lord Murugan's shrines in Malaysia. It is heartwarming to learn how, in one instance, the Sai volunteers made every effort to help those unable to have Darshan, and in the other, break a Malaysian national record - read on to know more!

'The spark of tears in their eyes gave me the happiness of a lifetime, not because I have achieved something great but to remind me to be more grateful to God for having an able body.'

This was the moving comment from a volunteer who had helped physically and/or mentally challenged pilgrims have Darshan of Lord Murugan during the festival of Thaipusam, at a hill top temple in Malaysia. Thaipusam is celebrated on the full moon in the Tamil month of Thai (Jan/Feb). *Pusam* refers to a star that is at its highest point during the festival. The festival commemorates both the birthday of Lord Murugan, the youngest son of Lord Shiva and Mother Parvati, and the occasion when Parvati gave Murugan a *vel* (lance) so he could vanquish the demon Soorapadam.

In Malaysia, Thaipusam attracts mammoth numbers of devotees. Over 1,000,000 people congregate at Batu Caves, Kuala Lumpur and 200,000 at the Waterfall Temple, Penang . **Heart2Heart** is pleased to inform you about the wonderful seva carried out by the Malaysian Sai devotees at these two sites during the festival period from 10th-11th February, 2006.

The Waterfall Temple is located at the top of a steep hill. Many devotees make their way there to worship Lord Murugan and to climb up is part of the ritual and penance. But the Sai devotees of Brown Garden Centre, Penang, became concerned for those people who are unable to climb up due to physical disabilities. They are forced to remain frustrated at the bottom, while their relatives go up to the top to receive the blessings on this holy day. It was indeed a sight to pity. Emboldened by the teachings of Lord Sai to help those in need, they formed themselves into special palanquin teams to convey the yearning physically challenged pilgrims to have Darshan of Lord Murugan.

This seva activity was aptly called 'Journey to God' and it became so for both the sevaks and the disabled people. The palanquins were handmade by the Sai volunteers themselves and each was carried by 4 devotees with one man to oversee the safety of the disabled devotee and to make way through the crowds up the steps.

Upon reaching the bottom of the hill the disabled pilgrims were given food by the lady volunteers. Then, to invoke Swami's blessings before commencing the climb the volunteers chanted Ganapati Prarthana, Ganapati Atharva Shirsha Upanishad, Narayana Upanishad, Sai Gayatri and performed Arthi to

Swami's picture. Then, they began the ascent and reached the temple after one hour.

Finally, the disabled people were able to feast their eyes and fill their hearts at sacred Lord Murugan's shrine. Many were in tears at this longed for opportunity come true. Some of them had brought milk with them, so that they could perform *Abhisheka* (worship) for Lord Murugan.

So, there were all kinds of people who were carried to the top – elders, physically and mentally challenged children and adults. If there is one thing that was common to all - the ones who were being served and the ones serving – it is the smiling joy on their faces. It was a truly joyful spiritual odyssey. In all, 21 disabled people were blessed by Lord Murugan's Darshan that day, thanks to the Sai volunteers. One young boy could not stop speaking of his experience for the whole day. Many of the disabled are not able to speak and could not convey their feelings, or were too young, but their parents were in tears at the sacred gift of Darshan that was given to their wards.

One volunteer said *'When I saw the smile in their faces, it was a heart-felt satisfaction because I managed to help them experience a lifetime joy seeing Lord Muruga on such an auspicious day. It was a wonderful feeling making another person happy.'* The volunteers numbered 140. An interesting aside is that only 70 were from the Sai Organisation. The remaining 70 were young people from a squatter village which the Sai Centre had adopted some time ago and for which they had been conducting Bal Vikas classes. By God's Grace the inspiring flame of seva had spread to them.

All the volunteers were overjoyed that they had made this holy pilgrimage possible for so many. One volunteer mentioned that, *'The joy of the disabled in getting Lord Muruga's Darshan was the greatest gift that I have earned.'* And another echoed these feelings, *'To see the special kids and adults smiling in joy, finally able to go up the stairs to the temple was just wonderful.'* Truly there is no greater joy than bringing a smile to another's face and happiness shared is really happiness doubled.

Record Breaking Blood Donation at Batu Caves , Kuala Lumpur

It is at Batu Caves, Kuala Lumpur, where the wish to have Lord Murugan's Darshan reaches overwhelming proportions. On 30th Jan 2006, the world's largest statue of Lord Murugan was unveiled at the base of the ascent to the caves - 140 ft tall and gold painted. Over one million people throng there in the fervour of devotion during the Thaipusam festival. It was here that the second seva event was held, when the Sai Organisation in conjunction with the Malaysian Blood Bank set up camp at the festival site with 80 beds ready for blood donors' comfort. This amazing mega blood donation drive broke the Malaysian record, reaching 2,330 pints over a 35 hour period.

The Sai Organisation also organized non-stop singing of devotional songs from top Malaysian Indian artists for 36 hours to inspire the devotees and

attract them to come forward to give blood. Behind them was the source of their inspiration in the form of a large picture of Swami.

The authorities gave the space used free of charge and a prestigious radio station supported and covered the event, encouraging its listeners to donate to save lives. In fact this time of year heralds celebrations of Chinese New Year, a major Muslim festival and Thaipusam. The 5 days of holidays unfortunately leads to many road accidents – thus there is a vital need for blood in all hospitals. Some volunteers were present for 48 hours! They looked after the donors many of whom were donating for the first time, moved to come forward by the singing, prayers and the festival atmosphere.

The Star Newspaper covered the event under the headline '**2,330 blood donations collected in just a day**' and mentioned that "*The National Blood Bank and the Sathya Sai Council of Malaysia could have achieved a record by collecting 2,330 blood donations in a single day at the Thaipusam celebrations in Batu Caves.*" *The Star 12th Feb 2006* .

At the same time, in the cities of Ipoh, Penang and Johore Bharu, Sai Centres held similar blood donation days, where a further 364 pints of blood were collected.

***Heart2Heart** is very pleased to pass on to you, dear reader, these two accounts of inspiring seva. It is wonderful what can be done with God's grace, disciplined organisation and a will to make a positive difference to the world.*

- Heart2Heart Team.

PRASHANTI DIARY

CHRONICLES OF HEAVEN ON EARTH

With a Special Report from Brindavan

As most of you are probably aware, Swami stayed in His "Trayee Brindavan" home in Whitefield, Bangalore continuously from January 20th, 2006 and returned to Parthi only on February 18th. As this chronicle covers His sojourn there for this period, it was suggested that perhaps this month's chronicle be relabelled as "Brindavan Diary". But as *prashanti* - the peace that passeth all understanding - in the fullest sense of the term is extant only where He stays, we decided to let the name remain unchanged and we hope that you concur with our view that *prashanti* is more a state of the mind and heart and not just a mere geographical term.

And while we type these words, we are also reminded of an incident that occurred just before the 75th birthday in the year 2000, which we will recall even at the risk of digressing from the main theme. As most of you know, once every five years all the Ashram buildings get re-painted. Hence all the buildings in the Ashram had just been given a new coat. From where Swami was standing on the veranda, He could see how the name on the East Prashanti Blocks had just been painted in big bright red letters. He read it out loud - "East Prashanti" and then turning to the students remarked in Telugu, "*Prashanti ki direction undaa?*" - Does *prashanti* have a direction also? It is very clear in what sense He is referring to the term *prashanti*!

Going back to the main story, soon after Swami arrived in Brindavan, the Brindavan boys welcomed Him with a well prepared programme "*Hridaya pushpam*". One of the hall marks of the integrated system of education prevalent in the Sri Sathya Sai Institutions is effective time management. The boys put up a creditable programme and also performed well on their mid-term exams starting the next day. This time-management quality of course is so useful in today's demanding world where one always has to do multi-tasking while simultaneously resolving conflicting and demanding priorities.

JAN 29, 2006: HRIDAY PUSHPAM - A PROGRAMME BY THE BRINDAVAN BOYS

Sundays in Brindavan are always special. On each Sunday the devotees of Bangalore start the *bhajans* in the morning and it is continued the whole day up to the point when Bhagavan enters the Hall again in the afternoon, and ends only when He signals for *arathi* at the end of the afternoon *darshan*. This gives an opportunity for the devotees immersed in devotional singing the entire day. Sundays are also special as some of the devotees from Puttaparthi also come down for the day and there is a full house in Sai Ramesh Hall.

After Swami arrived in Sai Ramesh Hall in the afternoon, He signalled to the boys to start their programme. His Excellency, the Governor of Karnataka, Sri

T.N. Chaturvedi was also present that day, as he had come to Brindavan to seek Bhagavan's grace. Readers of this column may recall that Sri Chaturvedi was the chief guest at the Institute's Convocation on November 22nd last year.

The programme "*Hrudaya Pushpam*" (the flower of the heart) by the students was a mix of soulful group songs interspersed with speeches. The songs varying from Hindi, Telugu and English lifted the entire atmosphere and also lit up a beautiful smile on Bhagavan's face. In between each song the students stood up to express their love, narrate their experiences, and thank Bhagavan for the wonderful opportunity.

Sreejith expressed his love for Swami in 4 different languages - Bengali, Hindi, Malayalam, and English and thanked Him for being his only solace and for helping us to be in bliss whenever He is near us. Asutosh Jha prayed to the Lord to make us true instruments in His hands and remember Him always come what may. Nishant Verma related how Bhagavan once cured him of his paralytic attack. He said that our every breath and heart-beat speaks only one thing - "Swami we can't live without You." Akshay Kamath said that the small squirrel that helped build the *Ramasetu* (bridge across Sri Lanka) and the flute of Lord Krishna is immortalised. It is similarly our duty also to become immortalised as His instruments. Sai Giridhar feelingly prayed to Him that we realize the beautiful relationship we share - that we live for You and You alone. Vivek Thacker speaking in Hindi expressed his love through a poem (a *shaire*) which conveyed that our relationship is deeper than love also. Another speaker expressed that before man realises that desires are not going to reap him any fruit, he ends his term on earth. But we are lucky that our Lord Sai has shown us the reality and has told us that He is our only motive. The last speaker expressed his gratitude to Swami for He gave him life. He was a still-born baby when he came out of his mother's womb and only when his grandmother put the baby on Swami's altar and also applied some *vibhuti* did the baby come to life. He called Swami his true mother for She gave him life.

Wonderful also were the songs that they sang that day. The songs included "*Maa Prana Daivam*", "*Kaise jiyoon*", "*Every moment of my life*", "*O maa O maa*", "*Sai Matha Biddalam*", "*I keep feeling*", "*O Nesthama*", and "*There is something special in your love*". The last song was "*Maa Jeevana adhaarama*", meaning the very basis of our life is our Lord! The programme ended at about 6:30 PM after which there was *bhajans* followed by *arathi*.

FEB 5th: BHAKTI SAGAR - A STUDENT PROGRAMME ON BHAKTI

The following Sunday again saw another programme offered by the students immediately after the end of their Exams week. The presentation that the students had planned was to highlight the profundity of the great teachings on *Navavidha bhakti* or the nine-fold path of devotion, on which Swami has talked about on many, many occasions.

After Swami had taken His place on the dais, He signalled to the boys who were holding an oversized card to come up to Him. After seeing the card the

boys had prepared, He blessed them and asked them to start the programme. The programme followed a similar format to the previous programme in which a speaker first expounded on a quality of Bhakti and this was immediately followed by a song. Thus alternating between a speech and a song, the boys explained some of the major aspects of the ninefold path of Bhakti to everyone's appreciation.

The first speaker talked of *Shravanam*, the foremost step of devotion giving the example of Parishith's exemplary devotion. This was followed by the song "*Saptaswara*". The second speaker highlighted the *Keertanam* aspect of Bhakthi, referring to saints like Meerabhai, Purandara Dasa etc. The song that followed was "*Ram Bhajana Karo Mann*". A small talk on *Vishnusmaranam* was followed by the Tamil song "*Easwaramba*". *Padasevanam* or worship of the Lotus Feet was the next aspect to be discussed. *Vandanam* or salutation was followed by the song "*Vande Janani Vidyadayini*" a song extolling and saluting Mother Saraswati. Referring to Hanuman as the best example of *Dasyam* (servitude), the speaker quoted several events from the life of Hanuman including the famous one wherein when Mother Sita gives him a pearl necklace, Hanuman bites each pearl and throws them away after putting them to his ear as he could not hear them say "Ram, Ram". This engaging programme ended with a rousing Qawali, "*Shirdiwale Sai Baba*" to which the entire audience joined in clapping and chorus.

At the end of the programme, *prasadam* was distributed to all. Swami also blessed all the students and the devotees profusely with His beneficent gaze for a long time before He retired to Trayee Brindavan.

FEB 6th: CHINESE NEW YEAR CELEBRATIONS IN SAI RAMESH HALL

After a hiatus of a few years, Swami graciously permitted the celebration of the Chinese New Year in His Divine presence. Accordingly, about 200 people of Chinese origin, hailing from Hong Kong, Singapore and Indonesia assembled in Brindavan during the first week of February. Putting up with myriad difficulties (due to limited infrastructural facilities in Brindavan) they nevertheless bridged barriers of distance and temporal difficulties to come together as one unit through intense practice and present a seamless Chinese New Year programme on the morning of February 6th.

The Chinese Lunar New Year was actually on January 29th. However, the New Year is celebrated over a period of 15 days and the 8th day is specially marked for honouring the parents. Hence in this year of the Dog, on Feb 6th - the 8th day after the New Year, the Chinese gathered at His Lotus Feet to show their filial love to our beloved Divine father and Mother Sai.

The entire Sai Ramesh Hall was decked out with intricate floral patterns with large helpings of the auspicious Chinese colour of red. The programme began on a pounding note when Bhagavan was escorted from His home in Trayee Brindavan to Sai Ramesh Hall to the resonant sounds of drums with a pair of lion dancers and dolls leading the procession. When He reached Sai Ramesh

Hall, Swami was given a traditional Chinese welcome before He ascended the dais.

After Swami had taken His seat on the dais, the lion dancers gave a vibrant display of their art. Devotees from Parthi are familiar with the lion dance since the students have performed it during the Annual Sports and Cultural Meet on January 11th this year and also earlier. However, for most of the devotees in Karnataka, this was the first time and they watched it with wonderment and joy.

The lion dance has an important place in Chinese culture and is traditionally performed to inaugurate important events like starting new businesses or other social events. It is also believed that this traditionally brings good luck to the people and the pounding drums drive away all the bad luck and evil in their lives. Additionally the association with the lion's strength and character (like courage and fearlessness in all situations) is supposed to bring good fortune and prosperity in the coming New Year and help achieve success in the ultimate goal of life.

After Swami was welcomed with roses and presented with the day's agenda for His blessings, the programme started with different couples presenting in turn the following items to our divine parent: Chinese tea, two types of Chinese cakes - *Nian Gao* and *Fa Gao*, Mandarin oranges, a pair of scrolls, and red packets (*Hang Baos*) containing sweets as gifts to Swami.

Swami accepted each present with grace and dignity. It was very touching to see Him pick mandarin oranges from both the gentleman and the lady presenting it to Him and lovingly stacking the oranges delicately in His lap to the delight of the congregation. Swami also spent a lot of time going over the photographs of seva done by our brothers and sisters after the recent devastating tsunami in the region.

Swami accepted each present with grace and dignity. It was very touching to see Him pick mandarin oranges from both the gentleman and the lady presenting it to Him and lovingly stacking the oranges delicately in His lap to the delight of the congregation. Swami spent over 10 minutes going over the photographs of seva done by our brothers and sisters after the recent devastating tsunami hit areas of Aceh. Our brothers and sisters have presented five sets of "public address sound system" complete with horn speakers, amplifiers and microphones to five mosques which were spared and untouched by the *tsunami*, namely, Baiturrahim-Ulee Lheue, Rahmadullah-Lampuuk, Menasah, Bale-U-Leupung, Al Abrar-Lamdingin Syiah Kuala, and Menasah Bale-Syiah Kuala. They also sent a generator to Menasah Bale-Syiah Kuala as they do not have electricity to power the sound system. The mosque's head was very pleased with the gifts. Some explanations were also written beside the photos. The word "sorry" (...etc in Indonesia language) was written besides one of the photos. Swami pointed to this word and asked "Why sorry?" The couple showing Him the photographs, told Him that our Sai Sister in Aceh said "sorry" because she cannot take photos of the fully-installed "public address sound system." She could only

take photos of the delivery of the sound system. Finally, Swami also blessed His photos which are to be put up in the new Batam Sai Centre in Indonesia.

While all the presentation ceremony was going on, there were many in the crowd who wondered - is there a special significance in these gifts? We did not have to wait long for an answer, for the presentation ceremony was followed by a drama elaborating on the significance of the Chinese New Year traditions and culture.

Using a backdrop of Malay and an Indian family visiting their Chinese friends on the occasion of the Chinese New Year, the Chinese traditions were performed and explained to their young sons. Thus we learnt that pairs of oranges are presented as a mark of respect and also as a symbol of wealth - to wish people good health and that all matters in their life will run smoothly. Chinese tea is offered to guests during the Chinese New Year and also on festive occasions for good health and longevity. Two types of cakes are offered to guests during the New Year. The moon shaped Nian Gao cake which is a New Year cake and the Fa Gao cake for prosperity.

A pair of scrolls is offered to guests with inscriptions in Chinese letters to wish good luck, fortune and peace in their lives like - "Wish you a happy, prosperous New Year" or "May all your wishes come true in this New Year".

And finally, through the medium of the drama they explained the significance of the red packets or "Hong Bao". They are given on all auspicious occasions (like Birthdays and weddings also) and not just on the New Year. The red envelope is decorated with Chinese characters for luck and is usually given with money inside it for luck and wealth. It is a Chinese practice to give an even amount of money as a gift rather the custom of an odd amount prevalent elsewhere. However the red packets given to Swami (and later distributed as *prasad* to the devotees) contained sweets and not money!

After the short drama there was a chanting of the six-syllable mantra *Om Mane Padme Hum*, which means that by the practice of a path which is an indivisible union of method and wisdom, you can transform your impure body, speech, and mind into the pure exalted body, speech and mind of a Buddha.

Following this, Lunar New year songs and Chinese and Sanskrit *bhajans* were sung by the devotees before *mangala arathi* was taken to signify the end of a memorable morning of celebration. Heart2Heart would also like to take this opportunity to say "*Xiang Nian Kuai Le*" or Happy New Year in Mandarin to our readers all over the globe.

FEB 12: KAVI SAMMELAN - A POETRY READING PROGRAMME IN SAI RAMESH HALL

For the third Sunday in a row, the Brindavan students offered a unique programme for our Lord. A bunch of budding poets - 15 in number, sat arrayed in front of Him, all ready to read their poems of love and gratitude that they had penned in 13 different languages.

After Swami had entered Sai Ramesh Hall around 5:00 PM and given His Darshan to all, He signalled to the boys to start. Two boys immediately went up to Him and showed Him a card seeking His blessings and presented the programme to Him. The programme started with a brief introduction by 2 students in both Hindi and English (where they addressed Swami as the poet of all the poets) and then the presentation was underway.

The poets were all dressed for the occasion in the traditional costumes of the states where they hailed from. Each poet got up in turn and stood in front of Swami and recited His offering to Him with feeling and love. The first poet rendered his poem in the *grandhika* style of Telugu and in flowing language described the glory and grandeur of the Avatar. This was followed by a poem in Hindi delivered in classical style and referred to the great good fortune of the residents of Brindavan and the contemporaries of the Avatar and to rejoice in His boundless grace. This was followed by a poem in Kannada highlighting a famous *sloka* from the Bhagavad Gita on *Nishkama karma* "*Karmanyevadhikarasche ma phaleshu kadachana*" which means that you have the right to work but not to the fruits thereof. The Nepali poem that followed next praised our Lord Sai as the greatest gift that mankind can ever hope to receive. This was followed in turn by a poem in English which extolled the glory of Sai's mission and the role of His students who are His only property. The Tamil poem that was next resonated well with the large Tamil speaking audience that was present that day in Sai Ramesh Hall. The poem raised the question as to how we can adequately describe Him when we fail to even comprehend Him? These were followed by more poems in Marathi, Malayalam, Tulu, Gujarati, Oriya, Bengali, and again in Nepali and Telugu all expressing in one form or other their love for Him and their gratitude for what He has done for them.

At the end of their programme Swami was immensely pleased. All the poets were also thrilled at Swami's pleasure, for they live only to please Him. Slowly Swami got up from His chair and asked all the students to come up to Him. Our students don't need a second invitation and immediately swarmed up to Him and milled all around Him, for He was rewarding them with the rare and much coveted group photograph. Swami posed with them for long till the photographers were also well satisfied, and then in His inimitable style started joking with the boys. He called the boy who had narrated a poem in Gujarati and said "*pagadiwala marriage ko jata*" - the turbaned fellow is getting married. Swami also showed His omnipresence to the Hindi poet by telling him the exact name of the place in Bihar where he hailed from and blessed him profusely. Thus He gave a lot of joy to all with a word here and a smile there. The programme ended with the song "*Hum ko tumse pyar hai*"- Swami we all love You!!

Swami raised His Hand and blessed everyone before He slowly wended His way back to His home in Trayee Brindavan

FEB 10 THROUGH THE 14th: A YAGNAM CONDUCTED IN SAI KRISHAN KALYANA MANTAP

With the blessings of Bhagavan the following *pujas* and chantings were conducted in Sai Krishan Kalyana Mantap every morning starting from the 10th of February for five days. Bhagavan came to the Kalyana Mantap (Marriage Hall) to bless the priests on the first day and the priests recited the following everyday over the next 5 days:

1. Ganapathi puja
2. Punyavachanam
3. Surya Mandalarchanam
4. Nyasam
5. Yantraradhanam
6. Mahasouram Parayanam
7. 108 Surya namaskarams with Tricha and Aruna mantrams
8. Surya Sahara Naamarchanam
9. Nivedanam
10. Nirajanam and Mantra Pushpam

On the fifth day, February 14th a more elaborate ritual was done for the *Poorna Ahuti* (the final ceremony). A small fire pit was erected in the centre of the *kalyana mantap* for the *yagnam* or the fire sacrifice. The *yagnam* started in the morning around 8 AM in Sai Krishan Kalyana Mantap. However, we were all waiting in Sai Ramesh Hall for Swami's Darshan, when around 9:15 AM all the devotees were requested to go to the *kalyana mantap*. Swami arrived in the *kalyana mantap* just a little before 10:00 AM and took His designated place.

When the ritualistic prayers connected with the *yagnam* were over, Swami blessed the couple that had conducted the *yagnam* and also materialised a gold chain for the lady and asked the husband to tie it around the neck of his wife. Swami also distributed clothes to the Brahmin priests who had conducted the prayers over these 5 days. He next asked the priest to recite certain Vedic *slokas*. After that He also consigned traditional offerings wrapped in a red cloth and gold coins and other precious offerings also into the fire to bring the sacrifice to a close.

After that came a ritual that everyone looks forward to. Swami walked around the Hall sprinkling *akshada* (turmeric coated rice) on everyone in both the ladies side as well as the gents' side. He then sat for some time giving everyone the bliss of His Darshan while *bhajans* were sung. Then after taking of *arathi* He again blessed the couple that had conducted the *yagnam* and also posed for photographs with the family before leaving for His residence.

A sumptuous lunch *prasadam* of tamarind rice, curd rice and sweet rice was quickly and efficiently distributed to all the devotees at the end of the ceremony through multiple counters arranged in all corners of Sai Ramesh Hall.

MANY VIPS SEEK SWAMI'S BLESSINGS

When Swami is in Brindavan, because of its close proximity to the metropolitan city of Bangalore, there is a steady stream of visitors who come to seek Swami's blessings. Even though Swami was in Brindavan in February - not the normal time when He usually comes to Brindavan - there was more than the usual quota of VIPs seeking an audience with the Lord. We are not aware of everyone who came to see the Lord during His stay there, but we were able to take the pictures of the few who came during the public Darshan or *bhajan* time or were sitting in Sai Ramesh Hall while awaiting the Lord.

On February 2nd, the Karnataka State Chief Minister designate Sri H.D. Kumaraswamy and the Deputy Chief Minister designate Sri B.S. Yediyurappa came to seek Swami's blessings before taking the oath of office the next day. Swami received them warmly and gave them an audience in the interview room.

On Sunday, February 5th, the Ashram also had another very distinguished visitor. The Vice-President of the country Sri Bhairon Singh Shekhawat, who had landed in the HAL airport in Bangalore that afternoon, came to Sai Ramesh Hall accompanied by the Governor Sri T.N. Chaturvedi later in the evening close to 6 PM. They sat through the students' programme on *Bhakti Sagar* (reported above) and were later blessed with an audience with Swami inside Trayee Brindavan.

On the evening of February 8th, Sri Sri Ravishankar, of the Art of Living Foundation came to have an audience with Bhagavan. As most of you know the Art of Living Foundation was celebrating their silver jubilee in the Garden City on February 17th, 18th and the 19th. Swami gave an audience to Sri Sri Ravishankar later in the interview room.

Taking advantage of the proximity of Brindavan, all the 850 students of Swami's school in Muddenhalli which is just 56 kilometres from Brindavan came by buses to have Swami's Darshan on February 13th. The ever merciful Lord, who normally sits on the dais in the evening for the *bhajans*, chose to come down from the dais and give these boys the bliss of His Darshan from up close.

FEB 18th: SWAMI LEAVES FOR PARTHI

It was an idyllic time in Brindavan. The weather was perfect, and Swami was at His amiable best. All the devotees of Karnataka and the students of Brindavan who were pining for the Lord drank His fill to their heart's content during the few days that He was there.

Unexpectedly on the morning of February 18th, just after the conclusion of the morning Darshan, Swami waited for the *arathi* to be completed. Then He raised both His hands and blessed everyone on both the Ladies and the Gents' side. Then turning to the Ladies in the first row He announced, "I am going to Parthi."

And right after the Darshan there was a scramble. Bags were hurriedly packed, taxis were booked, bus tickets had to be arranged, breakfast had to be eaten in a hurry and soon there was a steady stream of humanity taking the long dusty road back to Puttaparthi.

Swami left His abode in Brindavan exactly at 1:00 PM on the road home back to Parthi, where He arrived around 4:30 PM and was received with full honours.

FEB 20th: A PROGRAMME BY THE PARTHI BOYS

After Swami had settled down in Parthi, the third year undergraduate boys welcomed Him with a well-prepared programme on the 20th of February on the theme of EDUCARE, to express their love and gratitude to Him for His benevolence while they were students in the Institute. Labelled as a "gratitude programme", the graduating class from the undergraduate programme, the graduate programme and the High School traditionally present these programmes in the month of February just prior to their annual examinations in March. It is a time for emotional farewells, for fond reminiscences, for fervent prayers and sorrowful leave-taking from the physical presence of Bhagavan, Who has been their Divine Mother, Father and Friend since their joining the campus.

Swami came unexpectedly early that evening, just before 3 PM. Most of the 64 undergraduate boys taking part in the programme were seated in the Bhajan Hall and Swami spent a few minutes chatting with them prior to the programme. Swami questioned them about the theme and immediately the boys showed Swami the card they had prepared depicting a pond with a lotus in the centre and some leaves around. The boys explained to Swami that they were like the pond and that He was like the beautiful lotus in the centre of their lives! Swami went on to explain the subtleties and intricate details of various stories selected by the boys. When the boys were asked by Swami "Where is Sita?" on seeing a boy dressed as Rama, the entire Hall was filled with laughter.

The boys immediately took the cue and narrated briefly the story from the Ramayana that was to be depicted. Swami went on to explain that Rama was the caretaker of all and that Bharatha was the ruler of Ayodhya. The boys in reply said that Swami was the caretaker of all. Swami then said that He would come for the programme and asked the boys to get ready and assemble everything outside.

The programme began in the Divine presence at around 3:20 PM. The various aspects of Educare: E-Education, D-Duty and Devotion, U-Understanding, C-Compassion, A-Action, R-Reverence, and ultimately E-Enlightenment were depicted as individual characters who explained the importance of each value through instances from Swami's life, various parables and stories from mythology.

The importance of Swami's free education system was highlighted through an incident where a graduate was asked in an interview what he had received from Swami (the interviewer was referring to the many rings, watches, pendants etc that Swami manifests as gifts for those He wills). The boy replied that Swami had given him the most important gem that had made him what he was - the gift of free quality education and more importantly, self-confidence!

Duty and devotion was portrayed through a small skit depicting the story from the Ramayana where Bharatha on being unsuccessful in convincing Rama to return back to Ayodhya, then reverentially asks Him for His sandals and with great devotion takes it back to Ayodhya to fulfil his duty of ruling the kingdom in Lord Rama's absence. Speakers next spoke about how their hostel life had taught them the importance of understanding and oneness.

Compassion was highlighted by the story of Siddhartha (Gautama Buddha) saving the swan. A contemporary story was related next of a benevolent Australian who agreed to pay the medical school fees for a poor boy who had undergone a major heart surgery in Swami's hospital after reading about his story in the Healing Touch section of Heart2Heart.

Nishkama Karma - action without expecting the fruits thereof - was highlighted by a story from Swami's *Chinna Katha*, wherein a boy is sent by the father to buy fruits for the *puja*. The boy however, comes back empty handed and explains that the fruits meant for the prayer had been given by him to a beggar boy who had not eaten in days. The father is impressed by the son's act and declares that he has imbibed the good values of Bharat and had earned the true fruit of action.

Reverence was highlighted by the Mahabharatha story where Yudhistira removed his armour and crown, walked across the battle-field and sought the blessings of his grandfather Bheeshma. Moved by this reverence, Bheeshma blessed Yudhistira to be victorious even though he was arrayed against him on the battle-field. The boys also presented that by following Swami's teachings, one could achieve enlightenment. In an unusual twist, there was a blindfolded boy sitting dejected on a stone to convey that without these values life is not worth living. In the end, after all the values had been touched upon, in a dramatic gesture the boy removes the blind-fold to signify that he has acquired all the values and then thanks Swami on behalf of everyone for giving us these values that are so vital to life.

The whole presentation was interspersed with songs between these skits and speeches. Many soul-stirring songs were sung that day, including "*Maa Prana Daivam*", "*Hum Tere Hain Sa*", "*Dil Yehi Kehta Hai*", "*Marichithi Vemo*", "*Yenta Manchi Teepi*", and "*Duniya Tere Bina Kuch Bhi Nahin*". As each new song would start, a rose would be presented to Swami by one boy while another group of 2 boys would present Him the words to the song written in neat calligraphic handwriting.

Swami spent some time talking to all these boys who went up to Him at the start of each song, and also blessed them by putting His hand on their heads. At the end, there was multi-lingual rally wherein 8 boys gave a very short speech for just a minute or two in duration, in eight different languages, on the theme of Motherly Love. The languages they spoke in were Tamil, Tulu, Kannada, Lithuanian, Nepali, Manipuri, Hindi and Telugu. The programme was over just a little before 5:00 PM after which *arathi* was taken before Bhagavan went back to His Poornachandra residence.

FEB 23rd: A PROGRAM BY THE 10TH AND 12TH CLASS HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

Not to be left behind, the 10th and the 12th Class of the High School - the graduating class - had also prepared a programme to express their gratitude to Swami for all that He had done for them during their stay here. The programme started with the students singing songs of gratitude and love, after they had their programme card blessed by Swami. This was followed by some of the students expressing their feelings for all the grace Swami had showered on them.

Among these, some of the students narrated their personal experience of how Swami had saved their lives or the lives of their family members on numerous occasions. Jeemut expressed how Swami had saved the life of his grandmother.

"Once while Swami was returning to Parthi from Brindavan and as was the prevailing custom and is even now, Swami broke a few coconuts before embarking on the journey. Swami called a boy and whispered something in his ear. The boy nodded his head and got up and started scanning the students. Spotting my father, he signalled him to go up to the dais as Swami was calling him. My father rushed and knelt before Swami. Picking up a broken coconut, Swami handed it to my father. Immediately after darshan, my father rang up my grandfather in Assam and enquired about his mother's health. My father was shocked to know that my grandmother was suffering from severe gastric ulcer for a month! My grandfather had not told my father thinking that he would be disturbed. Surrendering completely to God, my father took the coconut, cut it into miniscule pieces and with the Lord's form in his heart and a prayer on his lips, dropped it into the letter box after addressing it to my grandfather in Assam.

Fortunately, due to Swami's grace, the envelope arrived just in time, when my grand mother's condition was getting critical. Partaking of the remedy given by the greatest doctor, my grandmother was cured within a week, with no sign of the gastric ulcer remaining what so ever! The disease had disappeared completely without a trace! Swami had shown yet again that when man's hands fold in a sincere prayer, God's open to shower his blessings. "

Tarun Bali of the tenth standard talked about how his brother got into a medicine rack kept by his mother who was a medical practitioner and happened to rub some transparent liquid into his eyes. Being a Friday Islamic

holiday in the town of Tahalla, Libya in North Africa, there were unavoidable delays in getting the young child to the hospital.

When they finally reached the hospital, staff gave the desperate parents the bad news that the liquid had not spared the young child's eyes and he would probably be blind for life. Day and night the parents prayed to Swami but each day saw the sight deteriorating further. However, on the 11th day, when the dressing was removed they found that the eyes had been spared due to Swami's grace and the child can see even today without the use of spectacles!

Kamal Chand of Std XII related how Swami had saved his father from not receiving a scratch in a motor cycle accident while the photograph of Swami in his pocket was torn to pieces.

S.Sugeet of the Xth class related how when his mother met with an accident and was lying seriously wounded in the countryside, a competent doctor arrived out of nowhere and provided timely medical treatment that saved his mother's life. He said that the unknown doctor who disappeared after giving the treatment was none other than our beloved Swami.

Jeffrey Erhard also of the Xth class related,

"I would like to narrate an experience that changed the course of my life. For my first few years of schooling I was studying in the United States. My mother tried to teach me to read but I just could not catch on. I remember that it was like a torture just to read a few sentences. Eventually I was tested and it was discovered that I was dyslexic. Many different remedies were tried but nothing seemed to help. In my third standard I was very frustrated and somehow wanted to read. I remember clearly that I took an easy to read children's book and hid under a table so that I can concentrate. I struggled through 2 or 3 pages word by word and finally gave up. In my fourth standard we were here in Prashanti Nilayam. One day when I was sitting in the Mandir for darshan, Swami came out and on his rounds glided up to me and pressed mysteriously on my head. I began to read. At first my mother did not believe me when I told her that I was reading. But when she realized that I really was reading, she knew Swami had changed my life".

Throughout the programme, the students pleased Bhagavan with some heartrending songs in English, Hindi & Telugu which were leavened in between the speeches. The various songs sung by the students were -

"Kya Kush Naseeb Jo Sai Ko Paale (Hindi)", " Pyaare Sai Hamaare (Hindi)", "Dandaalaya Dandaalaya (Telugu)", " Smile your ever loving smile ", "We want to be with you Oh Lord!", " Kannula Mundara (Telugu)", "Teri Hai Zameen Tera Aasmaan (Hindi)", and " Dil Yehi Kahataa Hai Maa (Hindi)".

The boys presented roses and the script of the songs. Swami lovingly accepted and spoke to the students & blessed them profusely. The students also made beautiful greeting cards which were appreciated by the loving Lord.

The programme concluded with the students thanking Swami in various languages such as Gujarati, Marathi, Nepali, Malayalam, Tamil, Hindi, Telugu and English.

In view of their coming Board Exams, Swami also blessed Vibhuthi packets and the pens with which they would write their board examinations. Pleased by their effort, Swami blessed them with an unexpected Divine Discourse emphasizing the path that a student must follow in his life. He said,

"It is very nice to know that so many of you have been here from Primary School and have studied till your 12th class. It is very heartening to note that you have secured good marks and a good name. But in the Primary School your heart was full of compassion, love, feelings of caring and sharing. There was a feeling of brotherhood. But once you come to Higher Secondary School your behaviour and actions deteriorate. They become cheap and mean.

Your words are full of devotion and make all happy. But some of you have taken to the wrong path fostering a perverted mind. Think for yourself, how your minds are. Human life is a combination of Manas, Buddhi, Chitta, Ahamkara and the Body. These five are most essential for liberation. Above all, the mind must not be polluted. You must never expect for that which does not belong to you. Be cautious with those things that do not belong to you.

Whatever you do, do it as an offering to Swami, to please Him. Tell yourself - this is not mine. Who am I? From the microcosm to the macrocosm, everything is Divine. From the mosquito to the elephant, all are Divine! The characters keep changing just as in a drama, but all roles are played by Him alone. All words and songs are His. Only the attire is different. Whatever is said and seen is all Divine.

The whole Viswa is Viswarupa. Therefore, we must have Viswa Prema. Only then you can see God and be God. Differences and anger make you an animal. Animals do fight between themselves. But should we also fight like that? Whatever you do, it should be like gold. God is Hiranyagarbha. What is the specialty of gold? It remains as gold even if mixed with mud. You all are golden. But you have joined with the mud. To purify you all, noble people have to come and clean you. But you all entertain doubts. Why do doubts come? It comes because of the feeling of difference. I am different and you are different.

Special Blessings To A Fortunate One

At one point in His Divine Discourse, Swami beckoned to one student sitting in the first line to stand up. Pointing to him, Swami said, *"I know everything about everybody. But I act as though I do not know."* Then Swami narrated the story of another student who had lost his mother when he was a young child. Since then, Swami had taken care of this boy and today he was doing his post graduate studies in Swami's college. Bhagavan then signalled for the boy and he came to Swami. This boy happens to be the band leader and our readers must have seen his picture along with that of the band every time

they play on festive occasions. Bhagavan patted him and later materialized a green diamond ring and slid it onto his finger, saying that green stands for Kshema (welfare).

He further said, "See, I know all about this boy's family. My true property is Love. I Love all, those whom I see and even those whom I do not. Even at times when I appear angry it is just that I am pretending to be angry. Iswara Sarva Bhootaanaam. It is with this Love that God takes care of this entire Universe. "

FEB 24TH, A THANKSGIVING PRESENTATION BY THE SECOND YEAR POST GRADUATE STUDENTS

Can one describe the relation between a flower and the fragrance, the ocean and its waves, the Lord and His children? To express their love and gratitude to their beloved Lord, the final year post graduate students offered at the Lotus Feet of their Master a bouquet of songs. The boys were part of the programme from the MSc, MBA, MA, M.Tech, and the final year Diploma students of the Music College.

Bhagavan requested the Vice Chancellor to introduce the programme for the evening. He stressed on the need for the passing out students to keep two aspects ever in their mind. One is the 'spiritual vision' and the second is 'social service'. He said that they were now entering the phase of 'active participation' in Bhagavan Baba's Master Plan and Mission .

At 3.45 p.m. the students began their offering. Two students took a beautiful card to Swami. The card was a heart-shaped nest with a mother hen feeding its little chicks. After the "card-boys" were blessed 4 boys took a lovely cake to be cut by Swami which the boys had baked themselves. The words on the icing of the cake read 'I in You, You in me. So it begins, so it ends.' As the programme began with a prayer to Lord Ganesha, an ornamental sheet containing the list of songs was presented to Swami.

This programme too followed the same format as all the previous programmes. The songs were interspersed with short speeches expressing their love towards Swami. Among the songs that they sang were "Jhil Mil Jhil Mil Khilte Taare", " Maa Jeevana Aadhaarama Maa Hrudaya Sangeetama ", " We Love You Swami ", "Sathya Dharmamu Shanti Premalato Nee Nitya Jeevana Yatra Saaginchu", "O Maa Sai Maa", "Enta Premayo Swamiki Enta Premayo Satya Sai Bhagawanuki Enta Premayo", "Ye Bandhan To Pyaar Ka Bandhana Hai Janmo Kaa Sangama Hai", and "O Nestamaa Priyamaina Bandhamaa". The mellifluous sounds of a pair of violins playing in the background lifted the songs to melodious heights.

In all about 25 boys expressed their gratitude in 12 languages - English, Kannada, Hindi, Telugu, Bengali, Punjabi, Marathi, Gujarati, Konkani, Tamil, Sourashtra and Nepali. The themes of these little speeches varied from thanking Swami for the education He had given, poetic expression of love and gratitude, nostalgic memories of yesteryears in the primary school, to

promising Swami that they would lead their lives by practising Swami's teachings. The last speech - in Telugu - adored the glory and beauty of Swami's words.

The song following this, expressed the prayer of the students that Swami should speak to them. Bhagavan blessed the boys and answered their prayers by giving them a discourse.

It was 4.50 p.m. when Swami stood up and began His discourse. He said,

"To live in this world you need secular education (Hemataaraka Vidya). For the life thereafter you need spiritual education (Brahma Vidya). Even with all great degrees like MA and MBA, with all wealth, affluence and property, and with all name and fame; man is not able to win over the worldly life.

Worldly knowledge will only help in living a comfortable life. What great thing do we gain by merely studying? Chaavu Leni Chaduvu Chaduvavalayu.. one must study that which leads beyond death. All worldly education is like bulbs and fans (negative) whereas spiritual education is the current (positive).

Man forgets and is ignorant of the inner current (there is static current even in your hair) and runs after the outer current. Along with secular education, spiritual education should also be acquired. Mere secular education cannot even make an ant move. Once you control your five senses nobody can be greater than you. Everything is contained within man. All is contained in the Viswa Rupa - Cosmic Form. Without realizing this truth undertaking any amount of spiritual pursuit is in vain. All our descriptions of Divinity are waverings of our mind. It has nothing to do with Godhood. That is why Tyagaraja said - 'Who can ever describe You O Lord?'

When bad thoughts enter your mind, replace them with good thoughts. If you practise this, you will become virtuous. All great people have achieved their greatness in this manner. Can anything happen without God's Will?

The human being is the one with a single desire not the one with multiple desires. Jantu Naam Nara Janma Durlabham. Human birth is very rare and precious. Do not entertain bad feelings like hatred, jealousy, anger towards anybody. To be truly human, one must control the bestial qualities. However fragrant the flower may be, when it is mixed with dirt it will smell foul.

What is Manasu? 'Ma' means 'I', 'Na' means 'No' or 'remove'. Therefore, remove the 'I' feeling and then 'Su' remains. 'Su' stands for Sugandham - fragrance. Born as a human being, belonging to the human race, if we go by 'Ma' and 'Ma' alone it will lead to Maya. Therefore remove the Ma - 'I' feeling and then Sugandham will come into your life. Su symbolises Sugandhaswarupa, Supriya, Sunandamaya, Sukhaswarupa.....

Good and bad belong to you. God has no role to play in this. He is the very embodiment of Love and Peace. Under any circumstances, be peaceful. You will surely find peace in your vicinity."

Swami concluded His discourse by singing the bhajan Hari Bhajan Bina Sukha Shanti Nahin. After a few bhajans by the boys, Swami took arati and retired for the day.

FEB 25: AN ENCHANTING EVENING OF PROGRAMMES

It was quite an evening, on the day before Sivarathri. After Swami came into Sai Kulwant Hall, He sent a lot of boys scurrying over to Poornachandra. It soon became clear why - when they came back carrying a couple of watermelons each from Poornachandra for distribution in Sai Kulwant Hall.

It was quite a sight to see the boys bring the watermelons two at a time and give it to the crowd and then run back again for more. It reminded all of us of Lord Rama's monkey army that helped Him build a bridge across the ocean to Lanka by bringing a stone each and dropping it into the ocean.

But the evening was not over yet. Swami then called Sri AVS Raju, an elderly devotee of long standing. He is the author of many books of poetry on Swami and Swami blessed him by releasing some more books that he had written on this auspicious day. Swami later gave him permission to read his poetry to the crowd and he sat right beside the Lord and read his Telugu poems of praise of the Lord. Though many in the crowd did not understand the words, the feelings of devotion came through and were appreciated by all.

But the evening was still not over. Swami then called Sri Ajit Poppat a devotee from London and asked him to speak to the crowd. Mr. Poppat started off by asking the question - 'What is discipline? Is it just sitting silently or speaking softly and so on, or is it something more profound.' He then devoted the rest of his speech to addressing this question. Speaking in a mixture of English, Hindi with a smattering of Gujarati, and quoting Sanskrit verses often, Mr. Ajit in his humorous style drew upon his experiences with Swami to get his important message across. He said that we are not animals or birds but humans and even more - we are Sai Bhaktas. We should always listen to the inner voice and lead a life in light of Swami's teachings so we can be considered disciplined and true devotees of the Lord. It was an enchanting evening and a precursor of the exciting promises that the morrow - Maha Sivarathri day - had in store for one and all.

FEB 26TH AND 27TH: MAHA SIVARATHRI CELEBRATIONS IN SAI KULWANT HALL

The Morning Programme on February 26th

Maha Sivarathri, the night devoted to Lord Siva, is celebrated over a couple of days in Parthi, as we have a night long Akhanda Bhajan session that lasts for over 12 hours. On the morning of Sivarathri day, the Institute boys traditionally sing Siva stotrams and songs in praise of the glory of Lord Siva to usher in the day in an auspicious and fitting manner.

February 26th, Mahasivarathri Day, dawned to an eager, expectant crowd in Sai Kulwant Hall - a crowd fully saturated with fervent and devotional feelings on this Holy Day. The entire Sai Kulwant Hall was fully decorated with festoons decorating the roof and floral decorations adorning the façade of Sai Kulwant Hall. Swami entered Sai Kulwant Hall around 8:30 in the morning and was welcomed by the Institute Nadaswaram and the Pancha Vadyam group in the traditional Indian custom. After He had taken His place on the dais, the Vedam chanting continued for some time.

There was an air of hushed expectancy in the Hall. Earlier in the morning 4 spanking new red cars that had also been adorned with floral decorations, had been driven into Sai Kulwant Hall and it was quite obvious that Swami was going to be presenting it to some chosen devotees. Soon the mystery was cleared. Swami called Sri Sanjay Sahni, Principal of the Brindavan Campus, and gave him some instructions. Sri Sanjay Sahni then announced that Swami was going to felicitate 4 long term devotees who had rendered yeoman service to the organization.

The first was Sri A. Ramakrishna. Sri Ramakrishna, now retired, was the Vice-President of ECC (a part of the Larsen & Toubro Group). ECC was the chief construction company that had executed many of Swami's social projects. Notable among them were the water projects in Anantapur, Medak and Mehboobnagar districts. The Chennai water project and the East and West Godavari water projects were also executed by them. They were also instrumental in constructing the Super-speciality Hospitals in Puttaparthi and Brindavan, the Chaitanya Jyothi Museum and the Sai Kulwant Hall. When his name was announced, Sri Ramakrishna came up to Him and was garlanded by another devotee standing next to Swami. Swami then personally handed over the keys of the car which had been driven and was now parked in front of the dais. Sri Ramakrishna thanked Swami profusely for providing him the chance to participate in the divine mission and also said that ever since his group had been of service to Swami, it had grown by leaps and bounds. He further said that Swami was doing all the work and giving him all the credit. Swami then personally escorted Sri Ramakrishna to the car and asked him to seat himself beside the driver and was ceremoniously driven a short distance.

Next was Sri Kondal Rao, Senior Technical Consultant to Govt. of Andhra Pradesh for the Sri Sathya Sai Water Supply Project, and also the Chief Engineer supervising the Chennai Water Supply Project. Mr. Kondal Rao had been closely working with L&T in the execution of these projects. Sri Kondal Rao in the true spirit of dedicated service worked night and day in the execution of the projects over the years. Sri Kondal Rao was overwhelmed by Swami's Grace and fell at His feet and took padanamaskar. Swami then commanded Sri Kondal Rao to get into the new car and profusely blessed him for all his service to the organization.

The other two who were similarly honoured were our very own - Sri K. Chakravarthy, Secretary of the Central Trust and Dr. G. Venkataraman, Director of the Prashanti Digital Studio and Radio Sai Global Harmony. Sri Chakravarthy, joined the Indian Administrative Service (Andhra Pradesh

Cadre) in 1960; He worked as the Collector of the Anantapur District and held various positions including Finance Secretary (projects), Commissioner of Relief, and Commissioner of Commercial Taxes.

He left the IAS in 1981 to become the first Registrar of the Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning and ably nurtured the fledgling institute in its initial years. Currently he is the Secretary of the Sri Sathya Sai Central Trust and is one of the busiest men in the organization working long hours each day handling all his myriad responsibilities.

Dr G. Venkataraman, who surely needs no introduction to our readers, had a very illustrious career in public service and research and is a former Vice-Chancellor of the Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Learning. He also served at the Bhabha Atomic Research Centre in Mumbai and the Indira Gandhi Atomic Research Centre in Kalpakkam.

He was the Founder Director of ANURAG, a unit of DRDO - Defence Research and Development Organization. He is the recipient of the Sir C. V. Raman Centenary Award, Indira Gandhi Award and the Padma Shri Award from the Government of India. He has authored many books including 'Journey into Light: Life and Science of C. V. Raman'. He currently teaches at the Institute besides running the Prashanti Digital Studio and Radio Sai.

After all the four had been honoured thus and presented with their gifts of a car, Swami posed for photographs with them. First He posed with Sri Ramakrishna and Sri Kondal Rao and praised both of them profusely for their contribution. Next He posed with Sri K. Chakravarthi and Dr. Venkataraman and listed all their achievements over the years to the boys seated in front of Him.

After this heart-warming ceremony was over, it was the turn of the Institute boys to sing songs in praise of our Lord Shiva Himself. About 9 singers of the Institute sang the following songs and stotrams that was a fitting finale to the ceremony we had just witnessed.

The songs that they had selected were "Chidananda Roopaha Shivoham Shivoham", "Bilva stotram", "Lingashtakam", "Vishwanaataashtakam", "Neela kandara deva", "Sada Shiva Bhajamyaham", "Shiva Shiva Shiva Shiva Yanaraada", "Shiva Shankari", and the last song was a well rendered duet "Om Namah Shivaya". The boys were ably backed by 3 key-boards, 2 violins, 1 flute, 1 tabla, and 1 harmonium.

The tiny tots of the Primary School had made many cards and handicrafts especially for Bhagavan on this auspicious day. Swami with His immense love and grace asked them to bring it to Him and talked with all the little ones who had toiled hard to prepare these gifts for Him.

Swami finally cut the cakes prepared by many groups in the Ashram before He went home to Poornachandra. Prasadam was also distributed to all the devotees.

The Evening Programme on February 26th

The Sivarathri evening programme is one that most of the devotees look forward to all year, especially after Swami resumed the lingodhbhavam (bringing out the lingam from within Him) a few years ago. The queues to get into Sai Kulwant Hall started forming early so as to get a vantage position to witness this unique, divine event.

Swami was welcomed again in the evening by the same Institute Nadaswaram band as in the morning. After His arrival trays containing blue boxes and white safari cloth pieces were brought out and kept for distribution. Swami instructed the boys to begin the distribution of the cloths and the blue coloured boxes that were actually calculators with a musical alarm clock.

Swami sat and kept watching the distribution occasionally giving the boys some instructions. After some time to everyone's surprise, Swami got into His car and went towards Poornachandra and later went out again for a short while, leaving all the devotees perplexed.

Are we going to have the Sivarathri discourse? Is there going to be a lingodhbhavam? We just have to love His uncertainty - as He keeps repeating often! After about half an hour He returned again to Sai Kulwant Hall. After Swami came walking to the veranda, He raised His right Hand and gave the Abhaya Hasta Blessings to one and all.

Smt P. Susheela, a famous playback singer took her place near the veranda. Swami asked the Institute boys to start with a Ganesha Bhajan. Then, Smt. P. Susheela sang two Bhajans - "Esawramba Priya Tanaya Sai Narayana" and "Manasa Bhajare Guru Charanam". After these two bhajans the boys continued and we thought the all night Akhanda Bhajan was well underway.

However, a few minutes after 6:00 PM, Swami stopped the bhajan singing and asked Sri AVS Raju to share his poems with the audience as he had done the previous day. He read some of his Telugu poems for about 20-25 minutes. Then Swami stood up and to everyone's delight and began His nectarine Sivarathri discourse around 6:30 PM. He said,

"The whole Universe is in Him. Can you build a temple for Him? When He resides in all beings, what name can you give Him? When all the oceans find refuge in Him, can you give Him a bath? He is not merely Iswara; He is the Iswara of the whole Universe. Prapancha is a combination of the five elements. 'Pra' means expression or manifestation or blossoming. 'Pancha' stands for the five elements. There are the five elements - earth, water, fire, air and ether. There are also the five senses - Shabda (sound), Sparsha (touch), Rupa (sight), Rasa (taste) and Gandha (smell). The five life breaths are Prana, Apana, Vyana, Udana and Samana. The Lord is the basis for the expression of all these. Is any among these permanent? No, only Brahma Tatva is eternal. What is Brahma - that which represents these five elements.

Love is the foundation of the Universe. There can exist neither Nature nor world without Love. The world is sustained by the Love that is distributed in the five elements. Forgetting Love, following any mode of worship is in vain. The five elements express their power through the human life.

Good and bad are all in your thoughts. Correct your thoughts. If there is any element of hatred, feel ashamed of it. If you are attracted by anybody, it is because of attachment. Understand that it is God who attracts. All forms are His. You have none but one true enemy and that is your own mind.

You are the origin of everything. You are all Embodiments of Love. None of you is separate. There is no second at all. There is nothing like a 6th element. Your Love represents the Divine Form. Brahma (God) is not away from you. To think that He is away is Bhrama (Delusion). Action (Karma) is also Divine. Never accuse or criticize God. All is God.

Doubts and imaginations rob us of our Bliss. Never entertain any doubts. It is like poison. You get doubts about your wife, children..... all this is useless. Why don't you doubt yourself? Then you will feel so ashamed. Even if doubts come, brush them aside. You can develop strong faith only when you remove all doubts. Doubts can be dangerous and can sometimes prove fatal.

Love God and it will transform your hate towards others also into love. Therefore, develop Love. When all of you enjoy supreme Bliss, it is Sivaratri for Me. My Blessings to all of you. Sing the glory of God all night. Do Naama Smarana whole heartedly. Then you will attain Divinity ."

It was very late, almost 8 PM when Bhagavan retired for the evening. It had been a hectic and an enjoyable day for all. A lot of devotees stayed behind to spend the entire night singing His Glory in compliance with Swami's command.

The Morning Programme on February 27th

Swami came early around 6:30 AM to Sai Kulwant Hall. After He had sat down in His seat, he commanded that the air-coolers be brought closer to His chair. A few minutes later, one of the boys serving Swami also brought many flasks of water. An excited buzz went around the Hall. Is there going to be a lingodh bhavam this morning?

After Swami sat down in His seat, He commanded that the vessels containing the prasadam (Pulihora or Tamarind rice and Sakkara Pongal or Sweet Rice) to be distributed at the end of the Akhanda Bhajan be stacked on the veranda. The boys not only brought the serving vessels but also the huge vessels that contained the remaining prasadam and stacked them all next to the Lord Himself.

Soon Swami began drinking copious quantities of water. The lingering suspicions became a certainty, for as noticed in previous years, He drinks a lot of water before the emergence of the lingam. The expectations of the

crowd were heightened and they started singing bhajans with renewed vigour and devotion.

Soon Swami's physical discomforts also increased. He occasionally burped as if bringing out the lingam but it was not time yet for the emanation of the lingam. Just as a mother has to undergo birth pangs, Swami undergoes severe physical discomfort in order to manifest the Lingam so that man may realise that behind Creation there IS a Creator who is Supreme. It is this Supreme One alone who can grant permanent Bliss, and man must strive to achieve Purity because that is the only gateway to God and Bliss.

The boys attending to Him tried their best to alleviate His physical discomforts. Added to it were the fervent prayers of all who could not bear to see our beloved Swami in agony. Swami requested that "Om Namah Shivaya" be chanted. The chanting went on uninterrupted and soon picked up a fervent pace. Swami continued drinking more and more water.

In earlier times, the Lingam that emanated from Swami used to be of crystal etc. These days, however, the Lingam is of pure gold, shining with incredible lustre. Can anyone have so much gold inside one's body? Wherefrom does all that gold come? Swami says that the gold forms in Him from the five elements present in subtle form. Initially, the gold exists inside as liquid or molten gold. For gold to exist in the liquid state, it must be at very a high temperature. At such temperatures, the stomach of normal mortals would be completely burnt but not so in the case of the Avatar.

The pace of the chanting increased. Bhajans with a fast beat were now sung and the atmosphere in Sai Kulwant Hall was electric. The tension was palpable and everyone was mouthing silent, fervent prayers in the heart. Just before 8:30 AM, Swami nodded gently, as if to say that the lingam is now formed and ready to emerge. Soon Swami bent His Head down and opened His mouth wide, and an incredibly big golden lingam - as big as an ostrich egg - emerged out into the world.

The agony (of being unable to see Swami's physical discomfort) and the ecstasy (of the emergence of the gold lingam) of the Lingodbhavam were experienced in full by all. Swami, after holding up the lingam for all to see, placed the lingam in a bed of flowers on a silver plate.

But Swami though visibly tired physically was not done yet. He was fully aware that not all had witnessed clearly this momentous event, due to the huge crowd. So He expressed and carried out His desire to go around Sai Kulwant Hall and show the lingam to all personally. Such is His love for all of us!

And this day was not over yet. Soon a red car was driven in front of the veranda and we knew it was going to be gifted to some eminent devotee. Swami then called Sri Paramahansa and his wife to the front of the veranda.

This couple run the Deenajanodharana Pathakamu - Swami's orphanage. Sri Paramahansa was honoured by being garlanded and the car keys were handed over to him. Swami was also kind enough to pose for pictures with the couple in front of the car. Swami then asked that all the children of the orphanage be brought to Him. They all came post-haste in obedience to the Lord's command. Swami first asked them to do some Veda chanting, which they did quite creditably to everyone's joy and appreciation. Swami then had chocolates distributed to all the little kids.

Swami then talked to all of them with a mike in His hand and said that they were not orphans for He was their mother and father. He said that they should redeem their lives and live up to all His expectations. He also said that Rs 100,000 had been deposited in their names and the full amount would be given to them when they are ready (after graduation) to enter the world. Swami said that He not only provided them with education but also with all the other needs like food, clothing, etc. that they needed. It was a touching, poignant moment when time itself stood still and oneness was experienced as a common emotional bond. And there was not a single dry eye in the entire Hall, including Swami's!

The boys of the orphanage then sang a few Telugu songs for Him. A couple of them were even bold and confident enough to thank Him for all that He had done for them in English! They said that before they came to the Ashram, their lives were drifting. Now they had love and purpose in their lives through Bhagavan's Grace and they were determined to fully utilise the opportunity.

After this ceremony, at Swami's command, *prasadam* was distributed to all the devotees. He supervised the distribution of the *prasadam* for some time and then asked that *arathi* be taken before He retired back to Poornachandra. Wherever we are, this is what we must remember on this Sivarathri day. Firstly, we all have come from the Creator and thus are born as the Embodiments of Divine Purity. That is what *Lingodbhavam* really ought to call to our mind.

Secondly, though we start off pure – as Swami says, children are always pure, at least at the start – desires soon invade us and contaminate the Mind as much as possible. However, we must resist this and try to purify the Mind by burning the desires, and *Vibhuti* or sacred ash is the symbol of this ultimate burning of desires. *Vibhuti Abhishekam* thus ought to remind us of the need to first limit desires and then burn them entirely. We might miss observing other functions but *Sivarathri* must be taken very seriously because it is all about becoming Pure and then truly become one with God.

So we bring to a close this rather long edition of this month's chronicle of events. It has been an exhilarating time for all. And the future looks if anything even more exciting, for really inexplicable are Swami's *Leelas*. So till next time, all of us at Heart 2 Heart wish you the very best. Jai Sai Ram!

-Heart2Heart Team

SWAMI AND ME

THE MOST PRECIOUS GIFT...THE AVATAR'S TIME

By Sri Sanjay Sahani

Sri Sanjay Sahani is a former student of Swami's Institute and is currently the principal of the Brindavan Campus of the Institute in Bangalore. This is the text of the talk delivered by him in the divine presence on the Ugadi Day, 9th of April 2004. (This year the Telugu new year day falls on March 20th)

I offer my loving salutations at the Lotus Feet of Our Beloved Bhagavan.

Precious Time

There are many Names by which the Lord is adored. The Vedas describe Him as *Kalaya Namaha. Kala-Kalaya Namaha. Kala-Atitaya*

Namaha - He is the Embodiment of Time. He is the Master of Time. He Transcends Time. He is the Timeless Principle. It has been the tradition in India to adore this facet of divinity through the celebration of the New Year.

What is it that we do when we adore time? **God Who is time and also transcends time teaches us that as an adoration of the time principle, we must make the best use of this gift of life.** How can we make the best use of Time? Swami says: "Time waste, is Life waste!" What is the purpose of life? *Paropkarat Kam Idam Shariram* – The body is meant to serve others.

Jantu Naam Narjanam Durlabam said Adi Shankara in his *Viveka Chudamani*. 'The gift of human life is something, which is very, very special.' Through life times, man has evolved from the beast to the human. And an Avatar comes to remind man, to make man aware of his true destiny that is to realize that he is none other than Divinity Itself!

From Mercenary to Missionary

There are different categories of people that we can find in society. At one end of the spectrum, is what one would call a Mercenary. He is one, who for the sake of money will do anything. If you'll pay him the right price, he is ready to do anything.

A little better than him is a Careerist who is totally obsessed by the three P's: Pay, Prospects and Promotion.

A little better than the Careerist, is the Professional. He looks at the return that he is getting, and to that extent puts in the commensurate effort.

A notch higher than the Professional is the Service Minded person. He is not looking at how much return he is going to get. He is looking at how much self-satisfaction he derives from doing good to others. But there is a trace of selfishness in him also.

At the top end of the spectrum, is the Missionary. We use this word in many contexts. **But the true Missionary is none other than the Lord Himself!** Right from the time an Avatar is born, He is always aware of His Advent and the purpose: Why that Advent has taken place? Swami says: "I have come to inscribe a golden chapter in the history of humanity; where falsehood will fail, truth will triumph, and virtue will reign!" It is to foster and nourish those seeds of goodness in the heart of man, which will ultimately lead him to Godliness that we have the Avatar amidst us.

Swami's Concern for All, Hawkers Included.

At this juncture, I am reminded of an incident, which happened many years ago. There are a thousand and one ways in which Bhagavan teaches us, nudges us and prompts us to take to the path of goodness. It was the year 1989 and we had accompanied Bhagavan to Kodaikanal. Even at that point of time, the little Bhajan hall was too small for the devotees. And it was Bhagavan's plan that the adjacent hill should be cut so that a spacious Bhajan hall could be constructed. And so, He instructed all the devotees, students and teachers who were with Him to take to this seva.

In the morning, after we had our breakfast, all devotees and students would take up various tools, implements and start doing the service activities. And of course, Swami would go around and give His Darshan from the top of the building amidst us - it was a very beautiful time that we had.

Wherever Swami goes, whether it is Brindavan, or Prashanti Nilayam, or Kodaikanal there are groups of hawkers who sell small photographs and trinkets to make their meager livelihood. So, these hawkers had laid out their wares on the Kodaikanal Lake road, outside Sai Shruti. One day, a police inspector came there and he thought that they were obstructing the traffic and therefore he confiscated all their wares. This event was intimated to Swami.

Next morning, the devotees had come for Darshan and this police inspector was also sitting in some corner. Swami went amidst the devotees. He went up to this gentleman and from a distance we saw there was a brief conversation that took place between them. **We do not know what transformation took place in the mind of that police inspector. The next thing that happened was that when he went back, he returned all the wares of these hawkers!**

When we were in Sai Shruti with Swami, these hawkers had made a prayer to Bhagavan through somebody. And this was a very special prayer. They prayed: "Swami, when your devotees and students are doing this seva, we are busy in our own work, and are not able to do these service activities. But when the devotees retire for lunch, at that point of time, we are free. If you permit us, we pray for your permission and blessings, that during that interval when your students and the devotees are taking rest we may be given the chance to help with the construction, so that this seva activity can continue continuously from morning to evening."

Swami was so touched by this prayer of these vendors that not only did He bless them with that opportunity, but put that as an ideal before all of us,

saying “See, look at that feeling with which they have come forward to do this service activity!”

I reflected on this experience thinking that these people are lost in the world. People have come to Bhagavan for His Darshan but they are wondering “How can we make a few rupees more now these devotees have come?” That is their livelihood. **But through a chain of circumstances, Swami provoked and inspired them to take up this seva and sanctified their lives!**

No One is Too Young for Service

And I see it in any number of situations! Once here in Prashanti Nilayam it was the period before Grama Seva started. Those days in the Hill View Stadium we used to have a day where all the students and teachers along with seva dal would be carrying out the feeding of the Narayanas. It was a great blessing that Swami had conferred on the staff and students of the university and it was very meticulously planned. We had distributed all the work to the students but there was this group of 8 th class students, 13 years olds, who we thought too young and therefore they were left out.

On that eventful morn Swami came out of the interview room while we were all busy with the arrangements at the stadium. When Swami came out of the interview room, He saw these 8 th class students seated in the Mandir. And He expressed surprise! **“What is this? Do you not know that it is Narayan Seva day today? What are you doing here?” And the boys very vociferously informed Swami “Swami all these senior boys have taken up the work. They have not left any work for us!”** And this is what Swami told these small children:

“If nothing else go and take water and serve the Narayanas. And earn some *punyam* (merit)!” From the youngest, to the eldest, there is none whom Swami feels is ineligible for this path of seva!

And No One is Too Old...

I remember in this context what one of our elders was once telling me. After retirement he settled down in the ashram and Swami asked him to go to our canteen and serve water to the devotees who come there for meals. And after some time Swami verified his work. “Do the devotees come to you for water, or do you go with your jug, table to table serving the water?” And he said: “Swami, I go to each devotee and serve the water.” **And Swami was so delighted that he mentioned this in a discourse and said: “See, this is how seva should be done!”** So from the youngest to the eldest nobody is unqualified for this!

Look at Bhagavan! Even at this age, how much He is doing for humanity! How much joy He is giving to thousands of people; and not only doing it Himself, but inspiring others to do likewise! His sensitivity to people’s feelings, His personal motivation, His sense of commitment to set an ideal. He comes to set an ideal for humanity!

The Avatar is like a drill inspector. He says, "I am the Teacher of teachers! And as a Teacher I am like a drill inspector. It's not for Me to simply say it - I do it!" The drill inspector has to raise his hands up and down and not just speak! And that's how his pupils follow. That is how Swami has been personally training humanity, with His personal example!

Sai Shares Our Pain

I cannot ever forget that eventful day before the starting of the Grama Seva some 4 or 5 years ago. Swami had sent word to all the teachers to assemble in the Bhajan hall. He had come out a little early to the Bhajan hall and He waited for almost half an hour till everybody had come and assembled. And then a couple of teachers spoke. And then Swami Himself addressed the gathering. And what He said was the seed for the entire Grama Seva movement! He referred to an incident, which was reported in a newspaper, which He had an occasion to read.

There was this mother, too poor and unable to feed her children, unable to see them crying of starvation. And unable to bear that kind of situation, she had given them poison and then had eaten the same poison and killed herself! **When Swami had narrated that particular incident, I cannot forget that His frame was trembling!**

At that point of time we realized that God is not an entity somewhere in the blue skies leaving humanity in the lurch saying, "Okay, this is your karma, and you bear with it! You suffer for what you do!" **God feels! He suffers! He feels the suffering of each individual soul more than that soul himself maybe going through, because He feels that sense of Oneness with His entire Creation! He has created the world but He is also there to nourish it, to sustain it!**

In spite of all the foolish things that man is doing today God has not lost hope of man! Rabindranath Tagore, our Nobel Laureate, very beautifully said, "Every time a child is born, he brings a message from God that God has not despaired of man!" If God had lost hope for mankind, no new child would have been born! He has that kind of affection for the crown jewel of His creation. At that point of time Swami said

"This is the Land of Annapurneshvari ! (Goddess of Prosperity) And such a thing should happen in such a land? This is the land where we say *Matradevo Bhava, Pitradevo Bhava* (revere your mother and father as God) In such a land, should such an event have taken place? It is My firm resolve that from today onwards, to the last day of My life that I will be intimately associated with rural service!"

And with that started from the next day the Grama Seva which has continued every year. It is a great blessing for the students and the staff in the university - and a great example for humanity.

Spirit of Swami - Empathy with All Creation

How should we do Seva? We have Swami's small story or *Chinna Katha* on this subject. A holy man was once passing by a village where a calf, had been caught in marshy land. It was struggling to get out of it and was not able to. And seeing that the village urchins were having a good laugh. This holy man saw all this and rushed into the marshy spot, picked up the calf and brought it to safe land.

The village urchins were very annoyed with this man and they went and complained: "Master, why have you robbed us of our entertainment?" And the holy man apologized saying, **"Please forgive me. When I saw that calf struggling, I was experiencing such acute, intense pain in my heart. To alleviate that pain, I went into that marshy area and rescued the calf. Now I am feeling better. It is to alleviate my pain that I have pulled the calf out of that marshy track."** Swami says that when you do Seva do not think that you are serving somebody else – you are serving yourself! We should have that sense of Oneness!

I still recall some years ago when Swami had our Brindavan hostel renovated and also had the bathrooms done up. The warden of the hostel expressed gratitude to Swami on behalf of all the students. Swami said: **"I have not done it for the students, I have done it for Myself!" That is the Spirit of Swami!**

If we can imbibe that spirit in our lives and if we can make that spirit the breath of our lives wherever we go in the world, when people meet us, when people talk to us, they will feel that they are not meeting us, they have met and seen Swami Himself! That is how Time has to be Sanctified!

Saint Kabir and the Baby's Cry

If we live in this feeling we will be able to fulfill what the great poet Kabirdas observed in one of his famous couplets *Kabira, Jab Hum Paida Huye, Jag Hasey Hum Roye. Aisi Karni Kar Chalo, Hum Hasey Jag Roye* . [When we are born, the whole world laughs and we cry; we should do such acts that when we depart, we laugh and the whole world cries]. The beauty of his poetry is that he will take truths from daily life and derive great lessons and insights from it.

He says when every child is born the first sign of life is the baby's cry! The whole world rejoices; parents, relatives and well-wishers. 'Oh, our new child is born!' *Jag Hasey Hum Roye* [The whole world laughs, we cry]. Kabirdas thinks to himself 'Why did we cry? My God! I did not learn the lessons of my life properly the last time! I failed in my examinations last time! I have come back again to make one more attempt, to write a supplementary exam. I have to attempt to pass this examination again!' So the child is crying!

At the end of the life - *Aisi Karni Kar Chalo*. Live your life in such a way that when your last moments come, everybody else should be crying! 'Oh he was such a good person. He is leaving us and going. We will not get a chance to

see him again.' People should be crying, you should be rejoicing. Why should you be rejoicing? Because you are going back to the Source! You are going back to the Lord Who sent you into the world to spread His Word to spread His Message! So that is the spirit in which we should conduct our lives; and our great example is Swami!

The Ideal Idol

I came to Swami's Lotus Feet as a schoolboy. At that age it is very important to have idols - and not merely idols but ideals! Swami was not only my Idol, but also my Ideal! If we can only emulate even a fraction of what Swami stands for, if we can only give joy to another human being to the extent of even a minute fraction of what Swami Himself does!

A few days ago, in Brindavan the outgoing bachelors were passing out and I just happened to ask them "This is the last class that you're going to be together; would you like to share a few thoughts with each other?" One boy came forward and after that there was a line of students! Amazing - we cannot imagine how Swami has impacted on their lives!

A Heart Healed

The first boy who spoke said "When I joined the primary school in Ooty, I was very sickly - you name a disease, I had it! My father took me to the AIIMS Hospital in Delhi and it was discovered that I have a hole in the heart that was causing all my illnesses. My teachers, my warden, my headmistress - everybody was so worried about me. And they told Swami about it and Swami came all the way to the Primary school (by that time the Ooty children had shifted to the Primary school here in Prashanti Nilayam).

He came all the way to the dormitory and asked: 'Who is that boy?' They said: 'Swami, this is the boy.' **And Swami touched my heart and said 'There is nothing wrong with him!' When I went back to AIIMS and had more tests, the hole in the heart was found to have closed!"**

The Sensitivity of Sai

Another boy narrated this incident. It was the Primary school prize distribution and one student from each class would go up and receive the prize from Swami's hand. Whoever received the maximum number of prizes would represent that class.

At the last class one small boy's name was called out and it so happened that two boys had the same name in that class! Now the boy who was to receive the prize apparently didn't get up immediately so the other classmates started nudging the second boy "See, there is nobody going, so you go!" So, innocently he got up and went up to Swami. By that time, the boy who was to receive the prize had already gone to Swami, received his prize and come back.

So when he went up to Swami the poor boy was highly embarrassed! There was no prize left to receive. And he realized that the prize had already been given by Swami, so he ran back to the edge of the hall and started crying. Swami noticed that the boy was crying amongst the thousand plus children and called the boy. **He made him sit on His lap, and taking His handkerchief, wiped the boy's tears. He called the warden and asked her to get some prize for the child and personally gave it to the child!**

When I hear such experiences of our students - and they are legion - I contemplate how sensitive He is even to a child's feelings! How sensitive He is to every sentient being in His creation!

Once He was coming out of the Trayee Brindavan Mandir and people observed that Swami's walk was very cautious. And somebody took courage to ask: "Swami, why are You walking like this?" And He said: **"The ants are crossing my path. I am taking care that I don't step on them."** He has so much Love and sensitivity for even an ant of His creation!

The Most Precious Gift

I started with the principal of time. There are many things precious in the world. **There are many resources but the most precious resource is of time. If we do not use the time that we get today properly that moment is lost forever!** It is true for each and every one of us! So precious is this resource of time.

But even more precious is the Time of the Avatar! We call today Yugadi (New Era). The Avatar comes only once in a Millennium and at such a point of time, we are His contemporaries! Do we realize how special and truly blessed we are to be basking in His proximity? And to be enjoying His Darshan, Sparshan, and Sambashan!

The Time of the Avatar is being gifted to us and it is such a precious resource! Just to see Him is the boon of a lifetime! How blessed we are if we realize the purpose for which Bhagavan has made His Advent amidst us, and make the best use of it.

On last Krishna Janamashtami, Swami said "When Krishna came, so many souls were liberated!" The indirect hint that I received was "What about you all? I have come; what about you all? Do you have any plans?" Yes! If we walk the path which He has shown us, the goal is certain! Past is past! Don't worry about the past! The future is uncertain. Don't worry about the future! The given moment is Now! That is the present. And this present is not the ordinary present - it is the Omnipresent!

If we realize, what a precious moment this is to be now, here, in the presence of God! Face to face with God! To imbibe that spirit and inspiration, to translate it into action, we would be the most fortunate people in the entire human race.

With these few words, I once again offer my Loving Pranaams at Bhagavan's Lotus Feet and close.

- Heart2Heart Team

WHEN HE TOUCHES YOUR HEART

By Sonja Engman Wilson

This is a wonderful account from a reader which will touch your heart as you read how Swami transforms a lady's sorrow in a far away land into service.

It has taken me five years to consider telling this story. It is just one among so many stories about how the Sweet Lord Sai Baba calls you into His light and love, but for each and one of us, Swami chooses the time and the circumstances to do so. It is a story about how Bhagavan Baba drew me to His Lotus Feet at a time when I was in deep sorrow during my husband's illness and later death. I did not know anything about Sai Baba at that period nor had I ever seen a picture of Him. It is also a story about all the lovely blessings Swami showered on me and how He tried my faith when I decided to go and see Him in person.

In The beginning... Deep Sorrow

But let me start with the beginning. In January 2000, my husband was diagnosed with cancer and he was slowly dying. I was in deep sorrow and prayed much to God for help. I told God I would help other people if only He would let my husband live. I was very desperate over the whole situation, and I could not sleep at night. I read a lot of spiritual books and often went to the small library in our village in which we lived in New Zealand .

The Scent of Sai

One day at the library I was looking at the bookshelves in the spiritual section, and my eyes caught sight of a book called *A Catholic Priest Meets Sai Baba*. I read a few pages and decided it was worth taking home. Next to it was another book *Sai Baba - The Holy Man and Psychiatrist* by Dr. Samuel H. Sandweiss. Again I skimmed through the book and found it worth reading. Strangely both the books smelled of incense, and I thought some hippies had read them, who had used incense sticks. I felt attracted by the fragrance and did not give it any more thought.

I first read *A Catholic Priest Meets Sai Baba* and understood his doubt about the catholic faith. Then I started reading Samuel Sandweiss' book, and I was fascinated about what Sai Baba could do. Many years ago I had read *Autobiography of a Yogi* by Paramahansa Yogananda, so I knew in my heart without doubt, that man can develop supernatural abilities through divine love and understanding. **When I finished the second book the incense fragrance vanished. I suddenly remembered that Samuel Sandweiss had written that Sai Baba could contact you wherever you lived in the world by scents of vibhuti, kumkum and sweet amritha.**

I wondered if He had contacted me? I was unsure about it but at the same time I felt a great truth coming to me, as if I had found something I had been searching and longing for my whole life.

“My Faith Grew Stronger Everyday”

I started to meditate on Swami in my morning meditations and very soon I had strong faith in Him. **Strangely He seemed to give me the necessary peace and strength to help my husband every day. My husband told me he felt totally at peace and his eyes were so beautifully clear.**

My husband's health deteriorated quickly and in desperation I wrote a letter to Sai Baba. In anguish I poured my heart out and talked to Sai Baba as God and as a dear, close friend. Every day I prayed and talked with Swami. I promised Swami to take care of elderly people, to help anybody, wherever I could, to change myself - just would He let my husband live. I was really bargaining with God. As if I did not know, it was of no avail. In the end I prayed to Baba, “If it was the karmic will that my husband's time was up, please do not let my sweet husband have any pain.” It was a painful and confused letter.

One day, maybe one week before my husband passed away something very strange happened. I was with my husband and suddenly felt a very wonderful feeling in my hands. I looked down at them, and it was as if they were not my hands. I was amazed over this feeling, and let this love pour into my husband. A slow stream of peace and love out of my control poured to him.

He looked at me and said, “ Puska, your hands are so filled with love.” Tears ran down my face and the strange beautiful feeling of love coming from another source was at this moment so divine. I silently thanked Sai Baba, because I had been praying how could I show my husband my deep love for him, not only by the help I gave him everyday, but on a very deep soul level. Swami heard my prayer. How immense is His grace and love for us!

I knew in my heart without doubt that it was Bhagavan Sai Baba that showered my husband with divine love through me, and that He was in us and around us. My husband died a few days later in our home and I helped him over, telling his soul to go towards the love and light and his death was peaceful.

The next morning when family and friends were gathered beside my husband's body to say a last good-bye, another strange and beautiful incident happened to me. I was alone by my husband's body and suddenly I felt so much anguish. In great agony I called out to God. Suddenly, I felt my husband's voice tell me “Puska, this is not my body I am here, I am here”. Then I experienced a feeling of great ecstasy so strong that I could hardly stand. I am sure it was Bhagavan's grace reassuring me that there is no death.

As time went by, people with problems started coming to me and I tried to help them as well as I could as I had promised Swami. My faith in Bhagavan Baba was very strong, like a rock. I felt I had been given a purpose in life and I grew stronger every day.

Journey to Joy With No Visa!

I now started trying to find more information about Swami and read everything that I could get my hands on. Two years after my husband's death, I decided to go back to Denmark, where I was born to see where life would take me from there. In April 2003, I booked a flight to take me to India to Bhagavan on my way back to Denmark. I wanted to see Him, to feel His Love and thank Him from my heart for all that He had done for me. At that stage I did not know that Sai Baba would try my faith in Him.

I booked my flight and confirmed with two travel offices in New Zealand that I did not need a visa to enter India. The plane made a stop-over in Kuala Lumpur and the next evening while I was boarding the flight to Bangalore I saw a woman who I felt was from Scandinavia. She was called Riita and was from Finland, but lived in Bangalore with her son and husband who was working in Bangalore. She told me that she was in Malaysia to have her visa renewed. "I hope you have a proper visa" she said, "if not they won't let you in." Very worried I told her that I had no visa and she said that the immigration authorities would not let me in. Then we found our seats and I did not see her anymore.

We landed in Bangalore late at night. Passport control asked me for my visa and I told them that I did not have one and had been misguided in New Zealand. They told me that I had to leave India immediately. During the whole flight I had an A4 size picture of Sai Baba with me. **I showed the passport control staff the picture and told them that I had come to see Sai Baba. They repeated that I had to leave but I insisted I had to see Sai Baba to thank Him.** They took me into a small office where I told them about my husband's death and about Sai Baba coming into my life. They listened, but were firm that I could not stay in India as I had no visa.

More airport staff arrived and discussed my case. I was sitting in a chair and all the other passengers had finally gone. Strangely I was at peace, but very sad. The staff would not change their position and I realized that they were only doing their duty. Here was I, a 60 year old lady with white hair, in sorrow over my husband's death, landing in such a pitiful situation and yet so full of hope to see my beloved Swami.

I was thinking, "Why hast thou forsaken me Lord; or are you trying my faith in You?" **I just sat there quietly, firm like a rock waiting for a miracle, because I was there to see Swami - and the miracle came in form of a woman.**

God Always Sends Help

Suddenly the Finish woman Riita returned and showed her visiting card and also some other papers confirming her husband's work with Volvo in Bangalore to the officials. She asked if she could be of any help. Finally after a long time they agreed to let her take me home and to be my guarantor. I was given a 72 hours 'Landing Permit' in my passport so that I could try and

arrange for a '10 Days Staying Permit'. I thanked them from my heart and went with my new friend Riita into the bustling, hot Bangalore night. **Swami had helped me.**

Now began three hectic days to get a stamp in my passport for 10 days in India. Everyday we ran from office to office and I do not recall how many places we were sent to. Some offices were closed or open at odd times. We were sent to some places twice and there were a lot of people waiting everywhere. Hour after hour we waited in the hot weather. My mind shut down - I was not there. I dreamed about seeing Sai Baba for the first time as I looked at His picture. I would never have been able to do this by myself, running around in a big city like Bangalore in the heat had it not been for Riita. After three days I had my legal papers and I thanked Riita and her husband profoundly for all the help they had given me. Then it was time to go to Brindavan, Baba's ashram in Bangalore.

The Reason for Riita's Return

The last day at Riita's place I suddenly had a strange feeling and looked at her asking, "Riita, what made you come back into the airport and help me out?"

She said "I was thinking of you in the aeroplane and I felt terribly sorry for you. I knew you were in for a hard time and would be sent out of India, because nobody can enter without a visa. After dinner I listened to some in-flight music in my earphones and I started talking to God. I am a Christian you know. **'God', I said, 'if you want me to help this Danish lady then You must play two Finnish songs for me.' And then I heard them! First a classical piece and then followed a Finnish folk song. So God wanted me to help you - that is why I came back!**"

"Riita", I said "are you sure that you heard Finnish songs?" She looked a little hurt and said: "Of course I am sure. I know both these songs." And she started humming them for me.

I stared at Riita and felt the small hairs on my neck standing up, for I could not believe that during their in-flight music Malaysian Airlines would play two Finnish folksongs!

"Riita," I said with tears in my eyes, "these are strange and wonderful things

Sai Baba does to people to help them all over the world."

"No," she said, "it was not that man, it was God who helped you!"

Next day they drove me to Brindavan, where I had my first Darshan with the living, loving Lord Sai. **When I saw Him the first time, it was as if someone had poured cups of water down my cheeks. I had never cried so much. It cleaned my heart.**

I have been thinking about all this over and over again during the last few years. I even wrote and e-mailed Malaysia Airlines twice, asking them to send their in-flight magazine, so I could check the music but they never replied back. I was never in doubt that Sai Baba was the divine director in the whole play. Swami tells us, that all names are His, Riita prayed to the same Lord. What an incredible play!

Why did He let two travel agencies in New Zealand tell me that I did not need a visa? I also realized later He let me through in Kuala Lumpur Airport with no visa to India! Why did He let me land in India without any visa in the first place? Was it to try my faith? I could have let myself been escorted to an aeroplane to Copenhagen from Bangalore. But I didn't. I had to see and thank Him.

We all know that Sai Baba sends the right person, when we are in distress. Riita was the one, whom I felt drawn to in Kuala Lumpur 's departure lounge. He made that happen. Bhagavan let Riita hear what she asked for, namely two Finnish songs. She was then bound by her promise to Him, to go and help me.

In The End... Joy, Strength and Wisdom

In my hardest time of sorrow and tribulations Sri Sathya Sai Baba helped me to overcome it all by trusting in Him. Sai Baba has given me such love, peace and strength that I have never dreamt of. I am still helping people, visiting old people, and comforting and helping people with many different problems. It gives me joy and Bhagavan Baba gives me strength and wisdom. If you are called to His Lotus Feet you never want to let go of them again. We are safe if we "Let go – let God."

- Heart2Heart Team

EXPRESSIONS OF LOVE - III

A Valentine's Card For Swami

Dear Reader, in the last issue of "Expressions of Love" we had a beautiful story for you of a Shivarathri Card for Swami done by the boys. Many readers wrote to us saying it brought tears to their eyes and they would love more such stories. And so here we are with another beautiful story and this time it is really special – the story of a Valentine's Card for Swami! It is really going to give you a whole new perspective on celebrating Valentine's day.

It was the year 1991. Many boys who were in the Brindavan Campus of the Institute the previous year doing their under graduation were now in Prashanthi Nilayam enrolled for their post graduate course. They had had a wonderful time with Bhagawan in Brindavan and truly speaking never wanted to leave Brindavan. And when they came to Puttaparthi they were in for a really unexpected and unpleasant surprise. What was it and how did they come out of it? Let us hear this wonderful tale directly from a former student, O K S Sastry, who was there in the hostel as a student those days -

"We had a wonderful final year in Brindavan and enjoyed the divine presence of our sweet Lord through out. But...all good things and good times do not last forever and little did we know that our M.Sc 1991-92 batch was in for a tumultuous time for the next six months!

Bhagawan had become displeased with some of the boy's behaviour and to teach us all, He practised what they call the 'mosquito philosophy' – that is, if you find one mosquito biting you then you kill them all; likewise, a few boys' behaviour has displeased Swami and He had decided to punish us all.

Thus, we found ourselves cast from the heights of Swami's divine pleasure, to literally the doldrums of despair! Swami was just not talking to any of the students and seemed determined to ignore us, no matter whatever we did. We felt like outcasts. We had absolutely no recourse but to plunge into self-examination. How we examined our faults and endeavored to correct them; how we racked our hearts over our inner mistakes; how we watched our every thought carefully throughout the day so that we would not go astray even for a second; how we prayed to Him for forgiveness; how we longed for reinstatement into his divine kingdom! Could He not deign to look at us for an instant, would He not care to end our misery with His smile? Is it going to be perpetual gloom like this? We were devastated to say the least.

Everyday we went earlier than the previous day to the mandir but could not get Swami's Darshan, as He, by divine plan, would finish His Darshan round before we could reach the mandir! And then, He would go into the interview room and long after the interview was over would still remain inside. We would be sitting there, our gaze glued to the interview room door for the slightest of movement. But alas! If at all the door opened, it was for the vice-chancellor, registrar and controller to go inside. Some days the door would open many times - but not a slightest trace of the orange robe. Swami would

come out long after the bhajans had started and immediately take arathi and disappear again! There was absolutely no opportunity for us to interact. We were truly in the midst of a grand freeze-out - iceberg style. The entire student body in the hostel was lost in yearning for the Lord's eyes to fall on them, just like a little lost babe pines for its mother to return and offer it warmth, protection and love.

And this happened not for a few days or weeks, it went on for months like this; and for us, these months had turned into an eternity! We were just not able to please the '*Sulabhprasannaya*' (the most easily malleable Lord, as it is said). Somehow our heart's prayers still lacked the intensity needed to melt His butter-like heart. For, maybe the Lord wanted the utmost from us – He would not be happy with a lukewarm response – we had to pass with flying colours, or not at all, it seemed.

As we were wondering how to win back His grace, one Thursday morning in February 1992, during the moral class, Prof Kuppaswami who used to teach philosophy at the Institute, spoke on the devotion of Andaal (a great devotee) and also referred to the Gopi's devotion to their beloved Lord Krishna. It was a very inspiring talk and it really set us thinking. We kept on churning our hearts and minds to think of ways to please our Sai Krishna and win back His priceless Grace. Even as we were thinking about Swami, by divine providence my look fell on that day's newspaper which had a bold heading saying "St. Valentine's Day".

The column informed us that February 14th is celebrated as St. Valentine's day and is an occasion to express your Love to your beloved. How wonderful! We had got it!

We seized on this idea and resolved that there was no better chance to plead with our Lord than by using this day! For, He was our beloved, our life, our happiness, our everything! And this was the most opportune moment to turn all our hearts to Him.

So we all gathered together in the hostel and in a harmony of concentration and divine fervour planned our initiative. Some would engage themselves in cutting out and designing the cards and then each of the 600 students would compose his own Valentine's day card message to express his personal Love to our Swami - the dearest One of our hearts. The night then passed in a fervent display of artistic ability, upon which pent up feelings penned a loving testimony of each boy's unique bond with his Master. We also prepared a large card which harboured the combined feelings of devotion of more than 600 boys to our Lord. On the cover the big card displayed a wonderful garden with flowers, butterflies, beautiful birds and rabbits, who were all beckoning to our Lord to bring us back into the nectar of His Grace, His lovely glances and His sweet voice.

Valentine's day dawned and we were there in the Mandir very early. And on that day, The All Knowing One patiently waited for us all to be seated. And then as if He had planned the whole event He opened the interview door and

came to us beaming with a smile! We were all rather surprised and overjoyed! We did not expect this to happen so soon, so fast! We rejoiced as He took the card with all its contents and gave it to a close servitor to keep inside. And it did not stop there. He then asked us (as if He did not know) with a gentle smile, "What is this special occasion?" There was no need for us to say anything. The tears of joy streaming down our eyes conveyed all that had to be said. The Lord just benignly looked at all of us. There was the new-found joy in His eyes too. It was only then that we realised who was actually suffering the pangs of separation more.

Yes, the ice was finally broken! It was celebration time. We begged pardon from our all merciful Lord and He took us into His bosom. The burden of months of separation just melted away. It is said "The Lord showers His Grace on us to show how much He loves us and withdraws it to teach us."

Truly, this test of our Lord was more painful for Him than for us, but then He is like a mother who will go to any extent to see to it that her son never goes astray. Ultimately, it was His inspiration that ended the drought that semester and what followed next was a torrential flow of love and grace for the rest of the year. We had regained our Lord. It was on that memorable occasion that we christened our group - the group that makes cards and other art work in the hostel - "Soul Inspiration" as He is the soul of all positive inspiration.

- Heart2Heart Team

H2H SPECIAL

UNFORGETTABLE MOMENTS WITH SAI

- RECOLLECTIONS OF MR. CHIDAMBARAM KRISHNAN

Starting this issue, *Heart2Heart* is pleased to offer to you a serial presentation of the recollections of Mr. Chidambaram Krishnan, a long time devotee with remarkable experiences. Mr. Krishnan spoke to us sometime ago in our Studio, in his native language Tamil. We are now offering you a transcript of the same in English. We are very grateful to Mr. Chidambaram Krishnan for sharing his precious experiences with us and through us with the world at large. Now follows the first instalment of these wonderful recollections:

My name is Chidambaram Krishnan. I hail from a beautiful village named Mukkoodal, located on the banks of the Tambaraparani river, in Tirunelveli District of Tamil Nadu. My father's name is Arumugam, and my mother's name is Gomathi Ammal. We were eight children, three boys and five girls. I was the third, and above me were two brothers.

There was not much of a religious fervour or devotion in our family, and we just worshipped a family deity. We believed that that this deity would fulfil all our wants if we propitiated the deity with rituals that included the sacrifice of a goat. So we prayed, sacrificed a goat whenever required, and looked forward to bounties. Our family knew nothing about *Dhyana*, Meditation etc. In this sense, our *Bhakti* was very limited. In spite of all this, somehow, unknown to me, I was impelled, while in school, to start meditating. I just don't know why and how I started. Probably it was all the result of good deeds done in earlier births.

I studied in a school run by Christian Missionaries and I stayed in the Hostel. We used to be awakened at around 6.15 A.M and were expected to study for one hour. However, I used to meditate during that period. For this, I was punished severely and beaten on the back with a cane. The teachers accused of me of meditating on Satan. I received all the blows but continued to meditate.

At night, after all had gone to sleep, I would sit in my bed and again meditate for one hour from 9 P.M to 10 P.M. The authorities would come, see me meditating and kick me, accusing me once again of worshipping Satan. However, I was not expelled from school because I was a topper, standing first in my class in all subjects. I really cannot blame the school authorities; they were just being loyal to their faith. I got into problems because of their zeal for their religion.

To get back to my story, those were the circumstances under which I used to meditate. I practised meditation from the time I entered 1st Form, to the time I left the school after finishing 6th Form. Thus it was in those early days,

somehow, for reasons I could not understand, I began, in my own way, to adore the Divine. I believe my devotion to God in those days must have been responsible for my coming to Swami later. Swami also once told me, "You actually came to Me a long time ago."

When I reached the age of 22, my horoscope was examined by astrologers, and I was told that at the age of 24, the planetary configurations would turn unfavourable for me and that therefore, I simply cannot expect to live beyond 14th March, 1960 – that was the cut-off date. My father then took me to a well-known astrologer named Sivaraman in Madras.

He too said, "No life beyond the age of 24." We then asked, "Could we perform some *Shanti Pooja* or something like that to cancel the effect of the planets?" The astrologer tersely replied, "No use in doing all that. It just won't work. God alone can save you but God does not come like that in this Kali Age." He bluntly added, "Your story is over and you cannot survive beyond 24."

We then went to a palmist in Kerala. He examined my palm, and he too declared that it would all be over for me at the age of 24. If you see the lifeline in my palm now, you would find it to be continuous. In those days, there was a clear break. That break has since vanished. I am now 71. After hearing the bad news from the palmist, we then went in search of one more astrologer. He too said that I would not live beyond the age of 24.

In between, something else happened. A couple of years prior to all this, preparations were started to get me married. I was to be married to the sister of the wife of my brother – that is, the brother just elder to me and younger to our eldest brother. The betrothal ceremony also took place. However, my eldest brother did not quite like this proposed arrangement. He felt that such an alliance would bring us two brothers younger to him very close, and as a result, his position in the family would become weakened. He therefore tried to persuade me to marry some other girl. I said no. The matter was then taken to Court on the ground that the girl I was to marry was a minor. On that argument, my eldest brother managed to obtain a Court injunction, stopping the marriage. To marry this girl, I would have to wait five years, till the girl attained legal majority. This is where matters stood; the Court had come in the way of my proposed marriage.

Meanwhile, the date on which my life was supposed to end was fast approaching. It was the morning of 9th March, 1960. In those days, there was in the town of Tirunelveli, a big textile shop named Shankar Stores, owned by one Mr. Krishnaswami Mudaliar, an ardent devotee of Swami. This Mudaliar felt great pity for me. Our family then had a big export business, and employed nearly twelve thousand people. Mr. Mudaliar felt that my untimely death would be a great loss for a family that provided employment to so many people. He was convinced that only Sai Baba could save me.

On that day, I was passing through Tirunelveli on my way to the sacred town Tiruchendur, where Lord Muruga is the presiding deity. In Tirunelveli, we had

a branch office of our business, and I made a stop-over to have some light refreshments. Krishnaswami Mudaliar came to know about this, and kept on phoning me and telling me about Swami. He said, "This Sai Baba – He is today travelling from Madurai to Surandai, a place nearby. He will pass through Tirunelveli. One Darshan of Sai Baba can remove all obstacles to life."

That is what this Mudaliar told me on the morning of 9th March, 1960, and my life was to end on 14th March, 1960. At that time, my health was not in good shape on account of acute peptic ulcer. I just could not eat, and subsisted mainly on black tea, curds and a few things like that. There I was in my office in this miserable condition, when Mr. Krishnaswami Mudaliar told me over the phone that Sai Baba alone could save me.

He then followed up the phone call by actually coming to see me. He told me, "You MUST see Sai Baba. He is leaving Madurai this morning by car and, covering the distance of about 150 km to Tirunelveli, is likely to reach here by 11.30 A.M. If you come to where He would be stopping, He will definitely see you. He is just passing through. If we miss Him here, then we cannot catch Him thereafter. "It is enough if He talks to you just once; thereafter, your life would be secure." That is what he told me.

I told him that it was not possible for me to wait for Sai Baba since I HAD to go to Tiruchendur to worship Lord Muruga on the occasion of a particular function. I had never missed this function any year, and did not want to miss it now either. You must remember that at that time, I simply did not know anything about Swami. Today of course, I would not dare say such a thing! So I told Mr. Mudaliar, "I HAVE to go, and will be back only in the evening. If destiny wills, maybe I will have Darshan of Sai Baba in the evening. Otherwise, I submit to Lord Muruga to save me." So saying, I left for the sacred town of Tiruchendur.

I returned in the evening around 4.30 P.M after completing my worship, and when I entered our office, I found the phone ringing. Mr. Mudaliar was on the line and he said, "You are lucky! Swami did not leave Madurai in the morning. Instead, He left only at 3.30 P.M. Soon He would pass through a town nearby. If we leave now, we can catch up and see Him." I said, "OK, let's go."

So we went to this small town near Tirunelveli and within five minutes of our reaching there, we saw a fleet of cars approaching. Swami never travelled alone, and a big fleet generally moved with Him whenever He travelled. The group would include members of Swami's family.

I had been told that Swami would give *vibhuti* with His hand. I did not understand much of what was told to me, and just did not know what to expect. I was imagining an old man who would take a pinch of *vibhuti* from a vessel and give that to me. I got a shock when I saw Swami for the first time. There was no old man; instead, there was a young person, 34 years old in the body and stunningly beautiful. I told Mr. Mudaliar, "You talked of a Swamiji. This person is so young and so handsome! Why did you not tell me all this

before?” You see, for us in those days, the word Swami always meant an old *Sannyasi*; hence the confusion!

Swami barely looked in my direction. Just a general wave to the crowd and He drove off to Tirunelveli to visit many devotees there. In those days, there was in Tirunelveli, one Mr. Ramamurthy, the Jail Superintendent. Swami went to his house. We waited outside, but Swami did not look at us. After completing His rounds in Tirunelveli, Swami drove off to the nearby small town Surandai, His immediate destination. He was to make a night-halt there.

(To be continued)

- Heart2Heart Team

GET INSPIRED

CARROTS, EGGS AND COFFEE

Jane complained to her father Harris about her life becoming unbearable. It seemed to her that when one problem was solved a new one arose. She was totally confused with her life. Harris took her to the kitchen and filled three pots with water and placed each on a high fire. Soon the pots came to a boil. In one pot he placed a few carrots, in another a few eggs, and in the third he put some coffee powder. He then let them boil, without saying a word. Jane anxiously waited to see what her Dad was showing her.

In about 20 minutes, Harris took the carrots from the boiling water and placed them in a plate. He then took the eggs and placed them in another plate. He then emptied the coffee into mugs, and turning to Jane he asked her, "Darling, what do you see?" "Carrots, eggs and coffee", she replied. He brought her closer and asked her to feel the carrots. She found them soft. He asked her to break an egg. She found the inside of egg hard. He then offered a mug of coffee to her as he took the other mug, and both of them began to sip the coffee with its rich aroma.

"What does this mean, Dad?" Jane asked. "Darling", said Harris, "the carrots, eggs and the coffee powder faced the same enemy: boiling water. But whereas the carrots softened and became weak, the fragile eggs protecting the liquid within, became hardened. The ground coffee changed the hot water into a drink with rich aroma. Which are you, when you are faced with pain and difficulties?"

In adversity are we like carrots in boiling water, we seem hard, but with pain and adversity do we turn soft and lose our strength? Or are we like an egg, which starts off with a malleable heart?

Are we fluid, and when caught up with a death in the family, a tragedy, a breakup, do we turn stiff and hardened? Our shell looks the same, but inside do we turn bitter and tough, with attitudes that others fail to understand? Or when life's water gets hottest, do we change the very difficulties and sufferings we face into opportunities for greater achievements in our lives?
How do you react?

Source: East And West Series, Oct 2005

- Heart2Heart Team

THE 99 CLUB

Some time ago, there lived a King. This King should have been contented with his life, given all the riches and luxuries he had. However, this was not the case! The King always found himself wondering why he just never seemed content with his life. Sure, he had the attention of everyone wherever he went, attended fancy dinners and parties, but somehow, he still felt something was lacking and he couldn't put his finger on it.

One day, the King had woken up earlier than usual to stroll around his palace. He entered his huge living room and came to a stop when he heard someone happily singing away... following this singing... he saw one of the servants singing with a very contented look on his face. This fascinated the King and he summoned this man to his chambers. The man entered the King's chambers as ordered. The King asked why him he was so happy? To this the man replied:

"Your Majesty, I am nothing but a servant, but I make enough of a living to keep my wife and children happy. We don't need too much; a roof over our heads and warm food to fill our stomach. My wife and children are my inspiration, they are content with what ever little I bring home. I am happy because my family is happy."

Hearing this, the King dismissed the servant and summoned his personal advisor to his chamber. The King told him of his predicament and then related the story of the servant, hoping that the advisor will be able to come up with some reason why the King, who could have anything he wished for at the snap of his fingers, was not content, whereas, his servant, having so little, seemed the picture of contentment.

The personal advisor listened attentively and came to a conclusion. He said, "Your Majesty, I believe that the servant has not been made part of The 99 Club." "The 99 Club? And what exactly is that?" the King inquired. The advisor replied, "Your Majesty, to truly know what The 99 Club is, you will have to do the following. Place 99 gold coins in a bag and leave it at the servant's doorstep and you will come to under stand what The 99 Club is."

That very same evening, the King arranged for 99 gold coins to be placed in a bag at the servant's doorstep. He was a little hesitant and thought that he should have put 100 gold coins into the bag, but he followed his advisor's suggestion to put only 99.

The servant was just stepping out of his house when he saw a bag at his doorstep. Wondering about its contents, he took it into his house and opened the bag. When he opened the bag, he let out a great big shout of joy, 'Gold coins... so many of them!' He could hardly believe it. He called his wife to show her the coins.

He then took the bag to a table and emptied it out and began to count the coins and found that there seemed to be 99. He thought this to be an odd

number and a little strange and so he counted again... and again... and again - only to come to the same conclusion... 99 gold coins. He began to wonder, 'What could have happened to that last one coin?' For no one would leave 99 coins. He began to search his entire house and even looked around his backyard for hours, not wanting to lose out on that one coin. Finally, exhausted, he decided that he was going to have to work harder than ever to make up for that one gold coin to make his entire collection a magical 100 gold coins.

The next morning he got up late in an extremely horrible mood, shouting at the children and his wife for his delay, not realizing that he had spent most of the night conjuring ways of working hard so that he could make enough money to buy himself that gold coin. He went to work as usual - not in his usual good mood, singing happily – and grumpily carried out his daily errands.

The King was puzzled to see the man's attitude changed so drastically. He promptly summoned his advisor. The King could not believe that the servant, who until yesterday had been singing away, happy and content with his life, had taken such a sudden change of mind, even though he should have been happier after receiving the gold coins. The advisor replied "Ah! But your Majesty, the servant has now officially joined The 99 Club." He explained: "The 99 Club is just a name given to those people who have everything but yet are never contented. Therefore, they are always working hard and striving for that extra one to round it up to 100!"

"We have so much to be thankful for and we can live with very little in our lives, but the minute we are given something bigger and better, we want even more! We are not the same happy contented person we used to be, we want more and more and by wanting more and more we don't realize the price we pay for it. We lose our sleep, our happiness; we hurt the people around us just as a price to pay for our growing needs and desires. That is what joining The 99 Club is all about."

Observing this powerful, real life example, the King decided that from that day onwards, he was going to start appreciating all the little things in life and count the many blessings that he had taken for granted.

Striving for more is always good, but let us not strive so hard that we lose all that is dear to our hearts. Let us not compromise our happiness for moments of luxury! Let us remember Swami's words, **"Happiness results not when desires are fulfilled, but when they are controlled."**

Source: Nava Sarathi, Dec 2005

- Heart2Heart Team

SHARPEN YOUR AXE

A young man approached the foreman of a logging crew and asked for a job. "That depends," replied the foreman. "Let's see you fell this tree."

The young man stepped forward, and skillfully felled a great tree. Impressed, the foreman exclaimed, "You can start from Monday."

Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday rolled by and Thursday afternoon the foreman approached the young man and said, "You can pick up your pay cheque on the way out today."

Startled, the young man replied, "I thought you paid on Friday."

"Normally we do," said the foreman. "But we're letting you go today because you've fallen behind. Our daily felling charts show that you've dropped from first place on Monday to last place today."

"But I'm a hard worker," the young man objected. "I arrive first, leave last, and even have worked through my coffee breaks!"

The foreman, sensing the young man's integrity, thought for a minute and then asked, "Have you been sharpening your axe?"

The young man replied, "No sir, I've been working too hard to take time for that!"

Our lives are like that. We sometimes get so busy that we don't take time to "sharpen the axe." In today's world, it seems that everyone is busier than ever, but less happy than ever. Why is that? Could it be that we have forgotten how to stay sharp?

There's nothing wrong with activity and hard work. But God doesn't want us to get so busy that we neglect the truly important things in life, like taking time to pray, to read and study Scripture, or to listen to 'the still small voice of God.' We all need time to relax, to think and meditate, to learn and grow. If we don't take time to sharpen the axe, we will become dull and lose our effectiveness.

Source: Unknown

- Heart2Heart Team

TEST YOUR SPIRITUAL QUOTIENT

SPIRITUAL QUIZ

1. In the *Mahabharata*, how did the Pandavas find enough food to feed the many guests and holy persons who visited them during their exile in the forest?
 - a. They employed special cooks.
 - b. They bought food from a neighbouring village.
 - c. They had a bowl that never emptied of food.
 - d. Angels brought them plates of food.

2. Lao Tzu founded the religion known as Taoism in the 6th century BC. What does the Tao refer to?
 - a. The God of Fire.
 - b. Something indescribable.
 - c. The Great Ancestor Spirit.
 - d. Lao Tzu's personal Guru.

3. How does Swami describe the God of death?
 - a. As time.
 - b. As a frightening demon.
 - c. As disease and ageing.
 - d. All of the above.

4. In the *Bhagavatham*, King Parikshith was cursed to die from a snake-bite within 7 days, by the son of a sage. Why was King Parikshith so cursed?
 - a. Because he fought with the sage's son.
 - b. Because he threw a snake around the neck of the sage.
 - c. Because he failed to recite the necessary prayers to the sage.
 - d. Because he killed the sage's cow.

5. Complete the following sentence from Swami "It does not matter a bit if you have no faith in Me or God. Have faith in"
 - a. Yourself.
 - b. The scriptures.
 - c. Your mantra.
 - d. Your parents.

6. What did the Pandavas do just before the battle of Kurukshetra?
 - a. They roused their troops with war cries.
 - b. They sat down and meditated.

- c. They went and prostrated before their gurus on the enemy side.
 - d. They wept over the coming bloodshed.
7. In the Raamayana, how did Hanuman cross the ocean between India and Sri Lanka?
- a. With prayers to Vaayu, the God of wind.
 - b. By contemplating on Sri Rama.
 - c. By being carried across by a celestial cloud.
 - d. The eagle chief Jatayu flew him across.
8. In Sikhism what does the term *Khalsa* refer to?
- a. An order who follow a particular way of life.
 - b. The prescribed dress of a Sikh.
 - c. The Sikh holy scriptures.
 - d. A mountain holy to Sikhs, to which all must make pilgrimage to.
9. With a beautiful simile Swami compares spiritual life to a house. What is portrayed as the foundation for this house?
- a. Making pilgrimages.
 - b. Regular fasting.
 - c. Being self-confident.
 - d. Practising meditation.
10. In Zoroastrianism, how is a dead body disposed of?
- a. By burial at sea.
 - b. By burial in the earth.
 - c. By burning the corpse.
 - d. By sunlight, birds and dogs.

ANSWERS TO QUIZ

1 c

In *Bhagavata Vahini* Swami relates how “One morning at sunrise, when the Pandavas were worshipping the Sun, He took pity on their condition and out of His immeasurable Grace bestowed on them a Vessel, whose contents will remain undiminished, however much they are used up. It was called *A-kshaya-pathra*. Droupadi as the dutiful wife, used to take her food only after the five Brothers had taken theirs. Until she finishes her meal, the Vessel will be full of food, however many may partake of it. When she has finished and cleaned the vessel it can give no more.”

2 b

“All the world says to me ‘Great as the Tao is, It resembles no description.’ Because It is great, therefore It resembles no description. If it resembled any description, It would have become small long ago.”

Lao Tzu, Tao Te Ching 67.

3 a

“The God of Death is called *Kaala*, Time. Time is the God of Death; time knows no mercy; when the time is over, you have to leave; each day, your span is shortened by 24 hours. He is as omnipresent and omnipotent as Time. He does not run a rope factory to drag into his home all the millions who die. The dying person has the rope already spun and twisted round his neck. He has only to come and pull! He spins the rope by every act of his, during all the years of his life, now or in the past. All acts done with egoism, self-interest, an eye on the beneficial consequences, the fruits, give a little more length, a stronger twist, to that rope.”

Divine Discourse, 30-3-1965

4 b.

King Parikshith was out hunting and feeling thirsty, went in search of water. He came to the sage’s hut and requested help. But the sage did not answer him as he was lost in deep meditation. King Parikshith thought that he had been willfully ignored and threw a dead serpent around the sage’s neck and left. When the sage’s son came to know of this, he cursed the person who had done this to his father, to die from a snake-bite in 7 days. (*Please see chapter 26 of Bhagavatha Vahini for Swami’s beautiful narration of this story.*)

5 a

“It does not matter a bit if you have no faith in Me or God. Have faith in yourself that is enough. For who are you really? Each of you is divinity, whether you know it or not.”

6 c

Yudhishtthira took off his armour, dropped his weapons and walked towards the Kaurava army. His brothers followed him. He bowed down before his grandfather Bheesma and his guru Dronaachaarya and asked permission to fight. He also asked for their blessings.

7 b

In Ramakatha Rasavahini Swami tells us that Hanuman addressed the monkey hordes, “O Vanaras! I shall, this instant, leap over the ocean, enter Lanka, see Sita and come back. I have no other work than carrying out the command of Rama. How else can we make our lives worthwhile than by earning His Grace?’ With these words, he raised his folded palms in salutation before the vast gathering of monkeys. He took leave of Angada, the Crown Prince. The monkey hordes were raising in unison the exultant cry, ‘Jai Rama’. ‘Victory to Rama’. Hanuman pictured in his mind the glorious Form of Rama, and, with one leap into the sky, he was off over the sea.”

Ramakatha Rasavahini, part 2 chapter 5

8 a

The Sikh Guru, Guru Gobind Singh established the *Khalsa* order (meaning 'The Pure'). The Khalsa are men and women who have undergone the Sikh baptism ceremony and who strictly follow the Sikh Code of Conduct and Conventions and wear the prescribed physical articles of the faith.

9 c

“Self-confidence is the foundation on which one can build the walls of self-satisfaction. On the walls of self-satisfaction, one can lay the roof of self-sacrifice. Under the roof of self-sacrifice, one can lead a life of self-realisation.”

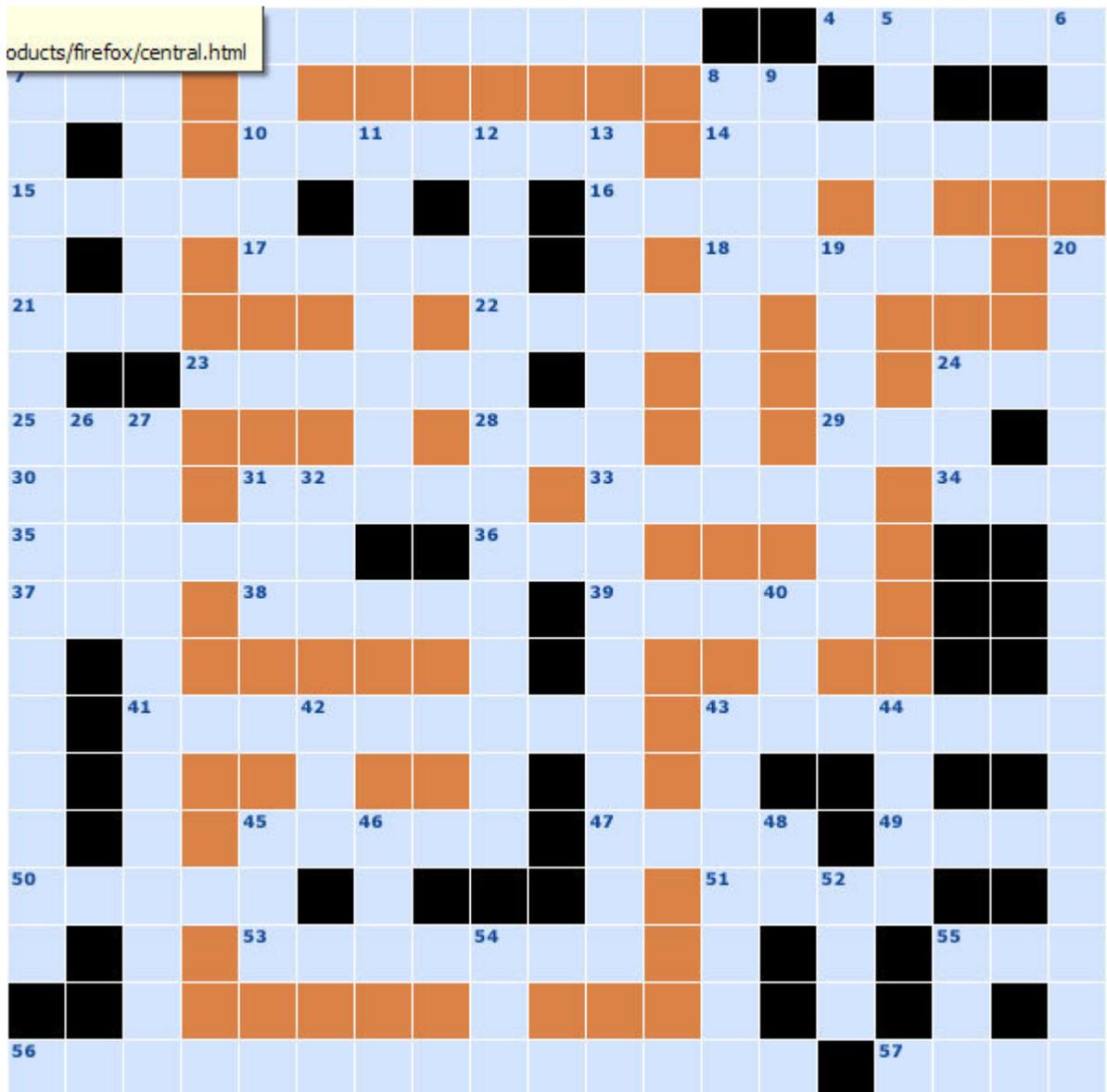
Divine discourse 30/9/98

10 d

Zarathushtra taught that the most hygienic and sacred way of disposal of a dead body was by flesh eating vultures or dogs, or the sun, or all combined. He explained that in this way the earth was not polluted by the dead body and neither was the fire element polluted by burning the corpse.

SPIRITUAL CROSSWORD

H2H CROSSWORD # 5



CLUES

(* denotes Sanskrit word; speech quotes means a saying from Swami)

DOWN

1. ___ (4) minus ___(6) equals ____ (7)
2. Drink of immortality (6)
3. Buddhist sacred text (5)
5. ___ Mazda, Zoroastrian God (5)
6. A declaration of God (1,2)
8. Hindu fire ritual (4,4)*
9. Shakes head in acknowledgement (4)
11. Inhabitant of the land of mountains and monasteries (7)
12. Beyond qualities: God is described thus (13)
13. Three of the five ingredients of the sacred food *panchamritham* (4,7,4)
19. Bhagavan's method and message (4,3)
20. Eternal Charioteer (8,7)*
26. ___ *vaasyopanishad* (4)
27. Regions for life after death (6,6)
31. Possesses a different form of *ash* (3)
32. Mythical creature makes mischief (3)
40. A flightless bird found in Australia (3)
42. Low ___ is a crime (3)
43. Constellation with a sting (7)
44. Sakhya ___, Gautama Buddha (4)*
45. Yes, in Japan (3)
46. Woman, first (3)
48. Initially French (2)
52. "Man minus desires equals ___" (3)
54. The expectant mother of the Lord was refused entry here (3)
55. Background primordial sound (3)

ACROSS

2. Mother of all mothers (10)
4. Here, young Sathya was refused entry to the temple (5)
7. Not well (3)
8. Indicates indefinite article (2)
10. Company necessary for spiritual development (10)*
14. Bovine dwelling in Baba's place (7)
15. He wanted to serve Shirdi Baba and was Kakasaheb's nephew (5)
16. "___ in the society" (4)
17. Christian / Buddhist head of a monastery (5)
18. Religion with the largest following in the world (5)
21. Vedas must be learnt with the help of this organ (3)
22. The Third ___, of Germany (5)

23. Centre of modern, moral and spiritual regeneration (6)
24. Creator's favourite (3)
25. Member of a family in short (3)
28. ___va, feeling (3)*
29. An organ symbolizing ego (3)
30. Supernatural power (1,1,1)
31. "An individual symbolizing individuality, nationality, unity, humanity and devotion" - not in that order (5)
33. ___ seva, service inaugurated by Bhagavan (5)
34. It is true! (3)
35. Holy greeting used in Sai family (3,3)
36. Pull a ship (3)
37. Man-made mobile vehicle (3)
38. Pointed projection on a church or mosque (5)
39. A female Biblical character (5)
41. The good and trusting generally fall victim to this act (9)
43. Hot showers that brought forth cool showers of wisdom (7)
45. Traditional endings of Christian prayers (5)
47. Image of God in stone etc (4)
49. Far ___ to the Lord? (4)
50. Mythical demonic creatures (5)
51. Food of the poor, food for Bhagavan (4)
53. Type of symbol (7)
55. An industrious creature (3)
56. A faculty unique to man in God's creation (14)
57. Everything, all, a Latin prefix (4)

ANSWERS

1	M		2	E	A	3	S	W	A	R	A	M	M	A			4	H	5	A	M	P	6	I
7	I	L	L		A										8	A	9	N		H				A
	N		I		10	S	A	11	T	S	12	A	N	13	G		14	G	O	K	U	L	A	M
15	D	I	X	I	T		I		T			16	H	A	N	D		R						
	S		I		17	A	B	B	O	T		E		18	I	S	19	L	A	M			20	S
21	E	A	R				E			22	R	I	E	C	H		O							A
	N			23	P	A	R	T	H	I		J		O		V			24	M	A	N		
25	26	27	S	I	S				A		28	B	H	A		M		29	E	Y	E		A	
30	E	S	P		31	H	I	N	D	U		33	G	R	A	M	A		34	S	A	T		
35	S	A	I	R	A	M				36	T	U	G				L						A	
37	C	A	R		38	S	P	I	R	E		39	E	T	H	E	L						N	
	R		I							L		R				M							A	
	E		41	T	R	E	42	A	C	H	E	R	Y		43	S	U	M	44	M	E	R	S	
	A		W			I			S		M		C			U							A	
	T		O		45	A	M	E	N	S		47	I	D	O	L	48		49	N	E	A	R	
50	O	G	R	E	S		V					L		51	R	A	52	G	I				A	
	R		L		53	O	B	E	L	54	I	S	K		P		O		55	A	N	T		
			D							N					I		D						H	
56	D	I	S	C	R	I	M	I	N	A	T	I	O	N			57	O	M	N	I			

Courtesy R Subramaniam SSSIHL Whitefield

-Heart2Heart Team

THE HEALING TOUCH

THE HOSPITAL HAS GIVEN ME...TIME.

His name sounded uncommon. Even to a busy Hospital like ours that registers over a hundred Indian names each day. That, I must confess, was what got me into conversation with him. “Newand?” I heard myself say, “What does that mean?” The short, kurta-clad figure explained that it meant ‘prayer’ where he came from, a remote village a thousand miles north of Bangalore. He threw me another unfamiliar name that I could not register, but I figured he was talking of his home in far away Madhya Pradesh.

His story was familiar enough. Newand, like many others, thought he knew what a heart attack was all about. Graphic images on the local television told him it was sudden and painful. Understandably, he dismissed his frequent bouts of breathlessness as being unrelated. However, during a particularly uncomfortable period, he was wheeled to a doctor who diagnosed the unthinkable. Rheumatic Heart Disease. A stuck heart valve that needed to be operated upon. The cost of treatment? A prohibitive one lakh rupees to replace the defective valve. Newand’s sincere smile hid the quiet desperation of a man who wanted to live, but quite literally, couldn’t afford it. That brought him to Swami’s Hospital.

There was a sweet, endearing simplicity in Newand that many of us at the Hospital were drawn to. You just had to ask and he would flood you with details of the many blessings he was showered with; his family, the simple, happy life, his hopes for the future, a genuine love for all things. He walked into my room one day with a small packet hidden behind him and a large grin. “I have something for you,” he said. I looked amused as he held out a single battery between his thumb and forefinger. Then he pointed at the clock on my wall. Its hands were frozen. I hadn’t even noticed that it had stopped. He had.

Newand was an inspiring picture of simple joy through his stay. His surgery was uneventful and, as expected, he had a quick recovery. We all grew pretty attached to his delightful personality and knew the parting would be difficult. A doctor, during a routine post surgical inspection, asked if he felt any pain. “Yes,” he said, and added quietly, “the pain of leaving.”

On his way out, I called on him to thank him for the battery. I was touched by his thoughtfulness. He dismissed my words with a quick wave of his hand. “Before I came here,” he said, “I was told I would die.” “Now I return to my family, many years added on to me. The hospital has given me these years. The hospital has given me...time.”

And then, with a slight smile, pointing to the ticking hands of a clock on a distant wall, he added, “In my own small way, I’m happy I could give my beautiful Hospital some time too.”

-Heart2Heart Team

A DEDICATED DOCTOR COUPLE - DRAWN BY THE DIVINE

Heart2Heart is very pleased to bring to our readers the story of a doctor couple, who received Swami's Call and have come, forsaking at a very young age a promising career, to settle down and serve at His Lotus Feet.

Dr. Prabir K. Roy and Dr. Sumona Paul are both doctors from Baikunthpur in the state of Chattisgarh. Dr. Roy had worked in a government para-military organization for many years and was serving as a Senior Medical Officer in a leading public sector undertaking. Dr. Sumona Paul was working as a Lady Medical Officer in the State Government. Dr. Roy had been previously exposed to Swami for over 10 years, but to Dr. Sumona Paul, Swami was a new entrant in the family, after her marriage to Dr. Roy.

They serve as an example of how Swami quietly inspires people to join His Divine Mission. Hearing their story one is reminded of the saying of Baba from His Shirdi Avatar days: "When the time comes, you will be drawn towards Me, just as a sparrow is drawn closer when the string tied to its feet is pulled."

After marriage, apart from their regular work, both of them were actively involved in various service activities and participated in the medical camps organized by the Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organisation in Chattisgarh. They used to attend the bhajans at the Baikunthpur Sai Samithi. All this while it appeared as if Swami was in the background, preparing the ground for them to come closer to Him.

It is interesting to hear Dr. Roy narrate his experiences with Swami. "I had been brought up in a devout family, but I had never taken to any of the 'miracle men', in which category I placed Baba. However as things turned out, I was one of those who 'came to scoff but stayed to pray'.

I was in my 3rd year in Medical College when I happened to come to Whitefield to have Swami's Darshan for the first time. When I saw Swami I couldn't explain why but I could not control my tears. Swami came and stood very close to me, allowing me to take *padanamaskar*. After walking a few paces, He turned around, looked at me and waved His hand. This was a remarkable experience for me and proved to be my initiation to Swami."

Dr. Paul recalls her experience with Swami: "I remember that we used to have Swami's picture in my family shrine. My mother had Swami's Darshan in Whitefield a long time ago and He had seen her through a complex by-pass surgery she had to undergo.

But it was only after marriage that Swami started playing an active part in my life. It seemed as if He crept into my life little by little until now when He encompasses every part of both our lives. Now, no major decision is taken without referring it to Swami."

The Call to come and serve at Baba's Lotus Feet came to the couple through the *Sanathana Sarathi*. A regular subscriber to the monthly magazine, Dr. Roy

came across one of Swami's discourses in which Swami came down heavily on doctors, stating that doctors nowadays are becoming very money-minded, forsaking true concern for patients and also for lacking in *Seva Bhavana* (spirit of service). This discourse moved Dr. Roy immensely and proved to be a turning point in his life. He says, "I knew they were a few 'black sheep' in the doctors' fraternity, but I wanted to stand up and tell Swami that not all the doctors are like that. I wanted to take up the challenge of showing Swami that not all doctors are cast from the same mould."

Around this time an incident happened which Dr. Roy recalls with bitterness. In connection with a court case, he had to give a testimony in the court, on which the court decision rested. The judge, not knowing Dr. Roy's commitment and attitude, attacked Dr. Roy with scathing remarks, maligning the service being rendered by doctors.

"It was the little bit of truth in his statement regarding the healthcare practices in the present-day environment that created in me a revulsion towards serving in the outside world. After the court hearing, I made my way to a tea shop outside the court building. I was in a very dejected state of mind, seeking some vent for my feelings. Imagine the pleasant shock I had when, after collecting my tea and sitting at the table I saw across the shop a beautiful picture of Swami with the slogan, 'Why fear when I am here?' This incident firmed up my faith in Swami and the desire to serve at His Lotus Feet even more."

He discussed the matter with his wife and almost overnight they both decided to resign from their present jobs and offer their services to Swami's organisation. And mind you, both of them were around 35 years in the middle of their flourishing career when they took this decision.

Was it not a tough decision? Dr. Paul agrees it was. "It was a major decision as there were our elderly parents to take care of and our little daughter to bring up. Our parents felt we were forsaking a safe and secure future and were setting out into uncharted waters. At this stage it was only our faith in Swami and His Grace that helped us take this crucial decision. After two years of taking that decision, we see now how well He had supported us in our decision to come and serve Him.

Once we made up our minds to serve Him, we wrote a letter to Swami expressing our desire to serve in any of His organizations. We then wrote to both the super-specialty Hospitals, enclosing our applications for suitable jobs. Within a month we received a reply from the SSSIHMS-Whitefield, accepting our applications and calling us for an interview," continues Dr. Roy.

From that time there has been no looking back for both the doctors. Dr. Roy is presently a DNB trainee in Anaesthesiology (a Post Graduate course in medicine) in SSSIHMS-Prasanthi Gram and Dr. Sumona Paul is working as a Medical Officer in the Neurology Department at SSSIHMS-Whitefield.

How is it working in Swami's Hospitals? Dr. Sumona Paul says, "It is really moving to see the tears of happiness and gratitude flowing down the patients' cheeks after treatment. There are difficult times, but when we see the joy on the patient's face as he goes back home hale and hearty, we know that the effort was well worth it. Their joy is the true reward of all our efforts. It gives us such a sense of achievement and contentment."

Recalling a specific incident, Dr. Roy continues, "I vividly recall the face of Ashutosh (*name changed*), a poor cycle mechanic, hailing from one of the shanty slums of Bilaspur (Chhattisgarh), who came to the Cardiac OPD with his son who was suffering from severe pulmonary stenosis, a cyanotic condition making the baby blue and gasping for every breath. Although diagnosed at another Hospital, no remedy was in sight due to the sky-high rates quoted to them. After the diagnosis was confirmed at our Institute, the child underwent a balloon dilatation of the stenosed valve under the expert hands of our cardiologist and lo and behold, the child recovered very fast! I could not control my tears when I found the same gasping blue tiny tot running around merrily in the out-patient department six months later during a review visit." The joy and fulfillment we saw in Dr. Roy's face, when he was narrating this moved our hearts, to say the least.

Dr. Sumona Paul adds, "So many people flock to the Hospitals with a hope for cure after being refused in many places. Their faith in Swami is much more than any doctor's anywhere. There is this case of a child suffering from seizures, who was taken to reputed hospitals all over the country, only to find the seizures getting controlled after they came to our Institute. There is enough proof here to make one wonder, 'Was it just the medicines or something Divine working behind it all?'"

Having served in government and private hospitals, how do they find the staff working at the Hospital? Dr. Sumona Paul says, "Having had the experience of working with doctors, nurses and support staff in other hospitals, I can confidently say that the staff here are sincere, hard-working and give their whole-hearted attention to the patients and patient care." So true - going by the patients' responses to the treatment received in Swami's Hospitals, which you have been reading in the patient stories in every issue of Heart2Heart.

Dr. Roy echoes similar feelings: "In a Government setup, we had seen doctors always being late in their timings, casual in their approach to the patients' suffering; and worse, every step taken by them had some ulterior motives of indirect financial gains. Here, the doctors are so sincere and punctual (in fact, initially we had to run a lot to keep up with the levels of expected punctuality!). No investigations are ordered unless extremely necessary or are beneficial in the diagnosis of the patient's condition."

"But the most surprising fact", Dr. Roy continues, "is the extreme economic steps being taken by the Technical Officers (alumni of Swami's university, working at the Hospital), who make sure that not a pie of Swami's money is spent without proper reason and cause. All of the nurses, who are Swami's

students from Anantapur, are very polite and sensitive to the patients' needs and comforts. These qualities are unknown and unheard of in Government and even in corporate Hospitals."

Dr. Roy and Dr. Paul are now very happy and contented souls who feel they have found fulfillment in their lives serving in His mission.

Hear2Heart wishes Dr. Roy and Dr. Paul a fruitful, fulfilling and life-long stay at the Institute, in the service of Swami. We also hope this story serves as an inspiration to many doctors to practise the noble profession of Medicine with the ideals Swami has been preaching and exemplifying to the world, through His Hospitals. We are also grateful to Satish Chandra, technical officer at SSSIHMS Whitefield, for sharing this story with us.

- Heart2Heart Team

HOSPITAL STATISTICS

Bangalore Super Speciality Hospital

Cumulative Statistics from 19th Jan 2001 to 31st Jan 2006.

Cardiac Surgeries: 6,160

Cardiac Catheterisation: 12,402

Neuro Surgeries: 5,471

CT Scans: 17, 476

MRI Exams: 20,063

Puttaparthi Super Speciality Hospital

Cumulative Statistics from 22nd Nov 1991 to 31st Dec 2005.

Cardiac Surgeries: 17,191

Cath Procedures: 17,147

Urology Surgeries: 28,068

Ophthalmology Surgeries: 27,443

Echo Cardiography: 396,660