

HEART 2 HEART

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BETWEEN YOU AND US

Dear Reader,

In the very first month of this year, 2007, we gifted you a precious cover story on Sai Geetha entitled "Sai Geetha...A Mystifying Tale of Unmatched Love." Many readers wrote back to us deeply touched by that article. Seshagiri Rao from Bangalore expressed, 'It was a trip around heavens, truly an experience of divine love. As I read through the narration it was a continuous stream of tears...'; Sarika from UK wrote, "This article has so much value and inner meaning for all...I read it twice over, if only we could be little like her..."; while Latha, a former Sai Student, said, "I am simply overwhelmed...I have no words to express my joy and inspiration reading Sai Geetha's tale."

Such is the magic of Sai Geetha. What she achieved being an animal, perhaps no man has ever achieved in the current age. And this, mind you, is no exaggeration; it is actually Bhagavan's own words. In a recent discourse to the staff and students of the Institute after the passing away of Sai Geetha, Swami said, "The kind of exalted life Sai Geetha led, no one has ever lived. She has, in fact, demonstrated how an ideal life should be led, and it is for this reason that I am thinking of her."

There is so much to learn from this four-footed devotee of the Lord. Just like Swami is not the 5' 3" figure with a red robe and a crown of hair, Sai Geetha too was not just a lucky elephant to be brought to the divine presence or a fortunate pachyderm that befriended Baba. If you thought she was a devotee of the Lord, you maybe right, but that is not even ten percent of the truth. Sai Geetha's life is, in fact, a Bible and a Bhagavad Gita for anyone and everyone who is on the path to know God, love God, live in God and finally realize Him. And it is for this reason that we have a second cover story on her life, barely six months after we had a very comprehensive article on her. That article was to commemorate the new mansion that Bhagavan built for her in November last year (2006), but this one is to celebrate her taking permanent residence in that beauty of a building which is now a colossus of inspiration for the amateur and the seasoned, young and old devotees, alike.

In fact, six months ago when the building was being built, Bhagavan in His inimitable style had hinted to Sri Pedda Reddy, the dedicated caretaker of Sai Geetha, that "we will build a big, beautiful permanent building for her." But none could then look through the Divine design. Again, when He suddenly decided to return to Puttaparthi from Kodaikanal on May 18, instead of going to Brindavan, Bangalore as was His usual practice every year, nobody had even a slightest inkling of what was about to unfold. Such was Swami's Love for Sai Geetha, that on the day she was finally placed to rest in the special bed made for her in her new home, in spite of the mid-day summer heat, Swami chose to remain on the site, by her side, the entire one and half hours till the whole process was complete and done flawlessly according to His directions. When you read the cover story of this issue, you will know why Sai Geetha had captured the Lord's heart like nobody before. Not only this, you will be left dazed and dumb-founded when you read certain facets of her life

which the world hitherto was unaware of. It is going to be a journey of revelations that can stir many a sleeping souls. It is not for no reason that Swami always held her out as an example to emulate for all the students and even went to the extent of saying, "If you only remember and ruminate on her love for Swami, it's enough. I will call you close to My heart."

It is said, "To fall in love with God is the greatest of all romances; to seek Him, the greatest adventure; and to find Him, the greatest human achievement." And imagine how easy this whole process can be when you have God, not as an invisible entity inaccessible to the senses and left to be felt only through creative imagination, but as a living, loving persona who can be seen, felt, touched and loved just like one would love his mother or father, brother or sister. Life, then, becomes an unbelievable blissful dream. You will get a real state of this when you read the third and final part of the article "He is My Swami" which is actually a revealing and reveling conversation with Mrs. Padma Kasturi, the daughter of Swami's Biographer, Sri N Kasturi. More illustrations of this is in the Swami and Me section. The experiences of Ms. Padmini Hundy, a former student of Swami's college in Anantapur, and of Sri J Jethwa, a lawyer and a barrister in the Supreme court of Australia, are instances of Divine Love and Grace that happen so spontaneously and nonchalantly that more often than not, we do not understand the import and value of what we are blessed with.

When Swami told the top rank holders from the Sathya Sai School in Alike in 2003 that they should concentrate on Medicare, they had no clue what was coming. Four years later, they have developed a model for holistic medical seva which is as professional as it can get and a perfect guide to do effective healthcare seva. It is said that, "It is easy to understand the Divine as long as you do not explain Him." How else can you fathom thousands of people from the far away island of Puerto Rico deeply in love with Sai and dedicated to His mission with all their heart and soul. But for a microscopic minority, none have visited Puttaparthi or seen Swami, but they feel Him every moment. He is very much with them as with people in Prasanthi Nilayam. Ultimately, as Swami says, faith and pure love is all that matters. And it is this pure love for Swami and His teachings that enabled the Sai volunteers from the Sathya Sai School of Canada to organize a splendid Walk for Values that had its impact not only in the downtown of Toronto City where it was held, but in places as far as Sweden and Australia.

With love, everything is possible; because where love is, as Swami says, God is. When we become convinced with the fact that - "Apart from God every activity is merely a passing whiff of insignificance" as English mathematician-philosopher Alfred North Whitehead said, then our lives will become a continuous saga of bliss and inspiration. We will not need to seek God or pray for His blessings or long for His love; He will come searching for us. And do we need any proof of this phenomenon? The beautiful tale sketched in the cover story says it all.

Let us make God the *raison d'être* of our existence.
Loving Regards, H2H Team.

SATHYA SAI SPEAKS

The Eternal Guru

On July 29th 2007 falls Guru Poornima, the festival celebrating the birth of revered Sage Vyasa and the occasion to express our love, reverence and gratitude to our teachers and preceptors. Swami, most often, gives a revealing discourse on this occasion every year, and let us recapitulate now one such His discourse delivered two decades ago in 1987.

Become Truly Human

By being endowed with the human form, men do not become really human. The evolution from animal to the human being has taken millennia. The world is peopled today by billions of human beings. But how many of them display genuine human qualities? Man is still going through birth-pangs of real humanness. Only when human qualities are manifest can man claim to be truly human. In that humanness there is Divinity. It will wear the mantle of Truth. It will be the embodiment of *Dharma* (Righteousness), *Prema* (Love) and *Santhi* (Peace). It is only when men display these qualities that they can be regarded as human. If mankind is able to achieve at least this level of humanness, it would be sufficient.

Today we are celebrating *Gurupoornima*. The day is usually observed as an occasion for offering worship to the Guru (the religious or other preceptor). There are eight different types of gurus, who impart spiritual instructions of different kinds. Among these, the really important *guru* is "*Vihitha Guru*", the preceptor who removes the doubts in the minds of the disciples and reveals to them the process of Self-discovery and Self-realisation. The *guru* should destroy the darkness of ignorance (about one's Reality) and illumine the mind of the disciple. The illumination must result in the perception of the One Reality that is beyond name and form and attributes.

What Does Vibhuti Signify?

Swami often gives to devotees *Vibhuti* or *Bhasma* (the sacred ash). Many people smear their foreheads with this ash. What is the inner significance of this ash? When any object that has a name and form is completely burnt, it is reduced to ashes. The name and form are gone. All things are one and the same in the final state as ashes. When *Vibhuti* is given, *Swami* wants

the recipient to understand this *Advaitam* (basic oneness). The devotee should get rid of *Ahamkara* (ego arising from the feeling of separateness) and sense of *Mamakara* ("mine" and "thine"). These two are based on name and form and when they are destroyed, the underlying unity of the Divine can be realised.

People constantly talk of *Advaita* (non-dualism), but hardly live up to their professions in practice. One must practice what one preaches or professes. Today there are not many *gurus* who live up to their beliefs or teachings. Their actions belie their words. No purpose is served by going in search of *gurus*. There is a *guru* in each of us. It is the *Atma* (spirit) principle. It is the Eternal Witness functioning as Conscience in everyone. With this Conscience as guide, let all actions be done...

Real Freedom

Real freedom exists in submitting to the Will of the Divine and not acting according to one's caprices and fancies. What is freedom that people want? Is it to behave like dogs with no self-restraint? Is it to descend to the level of the sub-human species? Is it to flee from one's divine nature and indulge in demonical acts? What kind of freedom is this?

In this context I shall tell you today the inner meaning of the different *yugas* (eras) the *Tretha Yuga*, the *Dwapara Yuga* and the present *Kali Yuga*.

Experience the Divine in You

In the *Tretha Yuga* (the time of Lord Rama), the Divine elements were on one side and the demonical elements on the other... In the *Dwapara Yuga* (the time of Lord Krishna), the divine and the demonic elements - namely, the Pandavas and the Kauravas, were in the same kingdom... But today, these divine and demonic forces are battling in each human being. This is the mark of the *Kali* age.

In *Tretha Yuga* Rama fought the battle in person. In *Dwapara Yuga* Krishna played the role of a witness, using others as His instruments. He did not engage in the battle Himself. In *Kali Yuga* because the two opposing factors are in each individual, the Lord plays the role of a witness and as the conscience. Man has to use the power of discrimination given to him to fight the evil forces within him. He has to foster the divine elements in him by his own efforts and listening to the voice of his conscience. The freedom to

choose has been given to man for this purpose. This freedom is to be used to discriminate between right and wrong, good and evil and to foster divine qualities. This is the unique feature of the *Kali age*. In this age, each individual has to fight against the demonic forces himself and vanquish them. When this is accomplished man's inherent divine nature will manifest itself of its own accord.

Embodiments of love! Realise that no special *Sadhana* (spiritual practice) is needed to experience the Divine in you. You must get rid yourself of impure thoughts and actions. Sanctify every action you do and make it a *Sadhana*. The Divine is not a created object. It is self-effulgent and present in everyone.

- Divine Discourse in the Poornachandra Auditorium on 11-7-1987.

CONVERSATIONS WITH SAI - PART 34

(continued from the previous issue)

Discipline and Conscience

Ac: What to do with a devotee who is making friction in a Center?

SAI: Out. Put them out.

H (Hislop): Our discipline is very strict in the American Centers. That is correct.

SAI: Sai's English has improved?

H: Yes, Swami. It is greatly improved.

SAI: All is love. All is love. The Russians are rationalists. Faith is of the greatest importance. Words, words, words; reason will not do. Faith is from the heart, the language of the heart.

H: But faith is a gift from God. Man can only have it if God wills.

SAI: Yes, God blesses. Purity helps. Swami is soft as butter, but hard as a diamond. Butter soft, diamond hard. Some small freedom I allow; not very much. The end of wisdom is freedom. That is the true freedom. Discipline is important. Swami demands strict discipline. Many foreigners are outside in the village. There man can sit beside woman and they can smoke. Inside the Ashram, Swami does not allow that.

H: A good small pamphlet explaining the rules of the Ashram should be given to everyone. People do not know. Germans in the round building play loud tape recorders because they do not know better.

SAI: In a room next to Admissions, someone should repeat the rules to each newcomer.

H: An important statement of Swami's is that we should ignore the faults of others. But how does one put this into practice? If one is dealing with a person, the fault must be taken into account; the fault may ruin the situation.

SAI: Inside himself, the person is not like that. He knows he is wrong. If the fault is being expressed, move away from the person, keep a distance. Then the person will see he is wrong and will approach you in repentance.

SAI: What counts is faith. Faith is of great importance. God should be installed in every thought and act. There may be a person who is the owner of a house. A tenant may be taken into the house, and year after year the tenant may pay the rent. At last, after many years of paying the rent, the tenant owns the house.

H: Why would that be?

SAI: The owner might say, "The house is mine." But the tenant will reply, "No. The house is now mine." That is the law.

H: Is that the law in this situation?

SAI: Yes. It is the same with the Lord. He is the "renter." Your body and mind is the "house." Once you have brought Him into the house and installed Him there, in due course, He is the "owner." The house no longer belongs to "you." It is now the dwelling of God. It is fully "owned" by Him.

H: Swami! That is wonderful! That is the way to come to the point of "Surrender to the Lord." By keeping Baba in heart and mind, gradually and naturally, there is full surrender.

SAI: Yes, it comes to be quite naturally. But not everyone is able to do it. Devotion and faith need be very strong.

H: But cannot everyone make a start?

SAI: Yes, certainly, a start can be made.

H: May I tell this to our Sai Centers in America?

SAI: You may tell.

Three Stages of Evolution

H: Swami gives three stages of evolution beyond the human: Superhuman, Cosmic, and Absolute. What does superhuman mean?

SAI: Superhuman is the stage of complete detachment from Body and World. Something may be said or done at this stage to benefit humanity and the world, but the Superhuman is no longer a part of the world of men nor involved in the interests of men.

H: Are there such people now?

SAI: Oh, yes.

H: Are they those people in the Himalayan Mountains who can be invisible and do the extraordinary things we hear about?

SAI: No. Those individuals are still seeking liberation. But it is temporary.

H: Temporary, Swami! That is awful! To get liberation and then lose it!

SAI: There are three kinds of liberation. It is experienced in one type of Samadhi. Then, a person who is engaged in Sadhana can suddenly - like a flash of lightning - have a clear vision of the Truth, but it fades and ordinary life resumes. Liberation cannot be permanent without total surrender.

H: Then, if not the people in the Himalayas, who are the Superhumans?

SAI: *(Naming half a dozen or so of the ancient sages)* These people were totally above human and worldly life, although for the benefit of others, they would give certain advice and engage in certain actions.

H: But that was long ago. Are there Superhumans in this day and age?

SAI: Oh, yes, there are. But today, outwardly, they live in Society and outwardly cannot be recognized.

H: What is the Cosmic stage?

SAI: No body, no mind. Both have disappeared. Body, feelings, mind, intelligence are no longer there. Just love, just spirituality.

H: Are there entities, individuals, in the Cosmic stage?

SAI: No. No individuals. More similar to currents of spiritual power.

Swami Bestows Full Liberation

H: Well, the Absolute is Swami. That is understood. When Swami says He will confer liberation at death, what does that mean?

SAI: It means that birth is finished with, there is no more birth again.

H: But Swami, there is this temporary liberation that was mentioned. Maybe it is that kind?

SAI: No, it is not like that. Sai gives total, final, liberation.

H: Could there be the ending of individuality, too?

SAI: There could be.

H: Individuality is a nuisance.

SAI: Yes, individuality is a nuisance.

H: One of Swami's statements is not understood. Swami has said that man is born with a dual gift from God - Discrimination and Conscience. And that because of conscience, everyone knows right from wrong; for, if he were to do wrong, his conscience would trouble him.

SAI: Yes, that is the case.

H: But people point out, Swami, that people of one religion kill people of another religion, and they do it because their conscience tells them it is right to do it.

SAI: It is not that way. When such things occur, it is because the individual has surrendered his judgment to someone else, or to an idea propagated by someone. If the person were to reject ideas and rely upon himself, his conscience, even though

deeply buried, would be there to prompt the person; for Conscience is God, Resident in the person.

H: Throughout the world, crime is growing rapidly. But in America, there is doubt about how to deal with criminals. How should criminals be dealt with?

SAI: There must be punishment. In areas of the Middle East, for example, if a person commits the crime of theft, the hand is cut off. When a person commits a crime, punishment must follow.

The Stages in the Life of the Avatar

H: Swami, people are thinking that after His 60th Birthday, Bhagavan Baba will step away from contact with the world and that His devotees will no longer have access to Him.

SAI: No, not at all. Sai is not separating from the world, nor will He separate from His devotees. The course of an Avatar goes invariably through the same stages. It is the same for every Avatar at all times. The first 16 years are characterized by constant leelas. Then leelas and teachings up to age 45. From age 45 to age 60, the emphasis is almost wholly on teaching. At age 60, there is a very big change.

H: How, Swami? (*Sai listed some things I should not repeat, but then...*) After age 60, Sai will directly give added strength to the minds of those persons who are actively working with Him. Now is starting a time of change. It is just as when a strong wind comes up and blows away the husks, leaving only the sound kernels. In these times, many devotees will fall away from Sai, leaving only those devotees whose faith is sound and solid. Have not you yourself noted a change? In the early years Sai came to your room to talk with you. Now, you come to the veranda each day and Sai does not even stop and speak with you. Such changes occur in the different stages of the Avatar.

H: Swami has said that the entire world will know of His presence. At this time only a relatively few people know of Sai. As of now only local individuals represent Him, and they do not draw the attention of people of substance and importance throughout the world.

SAI: Sai does not look at status and worldly importance. He looks at the heart.

H: Yes, Swami, but it is the leaders in society who tend arouse the attention and interest of the general population.

SAI: Sai does not force such things. He will be in body for many more years. What you refer to will develop naturally. Devotees of world stature, able to speak of Sai, will be present when the time is correct for them.

(To be continued...)

HOW FAR IS VAIKUNTA?

Provided your intellect is sharp and free from prejudices and predilections, the reality will reveal itself to you in a flash, for it is quite a simple thing. Only, it must be capable of seeing the problem in its basic essence, apart from all the jumble of irrelevancies.

Once a very learned Pundit was holding forth, in a very pedantic manner, the story of Gajendramoksha from the *Bhagavatha*, before the Maharaja in his Durbar Hall, and a large gathering of courtiers. He described how the Lord, on hearing the agonised call for succour from the elephant held by the jaws of the monstrous crocodile, hurried from Heaven (Vaikunta) without stopping even to collect His insignia and weapons, without even intimating to His Consort where He was going nor on what mission. Suddenly the Maharaja interrupted him with the question.

“Tell me, Pundit, how far is this Vaikunta?” The learned Pundit did not know the distance. He was nonplussed. Nor did any of the other scholars in the Palace know.

But the servant who was fanning the King from behind the throne offered to furnish the answer, if his impertinence be pardoned. The Pundit was shocked at his effrontery, but the Maharaja allowed him to speak.

“Your Majesty! Vaikunta is as far as the cry of the elephant could be heard,” he said. Yes, when the anguish of a devotee’s heart is expressed as a cry or a groan or a sigh, the Lord is only as far away as that sound can reach. He is always on the alert to listen to the cry of His children. His Residence, Vaikunta, is within hearing distance of every cry, from every grief-stricken heart. That illiterate servant knew in a flash the Omnipresence and the Compassion of the Lord.

COVER STORY

THE LEGEND OF SAI GEETHA...

Unsurpassable and Eternal

“From the beginning there was an intimate relationship between Me and Sai Geetha. And this was a purely inner relationship.”

As Swami said these poignant words in a private session to the students and staff of His University on June 7, 2007, the silence that dawned in the Institute auditorium was too deep and dense, absolutely impenetrable. “When I mention about Sai Geetha, do not think I am emotional,” said Swami, His voice unsteady, overpowered with intense feelings. Looking at the Lord’s eyes oozing with overwhelming emotions, everybody’s heart plunged; it was as if the fragile organ had become too heavy to beat and given away, creating a crater deep within that was subsuming every cell of their being into it.

As everyone expectantly awaited with bated breath the next diamond of divine revelation, Swami, in a very soft but steady tone, continued, “When I mention about Sai Geetha, I am not deeply grief-stricken. In fact, I have no sorrows. I am never worried. I am not remorseful at all. It is only *Vatsalyam* – Supreme Maternal Love.” It is the kind of spontaneous undiluted love that a mother has for her new one, who is so pure, so innocent, completely dependent only on her mother, seeking nothing but her lap and on whose face you can verily see the pristine image of God. As a child grows and becomes strong, and intelligent, the god-like purity slowly diminishes and diluted with reasoning love loses spontaneity, but with Sai Geetha it was exactly the opposite.

‘Sai Geetha’ is Born...Anew

When she first came to Prasanthi Nilayam, she was only a few weeks old. “Decades ago, when I was returning from Bangalore,” Swami said in the same discourse, “There was a *Khedda* operation in the nearby forest wherein they trap elephants by digging big pits and covering them superficially with grass. They beat drums and made loud noise to chase the pachyderms. The poor animals came in herds and many fell inside, but one survived. She was motherless, and crying. She stopped taking food. Utterly helpless, she did not know what to do.” The moment Swami came to know of her, He immediately accepted her. The Divine Mother was as if waiting for Her precious child. “I applied honey to my finger,” Swami said, “and put it in her mouth and she went on sipping in the honey. Later, I fed her milk through a feeding bottle, and from then on she forgot about her mother...I christened her Sai Geetha.” The child was now baptized, so to say; she was reborn anew as the Divine’s most special child. She was hardly two-feet in height then and Swami recalls, “She used to follow me everywhere. Be it kitchen, dinning hall, bhajan hall, living room or even bathroom. She grew completely under my care.”

Truly, she was the young Swami's bundle of joy. During the early sixties when Swami's agility would baffle devotees and only one with athletic sinews could match step with Him when He walked, be it to the Chitravathi sands or a whirlwind tour inside the ashram, spending time with Sai Geetha was perhaps the Avatar's favourite pastime those days.

The Blissful Twosome

"She was half of Swami's height," recalls Sri Chidambaram Krishnan who was a regular visitor to the Ashram in 1960s and enjoyed many years of divine proximity. "She was so small that Swami could take her easily in His car!" he reminisces. Swami Himself mentioned in the recent discourse that she indeed travelled with Him in the back seat of His car. Sai Geetha wanted to be every moment with Swami just like an infant who cannot bear separation from her mother even for a second. And Swami enjoyed it too. The little one stayed under a big tree just next to Swami's bedroom then and Swami could see her from His window all the time. Whenever she was hungry, she would just look up and shout, "Ahh!" and many times Swami would come down and do everything needed to make her comfortable.

"Every morning and evening, one would find Swami with her," Sri Chidambaram recalls. "She would be highly obedient to Swami! When Swami would call her, she would immediately jump to Him and then He would be either standing beside or playing with her - waving her trunk, petting her and patting her, and on some days He would run, and then take great delight in seeing the little four-footed one take her tiny leaps and cutely jump and hop to catch up with Him. It was an enthralling sight undoubtedly; for the devotees, it was the most exciting part of their stay in Prasanthi."

Sai Geetha's routine those days was tightly intertwined with Swami's. A totality of nobility that she was right from childhood, the first thing the tiny elephant would do every morning is to go around the Mandir nine times! Next, she would prostrate in front of the shining white idol of Lord Ganesha (that used to be there those days) in front of Prasanthi Mandir and then wait for Swami. The moment door opens and she sees Swami, she would kneel and offer salutations at His feet and then more often than not make a peculiar pleasant sound asking Swami to pat her – seeking His love and blessings.

Subsequently, Swami would feed her with plantains and other fruits, and then stand beside her and allow only children, not adults, to feed her. Many tiny-tots would be waiting for this opportunity and would be thrilled when she would accept their bananas under Swami's constant supervision. Meals over with her Mom, now Sai Geetha would head towards River Chitravati to play in the sands and then jump into the river for a refreshing dip, accompanied by a young eight-year-old caretaker.

Love of Sand and Care of Sai

The elephant calf would joyfully play in the Chitravati sands, throwing mud all over her body. And soon a 'ball game' would begin with the young boy who

was her trainer too. He would throw the ball and Sai Geetha would then run to bring the ball back in her trunk. But on occasions, when she would be in real freaky mood, instead of bringing the ball back she would run away with the ball! The young playmate-cum-trainer-cum-in-charge would have to chase a few yards to catch up with her. The 'little warden' instead of enjoying the game and the beauty of the moment, unfortunately, small that he was, would get upset with the 'indiscipline' of his ward and would punish her with a stick, sometimes even pulling and dragging her by her trunk. Sai Geetha then was very tiny and weighed only a few kilos.

But the story does not end here. Devotees who are witness to all this would come and report at the highest level. "Swami! That boy threw Sai Geetha inside the sand!" And then Swami would invariably say, "Go! Bring that boy here, he should be punished." When the boy arrives and seeking pardon says, "In future, I will not do this," Swami would let him go. But notorious that he was, he would again beat Sai Geetha some other day. And then Sai Geetha would come running to Mandir and seek out for Swami wherever He was, be it interview room or Bhajan Hall or living room. The mahout running behind her would soon appear there and without asking start complaining about Sai Geetha's 'indiscipline' Swami, the all-knowing Mother, would reprimand him for his mistake and then comfort His darling daughter.

Sai Geetha, even after she was few years old and could retaliate to any ill-treatment meted to her irresponsibly by her caretaker, would never do so. All she would do is to go to her Sai Maa to seek shelter.

Geetha – Sai's All Time Favourite

"Those were golden days," recalls Sri Chidambaram. "There was no 'Darshan'; it was only interviews! Swami would give interview to each and everyone. On non-festival days devotees would be very few – sometimes not even ten! – and whoever comes early and sits first, would be called in first and then all would go in, one after another, in the serial order of their sitting. Sometimes, the same person would get continuous interviews for days; at the same time, if Swami wanted to avoid, He would skip a person too. But during festival occasions, when hundreds would gather, Swami would call everyone in. In fact, if anyone did not get interview on the normal days, he would show up in a festival day and sure enough he would get an interview." Devotees those days indeed were extremely lucky, but the luckiest of all was Swami's favourite pet; because Swami gave her every little spare time He had. Just like in the morning, He would pet and feed her again in the afternoon and she would be waiting to touch His feet and be fondled by Him. It was like she got two special interviews everyday apart from many other personal sessions with Swami.

For the ashramites then, Sai Geetha was an eternal source of joy. Being the cutest kid of the ashram, everyone wanted to pet and fondle her. "In fact, in her first six months," says Sri Chidambaram, "anybody could take her out and play with her. She never would harm anyone. And Swami too allowed others to touch and caress her. She was for everyone and Swami too those days,

was so accessible. We could sleep in the Mandir portico itself and sometimes even inside the interview room too! I cannot ever forget those halcyon days.”

At the same time, living in the Ashram those days was no walk in the park; it was easily most challenging. There was no water; a family would have to stay under the shade of a tree and get not more than three to four buckets of water for the whole day. There were very few houses, in fact, they were actually just rooms – one single room without a bathroom and a hole in the wall for a window – and to add to this, there was no electricity. After dusk, everywhere it would just be dark. Sometimes, even snakes would enter to sleep under the mudpot in the room, however would never do any harm. “But whatever it may be, Swami was very loving,” recalls Sri Chidambaram. “Anybody could go and shout out to Swami in front of His room. ‘Swami, I want to go home. Please bless me’. And Swami would more often than not oblige and speak very softly too. It is purely because of His love that in spite of so many hardships people would love to come and stay in Puttaparthi. We used to walk inside the ashram without slippers on and would be pricked many times with thorns. On one occasion even Sai Geetha was hurt by a thorn. Being a baby, her feet then were still tender and she cried out in pain. A devotee nearby went and removed the painful prickle from her feet and she cooperated with him completely. She was like family in the ashram. Everybody loved her and wanted to play with her.” While all this is true, Sai Geetha belonged only to her Swami and was her best only when she was with Him. She would love the festival days, not because she would be adorned on those occasions with ornaments, instead her heart would be leaping with joy with the thought that she will get more time of her Swami that day.

Sai Geetha – Destined to Dazzle Divine Processions

In fact, only after Sai Geetha came, did Puttaparthi processions really acquire their charismatic character. Sri Chidambaram recalls that in the late fifties and early sixties before Sai Geetha arrived, whenever Swami used to see elephants being part of the welcome ceremonies during His visits to many towns in Tamil Nadu, He used to be delighted. So much so that in December 10, 1958, ten days before visiting Surandai, (a vibrant town in Western Tamil Nadu in the district of Tirunelveli) Swami, describing to select devotees the grand welcome awaiting Him, said, “The people of Surandai are very devout. Though it is a small village, they have arranged for an elephant ride!” Sri Venkatraman, who along with his cousin, had invited Swami to make the visit, says, “It was such a magnificent welcome in my native village...it remains as the most memorable day of my life.” Again, two years later, when Swami visited Udumalapet (a lively town in the Coimbatore district, Western Tamil Nadu), the reception there was one of unparalleled grandeur and gaiety, because there were three elephants in the procession. Swami was seated blissfully on the elephant in the middle and on either side there was one elephant on whom were seated two persons holding richly decorated umbrellas. Sri Bala Pattabi, who had only dreamt of offering such a rousing welcome to Swami in his home town, was too overcome with emotion and speechless when Swami descended from the elephant, patted him affectionately and asked, “Are you happy now that your long cherished desire

has come true?" Few months later, when Swami visited Nilgiris, the sylvan town located amidst the eponymous mountain range, tens of thousands villagers had gathered there, and Swami sitting gracefully on an elegant elephant was a darshan that simply sent devotees to ecstasy. Swami, smiling all the time, was accepting garlands from people and the whole session with mellifluous bhajans going on in the background went on for two hours. Every act of the divine is according to a definite plan and His sudden fascination for elephants in that period was no ordinary event; it was truly a patent precursor, an amazing antecedent of events that were to unfold in His Master plan.

And once Sai Geetha arrived, Swami wanted none else for His procession. Even when she was a little baby she was the one who always led the procession in Prasanthi Nilayam. She was marching, as early as in 1964! The pundits during Dasara celebrations that year walked behind the 'little champion'. And from then on, she became the permanent fixture of all major celebrations in the divine presence. The very sight of her, be it during Birthday or Shivarathri or Krishnastami or the Sportsmeet, would gladden the hearts of devotees. Faces would light up, smiles bloom instantaneously and some would even burst into a song. This is what came out of the heart of Mr. David Gersten during Krishna Janmastami in 1989.

Geetha is Decked Out...

Geetha is decked out
A golden brooch adorns her head, yes it does
Her toenails are painted bright yellow
And bangles are on all her legs
She's set for the party, a great Puttaparthi
She's here as Krishna Sai's guest
Millions of people come see her each year
And all of them fail the test

Her heart is filled with a greater love
Than most of us can ever claim
Her love has no words
Her love has no questions
Her love has no borders, desires or chains

Geetha is holding
A flute that she twirls in her trunk, yes she is
She sways to the songs in the air
We smile until we get drunk
When she reaches Baba, oh Krishna Sai Baba
She falls on her knees to the ground
And the love begins thundering out of her heart
It's the loudest silence around

Her heart is filled with a greater love
Than most of us can ever claim
Her love has no words

Her love has no questions
Her love has no borders, desires or chains

Her Only Medicine – His Word and Love

Purely it was because of such perfect love in her heart, that Swami was most concerned about her all the time. When she was 15 years old and on one occasion was bed-ridden because of fever and pain in her thigh, Swami appointed a veterinary doctor to look after her. But when the doctor's administrations did no good, Swami stopped all medications and said, "She will get better. She will get up." And sure enough, slowly she started regaining strength and was back to her lively self again. For all the festivals that fell during those months, the procession went on sans Sai Geetha; Swami wanted no other elephant to take her place in her absence.

Similarly in 1996, when her eye ball became red without any apparent injury, her caretaker Sri Pedda Reddy was a worried man. "I was very scared," he recalls. "I took her immediately to the Poornachandra Auditorium where Swami was residing then. Swami asked the Pathology Department of the Super Specialty Hospital to do relevant tests. It was disturbing to see her like that. I could not contain myself. I was crying in front of Swami and He continuously was consoling me, 'Do not cry.' Later, an ophthalmic Surgeon prescribed some eye drops but it had no immediate results, and then Swami asked for all the medicines to be stopped. He said, 'She will be alright' and just by His word she was cured. She was able to see clearly again with both her eyes."

Swami and Sai Geetha – An Intimate Inner Bond

Swami's care for Sai Geetha was always comprehensive and complete. During the days when Swami used to feed her morning and evening, He used to allow devotees to offer her plantains only; He alone would feed her with rice and *chakrapongal* (a sweet delicacy made of rice and jaggery) which would be cooked in His interior kitchen. Sai Geetha always wanted Swami to feed her in her mouth, while from others she would accept only in her trunk. And everybody was witness to this just the previous year (2006) during Dasara celebrations. Sai Charan, a MBA student of Swami's University, recalls:

"I vividly remember that day. It was Vijaya Dasami Day, the last day of Dasara 2006. I had the opportunity to accompany Sai Geetha along with Sri Pedda Reddy to Mandir. Once we reached Sai Kulwant Hall, Sai Geetha's eyes were always focused on Swami's residence. When Swami finally came near her in His wheel-sofa and was about to feed her with some fruits, I noticed some saliva dripping from her trunk. I immediately took two white napkins and covered Swami's feet and robe. But no sooner had I done that, Swami commanded me to take the napkins away. And the moment I did that, I saw Sai Geetha's trunk gently caressing Swami's feet. The saliva dropping from her mouth did not bother Swami one bit. She was hungry for His love. It was so palpable. Later, when Swami held out fruits for her and asked her to take them in her trunk as He was sitting on the sofa, she refused flatly every time.

Swami, then, looked at me and said, ‘She will take fruits from me, only when I feed her in the mouth.’ And then, He got up! And you could see Sai Geetha was in ecstasy; her huge ears were flapping excitedly and her eyes were overcome with emotion as Swami stood right beside her and fed her with apples and bananas right inside her mouth, just like a mother would do for her dear child. It was a perfect mother-child relationship.”

Which is Bigger – One or Twenty-five?

It is this unmatched love that existed between them and the utmost care that Swami took while raising her right from when she was a baby of only few weeks that Sai Geetha grew to become a strong and majestic being. Sri N Siva Kumar, a lecturer at Swami’s University and a former student, recalls that years ago when two professional circus elephants had been brought to Prasanthi Nilayam for the Annual Sportsmeet of the Institute, the two pachyderms looked so puny and pitiable compared to Sai Geetha who was standing majestically next to them. A fascinating incident that happened in 1988, in the words of Sri N Siva Kumar is this:

“I was studying for my MBA degree at Prasanthi Nilayam then. We used to have evening games on specified days during the week, and whenever we went to the ground we used to regularly see Sai Geetha. We were informed by the person in-charge that Swami had instructed to take Sai Geetha to the ground for walks everyday so that she may have some exercise. On earlier occasions, the caretaker would have a tyre with him and sometimes would roll it on the ground and Sai Geetha would run to fetch it. This was how he gave her exercise. But that particular day, it was something very different. Her caretaker had come to the stadium with a huge rope in his hand. When we went near him he informed us that on Swami’s instructions he has planned for a tug of war exercise between Sai Geetha and the students. We were all excited! While about 25 of us lined up on one side, the other end of the rope was tied to Sai Geetha’s leg. Standing behind her colossal form, we held the rope, tightly. Our job was to stop Sai Geetha from walking away from us. Once we were in position, and said, ‘Yes, ready’, her caretaker prompted Sai Geetha to move forward, and she started moving! We tried our best to restrain her by pulling the rope, but Sai Geetha continued to walk! It was as if she were taking a stroll in the park, effortlessly pulling all of us with her. It seemed like she did not feel that 25 students were actually pulling her in the opposite direction. It was a great revelation to us of her strength. Similarly, on another occasion, when she had come to Mandir and Swami was feeding her with fruits, we saw that He was giving her whole coconuts – along with the outer shell and not the white core alone. We were befuddled. Swami then turned towards us and said, ‘Her teeth are so strong. She can break the coconuts inside her mouth and eat only the kernel. The shells will be thrown out later’”.

Sports and Students – Sai Geetha’s Other Joys

Such was the physical prowess of Sai Geetha. But the conscientious Geetha would never make a careless display of her strength, though aware of it all the time. And when she was with Swami’s students, especially on the ground, she

would behave like she was one among them. Sri Pedda Reddy says, "She would be really excited when I would take her to the primary school. She loved being surrounded by the little kids and would give herself to them. She would begin to play joyfully with the little ones." Arnab, Prithvee and Kannan, three Higher Secondary School students, who were eye-witness to this during their primary school days, going down the memory lane say, "It was a bright Sunday morning. We had just finished our breakfast and were on our way to the playground to start a glorious day, and what a pleasant surprise it was to see Sai Geetha there. Soon everybody gathered around her including our headmistress and warden. She was so free and playful with us. Our fears vanished after we spent few seconds with her. We started petting and feeding her with juicy fruits. And while this was going on, a few of us moved away and started our game of football. Arnab kicked the ball hard and it landed right in front of her feet. The ball was now under her control, she was staring at it, and we were worried about our fate if she decided to stamp on the ball. But no, she did not trample it, but started picking it up with her trunk...it looked as if she was trying to put it in her mouth. Perturbed, we started screaming. But to our excitement, Sai Geetha next put the ball down and gave it a mild kick. The ball landed right in front of us. We now knew for sure she wanted to play. And thus, the game began. We would pass the ball to her and she would thrust it back to us or kick it high or sometimes even would lift it with her trunk and fling it in the air. It was so amazing. She was like one among us and we played for a full five minutes. We loved her so much."

If this was fascinating football with Sai Geetha, here's how she reveled in basketball too. Ms. Lene Sanchez Crispin from Denmark recalls, "It was my first trip to Swami for Christmas in 1995 and I went to see Sai Geetha one evening. There were 5-6 people like me who waited to join her on her walk. Once out of her premises, Sai Geetha crossed the street and went to the stadium where few students were busy on the basketball court. Sai Geetha went near them, grabbed the ball and threw it into the basket. Next, she caught hold of the ball, pushed it to the nearest student and lo, the game began. It ended up with Sai Geetha scoring and grabbing the ball. Now, the ball again in her possession, she motioned as if she was about to toss the ball, but instead of throwing the ball she placed it in her 'armpit' between her foreleg and her body and started walking around as if pretending to look for the ball! So amusing she was. We all laughed our heart out. It was so sweet; the sun was shining in her eyes. After a few rounds, she placed it down and gave a nice kick. And then, it was a game of football that began. She was absolutely captivating, but the salient trait that I noticed about her was this: she was constantly aware of her power and was careful when she moved her body or tossed the ball. She made us run for the ball, but never kicked or threw the ball directly at us. My fear for these big animals disappeared; I saw only love and truly fell in love with her."

"On another occasion," recalls Sri N Siva Kumar, "the students of Alike and Muddenahalli (Swami's schools in Karnataka) had come to Puttaparthi for a function. Oranges had been distributed as prasadam and each student had received the juicy fruit. Few minutes later, Sai Geetha came to Mandir and Swami blessed her too and then went into the interview room. The students of

Alike and Muddenahalli, who were seated close to Sai Geetha, were at a slightly higher plane, and by mistake one of the oranges of a student slipped out of his hand and rolled towards Sai Geetha. She immediately lapped up the orange by her trunk and put it in her mouth. Watching this, other students got excited. They wanted to have fun. So, they started intentionally rolling their oranges towards her, and she too played game and accepted one after another. It went on for sometime till it became uncontrollable when several students started simultaneously rolling their oranges towards Geetha. Then a teacher appeared on the scene and the whole drama stopped. Sai Geetha was too happy to see the kids excited and the students of course had their fun to the fill.”

In Sync with Sai – Every Moment

Yes, Sai Geetha was playful; no one who spent time with her ever returned without a smile on their face or a pleasant feeling in their heart. She spread happiness naturally and was physically very powerful too. But these were only additional facets of her magnificent personality; they were not what distinguished her from other members in her genre. What was unique about her, in the words of a devotee, Sri Subhas Malghan, is that “she simply returned in abundance all the love that Swami gave her.” Her focus on Swami was absolute and all times. In fact, “She was our ‘alarm clock’,” says Sri Abhimanyu Kaul, a former student of Swami’s Institute. “It remains a mystery how she would come to know about Bhagavan’s presence each and every time. Whenever we heard her trumpet we would run out of the hostel, and for almost every time we would find Bhagavan. One incident which happened in the mid-eighties is very vivid in my mind.

Bhagavan was in Brindavan in those days and in His physical absence we would have compulsory sports time in the evenings. It was during that time when Sai Geetha also would come to the stadium for her evening walks. We would normally go and say ‘sai ram’ and she would lovingly respond by raising her trunk.

One such evening when we were playing and she was also busy taking her stroll, suddenly came the news that Bhagavan was coming! It was absolutely unexpected. We did not know where and how far Bhagavan was from Puttaparthi. But before we realized, we saw His car entering the stadium from the Higher Secondary School gate. Sai Geetha then was on the other end at the crossing of primary school building (in front of the present Chaitanya Jyothi museum). And as soon as she spotted the ‘car’, she gave out a loud trumpet! She was euphoric. It was tough for her care-taker to control or stop her. To our surprise she escaped and started running towards the car. What followed next just made me standstill and watch with wonder. There was Bhagavan’s car coming up the stadium and the mighty Sai Geetha was running from the opposite direction towards the car. The next instant I saw Swami’s vehicle stop and He rushed out of the car. Now Bhagavan was running from one side and Sai Geetha from another. Even today when I recall that moment I get goose bumps. They met and what a sight it was to watch! Her expressions were uncontrollable. She literally hugged Bhagavan. Her

trunk was all over Him, and Swami was actually standing in between her front two legs and the trunk and holding and caressing her. It took almost 10-15 minutes for Bhagavan to pacify her. Slowly we students too came close to the scene, and we heard that Swami was constantly saying something to her and patting her very lovingly. He also then fed her some fruits, and we saw her saliva all over Bhagavan's robe; but He was least concerned. It was with lot of persuasion that Sai Geetha let Him go. What an episode of divine romance it was that I was blessed to watch!

"I remember, Bhagavan once asked us, 'Do you know why I have kept Sai Geetha in front of your hostel?' We just kept quiet and then Swami said, 'so that you can learn what true devotion is. If you all can get even an iota of her love for Me your life would be sanctified.'"

How many devotees have we heard of Swami Himself exalting their devotion, except ideals from mythologies? In the last eighty years, thousands have enjoyed His love, His Grace and His proximity, but has Swami ever singled one particular person out and said, 'Emulate him. I want you all to be like Him'? But when it came to Sai Geetha, on every occasion possible Swami would laud her supremely-focused love and goad others to take inspiration from her. On one occasion, when His robe was wet with Sai Geetha's urine as she could not contain her emotions seeing Swami on the road and the boys were hesitant to go near because of the pool she had created around her, Swami looked at the boys and went to the extent of saying, "If you drink a cup of her urine, maybe you will get a fraction of her devotion."

The Saint Called 'Sai Geetha'

Sri Pedda Reddy, who served Swami's dearest devotee as her caretaker for more than two decades, says, "She was no animal or an ordinary pet of Swami; she was indubitably a great soul. She had come only to enjoy proximity with the Divine." How else can we explain Sai Geetha waiting eagerly every morning after her bath for Pedda Reddy to apply *Thripundraka*, the three horizontal lines using Vibhuti on her forehead, generally drawn by devotees of Lord Shiva. "Not only this, the moment I would apply vibhuti, she would open her mouth and ask for a huge chunk. Till I satisfied her, she would not close her mouth; it would just be wide open. Now, no normal elephant will like to eat ashes, but for her it was very precious," says Sri Pedda Reddy.

Another very salient fact which distinguished her not only from others in her species but also from general devotees is that she loved silence the most. "She always wanted her dwelling area to be quiet just like an ashram. If the sevadals waiting at her gate were making noise and indulging in loud talk, she would pluck small shrubs and throw at them, asking them in her own way to maintain silence. In fact, she was one who enforced discipline in the area," recalls Sri Pedda Reddy. "And during processions, she was most disciplined. She would never be in a hurry or disturb anybody. Not even on one occasion, has she stepped on anybody inadvertently. Only when she sees Swami, she would be excited, but even then on formal occasions, she would behave very

intelligently. Her eyes would only be searching for Swami while walking with all the paraphernalia.”

Sai Geetha’s goal was only one and just like an ascetic, she wanted no company except of her beloved. We know how when she was sent to the forest many years ago to bear a child, she just did not allow any male elephant to come near her. Narrating that revealing incident recently to the boys in the Institute Auditorium, Swami said, “She was taken forcefully in a lorry with chains tied to her feet. In the forest, if any male elephants came near her, she would shout. She wanted to get out of there and started running. With blood on her feet, she reached Brindavan and tapped on the door in the night. Mr. Ram Brahman, the care-taker of the Brindavan ashram, who was sleeping next to the door, was terrified. He came to me and said, ‘Swami, maybe some naxalites (miscreants) are here.’ But I told him, ‘No. There are no naxalites here and called out “Geetha!”’. The response came in the form of a big trumpet. Having come dragging herself on the road all alone the whole night from the forest, the poor soul had injuries all over her body. She was determined, strong-minded and always had one-pointed attention. That was her life. The kind of exalted life she led, no one has ever lived.” And then Swami made the profound declaration again, “She was a *shuddha Brahmachari* - a celibate to perfection.”

Conferring Comfort – Just by Her Presence

It is this purity of her personality that gave her all the beauty and bestowed peace and joy to anybody who was in her proximity. Ms Susan Hardwick, a devotee from England, says, “In 1998 I took my daughter Charlotte, who at the time was 17 years old, on her first visit to Swami. It was a magical time for Charlotte who although completely blind was aware of Swami's presence everywhere. I took her to visit Sai Geetha and Charlotte was completely overwhelmed by the love of Sai Geetha for Swami and His love for her. We were allowed into the compound and Charlotte fed Sai Geetha with a fruit and this beautiful animal gently took the fruit from her hand and nudged her with her trunk. This sweet act brought tears to Charlotte's eyes. She can never ever forget that experience.”

Mrs. Meera James, another devotee from London, says, “During my short trip to Prasanthi in August 2006 which I made in memory of my eight-year old daughter who passed away unexpectedly, I used to take walks with Sai Geetha almost every other day. Not having come to terms with the sudden tragedy, these walks with her helped me find answers to her sudden death. In fact, it was one of the highlights of my stay in Prasanthi and I will treasure these walks forever in my heart.”

“One of the first times I visited the Ashram, the departure from the ashram was exceptionally hard,” recalls Ms. Anita Ricka, a devotee from New Mexico, USA. “I had just started my return journey and my heart was crushed having to leave Swami and the Ashram. Sitting in the taxi, I noticed Sai Geetha on her morning walk, and my heart sang when I saw her. I asked the cab driver to just slow down a little and I cried out in silent despair. I greeted her with

folded palms, behind the car's window-glass and turned to look at her for as long as I could, sending her all my love and longing. To my surprise and joy, the sweet Sai Geetha lifted her trunk in a greeting, and I felt as if she was saying to me: 'Don't worry, He is always with you, and so am I. I greet you and love you too.' So once again I cried, but this time it was tears of joy, and my journey home was just a bit easier. This may not seem much like a great experience to many but to me it was huge. The way she responded to my love and longing was very special and stirring."

Ms. Sally Kimball from Denver, Colorado, says, "This happened in 1985, during my second trip to Swami. I was walking back after listening to a discourse Swami gave to His students and on the way I stopped to see Sai Geetha. I touched her and felt such love radiating from her. I looked into her eyes and our eyes met. I remember thinking as if I was looking deep into a human's eyes as I continued to look deep within her. Sri Reddy told us if we said 'Sai Ram', she would respond and she did too curling up her trunk. I was deeply moved by her presence and the gentleness of such a large elephant. And about the time I was to leave, I heard a commotion. Everybody was expecting Swami's car to come that way. I waited for the chance and noticed Sai Geetha rocking back and forth in great anticipation – she knew He was coming. I hoped He would stop and visit Sai Geetha, unfortunately, that was not to happen nor did He even wave to her. As the car passed, He was actually looking the other way. And then when I turned to look at her, the disappointment that shadowed her being was heart-breaking. I watched tears roll down her radiant face and could feel how much she loved her Swami. She was focused on Him so intently. I realized she had more devotion in her heart than most of us present there. She taught me what unconditional love and devotion is."

Her Every Cell and Every Second...Sai Suffused

Come what may, Sai Geetha's love for Swami was like an eternal flame, ever resplendent. Nothing could ever reduce its brilliance or vigor. Even though Swami spent lesser and lesser time with her as years passed – from spending four-five sessions a day in the early years to seeing her only during major festival days, which was once in 2-3 months – her love for Swami remained absolutely unchanged. In fact, she only longed more and more for His attention and grace. "Though initially, it was more of a mother-child relationship, later it blossomed into pure love and devotion. It was like the bond between God and a devotee," says Sri Pedda Reddy. "She had always so much reverence in her eyes when she looked at Swami; she wouldn't even blink if Swami was next to her. If Swami fed her, she would be thrilled. She knew the value of what she was getting." And perhaps it is for this reason that she would always be moving her mouth and trunk when alone. While others thought, she was thirsty or looking for something, Pedda Reddy says, she would actually be chanting something all the time.

When a new mahout came to assist Sri Pedda Reddy in serving Sai Geetha a few years ago, Sai Geetha refused to accept his service, till Swami personally blessed the new person in Mandir. Though she was not a witness to Swami

creating Vibhuti and giving the new assistant during darshan, she somehow 'knew' when Swami blessed him. Just like Hanuman who did not want even one pearl from the beautiful necklace that Mother Sita gifted him because none of them were vibrating with the name of Lord Rama, she too wanted only those things to touch her which were filled with the blessings of Sai.

She 'Knew' What Was Coming!

So attuned she was to the Lord at any moment of time that she could 'sense' Swami's arrival much before anyone else. Once when Swami started His car from Bangalore, Sai Geetha immediately 'knew' Her beloved was coming, says Pedda Reddy. It is for this reason that Sai Geetha was no pet elephant or just an ordinary devotee of the Lord; she was in fact, an enlightened soul. Who would believe that Sai Geetha actually foretold her death to Sri Pedda Reddy the previous evening? She, in fact, did and Swami Himself confirmed this in a recent discourse. On 21st evening itself, she had communicated to Sri Pedda Reddy that she wants to 'go'. It is because of many such 'moments of revelations' that Sri Pedda Reddy was personally party too that he asserts, "Sai Geetha was actually a *gyani* – a being of all-knowing wisdom." "She knew what was coming most of the time," he continues. "When Swami left for Kodaikanal on April 26, she stopped the car on the road. Swami blessed her profusely but her happiness was very short-lived. The moment Swami's car moved away, she trumpeted loudly 3-4 times lamenting Swami's departure. She 'knew' Swami was going to Kodaikanal and will not be available surely for few weeks. It took me several minutes to console her. She kept on saying, 'Swami is gone'. It was extremely difficult to get her out of depression. Though Swami had nicely blessed her while leaving for Kodaikanal, on the day He returned to Puttaparthi on May 18, He was not smiling at all. He was just staring at her. It was a look of concern and she was very subdued too. It was very unusual. I never understood the reason then."

Previously, during the inauguration of her new and beautiful concrete building complete with ornate carvings and magnificent colours, (which happened few days before Swami's Birthday in 2006), she was actually disinclined to go inside even though Swami was sitting inside, which is extremely unusual. She went in only when I goaded her into it. Even after that, everyday she would be uninterested to go into the new house. One would think that it was because she did not like the cement and concrete and would rather stay in the sand and grass, but the reality was she was completely aware of all the happenings, now and future and therefore, was never comfortable in that structure which would be in future the site of her Samadhi. In fact, she could communicate all her feelings to Sri Pedda Reddy. And she did this only with Pedda Reddy and none else. With others she behaved just like an ordinary elephant, but when alone with her favourite caretaker whom she treated like her father, she would reveal her heart out. If a person assisting Pedda Reddy in taking care of Sai Geetha had harmed her, she would wait for a time when Pedda Reddy was alone and then would go near him and 'tell' him about the episode. "I would then enquire with the assistants and they would confess that they had beaten her. She was out-of-this-world, a very noble soul belonging to a higher plane," Sri Pedda Reddy reveals.

Sai Geetha - Announcing Her 'Freedom'

"For fifteen days before her death, she was as if on a vow. She didn't care about food at all, and would want me by her side always," says Sri Pedda Reddy. "And two days before her passing away, that is on May 20, she broke open the chain tied to her legs, and walked to the garden and started playing on the sands in the middle of the night. I welded the chain the next day and put around her legs again as was the usual practice in the nights, but she released herself out of it a second time on May 21. But this time, it was in the early morning at 5.30, perhaps she was trying to break open the whole night. When I came to see her around 8 o'clock, she was on the sands again just like the previous day.

"It was surprising because she never did this before. She would go out and play only if I had forgotten to chain her in the evening. Moreover, she was weak as she had virtually stopped food for nearly two weeks except taking few *ragi* (finger millet) balls with lot of persuasion, and even prior to this for five months she was suffering from some kind of stomach disorder and would not eat well at all. Various expert vets tried many medications, including antibiotic injections. More than Rs. 50,000 was spent on her, still her problem remained and as days progressed she only ate lesser and lesser. In the last week, her intake was close to nothing.

"One day before her final crossover, I noticed that her front left leg was giving her pain and she was limping. I thought maybe some stone or twig accidentally was stuck in there which was hurting her. She was restless and not steady in one place like other days.

Sai Geetha ...An Enigma till the End

"On May 22, the final fateful day, I came at 8.30 in the morning and took her for bath. Even during bathing she was normal and I forgot about the stone in the leg as she didn't complain of any discomfiture. But suddenly as I was pouring water on her, she raised her front left leg showing signs of pain. I asked her to lift her leg - generally she would be able to hold the leg for sometime when she lifts - but on that day she was unable to hold the leg at all; immediately she kept it down. Keen to remove the cause of her pain on the foot, I asked her again to lift and hold her leg but her leg gave away immediately. This happened one more time and finally when she lifted her leg for the fourth time, she just sat down with a jerk. Now I could see the lower part of her leg but there was nothing wrong visible there; no stick, or stone or mark of any injury. It is probably only internal pain, I said to myself.

"For one and half years Sai Geetha had not sat down, she was always on her legs day and night. Even during the night, she used to sleep standing on her legs or sometimes leaning on the wall. In this scenario, when she sat suddenly after more than eighteen months, her limbs refused to cooperate with her; she was unable to get up.

“I sent word for a crane to help her to stand. Unfortunately, none were near by, and it took some time for the poelain to arrive. We tied a rope to the rear side of Sai Geetha and tried to pull, but the machine was unable to lift the elephant. Sai Geetha was six tonnes and the tonnage of the hydraulic motor was only two. The higher capacity crane was 100 kms away; we telephoned them and asked them to start. They could not start immediately due to technical problems, so we asked for a crane from Bangalore and as it was coming it developed some problems, and lost some time in repair. Later, the vehicle’s tyre burst and by the time the crane finally arrived, it was very late.”

Superficially, one may wonder, why did the Divine not intervene? How could there be so many obstacles for His dear devotee? But the wise know that everything actually happens according to divine design, though it is very difficult to accept and understand at that particular point in time. But it becomes clear later when one goes over the whole event in a peaceful state of mind. Same it was with Sai Geetha too. Sri Pedda Reddy continues:

“Up to 12.30 in the afternoon she was trying to get up and by that time she was exhausted. The legs, which had not bent for over one and half years, were giving her lot of pain. I could see that she was silently tolerating the hardship; she did not want to shout. There were tears in her eyes. We started giving her calcium injections and saline for strength; about 10-12 bottles of the sterile solution went into her, but nothing seemed to help. She, then, slowly started to drop her head; it had become too heavy for her, she was unable to move it either. And then her breathing slowed down. She lay in this condition for an hour or so and then at about six she bid a peaceful adieu and immediately, Swami was informed.”

How did the Lord react that evening when He physically received this message, we do not know. But what we do know is that at about 8 pm, Swami sent a ball of *payasam* (a sweet dish) specially prepared in His kitchen to Sri Pedda Reddy with instructions that it be fed to Sai Geetha. The over 65 year old caretaker had never disobeyed Swami in his life but now he was in a critical dilemma. How to feed a dead elephant? The doctors had confirmed that her pulse has stopped. With prayer on his lips, and no other solution in sight, Sri Pedda Reddy poured the *prasadam* into her mouth and gently covered her face again with the white cloth. To this day, it remains a mystery to Sri Reddy how the semi-solid offering went inside. There was no sign of it being dropped or slipped from her mouth onto the ground till the next morning.

On Swami’s instructions, the whole night was spent digging a huge pit in the centre of the new building that Swami had built for her six months ago. Cranes and earthmovers worked continuously, and by early morning the massive 20 by 16 feet hole was ready.

“When Swami arrived at 7.30 in the morning to the site, I could not contain myself. I was crying,” says an emotional Pedda Reddy. “And Swami lowered the window-glass and caught hold of my hand. He was very emotional too. It was like we both shared the same intensity of feeling. Then He told me to open the car door and His chair came down. He went as close as possible to

Sai Geetha, took Vibhuti and smeared all over her head. For a couple of minutes, He was there, pressing her head with His fingers, stroking her trunk, applying vibhuti on her face and limbs. He lovingly then moved His fingers over her eyes. In fact, He asked me to open her eyes which I did. Though it was fifteen hours since she had passed away 'clinically', her body was still supple and flexible. It was like she was sleeping. Normally, two hours after life passes away, a dead body would become very stiff, but Sai Geetha that morning had no stiffness, the trunk was bending easily and her eye seemed to be looking at Swami."

"Go happily, peacefully"

In fact, Swami confirmed this in His discourse to the students a few days later. He said, "The other day Sai Geetha discarded her body. But I pointed out to her, "Geetha, look here. I am constructing a Mandir for you. She opened her eyes and saw me, but she was very weak. What else she could do? She only shed tears. When the end came and she was going, I said, "So, you are going. Ok, go happily, peacefully." One cannot but recollect at this point the final moments of Swami's foster mother Mrs. Subbamma. Though medically she was declared 'dead', a peculiar glow on her face made everybody nervous to take her to the cremation ground and the wise men of Bukkapatnam said, "The bird has not flown yet!" Three full days had passed since the first announcement of her death by the time Swami came to her deathbed after attending a function in Tirupati. But the moment Swami called out, "Subbamma", "Subbamma", just twice, she opened her eyes! And her hand was next stroking Swami's hand lovingly. Swami then put His fingers to her lips and she opened her mouth a little, and from the cupped palm of Swami next flowed holy water into her mouth and she joined the ranks of the Released! Sai Geetha's merger was no different, though everything was not so apparent to the ordinary onlooker. After Sai Geetha was satisfied completely and Swami had bid her final farewell, He turned His attention to the huge pit dug inside her new building. Sri Pedda Reddy recalls,

"He saw the pit and then asked me to come to the Mandir to take Sai Geetha's dress. He also instructed me how to drape the sequined body blanket on her body and also instructed all the materials that should be put in the pit before lowering Sai Geetha's body into it."

A Splendid Farewell by the Divine Himself

According to His directions, the bottom of the pit was first covered with sand. This was followed by coconut leaves, then Banana leaves, other small plants that Sai Geetha used to relish and finally fresh green grass that she loved the most. It was a multi-layered huge bed with all that Sai Geetha relished. But that was not all. On top of this was poured rice – many bags of them -, followed by flowers, turmeric powder and vermillion. Once everything was completed as per His divine direction, Sri Pedda Reddy returned to the Mandir and Swami then asked him to open the jewels of Sai Geetha that He always kept in His residence. Along with the dress, Swami also selected some of the jewels that she should be adorned with while putting her to rest at her

Samadhi site. And then handing over a pair of silk clothes to Sri Pedda Reddy, He said, "You should do all these tasks. Shower and then wear this new silk dress and be ready, I will come there."

Just as He had promised, Swami was at the site at 10.45 am. Efforts were on with the help of a crane to lift the 6000 kg body of Sai Geetha and move it to the other end of the compound where the pit was dug. Swami followed the progress of the job every second sitting in His car. The crane was big and could not enter the building. It was nearly one hour since Swami had arrived and the scorching summer heat was draining everyone's energy. Sri Pedda Reddy went to Swami and said, "Swami, it is very hot here and moving her is taking lot of time too. You may please return to Mandir." But Swami's reply was an instantaneous, "No." "I will wait till the end," He said. After 90 minutes of tough maneuvering with the machine, Sai Geetha was finally placed on the bed specially created and Swami, whose eyes were overcome with emotion as He saw His most precious devotee for the last time, blessed her again. More turmeric and vermilion was offered. Lots of garlands were spread on her body including a big one which Swami asked senior members of the Trust to place on her, and finally she was covered with mud. Only then, did Swami return to His residence.

The beautiful building that was her home six months ago was now her Samadhi. When we asked Sri Pedda Reddy, "Did you think that the eye-catching elegant structure that Swami built for her would be her Samadhi one day?" He said, "Yes, even while this new building was being constructed, given the carvings and ornamentation that went into making it, I thought maybe one day this would be her Samadhi. I remember, after her old shed was demolished, Swami one day came to me with a plan, called me near and said, 'See this, we will make a beautiful, big and permanent building for her.' Still, I never realized at that point that 'permanent' actually meant 'Samadhi'; I only thought of it as her final house from where she will never have to shift again in the future."

Sai Geetha – Ever-fresh in Sai's Heart

Swami had planned every little detail meticulously much in advance for His dearest devotee. And this year, the Lord suddenly changed his plans to return to Puttaparthi from Kodaikanal on May 18, instead of going to Brindavan as was his usual practice every year, and everyone wondered the reason behind the unexpected divine decision until it all became very clear in a matter of four days. For Swami, Sai Geetha was more important than all the hundreds of devotees that prayed to Him to extend His stay in Kodaikanal for few more days or the thousands of devotees from Bangalore who pleaded with Him repeatedly to visit Brindavan at least for a few weeks. In the 108 names of the Lord, one line exalts him as "Om Sri Sai Bhaktha Paradheenaya Namah" which means, "We salute the Lord who is actually under the control of His devotee." Just like Hanuman was one, Meerabai was one, Sai Geetha was one – demonstrating to man the power and the pinnacle of pure love. And as Lord Rama laid the dedicated Jatayu to rest on His lap and Himself performed all the funeral rites, Swami too treated Sai Geetha just as His very own. He

was there every second directing every act in her last moments. Not only that, on the 11th day after her burial, He visited the site again and asked Sri Pedda Reddy to place bananas, apples, *ragi* balls and sweets on the Samadhi and then directed for all these to be distributed to few poor people and also to feed all the cows in the Gokulam. It is a tradition in many houses in India to serve the poor in the name of the deceased on the 11th day after death and here Swami was Himself doing this for Sai Geetha. Truly, no other being ever captured Swami's heart to the extent this elephant-devotee did. "If Swami is 'Love in Action'," says Sri Raja Reddy, a very senior Sai devotee, "Sai Geetha was 'Devotion in Action.'" As one who had seen Sai Geetha when she arrived at the Ashram as a tiny infant nearly five decades ago and observed her grow into a majestic and magnificent devotee, Sri Raja Reddy in his 'Ode to Sai Geetha' says:

An Ode to Sai Geetha

Small you came,
Big you became.
Big both in body & spirit
But, big in body, small in ego,
It is not for nothing
Sai named you "SAI GITA"
For you have a MESSAGE
Apt for this AGE
Discipline and Devotion
Duty, Discrimination
Along with Determination
Your performance based upon,
Rain or Shine,
You led the Procession
Good & Gorgeous
With gong on either side
Calm Majesty,
Spectacular but silent;
Spotting Swami in the crowd
In bubbling devotion you bowed!
Once duty performed
Back in your dear Abode
Receding back into Reticence!
For years and for decades
This went on and on !
You emulated Bhagavan
To make your life a Message
While Sai's Life is Love in Action
Sai Gita's Life, Devotion in Action
Your message, mute but eloquent,
Silent eloquence but elephantine

We miss you Sai Gita
For in your absence

Missing is intense
As being, sans air or water

Aeons ago, it was Gajendra Moksha
Then by Sai Vishnu
Now it is Gajarani Moksha
Given by Sai Krishna

With this as our solace,
A happy smile's on our face.

Sai Geetha - A Monumental Ideal and Inspiration

Ms. Smruti Rath, a devotee from Bangalore, says, “ Love neither dies, nor it ends, and Sai Geetha taught us how true love lives, even when life comes to an end.” The homage the Sai community paid to Sai Geetha world over, be it special Sai spiritual meetings from Kerala to Kashmir in India or special programs complete with powerpoint presentations and performances by small kids in Malaysia or the poor feeding done on the 11th day of her passing by the Sai Youth in Hyderabad or a big card created by the Bal Vikas children of Qatar honouring her or the several cute drawings that the small kids of the Sathya Sai School of Canada sketched in her memory or for that matter, the innumerable ways each Sai devotee remembered in reverence this exalted devotee of the Lord – every act, small or big, only went to show the indelible impact this elephant-devotee of the Lord had made in the hearts and minds of thousands of devotees from California to Canberra without ever speaking a word. Paying her own special tribute to Sai Geetha, Ms. Jullie Chaudhuri, a devotee from Pune, India, writes:

A Tribute to Sai Geetha

The Master, the Lord of the Universe
Had tears in His Lotus eyes?
Everything we have experienced of Him
That He has allowed us to,
This act defies...
Yet, it is so,
Emotions did flow,
And what did this tremendous flow show?
To what did it open the door?
Lessons to be learned,
So much to be discerned,
Lessons of kindness, tolerance, compassion,
Acceptance, purity, reciprocation,
And above all, a lesson saturated with love...
For Sai Geetha to live, this expansive love
Was more than enough...
She was a gift from the animal kingdom
To the Lord of the Universe in human form,

Her story unfolded to show,
Specially for Him was she born...
Her life, her focus, her core,
Her everything was Swami, Swami, Swami
And *this* is a lesson for the rest of humanity...
A lesson of an ideal relationship between Creator and Creation,
Of what to choose, and what to shun,
No other attraction,
And specially no distraction,
Complete absorption,
Reaching a pinnacle of devotion,
A bond so touching,
And a reciprocation so fulfilling...
What we humans couldn't do,
This monumental example,
With matchless devotion as her clue,
This grand soul did bring glory to the animal kingdom,
And did us all stun...
For, she did win the heart of the Lord,
And, brought tears in the eyes of our Living God,
To wake us up,
A clarion call,
A supreme lesson for us all,
Her life, her love, her devotion,
A lesson for us all,
When Bhagwan came as Shri Ram,
He performed the last rites to highlight the glory of Jatayu,
And from the self-same divine hands,
Of this, His present Avataric form,
Sai Geetha got her befitting due, and a divine adieu...

Be like Sai Geetha and You will be Mine - Swami

Towards the end of His discourse to the students in the first moral class session of the Institute, Swami, after speaking for nearly 15 minutes on Sai Geetha said, "If you can only remember and ruminate on the intense love that Sai Geetha had for Swami and develop such sacred and noble thoughts, I will Myself take you close to My heart. You do not have to do anything else." Just like every act of Swami, be it the Hospitals or the Water Projects or the Institute, are models for the whole world to replicate, the Legend of Sai Geetha too is the unfolding of yet another powerful and profound mission manifested by the Will of the Divine to help and guide mankind to scale blissful heights in the spiritual realm, which are very much attainable, and discover the heaven of lasting peace, joy and happiness.

- **Heart2Heart Team**

FEATURE ARTICLES

IN QUEST OF INFINITY – 06

PROF. G.VENKATARAMAN

Loving Sai Ram and greetings again. I am sorry there was a break in presenting this series but then you know there was a good reason for it! In my last article, I dealt with Black Holes, prior to which I discussed White Dwarf and Super Nova explosions. When I was away in Kodai during May, I read in the papers that astronomers have discovered an explosion that appears to be the “mother of them all”.

Brightest Stellar Explosion Ever

The discovery is based on extended observations made using the Chandra orbiting x-ray observatory and several ground based telescopes operating in various wavelength regions. This supernova named SN 2006gy, is the brightest and most energetic stellar explosion ever recorded and may be a long-sought new type of explosion. Seen below is an artist's illustration that shows what SN 2006gy may have looked like if viewed at a close distance.

The fireworks-like material in white shows the explosion of an extremely massive star. This debris is pushing back two lobes of cool, red gas that were expelled in a large eruption from the star before it exploded. The green, blue and yellow regions in these lobes shows where gas is being heated in a shock front as the explosion material crashes into it and pushes it backwards. Most of the optical light generated by the supernova is thought to come from debris that has been heated by radioactivity, but some likely comes from the shocked gas. The lobes can be seen in the image captured by the Chandra telescope [see below].

SN 2006gy occurred in a distant galaxy [NGC 1260] approximately 238 million light years away. Therefore, due to the time it took light from the supernova to reach the Earth, the event occurred about 238 million years ago. Preliminary indications are that it was an unusually high-energy supernova of a very large star, around 150 solar masses. That is a real wow! The energy released by the explosion has been estimated as ten times more than the typical supernova explosion. The supernova's light brightened for about 70 days after discovery, until roughly the beginning of December 2006, and has been slowly decreasing since then.

Although the SN 2006gy supernova is intrinsically about ten times as luminous as compared to SN 1987 A, which was bright enough to be seen by the naked eye [concerning which I have already discussed], SN 2006gy was more than 1,400 times as far away as SN 1987A, and too far away to be seen without a telescope. Currently, astrophysicists are busy theorizing what could have caused such a massive explosion, of a magnitude hitherto unknown.

So much for the new excitement; let me now go back to the main trend of my earlier instalments. You will recall that thus far we have had 1) a look at what makes up the Universe, 2) the birth and death of different types of stars and the types of corpses they lead to. There are many more details I could give about the Universe and its makeup but right now, that would take us too far off our main course. So, at this point I would like to pause and pose the question that many have asked themselves before, which is: "Where did it all begin and what was the baby Universe like? How did it grow thereafter to its present vast size?" Since the Universe is a physical entity, it is obvious that a large part of the answer to the question just posed would have to come from Physics. So let us take a small detour and delve a bit into Physics.

Physics to Understand Physical Universe

Right from the time he appeared on Earth, man has been busy gathering bits and pieces of information about the world around him and putting it all together to make some sense. This has been a long and arduous process, and not always easy. Take for example, the famous discovery of Archimedes. Today even a school kid knows what this principle is. Compared to the highly complicated things relating to the Universe that we now know about, Archimedes Principle certainly might not appear to be any big deal. But it certainly was, at least at the time it was discovered. Same is the case with Newton's famous three laws of mechanics which once again are very familiar to high school kids. That does not mean that Newton's discovery is trivial; on the contrary, Chandra rates Newton even higher compared to Einstein, in terms of achievement! Which is saying something!

So what is the point I am really trying to make? Simply this; over the last few centuries, we have been gradually getting a better and clearer picture of the structure of matter; by structure, I mean, how matter is built up. During Newton's time, the generally accepted view was that matter is continuous and homogenous, that is to say it is not made up of discrete building blocks. The theories of physics developed at that time reflect this view. This does not mean that those theories are wrong or are too naïve. In fact, theories of elasticity, etc., whose foundations were laid during those days are still used by engineers. In other words, when we deal with Nature, **we have to do so at several scales of length and time; this is a very important point.**

Journey into the Microcosm

Let us try to understand this last remark. In astronomy, we deal with very large scales of distances that are measured in light years. As for the time scale, a few hundred thousand years is no big deal, considering that stars live for millions of years. Come down to earth and in normal life, distances we encounter range from kilometres to millimetres and may be a bit less, like the thickness of a hair. As for time, it ranges from years to minutes to seconds and may be fractions of a second like a millisecond or one thousandth of a second. Looking through a microscope, we can begin to see bacteria and things like that which are much smaller [and therefore require a microscope].

In this way, let us suppose we go down to the level of molecules. Here I must pause and mention an important fact. Although ancient Greeks and Hindus as well as Arabs are credited with proposing the idea of atoms being the building blocks of matter, the idea gained scientific currency only in the 19th century, from chemists to start with. In fact, strangely enough, until late 19th century, many physicists did not believe in the atomic theory of matter. One physicist who suffered on account of this prejudice was Ludwig Boltzmann of Austria. Boltzmann developed what is called the Kinetic Theory of Heat, the essential idea of which is that heat really boils down to the random motion of the atoms and molecules in the body concerned. The greater the velocities with these tiny objects fly, the greater is the temperature of the body. Boltzmann developed this theory in great detail, and the theory is extensively used to this day by heat engineers. Unfortunately, at the time it was proposed, a well-known physicist named Ostwald strongly opposed it, as a result of which Boltzmann was ignored by many. Feeling utterly frustrated, Boltzmann later committed suicide by jumping into the Adriatic Sea off Trieste, a coastal town in Italy. Ironically, just a couple of years or so later, Einstein, in a monumental paper, gave a powerful justification for the atomic theory of matter by explaining a baffling phenomenon called Brownian motion. This theory was soon verified and thereafter the atomic theory of matter gained rapid currency amongst physicists. Incidentally, Trieste is where the Pakistani physicist Abdus Salam later established an internationally famous centre for Theoretical Physics; that story comes a bit later.

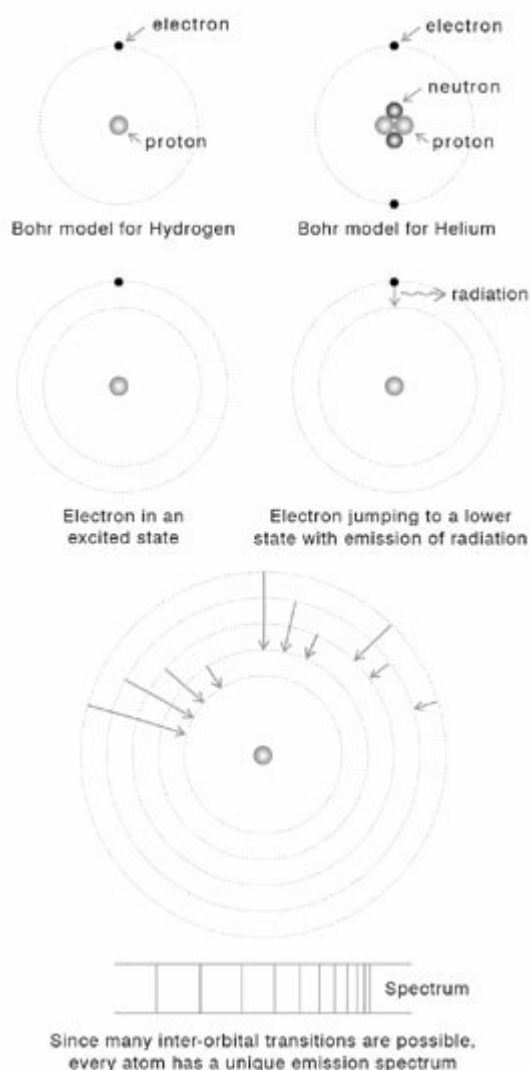
OK, we are now down to the level of atoms, whose dimension is typically 10^{-8} cm or one hundredth of one millionth of a centimetre – that is small, is it not? Well, wait and soon you would encounter distances that are still smaller. Once physicists [and of course chemists who came first!] accepted the atomic theory of matter, it was universally realised that though matter might appear continues to us in our daily experience, it is pretty grainy when one comes down to the level of atoms. As far as time scales are concerned, time intervals like 10^{-12} seconds [i.e., one millionth of one millionth of a second!] are what one usually deals with.

Atoms write their signatures through what are called spectral lines. The word spectral lines need not stump you. When energy is pumped into an atom [there are many ways of doing this], it becomes excited. This excitation energy is subsequently got rid off by the atom and it does this usually by emitting light at specific wavelengths. Spectral lines are just signatures of the light emitted by an atom while de-exciting. Study of atomic spectra is thus of vital importance in many branches of modern activity, ranging from basic physics and chemistry all the way to forensic science.

Until 1900, people imagined atoms were like hard billiard balls, but when J. J Thomson of Cambridge discovered around that time that he could chip an atom and squeeze electrons out of them, people realised that atoms had their own internal structure. It seemed as if atoms were made up of electrons that were negatively charged and that positive charge was tucked in somewhere within the atom. Around 1910 or so, Niels Bohr of Denmark tried to imagine a model for atomic structure and develop a theory for spectral lines emitted by

atoms when they emit radiation. Where structure was concerned, Bohr said that the atom was like a mini solar system with a tiny atomic nucleus at the centre [rather like our Sun] and electrons going round it in circular orbits. In the Bohr model, all the positive charge of the atom was locked up in a tiny region called the atomic nucleus or just nucleus for short. The electrons that carried the negative charge whirled around the nucleus like the planets. Clearly, Bohr was mimicking the solar system and there was nothing wrong in that. Scientists often make models, based on examples presented by Nature itself.

After imagining all this, Bohr then wanted to describe the motion of the electrons, calculate their energies and so forth. For doing this, one needed a theory of mechanics and all that one had then was Newton's theory for describing the behaviour of moving bodies, [modified by Einstein to include relativity, if the objects moved real fast, that is to say at speeds close to that of light].



The very first useful and working model of the atom was due to Neils Bohr. In the Bohr model, the atom is like a mini solar system, with the atomic nucleus in the centre and the electrons going round the nucleus in circular orbit. In the simplest atom, namely hydrogen, the nucleus is just a single proton and there is thus only one electron going round the nucleus. [The number of electrons is always the same as the number of protons – that is the way Nature maintains electrical balance!] Normally, the electron moves in the lowest orbit but if the electron is given some energy [physicists say excitation], then the electron moves into an outer orbit. Obviously, it has plenty of them to choose from.

The farther the orbit, the greater is the energy of the electron in the excited state. Atoms do not like to be in an excited state; so what they do is to get rid of the excess energy by emitting radiation, which then allows the electron to settle down into its lowest state, rightfully called the ground state. Thus, radiation emitted by atoms and the energy levels available to the atom are intimately connected. This is a great boon to physicists who can, by studying the spectrum of the emitted radiation, literally finger print the atom – this is rather like DNA finger printing, so common these days.

When Bohr completed his theory of atoms, he found it simply did not work. It seemed pretty clear to Bohr that somehow, he had to bring in new ideas sparked off by the German physicist Max Planck. In 1900, Planck showed that unless one blessed light [and indeed all of electromagnetic radiation] with a quantum nature, there were many important facts concerning radiation that simply could not be explained. At that point, people simply knew that there was this quantum aspect out there but very little else. And now when Bohr failed to explain atomic spectra using Newton's classical mechanics and hit a roadblock, he reached out for his pipe and murmured, "Ah ha! When we are talking of spectra, we are dealing with light. Since light has a mysterious quantum aspect to it [that's what Max Planck says], unless I somehow smuggle in this quantum aspect into my theory, it is not going to work!"

Birth of Quantum Mechanics

Bohr did just that and in 1913, came out with his now famous Bohr model of the atom, and it was an instant breakthrough. Sure, Bohr's model left a lot of things unexplained, but it certainly was a big leap forward. One thing led to another and by 1928, one had what is now called **quantum mechanics** – which has since become the standard grammar of physics at the microscopic level. Physicists said, "Listen, whatever it is that you deal with at microscopic distances, you better use quantum mechanics to do that." So where physicists were concerned, quantum mechanics became their new *Veda*, and the *Rishis* who discovered this were Erwin Schrodinger of Austria, Werner Heisenberg of Germany and Paul Dirac of England. I should not forget Prince de Broglie of France who in 1924, preceding the trio just mentioned, made the radical suggestion that if light had a dual nature representing its quantum nature, then so does matter! In other words, not only radiation but matter too was quantum in nature, an aspect that reveals itself mostly on small scales of distance. That is why it was missed till the twentieth century.

OK, so by 1930, physicists had a mechanics for describing the behaviour of moving charges right down to the quantum level. There was still some dust around that had to be cleared but physicists developed new interests and started becoming curious about the nature of the atomic nucleus. This opened up an entirely new vista that we now call nuclear physics. Thus, in a manner of speaking, the period 1930 to 1939 saw the rapid growth of nuclear physics, with **quantum electrodynamics** as developed by Dirac in 1928, put aside for the moment. Some people realised that Dirac's quantum electrodynamics was incomplete but no one knew how to fix it. Besides, nuclear physics seemed so much more inviting!

1939, World War II broke out. America was not in the war yet, but Europe was in the thick of it. A good many European scientists of Jewish origin had fled from Germany and other countries under Hitler's domination, and many of them took refuge in America. In 1939, Hahn and Meitner in Germany had discovered nuclear fission and while nuclear fission was good physics, physicists in France and European scientists who had taken refuge in America realised that fission could be made the basis for an entirely new type

of bomb with unimaginable power of devastation. That led to the secret atomic bomb project culminating in the development of the atomic bomb by America in early 1945. Meanwhile of course, America itself became involved in the war, when the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbour. In August 1945, two atoms bombs were dropped over Japan, and the destruction they produced left everyone stunned. Japan surrendered quickly and the war was over.

Return of Quantum Electrodynamics

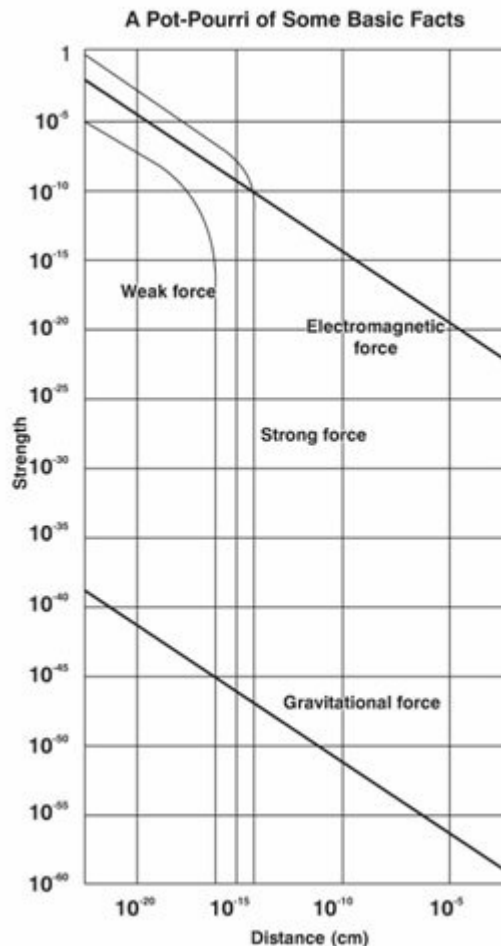
In America, physicists eagerly returned to their academic ivory tower and suddenly, quantum electrodynamics became very attractive. Some very precise experiments were performed, and those results simply could not be explained using the Dirac version of quantum electrodynamics [QED] which till then was thought to be the end all. A Version 2.0 was needed but it was not easy to find. However, three young people, Feynman and Schwinger in America and Tomanaga in Japan independently discovered this version, and it made great waves. This new, improved version [that almost sounds like a toothpaste ad but this version of QED deserved all the adjectives one could use!] was put to one test after another and it explained experimental results with hitherto unimaginable precision. I mean they would do a very precise experiment, yielding a result accurate to seven or eight places of decimals. QED calculations would give the same answer. In fact, they would give to more decimal places, forcing experimenters to improve their accuracy. So for some time, it was experiment and theory each trying to outdo the other. QED was so successful, that Feynman described it a Jewel of Physics.

After a while, physicists said, “OK, QED is great but let us move on and turn our attention to the mysteries inside the nucleus more carefully.” Thus from 1954 or so to say 1970, a lot of attention was given to nuclear physics. The first question asked was: “What on earth is the nucleus exactly?” Bohr said it is a small entity with positive charge and Rutherford in Cambridge had not only determined the size to be around 10^{-12} cm or so, but also figured out that the nucleus was made up of protons and neutrons. From then on, it was one question after another, almost endlessly. When one question got answered, another popped up – that is the way it is in science which is why many head for science; it gives a high non-stop, without drugs that is!

So where was Physics, say around the seventies? That can be summarised as follows:

- Physicists realised that the physics of matter revolves around two basic entities. 1) Basic building blocks, and 2) forces via which these building blocks interact with each other.
- Bulk matter is obtained when the basic building blocks are put together according to some rules; it is rather like building a building using say bricks.
- There are four basic forces in Nature. They are: 1) The gravitational force, 2) the electromagnetic force, 3) the [so-called] weak force, and 4) the strong force.

- Each of these forces operates in its own way. Also, they are of different strengths. Further, each force comes into its own on some scale of length.



This figure shows the relative strengths of the four forces on a distance scale of about 10^{-20} cm. I have chosen this scale of length because outside the nucleus, the strong force does not operate; so also the weak force. Gravity and electromagnetic forces on the other hand, operate all the way to the edge of the Universe! They are thus long-range forces, as compared to the other two which operate only on a very short range. An important caveat regarding the relative strength of the four forces. Suppose one goes to very small scales of length, like say 10^{-40} cm. This is an incredibly small distance, too small to be imagined! Yet, physicists do consider such small distances, because that is important when we consider matters like the Big Bang. And you know what? At those unimaginably small distance, gravity which otherwise seems like a puny fellow becomes a goliath! That story would come later.

Mystifying Story of Matter

I am sure all this must be rather mystifying and so let me add several explanatory notes and comments, starting with the so-called building blocks. Actually, here the views have changed quite a bit over the last few centuries. At the time of Newton when the atomic theory of matter simply did not exist, there was no question of building blocks of matter. This has an important implication.

Let us suppose that matter is continuous. Take a piece of matter like iron rod, say 1 cm diameter and 10 centimetres long. Cut it in the middle. We would then get two pieces each 5 cm long. Take one piece and cut that; this time the pieces would be 2.5 cm. Keep doing this on and on. As you do so, the pieces would get thinner and thinner and thinner. In principle, there should be no limit, because since matter is supposed to be continuous, the slices cut can be indefinitely thin. Suppose now matter is made up of atoms that are like infinitely hard spheres; that is to say an individual atom simply cannot be cut. If the above slicing process is gone through, then in this case, one would eventually come to a slice that is one atom layer thick; that is the limit and one cannot under the assumption of an indestructible atom, go any further.

As I told you, by the beginning of the 20th century, physicists not only knew that matter was made up of atoms but also that electrons could be knocked off atoms; that meant that the atom could be broken up; in turn that meant that one must now start looking for building blocks that are smaller than the atom.

The atom, as I told you earlier, is made up of a central atomic nucleus and a whole bunch of electrons orbiting around it. Can the nucleus be broken up? That was possible; so that meant that something smaller than the nucleus was required for making an atom, apart from electrons of course. What was the nucleus made up of? That, physicists found, was made up of protons and neutrons. Does that mean all matter, from the ant and the elephant all the way to galaxies are made up of just electrons, protons and neutrons? Do these three particle types constitute the basic building blocks of matter? Not quite, for the proton and the neutron had internal structure of their own!

Unearthing the Twosome - Leptons and Quarks

It was a hard grind finding all this, but by 1950, physics had become a big arena with hundreds if not thousands of physicists working all over the world. So a lot of information started piling up, rather quickly, one must mention, and by 1970 or so, one could sort of say: "Well you know what? We now can be sure what the basic building blocks of matter are, and list them." This was done, and it was found that the building blocks were of two fundamental categories; one of them was called *leptons* and the other was called *quarks*. Leptons meant light particles and the electron was identified as a member of the lepton family. As for quarks, it is combinations of them that make up the neutron and the proton. In other words, one can now really say: "I don't care if it is an ant or the Statue of Liberty. It is all made up of electrons and quarks – that's it!"

QUARK FAMILY	LEPTON FAMILY
up quark (U)	electron (e)
down quark (D)	electron - neutrino (ν_e)
charmed quark (C)	muon (μ)
strange quark (S)	muon - neutrino (ν_μ)
top quark (T)	tau (τ)
bottom quark (B)	tau - neutrino (ν_τ)
Three quark families	Three lepton families

This figure shows the basic building blocks of matter as we know them today. There are essentially two baskets, one containing what are called the quarks, and the other containing what are called leptons [which are supposed to be light compared to quarks]. While there are many leptons and quarks, only a few of them dominate as far as physical matter is concerned. That is to say, atoms are made up of electrons [which represents just one member of the lepton family] while the atomic nucleus is made up of neutrons and protons which can be put together with just up and down quarks. However, this does not mean that the no so visible leptons and quarks have no role to play. On the contrary, without them we cannot explain many physical phenomena.

You might say all this is fine but what is the big deal. Well it is a big deal and to appreciate that, just go back to chemistry, which I guess must be somewhat familiar to you. Chemistry deals with all kinds of chemicals, chemicals that make up drugs, plastics, pesticides and what not. Every single chemical, no matter what it is, is made up of molecules. So are the biological cells; our heart, lungs, liver – you name it – are all made of bio-molecules. And every molecule, whatever it is, is made up of atoms. And every atom is made up of electrons and quarks. In short, name the most complicated chemical on earth, and one can describe how it all put together with just leptons and quarks – that is the big deal; you need to remember only two basic ingredient types, that is all.

Scientists like to think of things and entities in terms of building blocks. They always say: “Listen; first make it simple, and then develop the theory. This way, you can deal with even complicated things step by step, one step at a time.” May sound simple but in practice, as one goes deeper and deeper into the atom, both theory and experiment become quite challenging and difficult. This is the game for the big boys! But a lot of big boys did get in there and did wonders; no wonder many of them picked up the coveted Noble!

The Fundamental Forces

So much for the building blocks. What about the forces via which this basic building blocks operate? In the beginning, discovery of forces came about quite independently; it is only after say 1950 that the study of the basic forces and the building blocks started going hand in hand. Well, how many different kinds of basic forces do we have and what do we know about them? The basic forces have already been enumerated; there are four of them. Historically, the first to be discovered was the gravitational force. As you perhaps know, Newton made that discovery, and it was an important moment in history. Newton said matter attracts matter, always. It does not matter if the piece of matter is big or small; a big stone thrown upwards is attracted by the earth and falls; so does a small stone. You may say a feather does not fall easily as compared to say a ball with the same mass. Well, the force of attraction depends only on 1) the masses of the two objects concerned and 2) the distance separating them. Feather falls softly because of the atmosphere, which acts like a cushion. Take that same feather to the Moon [where there is no air] and drop it there; you will find the feather and the ball with the same mass would fall at the same rate.

From the gravitational force, we turn next to the electromagnetic force which operates between any two charged particles. Thus, since the electron and the proton both carry electrical charge, there is between the two, an electromagnetic force as well as a gravitational force. However, the gravitational force acting between the two is so small [about one part in 1 followed by may be 40 zeros!], that the gravitational force between the electron and the proton is completely ignored, as was done by Niels Bohr when he developed the theory of the hydrogen atom.

In contrast to the gravitational force, information about the electromagnetic force came in bits and pieces due to the investigation of many physicists over a period of time. But in due course, one had a complete understanding of it.

What now about the so-called weak and the strong force? Where do they operate and why are they so named? The answers to all those questions is simple. Firstly, both these forces, the weak as well the strong, operate only when the distances between the concerned particles are very small? How small is small? Around 10^{-13} cm and less! In other words, consideration of the weak and the strong force play an important role in nuclear physics and the physics of elementary particles in general, that is of leptons and quarks. The discovery of the weak force was made during intensive studies on radioactivity, and the man who formally introduced it was Enrico Fermi [then of Italy], later to build the world's first atomic reactor as also the first atom bomb! To put it in perspective I should perhaps say that a study of leptons is impossible without bringing the weak force into the picture.

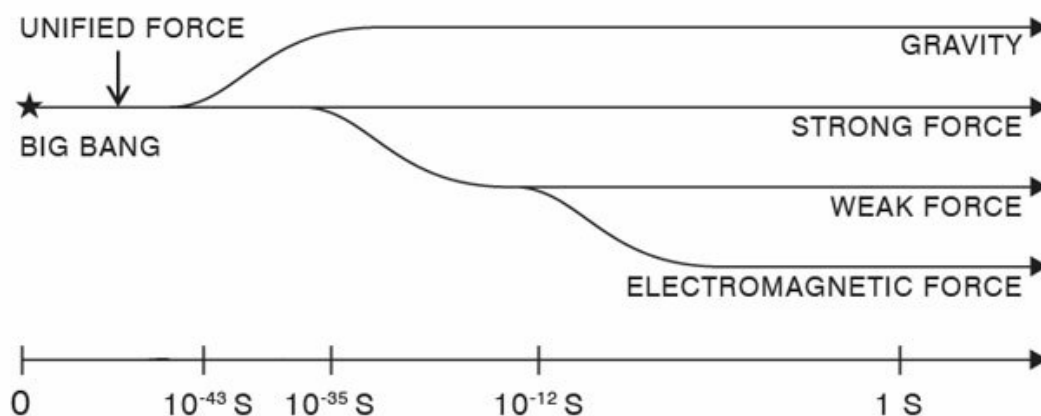
I turn finally to the strong force. The idea for this came when people began to pay serious attention to the structure of the atomic nucleus. I think it was Heisenberg who first asked himself the question: "Suppose I look at an atomic nucleus made up of many protons and neutrons. Nature has huddled them all

together and packed them into a very tiny space. But then, the protons all carry positive charge and so must repel each other heavily. As for the neutrons, since they are electrically neutral, they act like silent spectators so to speak. How come the nucleus is held together? Why does it not come apart and the constituent particles all fly off?" After thinking about it, Heisenberg finally decided that some "strong force" held the nucleus together! This force clearly acted within the nucleus and Heisenberg reasoned that both protons and neutrons respond to the strong force. All that was a long time ago, around the mid- thirties. Yes, things were pretty vague, but since then enormous progress has been made and now physicists know a lot about the strong force.

You are perhaps wondering: "What is this man up to? We are supposed to be talking about Infinity, which obviously must be something unimaginably huge; and here is all this chat about the infinitesimal! Has he gone bananas?" I assure I have not! You see God, the quintessence of Infinity, reveals Himself everywhere, from the infinitesimal to the Infinite. Right now, I am trying to take you to the microcosm of the physical Universe just to highlight how even in respect of the Universe, the micro and the macrocosm are intimately intertwined. With that caveat, let me proceed.

Two questions arise at this point: "Why only four fundamental forces? Why not more?" This is question number one. Second question: "Are these forces completely unrelated to each other or is there some connection? If so, what is that connection?" These are the two questions that would concern us next.

Let us start with the first of the two questions above. After a lot of intense debate, physicists are generally agreed that there are only four fundamental forces and no more. For a while there was a flutter about a fifth force but that whisper has since died down. As regards the second question, the consensus is: "When the Universe was born, there was actually one Universal Force. But almost within a second after birth, this one Universal Primordial Force split into four, to facilitate the further evolution of the Universe. The history of the Universe from that moment of separation has been governed by four and only four fundamental forces.



This figure shows schematically, how the four fundamental forces were all born from one primordial force that existed right at the beginning of space-time, that is, when our Universe was born [about 13.8 billion years ago]. In about a trillionth of one second after the Big Bang, one force became four, and that is the way it has been ever since! It is amazing, is it not?! By the way, even in the world of physics, we have one becoming many!

A small corollary. We often find physicists and chemists talking of all kinds of forces like the forces of surface tension, elastic forces and so on. All these are derived forces that operate within a certain context; they are not fundamental in the sense they do not determine the way leptons and quarks behave. Please keep that in mind. The derived forces are not unphysical but they are relevant only in limited context; our concern is with the Universe as a whole and in that context only the four forces I have listed above are pertinent. Hope that is clear.

Understanding ‘the small’ is Unavoidable

You might still say: “All this is fine, but I am still not clear why this digression from the Universe into nuclear physics, particle physics and all that.” Point well taken, and maybe I should say something to address that concern of yours before taking leave. You see, the reason why I am currently insisting on talking about all this is to give you some idea of physics at very small distances. When I say very small distances, I mean incredibly small distances like 10^{-40} cm and things like that! Thirty or forty years ago, few physicists bothered about such matters but in the context of not only the ultimate of particle physics but also in the context of early cosmology, such considerations have become both vital and inescapable. If we want to know something about the actual birth of the Universe and its early history, that is to say when it was around 10^{-30} seconds old [no, I am not crazy!], then the kind of physics that I am trying to thrust on you becomes unavoidable. Once upon a time, the entire Universe had a radius of only that size! No, I am not kidding; it is absolutely a fact; we have plenty of incontrovertible scientific evidence to support that view. Physics on such incredibly small scales of length and time [this is called Planck scale after Max Planck who drew attention to their importance], is expected to be vastly different from what we are used to at the present time, and on the scales we are accustomed to explore in. In short, if we want to know something about the Baby Universe, then we had better start paying attention to such issues.

You may say: “Hey, wait a minute! Why at all do we want to know about the Baby Universe? In any case, I am not too sure I would believe all that you might say; it was so long ago!” Good point, but you see, today’s astrophysicists are so smart, if you tell them, “Look the Baby Universe was like so,” they would reply, “Is that so? We will go out and check and get back.” They then go out and look into the sky – and they have amazing tools now to do that, and when they are finished, they would report, “Mister, we have bad news for you. Your hypothesis about the Baby Universe is not quite ok. These are things we found out there. If the Universe had been like what you say

then, it follows it should have been like this now; but it ain't!" Thanks to this sort of constant chat back and forth, our picture of the Universe has become slowly sharpened all the way back say about 10^{-10} seconds. This has happened in just about twenty years or so; amazing it is not? Of course the story is far from complete because that last bit, from 10^{-10} to say 10^{-50} seconds is going to be very, very tough. But people are getting smarter and smarter all the time, and may be in fifty years time we would know about a still smaller Baby than we do now, that is if we have not screwed up the world further with conflict, wars, global warming and all that!

I should call a halt, but before I do so, I want you to reflect on the following:

- The rate at which Science is progressing is absolutely breathtaking.
- Fifty and odd years ago when I got out of college, no one could even dream we have got where we are now; but we are. That's how astonishing progress has been.
- All this shows the amazing power with which God has blessed humans.
- However, how much of this power is man actually using to solve the problems of mankind?
- Is man at least grateful to God for the gifts conferred?
- Is man ready to spare even one minute per day for God? And yet these days, he is barely away from his Blackberry! Sometimes I wonder whether he takes his shower holding the Blackberry!

God does not care what man does. However, He does care about helping man and guiding man. He comes down to advice and act as a guidepost. As Swami says, the guidepost tells the traveller in which direction he or she should go. It does not go with the traveller! Think about it! All the best till we meet again! Jai Sai Ram.

THE SAI MOVEMENT IN PUERTO RICO

Pristine Puerto Rico

It seems it is like the Garden of Eden. Surrounded by sea on all sides, dotted with lovely waterfalls, blessed with miles upon miles of white sand beaches, endowed with unbelievable rainforests, covered with captivating mountain ranges, awash with more than 50 rivers, and to add to all this soul-soothing magic, a cool and warm climate all the year around - Puerto Rico is, truly, a surreal beauty blessed by the divine in bounty. This tropical island which is actually the top of a submerged mountain crest is a pristine paradise of nature where warmth of its people is equaled only by the sunshine that graces its shores. Though only 170 kms by 60 kms, every facet of nature's beauty blooms in this most sought after Caribbean island. It is one of the rarest places on earth where the Atlantic Ocean reaches its greatest depth, 27,992 feet, known as the Milwaukee Deep, in a chasm about forty-five miles north of this island, and in the South, only a short distance away, the Caribbean Sea reaches a depth of 12,000 feet. An exciting area of nearly 3500 square miles which includes its three small satellite islands, Vieques, Culebra, and Mona, Puerto Rico is always a dream vacation for many Americans next door and nature-lovers worldwide.

A Much Coveted Island

Being an unincorporated self-governing territory of United States, and located about 200 kilometres off the south coast of Florida (the nearest to the mainland United States), any American can freely step into this island without a visa. From July 25, 1898, when it was invaded by the United States during the Spanish-American war, the President of United States has been the Head of the State, though the territory has its own Executive, Legislature and Judiciary, the Governor and the legislators being elected by popular vote every four years.

When Christopher Columbus arrived in Puerto Rico during his second voyage on November 19, 1493, he found the Taínos (Amerindians) inhabiting the island which they had named "Borikén" or "Borinquen". But he named the island San Juan Bautista, in honor of Saint John the Baptist. Later, the island took the name of Puerto Rico, (which means 'rich port' in Spanish) while the capital was named San Juan. In 1508, Spanish conquistador Juan Ponce de León became the island's first governor to take office. Earlier, the island was occupied by prehistoric people called Ortoiroids who are believed to be first human settlers of the Caribbean, originated from the Orinoco valley in South America. But after Spanish colonisation in the 15th century, the Tainos who were flourishing till then, soon dwindled in the island because of harsh working conditions enforced by the Spanish conquerors as well as diseases brought by them. The Spanish rulers then introduced African slaves to augment the workforce. In time, this port city evolved into what is now San Juan, the Capital city, and the republic island Puerto Rico. Because of its

strategic location in the Caribbean, especially from a naval standpoint, the officials of the Spanish crown always thought of it as the strongest foothold of Spain in America, and to safeguard it from imminent threats from European enemies, built various formidable forts and walls, such as La Fortaleza, El Morro and San Juan Cathedral which are now national treasures of the island; the first two in fact being 'World Heritage Sites'.

Puerto Rico – Prosperous and Progressive

During the early nineteenth century, because of constitutional reforms, the economy and population of the island saw a surge with hundreds of Corsican, French, Lebanese, Chinese, and Portuguese families, along with large numbers of immigrants from Spain and former Spanish colonies in South America, arriving in Puerto Rico. The local character of the island expanded. There were other settlers too which included Irish, Scots, Germans, Italians, and thousands who were granted land from Spain during the Royal Decree of Graces of 1815 which allowed European Catholics to settle in the island with a certain amount of free land. This mass immigration during the 19th century helped the population grow from 155,000 in 1800 to almost a million at the close of the century; now it is roughly four million. Thanks to its rich fertile soil as well as its small size, Puerto Rico today has one of the highest population densities in the world at 446 people per square km while it is only 31 in the United States.

After the United States granted the right to democratically elect the Governor of Puerto Rico in 1947 and draft their own constitution in 1952, the island experienced rapid industrialisation, thanks to the new deal (Operation Bootstrap) offered by America. Taking advantage of the tax exemptions, factories flourished and slowly Puerto Rico's economy transformed from being agricultural-based to manufacturing. It became the leading exporter of US prescription drugs, electronic and other machinery, chemicals, raw and refined sugar, and sugar products. And added to this was tourism, the country forte. Even now, at least five million tourists – mostly from United States – visit this island every year, contributing nearly 2 billion dollars to its economy. From some of America's best un-crowded beaches with breathtaking sunsets to beautiful biosphere reserves, from mesmerizing mountains to amazing old-world architecture, from best seafood restaurants to spectacular surfing, kayaking, hiking, horseback riding, parasailing and Scuba diving experiences - not to forget the golf courses -, Puerto Rico, for many, is the star-attraction of the Caribbean with the charm of an island and at the same time with conveniences and roads that one would find in the United States. Another big plus for this tropical island is the climate, which is neither too cold nor hot, and is always warm with an average temperature of 82.4 °F (28 °C). But what has made Puerto Rico a preferred choice for millions today, is not its warm weather but the warm hearts of its people. Best known by speaking using lively hand and facial gestures, Puerto Ricans are very cordial and genuine in their communication, especially to strangers. Though Spanish is the primary language, English is taught as a second language in schools from elementary levels to high school.

Nearly half of its population (that is two million) lives in the capital city of San Juan, which is also the largest city. Apart from being the island's most important seaport and manufacturing and financial hub, this historical city is the home to many picturesque colonial buildings and extraordinary forts. It is also a major sports and cultural centre too having played host to mega sport events like Pan American Games and World Baseball Classic tournaments.

Puerto Rico - A Pot-pourri of People

With a mix of four cultures, African (from the slaves), Taíno (Amerindians), Spanish, and, more recently, North American, Puerto Rico is not a complex society but a lovely blend, which is very tolerant, radiant and resilient. From Africans, they have obtained the 'bomba and plena', a type of vibrant music and dance including percussions and maracas. The Amerindians (Taino's) have kept many names for their municipalities, foods, and musical instruments like the güiro and maracas; while their language, Catholic religion (the most dominant in the island) and a vast majority of their cultural, moral values and traditions have come from the Spanish. The United States have gifted the English language and the university system – the University of Puerto Rico was founded in 1903, five years after the island became part of the United States. And now, just over a hundred years later, the Univeristy is receiving the Sathya Sai Education in Human Values programme. Now, when and how did Sai enter this serene island?

The Sai Organization is Born...

The Sathya Sai Organization of Puerto Rico had its beginning in July, 1987, when it was officially accredited by the Sathya Sai Council of USA. In Cabo Rojo, a city in the Western Coast of Puerto Rico, a group of people were meeting in the clinic of Dr. Moreno to study the teachings of Swami Muktananda. When this teacher left his body, the group continued their study circles, but now turned to understand the universal teachings of Bhagavan Baba. This was in the early eighties. Around this time, Aida Medina made contact with the group in 1984, after reading some books on Sai and seeing the movie *Aura of Divinity*. When Dr. Moreno left the group, a committee was formed, with Aida being designated as the leader. Aida lived in Mayaguez, which is on the other side of the island from the capital, San Juan. But only after attending a Sai retreat in New York in 1986, did she discover that there is another Sai Group in the same island, right in the capital city of Puerto Rico, San Juan. She found that Mr. Mohan Darayanani was the one in charge of this group and they had Sai books for sale too.

Mohan had been a devotee of Shirdi Sai Baba for long. Originally from Pune, India, he moved to Canary Islands (in the north western coast of Africa) after his marriage. The couple did not have an offspring for eight years. This was when Mohan decided to make a trip to Shirdi and sure enough, months later, his wife conceived and Neeta, their sweet daughter was born in 1963. Two years later, Mohan happened to visit a Sathya Sai Centre in Canary Islands and the picture of Swami in the wall there made such a deep impact in him, that from then on Swami became the soul of his life. And he made his first

visit to India to see Baba in 1978. Mohan was now living in San Juan, Puerto Rico and in 1986 when an opportunity showed up to rent a place for Sai meetings; he along with Jose Marrero and Erick Lluch formed the Condado Sai Group in San Juan.

Fascinating Encounters

How Swami came into the life of Erick Lluch and Jose Marrero is fascinating too. In 1975, Erick was living in New York, and going through very challenging times in his life. It was at this time that he accidentally picked up the book "Sai Baba, The Holy Man and the Psychiatrist". He was very sick and the doctors could never diagnose his problem. So he prayed for a divine intervention or the presence of a saint in his life. He read the book completely the day he bought it and then started writing letters to Baba everyday. He was convinced that Swami was the 'Divine Saint' he had prayed for. Swami even appeared to his mother at their home in Puerto Rico. Erick returned to his mother's place in 1976 and there he met Jose Marrero. Together, they started visiting a park near his home everynight to sing devotional songs to Swami and meditate on Him. Jose Marrero recalls,

"My good friend Erick told me about this saint from India who had saved his life. He called Sai Baba his personal physician, and always carried with him the book, 'Sai Baba, the Holy Man and the Psychiatrist'. This book has been his point of reference to overcome a severe crisis of health. About this time in 1979, there was no Sai Baba center in Puerto Rico. But, Erick and I would take a guitar and sing to Sai Baba and meditate on His presence in the world. We would do this every night in a small park in our neighborhood; know as Golden Gate, Guaynabo. It was here that I started to have the most transcendental experiences of my life. This has been a guide for my life ever since. Sai Baba made His presence felt in my heart, and I started to become aware of another world, up to then unknown to me, a world where the atma (spirit) was all. When I discovered Sai Baba, my search for God opened a new horizon for me. From that time to now, I have been repeating His name in my mind. It has been like this for 28 years now.

"Our spiritual practice in the park lasted several years, and in this way we maintained an inspiration and motivation for Swami and His teachings, and at the same time receiving innumerable blessings. About this time, Erick told me that his wife, Alicia had seen some photos of Sai Baba in a store in Condado. We thought the owner must know Sai Baba, and when we went there, our suspicion was confirmed; Mohan Darayanani was a staunch devotee of Sathya Sai Baba. This was in 1986. Mohan had just heard about a group which was meeting on the other side of the island in the home of Aida Medina, but he did not have a car. We solved the transportation problem, took off to visit the other group and sing bhajans together. Later, Mohan offered his apartment as a meeting place, and we started our regular meetings to sing bhajans and perform arathi ceremony which has continued for 21 years now without interruption."

Comforting Grace

In the meantime, all these devotees filled with devotion for Sai had amazing experiences too. Erick wanted to travel to India, and there were too many obstacles on the way. But when he just mentioned Swami's name, he got the visa in no time and all the other problems too disappeared including his undiagnosed sickness! Similarly, when Mohan's daughter, Neeta, too did not have children for eight years, and she did an encore like her mother, she conceived too once she was back from Shirdi. Just a few years back, in 2005, when Mohan was diagnosed with prostate cancer, the doctors examined him and detected a swelling on his chest too. After a biopsy, they confirmed it was cancer, which meant the disease had spread. His wife Sandra Maria, prayed to Swami, and started applying vibhuti to the wound left by the biopsy on the chest.

The doctors prescribed chemotherapy but first they sent the biopsy results to a U.S. laboratory for a second opinion. When Mohan came for his next meeting with the doctors they found that there was no cancerous growth on his chest or in the prostate! The doctor could not explain what had happened, but Mohan knew how much Swami loved him. Even now, Mohan is strong and healthy serving as the Vice President of the Sai organization coordinating committee. But we will come to it a little later; for now, going back to the late eighties, so, it was Mohan along with Erick and Jose who started the small Sai group in San Juan.

The Small Group Now Grows...

In 1990, this study group became a Sai Centre. Bettina Biggert, who for many years was the regional coordinator of south-eastern USA, and one of the founders of the Sai Organization in the States, attended the opening ceremony. Later, she went to Mayaguez too where the other group was operating in the home of Aida Medina.

In 1991, the Sai Organization of Puerto Rico was transferred to the Latin American zone from the US because of similarity of language and culture, and the first public meeting was held in San Juan where about 200 people attended. New centres and groups sprang up in north as well as south coasts of the island in the municipalities and cities of Carolina, Guanica, Ponce and Guayanilla. This necessitated the formation of a coordinating committee in 1998 and Mr. Erick Lluch was its first president, while Jose Marrero became the first service coordinator. Erick, incidentally, is a very talented person skilled in plastic arts and woodworking. Jose, on the other hand, has a sports clothing factory, and sponsors little league baseball teams.

Mysterious Manifestations

Apart from Mohan, Eric, and Jose, there were many others too who were the divine instruments of Swami in the early years of the Sai Organization in Puerto Rico. And one such person is Mercedes Mercado. She heard about Swami when she was living in New York in the late eighties from a friend. Her life's circumstances then were very painful. The divorce process was on and

every minute was difficult, but she felt Swami's protection through every step of the way. He manifested to her in mysterious ways. First it was a vibhuti flow on a tiny envelope for a whole week; then, a delicate sensation of jasmine smell in the middle of dark winter where no plants were around and snow was piling high everywhere (it was February!); and later, through the sound of a flute in the first visit to a Sai center. "However, the most fascinating part was not the manifestations per se but the feeling of a rare peace of mind and exhilarating joy that I always felt inside my heart and spirit," says Ms. Mercedes. When she returned to Puerto Rico in 1992, she started the Sai Center of Carolina (a city located in the northern part of Puerto Rico bordering the Atlantic Ocean), in her home. Since the starting of this Sai group, Swami has been entering the lives of many Puerto Ricans in His own unfathomable way, just like it was for Mercedes. It will be interesting to note that Mercedes is a trained music teacher and violinist, and even participated in the Sai Symphony Orchestra held in the Divine Presence of Bhagavan at Prashanti Nilayam on various occasions as the representative from Puerto Rico.

Divine Answers

Kilbio Tiburcio of this centre in Carolina, after going through very difficult times in his life, had some searching questions. One of his friends was going to India, so he penned his doubts in a letter for Swami and insisted that his friend give the letter to Swami directly. The friend agreed and reached the ashram - but not only did Swami not take the letter, He seemed to avoid it day after day of his month's stay.

The last day during the morning Darshan drew no joy either, so there was no choice but to send the letter by post. Kilbio's friend started on his journey home, saddened at his failure to keep his given word. The trip took him two days and when he arrived home, he did not know how to call Kilbio and give him the depressing news. But out of the blue Kilbio appeared at his house and before he could tell him anything, with great excitement Kilbio said: "I know what happened; you don't have to tell me. Sit down I know everything! Sai Baba did not take my letter, as I asked right? As I was going off to sleep three days ago, a very strong energy came into the room, took hold of me and I just could not move. As I opened my eyes I saw Sai Baba at the end of my bed, and He asked me: 'What do you want to know?' Then He answered every question I wrote on that letter!"

You can imagine, Kilbio and his friend's joy! Such miraculous and mind-boggling experiences, continued to draw more and more people into the Sai fold.

Vibhuti Visitations

Going back to the San Juan centre, many more devotees joined there too, prominent among them being Mr. Aulio Hernandez and Mr. Reynaldo Ureña.

"On two occasions Swami has blessed my pictures with a very soft veil of vibhuti," says Aulio Hernandez. "The first time was with my son, who decided

to start talking poorly about Swami. So, I punished him by making him stand in front of Swami's picture for a while and then closed him in the room. About two minutes later he started to scream very loudly which scared me. When I got to the room and opened the door he was very upset, so I let him go. Later as my wife was cleaning the picture she noticed a soft vibhuti veil – no wonder he had been shocked!

“On the second occasion it was my duty to clean the altar but I arrived at the center late from my job, and was the last to arrive and leave. I began to clean the altar around 10 o'clock in the evening and left at 10.30. That was on Saturday, and no one else had been there since, because I had the key and locked the door as I left. On Sunday morning, as we arrived for the morning service, a soft vibhuti veil was on the same picture I had cleaned the night before. It was just another manifestation of Swami's Love.”

A Call and a Cure

It was Vibhuti for Aulio, it was a mysterious phone call for Yesenia Urena. She says, “These events happened, right after I had gone through a painful separation from a Christian group, which I had cherished very much and was feeling really low. So, I prayed to Jesus, and told Him that I feel as if I have lost everything in my life!

“The next day, a neighbour's child called me and gave me a little note. It read: ‘One can lose everything except faith, and still you haven't lost anything. But if you lose your faith then, you really did lose it all!’ Some days after, I was walking into the Sai center and the following event unfolded.

“My father became suddenly very ill and was hospitalized, and admitted into the intensive care unit. He could not breathe and chances of his recovery were dim. That was on Sunday and on the next day I went to visit him again and he seemed to have recovered, and was not even on oxygen. Amazing I thought! Then I left the hospital, but hours later his health was in a deeper crisis, much worse than the first one. On the next morning my mother received a phone call from a woman, asking if a ‘Dr. Francisco Ureña’ lived there.

“My mother told her that Francisco Ureña was her husband's name but he wasn't a doctor and he was very sick at the hospital. The woman explained that she had a dream telling her to call Dr. Francisco Ureña because he had a remedy for her, (i.e. the lady that was calling) and since it was such a vivid dream, she started to look for the name in the phone book. Dazed by the phone call, my mother told me about it and immediately I thought it was a call from Swami. I phoned my older brother and told him to give Dad some vibhuti. Right after that, Dad recovered and was out of the crisis.”

Sai Retreats – Refreshing the Soul

Miracles like this only drew people in increasing numbers and the dedication and devotion of the devotees were exemplary. Mr. Aulio Hernandez and Mr.

Reynaldo Ureña guided the San Juan centre successfully since 1999. People wanted to share their love for Swami with fellow devotees and Sai Retreats began to take shape. Almost every year there was a big congregation of all the devotees apart from the meetings in small groups and every such session had profound impact in their lives.

Sharing her experience at a national retreat in 2002, Ms. Carmen Teresa Pacheco, says,

“I was very worried because my daughter Mayra had detected a lump in her breast. One could see under the skin something that looked like a calcium deposit. I went to the Sai Baba retreat with Mayra in the Centro Vacacional del Monte (Mountain Vacation Center). The Presence of Sai is so real during the retreats and I wanted to dedicate this special time to my daughter’s health. The first night I could not sleep and we got up at 4:30 AM and in spite of the cold, we joined the *nagasankirtan* singing bhajans. Then we went to watch the Sun rise. It was breathtaking watching as the Sun rose between the mountains and pine trees while we chanted the Gayatri mantra.

“As the Sun ascended I made a prayer to Swami for Mayra’s health and then noticed the big ball of red light come closer and then retreat. This happened several times, but Mayra did not have this experience. We passed the day together in the wonderful spiritual company of the devotees. When we returned home, Mayra told me of her own experience. She said that she too had been sleepless. She had sat on the floor to meditate, and a white warm light had touched her, and then a translucent figure like an angel had appeared. She felt covered by light as the figure disappeared. After relating this experience, she touched her breast and said, ‘Mom, the lump is not there anymore!’ I too examined her, and the lump had disappeared. Thanks to Swami we are enjoying good health.”

The Sai retreat every year was a moving and revealing experience for all the participants. In 2005, the retreat featured the Sai Musical group known as the Lightstorm. The group has Jonima and Kalassu Wintergate who were old time devotees of Swami and had spent a lot of time in the ashram during the 1960’s. During their visits to Prashanti, they would take leave for a few days and travel to Vietnam and entertain the troupes there. Narrating a ‘divine moment’ that occurred in Vietnam they said that once there was to be an enemy offensive and they were warned not to go into the jungle. But they said, “Baba will protect us” and went. When they got to where the troupes were, the commander told them that there was sure to be an enemy attack that night; however, the Lightstorm started their concert at 6 PM. And from out of the shadows appeared all the enemy soldiers, but without weapons, and what is more amazing is that they joined the allied soldiers listening to the music until the wee hours of the morning! There was no fighting until the next night after the Lightstorm had left to return to Prashanti.

The Sathya Sai Institute of Human Values

There is no kind of people untouched by Swami’s Love in this island. And every devotee now wanted to express their love to Swami and what better

way than service? One of the first major service projects of the Puerto Rico Sai organization was in the sphere very close to Swami's heart, namely Education, especially guiding the small children along the right track. And thus was born the Sathya Sai Institute of Human Values in Puerto Rico.

The entire history of the Institute has indeed been a Sai miracle. In 2002, the devotees were inspired by the visit and the talks given by Paola Contestabile, who was a recent graduate of the Sathya Sai diploma course in Thailand, and the daughter of one of the directors of the Sathya Sai School in Chihuahua, Mexico. They decided that they must start an Institute in Puerto Rico. The Ministry of Education advised them that the director of such an Institute needed to have special educational requirements.

Raul Rodriguez, a recently retired teacher and devotee of Swami was the right person for the job with all the required conditions, so the legal basis was fairly easy to cover. They then started receiving applications for workshops to introduce the program at different schools, and as word got around, many more schools called up to receive training in the program. The Institute gave the first seminar in May, 2003, and since then over 300 teachers have been trained in the Sathya Sai EHV Program. Raul Rodriguez continues to lead the Institute as its President and the training is given free. Teachers from different public and private schools come voluntarily, and give their time to understand Swami's Educare, and then they apply it in their classes and their lives too.

One of the first teachers to receive the training workshops was Mrs Emma Roche. A very enthusiastic participant, she has now joined the Institute's team of teacher trainers, and also has introduced the program to all the teachers in her school Centro Angeles de Esperanza where she is the director. Last year Mrs Emma brought a young university student, Jackilyn Rodriguez to take the workshop. After going through the course, Jackilyn, who is now studying to become a teacher, has chosen to do her thesis on Sathya Sai Human Values techniques for her graduation. No one had earlier presented this approach to teaching Human Values, and learning from Jackilyn her teachers at the University of Puerto Rico became enthusiastic advocates of the program too. Her supervisor at the university is now helping her give some workshops for public schools teachers.

Human Values in Music

Another very salient and innovative way the Institute encourages human values is through organizing uplifting Music Festivals. In a recent such programme, 25 public schools and 3 private schools signed up.

However, one director of a school contacted the organisers a few days before the festival, and said she was withdrawing her school from the festival because there were no prizes for winning the competition and she was sure that her school would win. It was explained to her that this was not a competition, that only certificates of participation would be given, and everyone was to be served a free breakfast.

The festival representative also explained that the way human values need to be practiced is not by looking at the fruits of the action, but for the sheer joy of giving. This made sense to her and she changed her mind. On the day of the festival, when each school was being given their certificates of participation, it was noticed that the certificates for the aforementioned school had disappeared. The organizers prayed fervently to Swami and as the lady director approached the dais to receive her certificates, the envelope appeared on top of the others!

Everyone who participated in the Music Festival thought this was a festival straight from Prashanti Nilayam. They could feel Swami's presence during the entire event. Each school presented their values song written by the students, or teachers, and in some cases songs from other countries in Latin America were also used. Many of the songs were accompanied by instruments played by the students themselves. The hall vibrated with positive vibrations as value songs, one after another, filled the air. After the programme, there were requests to hold more of such inspiring programmes.

"The amazing thing about working at the Sathya Sai Institute is that as we practice the values in our daily lives, there is a gradual transformation in our personalities, and we become more loving and caring as we found while participating in the Music Festival," say the volunteers working at the Institute.

Stirring Sai Service

The Sai devotees' service activities over the years have diversified into many areas. For five years in a row, Grama Seva (rural service) is being done for homeless people at El Paraiso. One of the poor and the forlorn expressing his gratitude says, "I know my Jesús wouldnt leave me alone. I knew God would hear my plea and that is why you came."

The Sai volunteers here regularly see the 'hand of Sai'. One Saturday when they had prepared food for 10 to 13 people, but suddenly actually 30 showed up, they just prayed to Swami and served the exact proportion to everybody and no one was left out in the end.

They also serve breakfast at the Plaza Rio Piedras in San Juan every week, which has been going on since 2001. All the homeless are waiting by 7 am in the morning every Sunday to receive their only good meal in the last six days. And during Christmas, it is very special here when the devotees sing and celebrate along with the poor. After they had their fill of cakes and ice creams, the homeless with their pots and pans as improvised percussion instruments and the devotees with their voices, in fact, make up a wonderful musical group, and sing gleefully the glories of the divine.

Laura Rodriguez tells us that during one of such breakfast outings at the Plaza in San Juan, Sai volunteers arrived to serve breakfast as usual. But on this particular Saturday morning, a group from a local church had also showed up and brought several items. The devotees now were wondering what to do with all the extra food. Laura put through a call to her brother to ask for

suggestions, but inadvertently she dialed an incorrect number; it was the Divine Providence home for the elderly. She asked if they needed some breakfast items, especially hot chocolate for the inmates. The elderly home was very happy to receive it. But the story does not end here. While they were delivering the breakfast, it was apparent that the Divine Providence home was not in any urgent need of charity, as this was a very nice place where the inmates were paying for good service. However, just above the home on the hill, they noticed many homeless people who were in need of help and they offered all the extra food to them. Now, the Sai group was introduced, through very strange circumstances, to a new group of homeless who were really in need and would receive loving Sai breakfasts on Sundays. For the devotees, it is the way Sai guides them and is always with them. Yesenia's story is just another illustration emphasizing this fact.

Puerto Rico - Pulsating with Pure Love

Yesenia Urena used to teach Bal Vikas classes in San Juan Center every week. When the night before her class she asked her mother to accompany her to the store to buy some materials for the children to use during the class on Sunday morning, her mother agreed and she drove out. While they were traveling to reach the store another car lost control and ran into the back of Yesenia's car. It was a terrible crash, but the mother and the daughter were without a single injury. When they got down to inspect the damage, their car was perfect too; only the car that had hit them was fully smashed. It was unbelievable!

Swami always says that if you are all the time focused on Me and My work, I will look after your welfare. And this is the experience of every Sai devotee whether he is in Puerto Rico, Panama or Prasanthi Nilayam. By instilling Sai in their hearts, and worshipping Him there with offering of pure love, Puerto Ricans, though miles away from Puttaparthi, are still in Prasanthi Nilayam every moment. Just as Swami promises, "I am in you, around you, above you, below you, with you," He is always there with them. And one day, by His grace, this 'island' would surely metamorphose into 'Sai-land'.

- Heart2Heart Team

HOW TO RAISE CHILDREN WITH DISCIPLINE AND LOVE

By Mrs. Rita Bruce

This is our second article on the theme of “Value Parenting” and is taken from the book “Sathya Sai Parenting” by Mrs. Rita Bruce. This is in response to requests by many readers to have more such articles after we carried the first article “Teach Children the Joy of Giving” in the May 2005 issue of H2H. The current excerpt is from the chapter “Balancing Discipline and Love” and we hope to bring you more extracts from this book in the coming issues.

Let's investigate this subject of controlling or disciplining our children. From the time they are born, until they mature, you are their conscience. When they are infants you rush to fulfill their survival needs. They become habituated to your constant response and the behaviour begins. You are giving them what they want. It will not hurt them to cry themselves to sleep, within reason, if a child is not wet, or hungry, or in pain. You are only interested in their well-being, and are protecting them from getting harmed or overly tired. The sooner they learn to trust your judgment and feel secure in your decisions the more cooperation you may have.

As they begin to toddle, their words and actions become challenging, testing you even more to see if you will allow them to do what they want as opposed to what you want them to do. The battle between your conscience and their desires starts very early. The sooner you let them know who is the boss, the less trouble you will have when they are in their teens.

Lessons in Limits

Of course, you cannot discipline a newborn or small infant by time-outs, but you can place limits and have a daily routine. Limit their bed time. If they are not ill, let them fall asleep on their own, instead of rocking or sleeping with them. Let them sleep in their own bed, instead of in yours. Let them play in a playpen for short periods during the day instead of roaming all over the house.

Incidentally, the playpen saved my sanity. Today, a playpen is looked upon as "How can I cage up my child?" Again it is the overly permissive approach, allowing them to roam and do as they please. Restricting their movement or behaviour has not been in vogue. I used it for short periods of the day, half an hour, and if the child was content playing with his/her toys, I extended the time. They will let you know. I was free to prepare dinner without worrying, "where was this toddler"? The playpen provides the infant's safety and the parent's peace of mind. But today we think how could we be so cruel as to confine our child in a playpen or gated room? Nonsense. It teaches them limits and boundaries.

Discipline with Love

If you are going to have a child, start immediately with your newborn, letting the child know who is in control! Here are some examples of "you say / they say" which typically apply in all households.

You Say	They Say
Eat Your Dinner	I Don't Like It
Take A Bath	I'm Not Dirty
Clean Your Room	What's Wrong With It?
Time for Bed	Not Tired
Time To Get Up	Too Tired
You're Late	No Clock
Who's Fighting?	He/She Is
Who Did This?	Not Me
Share Your.....	Its Mine
Do Your Homework	Don't Have Any
You Cannot Go	All My Friends Can
Change Your Cloths	What's Wrong With These?
Get Off The Phone	I Just Got On
What Did You Do	Nothing Today.
Where is The Money?	I don't Know
Stop That Arguing	You Do!

Do these answers sound familiar to you? It is really very simple. Look down the centre of the two columns, called 'You say....they say'. This division is the line of separation that creates our child management problems. God has the same "child management" issues with us. He wants us to give up our ego desires and body identification. We hear the voice of the conscience but we, too, would rather follow our impulses. Our children present us with a similar condition; there is little difference. Always, always look to your relationship with God, to determine what your role is as a parent. You are fighting the battle with their ego and it is powerful.

Sai says, *"To earn the goodwill of the Master, there is one recipe; obey His orders without murmur....Grace is showered on all who obey instructions and follow orders."* SSS 2 pg. 184

I could give you many examples of what they want versus what you want: hours on the phone, not wanting to go to bed, fighting with brothers/sisters, insulting parents, returning home late, watching television, going to movies, not cleaning their room, etc. But let us realize that whatever the circumstances, the underlying cause is always the same, "Your will against their will."

A toddler only knows a few words, but one of the first he catches is "No!" That's plain enough. When they get older they embellish it a little, with phrases as in "you say - they say" or worse. It's your will versus their will. You

don't need many examples on how to discipline, all you need is to know how to say sweetly, but firmly with love, 'No'. Practise it. If they don't respond then you must enforce it with discipline.

Being Consistent

The sooner they learn that your word will not be changed, the easier your job will be, now and in the future. Inconsistency allows them to think they can have their own way. The more you give in...the more they test you. Inconsistency gives them greater control; you loose ground. Your job will become harder each time you give in to them. They will continue to beg, plead, scream, throw temper fits, anything to try and persuade you to give into their wish. If they know that you mean "No" when you say it, they will finally get the message and relinquish the struggle to manipulate you. Be consistent! Repetition habituates the behaviour.

Swami does the same with us. If we have a harmful desire or habit He makes our life uncomfortable with this desire, until we let go and surrender it. When we are new to the spiritual path, we often prolong the struggle, wanting the desire fulfilled. The longer you are on the spiritual path, the quicker you let go! You simply learn that "what you want versus what He wants" is a lost battle before it even begins. The same process will work with your child.

Sai says, "When students do not behave, Swami tells them softly, 'Bangaru, you don't do that'. If they still do not behave, Swami raises His voice. His voice changes but Swami's heart does not change. That you demonstrate."

Inculcating Self Control

Most of us want our children to love us. It is painful when we have to enforce a rule. We don't like to see them hurt or angry. We want to play with them and enjoy their company. The problem is that when they become adults and do not have the ability to control themselves, their suffering increases because the risks are larger. And I might add we also suffer when they, for example, leave a job, get a divorce, drink too much alcohol, drive recklessly, or ignore their familial duties. In general, we suffer when they suffer.

A group of devotees from Madras came to Bhagavan and said, "Swami please visit our Centre in Madras?" Swami replied, *"What is the use? You are not regular in your appointment with God. One day, you commence Bhajan at 5 PM another day at 5:30 PM. When you say that you commence Bhajan at 5 PM God will always be ready at your doorstep. But you want to give importance to a guest politician who was to come to attend the Bhajan. Discipline is my Second Name. Remember this."*

Our children wandering away from God would be our ultimate failure. This is the main task set before us....to bring our children to God. If we take our duty seriously, make every effort, and our children fail to realize the God within, then we sigh and ponder their karma. You are not responsible for the results, the good or not so good. You can only execute your duty in the best way that

you know. When you have done this, and the results are not what you sought, it is up to God to change what you cannot.

Swami said, *"He alone is the father who tells his son "Child, realize God". He is the true Guru, who leads the disciple to God. Such teachers and parents have become rare these days. All that had brought fame and glory to the country in the past has become a waste, because of the decline of the moral values and behaviour. The educational system is utterly vilified."*

Suffering is a part of life; we must learn to accept it and go on living, and even loving our living. By placing emphasis on pleasure, we are sending the message that pain is so unbearable that it must be avoided at all cost, and we must find an escape.

As Sai says, *"Pleasure is a brief interval between two pains."*

Our job is to teach them that life holds both joy and grief. The more we stress the importance of one over the other, the lesson of treating them equally is not learned. Yes, I know this is certainly a task for the self-realized, but it is important for us to strive for the ideal. Don't place so much importance on seeking pleasure by continuously entertaining the child. They are so highly stimulated today that they cannot seek the simplicity of enjoying their own imagination. They must even be entertained in the school classroom. Is it too difficult for the child to realize that learning is often hard work, and not always entertaining? Is it not the time for entertainment? We are pampering the children too much. We assume they cannot face the reality of life unless we sugar-coat each event.

Allow the child to struggle with its own life issues. Our purpose for being in the body is to overcome it, transcend it. If we do not teach them how to face each situation fearlessly, to confront problems and challenges, fighting with a strong will and all their might to overcome the evil forces that are here on earth, then they will succumb. Our conscience is training their conscience, teaching them what is right and what is wrong. This will develop a pattern of behaviour that will sustain them throughout their lives.

Sai teaches us, *"Do good and have good in return; do bad and accept the bad that comes back; that is the law."*

If our child makes a mistake, we can teach them how to correct it. This builds their self-esteem and self-confidence, which are essential aspects of self-love. Can we continue to deny our children the art of self-discipline, the core of character building, by spoiling them?

Swami says, *"Parents, have the primary responsibility to mould the character of children. Too much freedom should not be given out of excessive affection. Children should be taught to exercise self-restraint and observe discipline in their daily life. If parents are negligent in bringing up the children in their most tender years, it will not be easy to correct them later on."*

SERIAL ARTICLES

SHIRDI SAI PARTHI SAI

Part - 31

(Continued from the previous issue)

ACT VIII - SCENE 4

Sathya moves over to Kamalapuram along with Seshama, and is admitted to the High School there. The scene is a classroom, and the class is the one to which Sathya belongs.

TEACHER: [to boys] Attention!

BOY: Sir, this is not a playground! It is a classroom!!

Boys laugh

TEACHER: Silence, silence! I know that!! I wish to tell you something very important. Sit down, sit down! Boys, all of you have joined the Scout movement to do social service and thereby serve the people as well as the country. If all the boys in India were fired with such enthusiasm, the country would become free and prosperous. Isn't that so? Service will promote a sense of responsibility. Everyone must have a sense of service and responsibility.

BOY: Sir, when does the Pushpagiri Carnival take place?

TEACHER: Who is that boy so eager to do social service? [stares at the boy] ... Now listen carefully. The Carnival will commence next Monday and last for ten days. All of you must get Khaki uniforms stitched, and perform service there for ten days. The expenses would be ten rupees per head.

BOY: What expenses, sir?

TEACHER: Don't be impatient! I'll give the break-up. There is the to-and-fro bus fare, and the living expenses for ten days. Now do you understand?

BOY: Yes sir.

TEACHER: All of you must participate without fail. Now, those who will come, raise your hands! Next, those who will not, raise your hands![all boys except Sahtya raise their hands] What's this Sathyam? You will not come? Listen, You are the Leader of the class, and You have got to come! Now, raise Your hand!

BOY: Why Raju, are you not coming?

BOY: Raju, if you don't come, we will not go.

BOY: Come on Raju, let's all go together.

TEACHER: For serving the people, one must not go back but jump forward, understand?!

Teacher jumps and the boys laugh

TEACHER: I'll find out why Sathyam says He will not come. Sathyam my boy, You will come, won't You? [turning to the boys in general] Well okay, you must pay ten rupees before Monday. Remember, everyone must come only in scout uniform, right? There goes the bell! Don't forget my instructions, and come for the Carnival.

CHORUS: Yes Master!

TEACHER: Sathyam, You also must definitely come!

Teacher leaves the classroom, and the boys surround Sathya.

BOY: Raju, why are You saying that You will not come?

SATHYA: Master said that one must come in uniform; that's what I am thinking about.

BOY: Ask Your people at home.

ANOTHER BOY: Ask Your elder brother. Scouts must be in uniform while doing service.

SATHYA: All right, I'll think about it. Come, let's go.

BOYS: Come on, let's take our books and go!

SCENE 5

Seshama Raju's house in Kamlapuram. Conversation is in progress between Seshama, his wife Suseela, her mother, and Sathya.

SESHAMA RAJU: Well, why are You so late? The School got over a long time ago. Where have You been roaming? When will You do the homework?

SATHYA: I have carefully heard everything said in the class, and I know all the lessons.

SESHAMA RAJU: You know everything? In that case, tell me what they taught You in the class today.

SATHYA: Scout students are to go the Carnival in Pushpagiri. Master said that we must do social service.

SUSEELA: Then, You also go along.

SATHYA: To go to the Carnival, one has to pay ten rupees and stay there for ten days. For that reason,

SESHAMA RAJU: It's not even ten days since You joined the school, and already You are talking about Scouts, uniform, social service, etc.! You are being sent to school to study and not to spend money unnecessarily. There is no need to go to carnivals in order to do social service.

MOTHER-IN-LAW: If You go away for ten days for doing social service, who do You think is going to do Your work here? There is so much work to be done here!

SUSEELA: Mother!

SESHAMA RAJU: [to Sathya] You had better forget about social service; instead, stay at home and study. Now go!

SATHYA: If Master asks?

SESHAMA RAJU: If Master asks, say that You have no money and therefore cannot go.

SCENE 6

The scene is the classroom in the Kamalapuram High School. The room is empty but for Ramesh, a dear friend of Sathya, who also sits by His side during class. Ramesh has keenly followed what happened in class – Sathya would not be able to participate in the Scout Camp during the Pushpagiri Fair, because He could not afford the Scout uniform etc. Ramesh's father is well off. So Ramesh manages to buy an extra uniform. He packs it and now prepares to leave it in Sathya's desk, along with a letter. Sathya comes and reads the letter. Ramesh hides himself and watches.

'Raju, if You do not come to the Carnival, none of us will go. If You come, all of us can go together, do service and also have fun. I had the feeling that You do not have a uniform. I have two new uniforms. One of these I have kept in the desk. Please take

it, and come for the Carnival. Raju, Your friend is giving this with Love; therefore, don't say NO! You must definitely come to the Carnival. Accept the uniform. With Love, Ramesh.'

Sathya thinks

'Ours is the Ratnakara family that knows only how to give and not to take. Self-respect is its ornament, and helpfulness is its wealth. Friendship is like a flower; the fragrance must be inhaled and enjoyed and the flower must not be plucked. One must not become a burden to others but reduce the burden of others.'

Sathya decides that He will not accept the gift of the uniform. He writes reply letter to Ramesh, and leaves it along with the uniform. He then leaves. Ramesh comes, picks up Sathya's letter and reads.

Our friendship is sacred and charged with Love. That sanctity will disappear and Love will recede if there is money or material transaction. We must always stay together, sharing friendship and mutual respect, and not be driven apart by the exchange of money and materials. I am explaining all this via this letter so that you don't feel hurt. Take back your uniform. Thus, Sathyanarayana Raju.

Sathya and Ramesh then meet.

RAMESH: Raju, I read Your letter. We cannot understand Your philosophical words. But if You are with us, we feel Blissful. We feel a fresh enthusiasm surging through us. That is why I am repeatedly pleading that You must come with us.

SATHYA: Ramesh, I understand your feelings. I'll try and come. Okay?

RAMESH: Okay!

(To be continued)

GITA FOR CHILDREN
- PART 32
(Continued from the previous issue)

Chapter 15

1. Krishna says to Arjuna, 'I have told this many times earlier but since this is so very important, I shall repeat it once more. I am not only the beginning and the end of everything but in fact everything!'

2. 'I sent man to this world to yearn for Me and to Love Me. Instead, he has diluted and indeed even polluted My priceless gift of Divine Love into worldly desires. Instead of yearning for Me, he has developed yearning for worldly pleasures and all kinds of trivia not worth talking about.'

3. 'Arjuna, take it from Me, if you pine for Me, you will for sure come to Me. Once you come to Me, you will always be with Me. Once you are with Me always, you would be eternally happy, naturally.'

4. 'I am your Real Home, and it is from this Home you have gone out into the world. Should you not come back Home sometime? Do you want to keep putting that off? What for? What do you have in that transient world except misery, cleverly sugar-coated with occasional pleasures?'

5. Arjuna asks, 'Krishna, You say that once man goes out into the world, he gets lost there. How exactly does this happen?'

6. Krishna replies, 'I certainly shall explain and you must listen carefully. To start with, you must understand that man is a composite of three entities that are strikingly different. They are 1) the gross body, 2) the Mind which is a subtle entity, and 3) the *Atma*, which is super subtle! This three-in-one complex has a special name, the *Jivatma*, sometimes shortened to just *Jiva*. In short, you are a *Jivatma*.'

7. Arjuna asks, 'Krishna, are You also a *Jivatma*?'

8. Krishna smiles and replies, 'Of course not!'

9. A puzzled Arjuna then asks, 'In that case, what are You?'

10. Krishna replies, 'I am *Paramatma* or God in totality!'

11. Arjuna is surprised and says, 'Krishna, that is strange! I can't see any difference between You and Me. And yet You say that You are *Paramatma* while I am just a *Jivatma*. How come?'

12. Krishna gives the answer. He says, 'Arjuna, your difficulty neatly pin-points man's main problem. You are comparing yourself with Me purely on the

basis of external vision. Is that correct? Go beyond the body and examine. Are you and I the same?’

13. ‘Arjuna, you are well below the senses whereas I am far beyond the senses and even the mind! You are below the *Gunas*, and that is why you are a *Jivatma* or a spark of the Divine. As for Me, I am far beyond the *Gunas* and that is why I am *Paramatma* or God in totality. In principle you also are God but not in practice! But I am God in principle, in practice and any other way you choose to look!’

14. ‘The differences don’t end here. When a *Jivatma* gives up the body, the gross body is returned to the elements while the subtle body goes in search of a new body. Even as the wind carries the scent of flowers from place to place, the current of Destiny sweeps the subtle body from one gross body to another, in accordance with the rhythm of the cycle of birth and death. This is what I described earlier in terms of dress change. My case is entirely different; I come and go as I please!’

15. ‘The *Jivatma* has to go through many cycles of births and deaths because of all kinds of unfulfilled desires. Let us say a *Jivatma* desires something and cannot get it. It gets a fresh chance to attain that in the next birth. So you see if you want to get out of the rut, you have to put a ceiling on desires. And this is where sense and mind control enters the picture.’

16. ‘Lack of self-control breeds desires, desires cause mind pollution and delusion, and delusion traps the *Jivatma* in the cycle that I referred to.’

17. ‘This is where the example set by *Yogis* becomes very important. The *Yogis* see things very clearly. Thanks to their power of sharp discrimination, they can clearly distinguish between the unreal and the Real. They summarily reject the unreal and focus entirely on the Real or Reality as some refer to it.’

18. ‘That Reality is Me! Wherever the *Yogi* turns, he sees only Me. You look up in the sky and say, “Ah, the Sun is shining brilliantly.” The *Yogi* looks and he also sees the same Sun but his words are different. He says, “I see Divine Glory radiating there as the Sun!”’

19. ‘Everything in the external world so-called, the five elements, the Sun, Moon, stars and whatever else you can see, is nothing but Me and Me alone! Do you ever get that feeling? Never but that is how the *Yogi* always feels! He sees only God everywhere and all the time!’

20. ‘The *Yogi* sees God within also. He sees God seated in his Heart, he sees God functioning as the *Pranaa* or the vital life-force, he sees God doing the digesting, he sees God doing the blood-circulation and all the rest of it. In short, the *Yogi* is fully conscious that it is I who provide the basic life-force, the basic creativity, the basic intelligence, and so on.’

(To be continued...)

WINDOW TO SAI SEVA

EFFECTIVE HEALTHCARE SEVA

A Project Management Perspective to Medicare

In the May issue of H2H, we brought you the story of a massive medical camp conducted in the Sai School in Alike that was executed beautifully to the satisfaction to everyone – patients, doctors, volunteers, etc. - whoever was part of it, thanks to the dedicated band of students of the school who literally took over the whole service camp. If that was wonderful, what we have in the current article is even more stirring. This is the story of the splendid steps taken by the former students of this blessed school along with other Sai Youth in trying to bring lasting and profound change in the lives of the forlorn and deprived.

“History is HIS Story”, saying these words Swami greeted a group of rank students from Sri Sathya Sai Loka Seva Educational Institution, Alike (pronounced as a-lee-kay), located about 50 kms from Mangalore in the Indian state of Karnataka. These students, by His Grace, had created a record by securing first rank in Common Entrance Test (Medical), Common Entrance Test (Engineering) and First Rank in Karnataka State Pre-University Examination. A unique and historic feat indeed! The batch of year 2003 had also created a record by securing 35 ranks in the top 100 bracket in Common Entrance Test for Engineering and Medical colleges. Boys with ranks 1, 2, 5, 6 and 11 in Medical Entrance Examination and Ranks 1 and 5 in Engineering Entrance Examination were present in the immediate presence of Bhagavan along with Sri U Gangadhara Bhat, the Chairman and other elders of the Sri Sathya Sai Loka Seva Educational Institutions (SSSLSS) that Swami had most lovingly taken over in 1978.

Alike Students’ Amazing Performance

In the interview that Bhagavan gave the students on that memorable day, He emphasized the role of healthcare seva in society. What the boys did not know then was that the all-knowing Lord had already planned their future well in advance! In August 2003, 16 boys from Class 2003, SSSLSS, joined the prestigious Mysore Medical College and Research Institute. Today they are studious final year students and training to be pioneers as doctors and administrators in healthcare domain. But what is more heartening is that they are now dedicated members of the Sai Youth Wing too in the city of Mysore, the second largest in the Indian state of Karnataka, located about 135 kms from Bangalore.

Immediately after arriving in Mysore in 2003, they searched for a Sai Samithi and to their surprise they found a newly inaugurated Sri Sathya Sai Seva Kshethra (blessed by Bhagavan in March 2003) which was just a kilometer away from their Medical College Boys Hostel. They responded immediately by

attending bhajans on every Thursdays with a lot of devotion and enthusiasm. Soon, they were part of the Sri Sathya Sai Youth Wing, Mysore district. Sri Avinash S, a former student of the Alike School, says,

“Based on Swami’s advice, we approached the Youth Coordinator of Sri Sathya Sai Organization, Mysore District, Sri M. Prasaad and expressed our willingness to participate in healthcare seva activities. He immediately requested us to join his team. The real excitement began when we were given the task of providing the healthcare perspective of Grama Seva.”

Taking the First Few Steps...

The team was informed that as a part of the new initiatives, healthcare seva activities would be treated as a priority area. This meant more villages will have to be included in the healthcare seva agenda. With medical students inducted into the team, the atmosphere was charged with optimism and enthusiasm.

Youth Wing and experienced Seva Dal members (including the members of the current Healthcare Seva team) gathered to develop a preliminary roadmap. The medical students provided valuable insights while the experienced members explained the ground realities of the villages in Mysore district. The blend of youth and experience helped the team to visualize the healthcare seva more effectively. Despite all these, goals appeared very difficult to achieve, initially. There were many seemingly insurmountable goals. The youth prayed for His inspiration and what evolved then is an effective three-phased approach to Healthcare seva.

The first step in this whole process was the **Data Gathering phase**; next, the **Planning phase**; and finally the **Implementation phase**. The youth knew that, to begin with, they needed comprehensive data pertaining to the various health parameters of the village. A thorough medical survey was, in fact, the need of the hour to ensure that the service camps are effective and deliver exactly what is most needed.

Based on the expert judgment and advice of the senior members, seven villages were selected for a preliminary survey, out of which two villages, they decided, would be short listed for comprehensive medical survey and subsequently healthcare Seva.

Visiting the Villages

Detailed discussion resulted in the preparation of a list of parameters that broadly provide a snapshot of the prevailing conditions in a village, and this was called the Initial village survey list. The information collected from each village included the following -

- Approximate population distribution
- Condition of the approach road
- Transportation facilities

- Nearest medical infrastructure
- Prevalence of endemic or epidemic diseases
- Availability of drinking water
- Adequacy of water supply and water source details
- Condition of Sanitation
- Availability of power supply
- Level of health awareness among people
- Literacy rate
- The condition of village school
- Socio economic status
- Number of people below the poverty line
- The condition of village temple

The team visited all the seven villages and gathered the information. The analysis of this data helped the team to define the basic criteria to select the village for health status survey (and subsequently medical camps). They now laid down six basic criteria for selecting the villages to do Medical Camps:

- Majority of people below poverty line
- With minimal healthcare infrastructure; no primary health center in radius of 5-10 Km
- Poor literacy rate
- A population with poor awareness in health and wellbeing
- People harboring endemic diseases
- Not well connected / no good roads

Can Serving Few Villages Solve all the Problems?

For the youth, surveying the villages was a revelation. The lack of basic amenities and the poor level of awareness among villagers changed the perceptions of the youth members. Every one agreed that there is a lot of work to be done. The quantum of work would in fact, require more than a lifetime! Some started even questioning the whole effort: 'How can few youth participating in healthcare seva activities twice a month, bring about transformation? The answer that came drawing inspiration from Swami's teachings was: "You are just an instrument in the hand of the Divine Master and you serve yourself by serving others." Some of the youth still were not convinced; they said, "This is difficult to digest. Can we have a more practical, simple and understandable answer?"

And the clarification they wanted emerged after a few weeks during the course of the healthcare seva activities. All in unison agreed that "it is quite difficult to achieve even the smallest milestones in seva projects, but Swami has brought about so much of transformation and progress in such a short span of time. How could Swami build the massive Super Specialty Hospital in ten months? The answer clearly lies in Swami's approach. By participating in seva projects, we learn how to manage time, resources, situations and

expectations. This skill makes us effective in our career, home and just about where ever we go.

“A volunteer, for example, may be given a task at food distribution counter in the village. Just standing at the counter he can do a lot more. He can calculate the time spent by each recipient in the queue. He can assess if the quantity of food is sufficient? Are there any alternatives if there is a shortage of food? Is the food being served properly in a hygienic way? Is the recipient happy? What would be the checklist for food counter? What are the other requirements in terms of time, resources and expectations? Finally, what are the expectations of the Divine Master Himself?”

So effectively, every task becomes a confluence of duty, devotion, dedication, determination and discrimination along with project management, task related skills, expert judgment, continuous knowledge update and progressive improvement in quality.

It enhances the way seva projects are managed. It also results in the personality improvement and creates greater balance in life. It increases the emotional quotient, self confidence and self esteem. The volunteer also learns to do his duty and leave the rest to God (though not an easy task to do always!). One should do the work to the best of their abilities and avoid having grandiose plans like eradicating a disease from the face of the planet ... It is good to have ambitious goals as long as it is practical and achievable. In the end, being effective Sai Youth, apart from the obvious personal growth, is a passport for professional growth too! As we approach the state of excellence, we begin to see God everywhere. We attain the state of **MBA** (Mind in Baba Always)”. To put in a nutshell paraphrasing Swami’s words, **“You are not serving in order to solve the problems; you are serving in order to make an offering to God and to improve yourself.”**

The youth were now very clear about the ‘why’ of their activities. The discussion next was on the ‘how’. “We need to develop standard seva methodologies,” they agreed. Soon, the team seriously incorporated the Project Management guidelines alongside medical domain knowledge into the Sai Healthcare activities.

And the first step in this approach was the **Data Gathering Phase**.

Health Status Survey - Data Gathering Phase

Health status survey marked the beginning of data gathering phase. Earlier we saw how the youth selected six basic criteria to select the villages for Seva, now they conducted a full fledged health status survey in these villages in order to gather inputs on the prevailing health status scenario in these hamlets. Principally, they sought to draw the village health profile by finding out the following about the village -

- Endemic & epidemic diseases,
- Prevalent chronic diseases

- Diseases that require immediate care.
- Nutritional status
- Level of health awareness – Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices [KAP Assessment] of the people towards the disease
- Disease foci - pinpointing the cause of diseases (for example, contamination of drinking water source, poor sanitation, etc.)

During the survey, as the medical students in the team were looking for signs of malnutrition, chronic disease, anemia, and the like, they discovered that one of the villages was actually having an epidemic of Chikungunya (a viral disease)! Similarly, in some villages the sanitation system was appalling.

They used various established procedures and techniques to collect the information. For example, the nutritional status of children below five years of age was assessed by measuring the mid arm circumference.

What Kind of Data Did The Survey Reveal?

It gave valuable information on many aspects like -

- Gender wise, Age wise, disease wise breakup of the population
- Immediate requirements (urgent health care problems)
- Priority areas
- Villagers' response to the proposed camp
- Local resource persons
- Site where the camp can be conducted
- All the input data to plan a camp effectively like
 - Type of camps required
 - Number of patients expected
 - Number of doctors and specialists required
 - Type of medicines required (guess estimate based on the disease profile)
 - Quantum of medicine (guess estimate)
 - Medical instrument requirement
- Level of Awareness
- Level of Hygiene
- Infrastructure improvement required (like water supply, sanitation, etc.)
- Social and cultural imperatives
- Manpower requirements
- Budget allocation

Sharing his experience about the survey, Sri Ravishankar P M, a former Rank student of Alike, says,

“After preliminary visit, we conducted a health status survey so that the information would help in defining the objectives of the medical camp. Survey gave us first hand information of the problems faced. During the clinical postings, medical students have to gather and analyze the case histories of the patients. Our experience in designing the village survey, analyzing the

data and deriving conclusions gave us an upper edge in clinical postings and, apart from the chance to do Sai Seva, also helped us to get more marks in the corresponding exams.”

For Kuldeep Shetty S, another Rank Alike Alumnus, personally collecting data from the villages was a revealing experience. He says, “Visiting the villages was an eye opener to us, especially the medical students. Villages lacked basic hygiene. People were ignorant of health issues and blissfully were not bothered about its impact too. There was no immediate infrastructure to treat the villagers, no disease prevention framework and nobody to create awareness in healthcare, hygiene and well being. We started analyzing the healthcare status of the village and tried to express it in terms of **Treatment**, **Prevention** and **Awareness** requirements.”

Brainstorming - The Planning Phase

After data collection, this next stage of Planning was surely the most decisive phase. The first brainstorming session among the youth did throw up many possibilities but no conclusion could be reached. It was the case of ‘newer solutions bringing in newer problems’. The suggestions were varied, from daily nutrition scheme to combat malnutrition; eliminating the usage of alcohol and tobacco to fluoride removal from drinking water; conducting medical camps frequently to improving sanitation status, etc. To accommodate everyone’s ideas meant complete disarray of the whole healthcare implementation plan. Even though the team agreed to disagree on many issues, love and mutual respect prevailed under all circumstances. They knew they needed an ‘out of the box’ solution and prayed for Divine guidance.

Lead coordinators now revisited the entire exercise and developed a model based on the health status survey data. They decided to classify all the requirements of the village into what is required immediately, what can be implemented over next eighteen months and what can be implemented in a time span of a few years. Such classified and phased approach fitted perfectly with the **Treatment – Prevention - Awareness** model proposed by the medical students.

This meant that immediate priority (**Treatment**) is to detect diseases and provide treatment to all diseases in the village. Over next eighteen months (**Prevention**) the team aimed at implementing preventive measures systematically which included comprehensive vaccination (as per national immunization schedule), improving sanitation in the village, encouraging hygienic practices among villagers and creating disease prevention related awareness. Finally, the Long term initiatives (**Awareness**) included sustained awareness campaigns along with infrastructure upgrade to improve the quality of life in the village. And added to this was the **Spiritual Dimension** which kept all the activities in the right perspective.

With this framework it was possible to accommodate all the suggestions over a period of time. It also improved the team spirit because each member felt that their individual point of view was accommodated in a collective framework

of ideas and plans. This increased the belongingness of each member to the team.

The progress achieved so far was summarized as -

Swami's teachings + Project management methods + medical domain knowledge + sincere and dedicated implementation of seva activities + Swami's blessings = Quality seva delivered + Problems resolved + Swami's Grace + Personality development + Knowledge improvement + Career Growth + Spiritual growth + Job satisfaction + Joy

During the survey the team encountered a story which reflected the prevailing scenario in most of the Indian villages. This story in fact, influenced the team to redefine the camp methodology.

Nanjaiah, a 40 year old illiterate farmer who was the sole bread winner of the family, visited a doctor in the neighboring village when his fever persisted even after ten days. The doctor there gave him Paracetamol and referred him to the district hospital for a blood test. Typically, persistent fever requires further investigation, but Nanjaiah ignored the doctor's advice as going to the district hospital would cost his family a day's wage. The fever now persisted for a longer duration and soon, his condition became life threatening. Finally, one day when it became a question of life and death, he was brought to the district hospital. Nanjaiah was actually suffering from typhoid initially (a water borne disease) which progressed to intestinal perforation, requiring emergency remedial measures.

From this story the team analyzed that the outbreak/spread of typhoid could have been avoided by:

- Availability of Safe drinking water. **[Prevention/ Infrastructure development]**
- Following doctor's advice for further investigation. **[Awareness/follow-up/referral]**
- Proper sanitation to contain the outbreak of waterborne diseases. **[Prevention/ Infrastructure development]**
- Personal Hygiene & Cleanliness. **[Awareness]**
- Timely Availability of medical facilities. **[Infrastructure development / regular medical camps]**
- Proper review of the medical condition through regular follow-ups. **[Awareness/follow-up/referral/ regular medical camps]**
- Managing referrals for advanced investigation/treatment. **[Referral/follow-up]**
- Counseling of the patient (to drink clean water). **[Awareness]**
- Emergency case handling. **[Situation management / Prevention]**

From this experience, the team was able to clearly crystallize their objectives and their effective action items for subsequent activities. Now apart from the earlier three – Treatment, Prevention and Awareness – the team added two

more facets – Infrastructure and Transformation - which made the mission of the Healthcare Seva a comprehensive five-point program.

Objectives of Healthcare Seva

Treatment: Heal the body and mind

Prevention: Take steps to prevent further spreading of diseases. Aim at elimination of disease occurrence over a longer term.

Awareness: Health, hygiene & the correct way of living towards positive health

Infrastructure: Help the underprivileged by developing the physical infrastructure and in the process develop the infrastructure in the heart to support and nurture divine feelings.

Transformation: Transform the sick and the decrepit villages into healthy, happy, vibrant and self sufficient villages full of harmony and wellbeing. For this to happen, the sevadal youth should also initiate the transformation in their respective hearts as well.

The spiritual metaphor of the all objectives simply is “**Love All , Serve All**”. Swami says,

“Tablets alone cannot cure pain and medical equipment is powerless in the face of hopelessness. Primary health care is complete only when the broken body is mended and the forlorn spirit restored. It is only when the tears have been wiped away and hope restored that the health care delivery can be deemed complete.”

How to Balance Family, Service and Office?

The team together was now generally convinced of the big picture evolved so far, but still there were few teething problems. Some members due to other commitments were unable to give more than four hours a month; they felt demotivated. Here, the team leadership convinced them that the four hours of their time was very precious for the team, and moreover, it is the quality of work not quantity that mattered most.

Office and family commitments are facts of life and seva activities become more effective only when office and family situations are balanced. So, the senior youth members advised that one should focus more on achieving balance rather than count the number of hours in service. By careful planning and thinking, one can surely take time out for seva activities which will eventually act as a catalyst to speed up transformation (individually and collectively). A balance in all spheres of life is possible only through transformation.

It may not have been the best answer, it was convincing nevertheless. Many members still had questions about job rotation, skill sets, self goals vs. team goals, etc. **It turned out that everyone was looking for a point of confluence of everyday life, spirituality, role as an individual and role as a team member.**

Here, the team did a detailed study and interpretation of Swami's teachings and restated some of the action items and keywords within the context of the Youth Wing activities.

Action items from an individual and team context were:

- ❖ *create Impact*
- ❖ *use Best Practices*
- ❖ *improve Standards*
- ❖ *adopt Modern innovation*
- ❖ *implement Ancient wisdom*
- ❖ *embrace Change*
- ❖ *gather Data*
- ❖ *utilize Statistics*
- ❖ *redefine Sadhana*

And the keywords applicable to the context distilled into:

- ❖ *Pray*
- ❖ *Serve*
- ❖ *Transform*
- ❖ *Surrender*
- ❖ *Think*
- ❖ *Plan*
- ❖ *Act*
- ❖ *Manage*
- ❖ *Deliver*

The individual roles were redefined as administrator, budgeter, planner, negotiator, organizer, communicator, manager, mediator, supervisor, leader, etc.

The team at this stage also developed detailed seva implementation plan with objectives, milestones, activity breakup, task details, scheduling, guidelines and checklists, etc. This helped the team to manage the entire healthcare seva activities more systematically and manage the resources more optimally and effectively.

Defining Priorities – What Kind of Medical Camps to Concentrate on?

Based on the analysis of data of the Village health profile and ground realities of villages, the team developed a list of priority areas for healthcare seva. These critical health concerns were juxtaposed against the constraints (in terms of what was practically achievable) and what emerged was a list of nine priority camps/programs:

- General Medical Camp
- Special Camp for Women & children
- De-Worming camp
- Ophthalmology camp
- Dental camps
- Nutrition program
- MMR vaccination for children
- Cancer and TB screening
- Cleanliness and sanitation

The statistics also revealed that women and children needed special emphasis in the healthcare activities because -

- Women and children form up to 70% of the population.
- They are the most vulnerable section of the society.
- Women are great communicators. If they transform, society transforms.
- If Women lead a better quality of life, children grow up to be better citizens.
- If Children are healthier today, future is healthier and better.

So, it was decided to have camps exclusively for women and children. While these inferences were developed with statistics localized to Mysore, the youth feel they are generally applicable to most of the villages in India. They also included urban areas in the healthcare activities map where the focus is more on lifestyle diseases like diabetes and hypertension. For the cities and towns, they included blood donation camps too in their list.

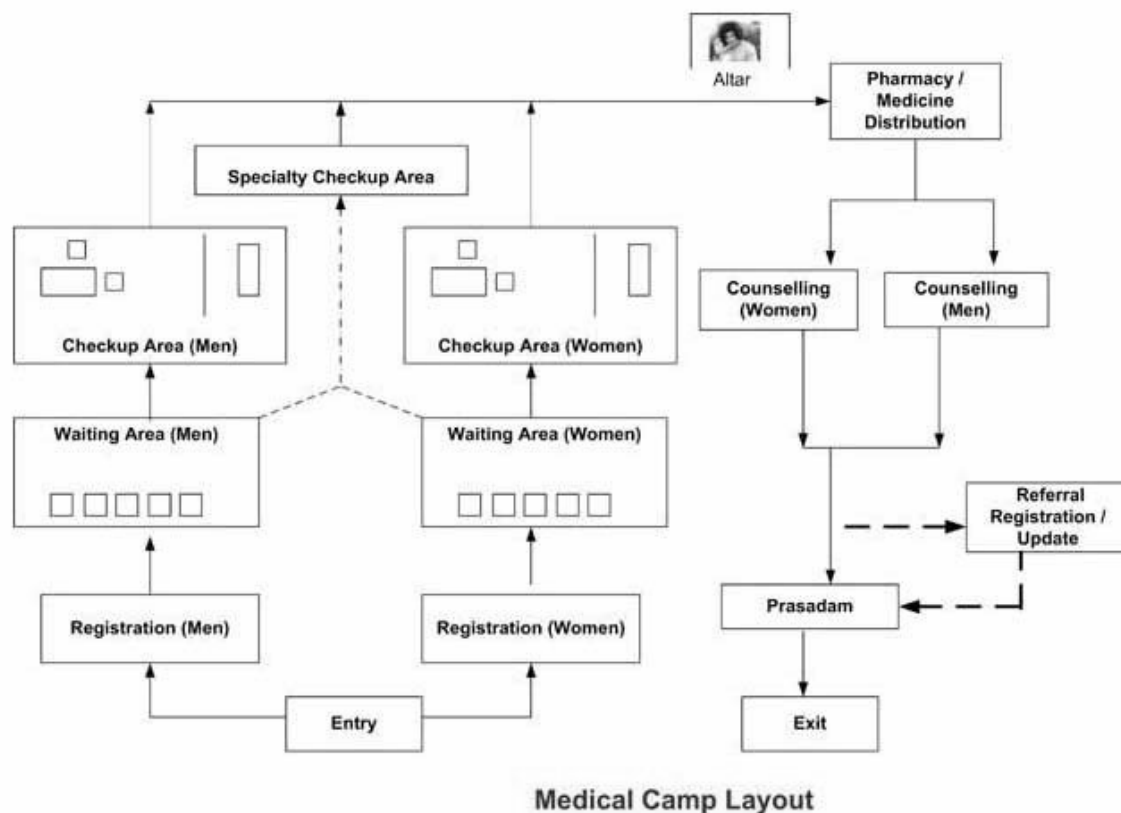
This important phase of planning resulted in development of the objectives, action plans, task details, checklist schedules and costing models for the each of the camps which have become extremely useful while conducting camps, be it regular or sporadic depending on the need. Talking about the usefulness of this activity, Sri Sathyanarayana Murthy, Coordinator of the Sri Sathya Sai Youth Wing, Mysore, says,

“Planning and conducting Healthcare camps using these methodologies in villages taught us superior project management skills. Personally it taught me to be more systematic which in turn improved the quality of work professionally. My positive outlook resulted in my staff participating in Seva activities. They are now a part of the Sai Family with significant improvement in their personalities as well. There is real all round transformation after participating in Sai Healthcare Seva.”

Health Care Camp in Action - Implementation Phase

In this last stage, the team decided on the nitty-gritty of conducting a medical camp starting from camp layout to patient follow up and referral camps. They laid down clear guidelines for each activity in an actual medical camp. To begin with, they said that the lay out of the camp should facilitate a streamlined flow of people from entry to exit points. This sometimes might

require imaginative thinking and experience in crowd control but this is important as bad layout would create confusion, disharmony and make the medical camp activities inefficient.



It is great to start the medical camp by first creating positive vibrations in the village by spiritual activities like group singing, chanting hymns, etc. It brings the villagers together and also adds more vigour to other value-addition activities like Bal Vikas, Study circle, etc. being done in the villages by the members of the Sai Organisation.

Registration

A patient enters the camp, through the registration section. This is an important area from the impression and perception management perspective. The patient and the accompanying people have to be greeted and invited into the camp. Volunteers managing this section should be cheerful, polite, helpful and informative. They should provide a correct and context sensitive answer to every query. If they are not sure they should ensure that some one more knowledgeable handles the query. There is no harm in requesting the patient to wait for a while till someone else provides the correct answer. It is also a very good idea to give the patient some idea of the camp procedures. The crucial thing to remember for every volunteer is that they are actually interacting with a manifestation of 'Sai Narayana' in the form of the patient.

Every patient is given a case book that contains his personal details like name, age, gender, address, etc. This book is used by the doctors to maintain

the case history of the patient. The patients are requested to return it so that the healthcare team updates all the information into a database for further reference by doctors. This data would be very useful for statistical analysis like the frequency of disease occurrence, the duration of treatment, healthcare costs per person, etc. which will help in taking right decisions.

Waiting area

After registration, patients are seated in the waiting area, which should typically accommodate about twenty people comfortably (unless of course it is a big camp). This area could be made more ambient by playing soothing instrumental music. Pictorial charts displayed here demonstrating personal hygiene, sanitation, immunization, nutrition, awareness about major diseases, hazards of smoking, alcohol and drug abuse would be an added advantage. Volunteers to handle queries and availability of drinking water and washroom facilities here are a big plus.

Checkup area

The checkup area is typically a room with good lighting and ventilation. Cleanliness in this room is an essential prerequisite. It must have an examination couch with a screen to provide privacy.

Doctors here are to be provided with the minimum ancillaries like BP apparatus, weighing machine, torch, pen, paper, a box of tissues, surgical spirit or hand sanitizers and a list of the medicines (and quantity) available at pharmacy counter.

Pharmacy

Pharmacy is tasked with medicine distribution as per prescription. It is typically managed by a pharmacist but volunteers need to explain the dosage to every patient in detail in their own language. Pictorial description of dosage and medicine usage is an added advantage.

Counseling

The dosage, the timing and the way in which medicines have to be taken is explained again in this stage. Doctors and volunteers (trained in counseling) need to interact with patients and their family members to assuage any of their doubts, provide emotional support and also improve their health awareness. Every age-group needs counseling of a different kind, like -

- Children on: personal hygiene (bath, dental care, washing hands before food, using footwear, covering mouth while coughing, etc.)
- Women on: nutrition, personal hygiene, health problems, immunization of children, mother craft and use of oral re-hydration salts in the treatment of diarrhea.

- Adults and the aged on : personal hygiene, substance abuse, awareness about cancer diabetes, hypertension etc.

Patient Referral

Certain patients require additional investigation, diagnostic tests and specialist consultation in better equipped medical centers; such cases are called as referral cases and they are the neediest among all patients. Such individuals are to be identified and taken to the higher medical centers (typically district hospitals). Referral management team has to ensure that referral patients are taken to the bigger and better hospital and are provided with support and assistance to the extent possible. Without proper monitoring of referral cases, the healthcare seva may often become ineffective; hence this is an important activity. To quote one example, here is the case of Ms Jayalakshmi.

A 10 year old girl, Jayalakshmi, from Kamarahalli village (in the outskirts of Mysore) complained of a mass in the abdomen. The doctor at the medical camp diagnosed it as a 'massive enlargement of spleen'. This condition required a blood test by a pathologist and the team members took her to the government Hospital in Mysore for further investigations. The blood test at the Government Hospital, Mysore revealed that she was suffering from a type of blood cancer. She was then taken to Kidwai Institute of Oncology, Bangalore, by the Sri Sathya Sai Samithi, Mysore. After the investigation, the oncologist provided the details of the treatment which included chemotherapy.

This story is a clear example which underscores that the **Referral Management System** is an indispensable component of healthcare seva.

Unfortunately, the girl's family refused chemotherapy in spite of having been counseled in detail by oncologists. Her family went by the advice of the village elders that chemotherapy side effects would affect her marriage prospects! The most important lesson learnt here was, the objective of the service is to do the duty to the extent possible and to facilitate treatment as much as possible. The ideal goal of providing a cure to everyone may not happen always. Acceptance of this reality helps to visualize the healthcare seva with a more realistic and practical perspective. "**Do your duty and leave the rest to God**" should dictate ones efforts. With a short prayer for the wellbeing of the girl, the healthcare seva team moved on. This event also helped in restating priorities and cancer detection became an important item in medical camps.

Narrating his experience in the map, Sri Sreevatsa T, a final year MBBS student in Mysore Medical College and Research Institute, says, "Primary healthcare is provided in the camp, but for secondary care the patients are taken to the KR Hospital, Mysore. The methodology is working beautifully as patients are turning to the KR hospital after being referred to by the village camp. Simple preventive measures like de-worming camps eliminate hookworm infestation and help in reducing anemia. This sort of camp provides Medicare to those who are in need of it in their villages, instead of having them to come to the doctors. I have been to many other camps, but my

experience with the Sri Sathya sai camp has really been unique. Observing the camp, I learnt the essence of life as a doctor.”

Patient Follow up

Just like patient referral, ‘follow up’ as an activity is very significant for complete cure of the patient. Here the current health status of the patient (from previous camps) is recorded and information about response to treatment, adequacy of medicines, progress in recovery, and further healthcare requirements is assessed. The patients not showing any progress need to be referred to reputed doctors. Citing an example to emphasize on the importance of follow up, Dr. Latha Kumari, Chief Medical Officer (NFSG) in Central Hospital, Mysore, who works with the Sai Youth, says,

“I particularly remember a patient telling me that she lost one child due to some medical problem few years ago. She said, ‘If camps like these were conducted then my child could have been saved’. Now she regularly brings other two children for checkup and follows all advice given to her... Since childhood, I dreamt of working as a doctor in villages. As a government employee, I was always posted to urban hospitals. Now I am happy that my dream has been fulfilled by Swami’s Grace as I am reaching the poor and the needy through Sai Healthcare camps...There has been significant improvement in the referral and the follow-up in the recent past. One of the key elements for the success of this project has been volunteers working as health workers in the village.”

Echoing similar sentiments, Dr. Ganesh Uppinal, Senior Specialist, S.M.T. Maternity Hospital, Mysore, says, “Follow up is very effective. Service and Medicare are made available at the doorstep of the villagers free of cost. The Camp set up is very ambient... The faith of the villagers in the camp has increased. Villagers are now following what we say and the health education has certainly made a big impact.”

Sri Pramod D, another rank student and winner of 15 gold medals in University level track and field events after joining Mysore Medical College in 2003,says,

“As budding doctors, we realized that:

- Sai youth provide a crucial link to facilitate transformation of the healthcare in the village.
- Patient follow-up and referral management are the grey areas improving which would make the critical difference; and finally
- Regular medical camps would result in all the chronic cases to be detected and treated.”

Specialty Camp

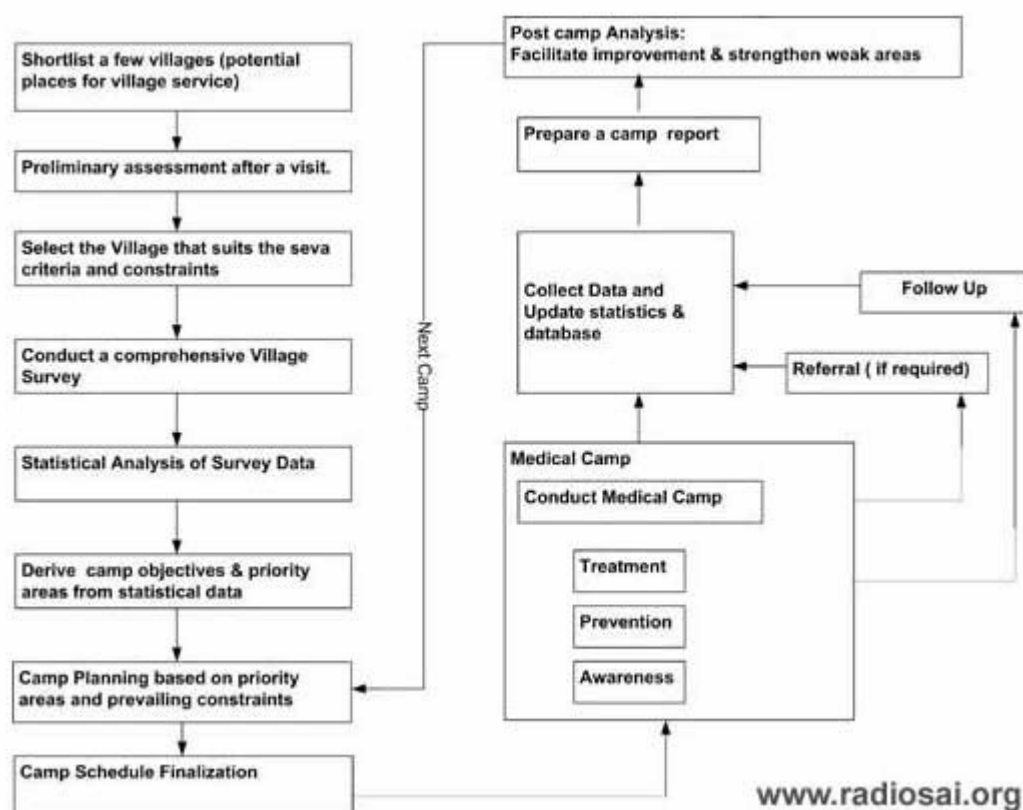
Specialty camps are to be organized to address health care issues beyond the scope of an ordinary medical camp. It has to focus on diseases that require specialist care. It also targets the vulnerable sections of society: Women and Children.

The youth wing so far has conducted specialty camps in the areas like Vaccination, Ophthalmology, Dental, Diabetes, De-worming, Pediatrics, Obstetrics and Gynecology. Talking about the impact these camps have had, Sri Ravichandra S. Karkal, another rank holder from Alike, says,

“By conducting camps, we not only got an idea of the conditions prevailing in the village but we were able to develop skills of interacting with people, which is very important for doctors. We were able to console sick people and infuse hope in them. This made us realize that it is not enough if we treat the body, we should also heal the mind.”

Post camp review

After every camp the team members need to conduct a review meeting to revisit the events of the camps. The problems encountered could be subjected to root cause analysis in this session. Feedback from the volunteers, doctors, and patients are to be analyzed as a part of the efforts to improve the quality of the camp on continuous basis.



Other Salient Activities

Improving Awareness through Street Plays

Street plays are an effective way to communicate and drive home important lessons on health awareness and disease prevention. The youth team here developed street play in the colloquial language and enacted it in the village covering themes like cleanliness and hygiene, preventive care, etc. One of the highlights is that the team improvised the play by including farm animals to recreate an authentic rural situation. This scene had a wider impact. It revealed that improvising the play to tune it to the local environment really heightens the impact of the presentation.

“Street play was a great experience,” says Sri Sreevatsa, a budding doctor and part of the Sai Youth team. “Basic concepts of health and hygiene were covered. The volunteers went round the village to coax the villagers to see the street play and at the end the message was emphatically conveyed...I wish more and more medical students participate in such village healthcare activities as it is a great learning experience.”

Village Youth Motivation

Village youth motivation sessions are meant to establish communication with village youth to feel the pulse of trends in the village. Based on the assessment of the aspirations of the youth, career guidance and mentoring, targeted awareness program are to be conducted to help village youth to transform the village, be a partner in healthcare activities and improve the quality of life. The story of Sri Cheluvvaraju is a case in point.

Sri Cheluvvaraju, was a Balavikas student when his village was first adopted by the Mysore Samithi, twenty years ago. Today, he has achieved success in his work and is successfully leading a team of volunteers in Seva activities conducted by the Sai Samithi in five nearby villages. He says,

“When we keep our surroundings clean, our neighbors also start cleaning up their surroundings. This is the first thing I learnt. Next is the value of *satsanga* (spiritual company). It taught me the importance of good thought, word and deed. Swami’s teachings and the seva activities in our villages since twenty years has made the crucial difference. While in school, the Sai volunteers helped me with tuition and study notes which helped me to pass my exams with good marks. Then, I got a diploma, and training in Industrial Training Institute and subsequently training in Bharat Earthmovers Limited, all because of the correct guidance from the members of the Samithi visiting our village every now and then for Seva activities.

“Today I am an active Samithi member myself. Seva activities have provided me an opportunity to serve others. It has also brought me recognition in my village. It has also given me a sense of identity and inculcated in me a sense of duty.”

Sri Doreswamy, a former student of Swami’s University in Puttaparthi who is part of the youth team, says, “I have felt that village service is not just about

helping in creating infrastructures for better physical life. It is also about creating atmosphere to make the people of the village feel that the activities organized are for the benefit of every one...and as an ex youth coordinator I realized that participation of youth has far reaching consequences. Enthusiasm of the youth rubs on even to the old people. During the health camp the satisfaction on the face of patient conveys that it is not just about distributing medicine. It is much more than that, and it is wonderful how problems melt away by His grace when we take up any good activity.”

Urban Service Camps - Blood Donation

As a part of the activities for the urban areas, the team focused on voluntary blood donation as the current scenario in India is not very encouraging. There is chronic shortage of blood with a major shortfall during summer. Non-availability of blood during treatment costs life in many cases. This is principally due to lack of awareness about blood donation and poor infrastructure.

Sai Youth Wing has a great role to play in this seva activity by conducting blood donation camps regularly, scheduling more camps during summer months and creating awareness about voluntary blood donation. The youth wing summarized its approach in the following points -

Goals of Voluntary Blood Donation Camp

- Increasing the supply of Safe Blood.
- Strengthen the blood donation infrastructure.
- Spreading awareness (and increasing motivation).
- Develop a robust donor base.
- Standardize the blood donation camp procedures.

Some pertinent facts about Blood Donation that inspired and helped the youth were:

- One unit is required in every 2 seconds.
- Four patients can benefit from one unit of blood (from component separation technique)
- Average Indian hesitates to donate blood.

They decided that camp must be arranged with an accredited and non-profit blood collecting agency and the donors are to be informed of directions to camp venue with timings.

As per the camp ambience, it should have a cordial and a soothing atmosphere with proper seating arrangements and minimum waiting time for donors. And refreshments provided to the donors should be nutritious, palatable, hygienic and adequate. In the end the donors are to be given a token of appreciation (typically a small gift along with blood donation certificate). The Youth Wing in Mysore have so far conducted 4 blood donation camps and collected 248 units of blood.

Urban Service Camps - Combating Lifestyle Diseases

As a part of healthcare activities in the urban areas the youth decided to concentrate on lifestyle diseases in the cities and towns and conducted camps to improve awareness in diabetes and hypertension.

Aashith Sridhar, another former Alike rank student, says,

“Participating in the health care camps was a very valuable experience, since it taught us about community medicine much before it was taught to us in the classroom. For volunteers, the medical camps taught leadership skills and improved their awareness in the healthcare domain. The knowledge and experience gained out of these activities were presented in an exclusive healthcare seva workshop called ‘Yuva Spandana’.”

‘Yuva Spandana’ – Sharing Knowledge Through Healthcare Workshop

The Sai Youth of Mysore conducted a unique healthcare workshop to discuss practical Medicare issues and spirituality. Senior and eminent devotees like Sri B N Narasimhamurthy, Warden, Sri Sathya Sai Boys’ Hostel Brindavan Campus, Sri Nagesh.G Dhakappa, State President of Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organization, Karnataka and Sri. R.K Subramanya, Karnataka State Youth Co-ordinator provided many practical insights and expert opinion on various aspects of service and spirituality.

Sri M Prasaad, the President of Sri Sathya Sai Seva Organization, Mysore District, commenting on the systematic approach developed and followed by the Sai Youth, says,

“Conducting the camps in a systematic and an organized way gave a professional outlook to the activities.

The documentation of all the activities and work allocation to the volunteers reduced the time required to arrange a camp and led to optimal usage of resources. It also attracted more volunteers because the systematic approach reduced confusion and improved satisfaction levels. The villagers noticed the difference and appreciated it. We implemented the follow up and referral activities successfully, which in turn improved the quality of healthcare.”

Being His Loving Instruments...

With Swami’s Grace, the Mysore Youth conducted many healthcare camps in villages around Mysore City. Happy to be part of these service opportunities, they say,

“The experiences made us **Better** human beings by teaching how to be compassionate and to show concern to fellow human beings; **Better** healthcare providers by teaching us the cardinal principles of community medicine; **Better** leaders by teaching management perspectives and leadership skills; **Better** Sai Students by teaching the spiritual aspect of seeing God in everyone; and finally, **Better** Sai Youth by translating Swami’s teachings and management techniques into Effective Healthcare Seva.

The standard practices and methodologies that they developed, they feel, can be replicated elsewhere. But **the most important gain from the whole effort was this: “At the end of the whole exercise, we realized that through these camps we are serving ourselves to get one step closer to our own real self.”**

Half of the problems in life, it is said, are because we act without thinking and remaining half is because we keep thinking without acting. At the end of all these, it is clear that if one starts doing quality service with devotion, Swami will take care of the rest. **Kishan R Bhagwat, the first rank holder in Karnataka Common Entrance Test (Medical) 2003, says, “It’s wonderful to get answers to prayers. But it is even more wonderful to let God mould you and make you an answer to somebody’s prayers”.**

Ekalavya Drama – Huddled At His Lotus Feet

Even as the Sai Youth healthcare activities kept the team busy, there were memorable situations that constantly reminded the team of the Divine Presence, encouragement and blessings.

“Bhagwan bestowed Mysore youth a golden opportunity to perform a drama in the divine presence of Swami during the Karnataka State Youth conference – Yuvavandana at Brindavan. We used to begin all the practice sessions of the drama with three bhajans and end it with a prayer and Mangalarati,” they reminiscence.

“On the day of drama we were ready with the costumes and make-up; we did the prayer back-stage in the Sri Sathya Sai Kalyana Mantapam, Brindavan, where the drama was going to be staged. No sooner we had finished the prayer, Swami started reciting the invocation prayer of our drama in His discourse and explained the meaning! He also mentioned about the drama and gave a brief introduction about the story and the characters coming in it. It was a thrilling experience for us. It was then that we realized that Swami was present in each one of our practice sessions as well as the service activities.” Putting their learning from the play in the divine presence in the form of a poem they say -

The play is His
The role is His gift
The lines are written by Him
He directs, He decides the dress and decoration,
The gestures and tone, the entrance and exit.
You have to act well to receive His approbation.
When the curtain falls, earn by your efficiency and enthusiasm
The right to play higher and higher roles.
That is the meaning and purpose of life.

Sai Teachers – Swami Inspires Through Them

“Our teachers in Alike residential school nurtured us like our parents,” say the former Alike students. “When we came to Mysore, we missed them. We also wanted to revisit their words and advice since it appeared more relevant for us today. So, we invited them to visit us.

“This plan quickly materialized as a *Satsang* (Spiritual study circle) program. For six weeks our teachers spoke to us about various facets of Seva. We relived the olden days once again but with a difference. Our experiences in villages and the insights on Swami’s teachings, tireless service rendered by Sri Madiyala Narayana Bhat, (founder of SSSLS) was discussed and revisited.” Late Sri Madiyal Narayan Bhat, an ardent devotee of Bhagavan had originally founded the SSSLS Educational Institutions which Bhagavan lovingly took over and now it stands tall among all the pre university colleges in Karnataka state, India.

Sai’s Schools – Serene and Shining

The Sri Sathya Sai Loka Seva Institutions are located today in Alike and Muddenahalli. While Alike is situated in a valley surrounded by hills, 46 kms from Mangalore, in the Dakshina Kannada District of Karnataka; Muddenahalli, nestled in the sylvan surroundings at the foot of the reputed hill station, the Nandi Hills, is at a distance 7 kms from Chikkaballapur, along the highway from Bangalore to Puttaparthi. It was christened by Swami Himself as ‘Sathya Sai Grama’ in 1973. Both these schools are now trend-setters in academic excellence as well as Character education. Can anybody doubt that?

PRASHANTI DIARY

CHRONICLES OF HEAVEN ON EARTH

Swami returned from Kodaikanal on May 18th, 2007 and four days later Sai Geetha bid farewell to everybody. Swami was with her in her last moments. In the cover story of this issue, we have a very detailed and revealing narration of the whole episode; do not miss it. After this the first major event in June happened in the first Sunday of the month.

‘Namasmarana’ by His Students – June 3rd, 2007

It was to be the first effort by His dear students to please Him with a programme. In the previous few days, Swami had asked a few students as to what had been taking place in the hostel. When they had said that the new academic year would begin with *Laksharchana* (chanting the Lord's name a lakh times together), He had asked, "Am I not invited for it?" But then He had said, "Carry on. I just asked." So the senior boys of the hostel decided that the first worship of the year should be done in the Mandir itself in Swami's presence. Thus, overnight was born the programme, "Namasmarana"!

Swami came at about 4:10 pm giving the boys precious minutes to fine tune the programme. It began with an introduction on the power of the Lord's Name. It is only the Name of the Lord that can equal the form of the Lord as demonstrated by Mother Rukmini when she equaled Krishna's weight by chanting His name and placing a Tulsi leaf on the balance. Prahlada, Meerabai and Gajendra were all redeemed by the chanting of the Lord's Name. A short skit of Ajamila's story was enacted to drive home the lesson. Taken from the Bhagavatam, the story is about Ajamila who lead a very sinful life. As he is about to die and the messengers of the God of Death approach him, he calls out to his son Narayana. But, the messengers of Lord Narayana arrive on the spot and say that as per the command of the Supreme Lord, Ajamila is to be redeemed as he took the Lord's name in the last few moments of his life, whatever be his intentions.

A Telugu skit on another popular story was about a poor farmer. The venerable sage Narada refuses to believe that there could be someone greater than him in their devotion to Lord Narayana. So he sets out to scrutinize the Lord's choice - a poor farmer. He finds out that the farmer chants the Lord's Name only thrice the whole day in between his work. When he doubts the Lord's choice, Narayana tells Narada to go around carrying a pot full of oil, ensuring that not a drop of it falls out. Narada carries out the command but once done, Lord Narayana asks, "Tell me, how many times did you chant My Name as you carried out that task?" Narada says, "Oh Lord! How was that possible? I was fully concentrating only on the pot of oil." The Lord smiles, "Oh Narada, that farmer thinks of me in spite of being engrossed

in his work. What matters is the feeling. It is quality and not quantity that matters.”

The programme was interspersed with songs on the glory of the Lord's Name. There was also chanting from the *Lalita Sahasranaama* and *Vishnu Sahasranaama*. The grand ending for the programme was triggered by the comperes describing the various glorious Names of Sai. Then the Ashtothara Namavali was chanted by the entire hall and it was truly a wonderful experience for all. The programme concluded and very aptly, Swami asked for bhajans to be sung. As the bhajans were on, Swami graciously agreed to grant group photos to all the participants of the programme. After the photo session, the glorious evening came to an end as Swami accepted arathi and retired to Yajur Mandir.

Bhagavan Visits The Institute – June 7th 2007

As had been announced the previous day, at about 8:40 am Swami arrived at the Institute auditorium. The students and staff were absolutely thrilled and overjoyed at the prospects of Swami addressing the very first Moral class of the academic year. The morning was very fresh and the whole place seemed to have been washed clean by the morning rain. Swami arrived to the welcome of a group of students chanting Vedam. Two peacocks too stood by as part of the welcome team. Swami got down from the car and called the caretaker of the peacocks and spoke to him for few words. He blessed the *Poorna Kumbham* and then was taken straight up the stage. The whole assembly stood up to receive Him and sat down only after Swami had indicated them to do so. The stage had been adorned with a huge banner stating, "*Tamasoma Jyotir Gamaya*." Meaning, 'From darkness, lead me to light.'

The Vice Chancellor first laid out the schedule for the morning. Swami then blessed two documents presented by Dr. Krupanidhi of the Biosciences Dept. and Prof. Venkatramaniah of the Physics Dept. The documents were part of the ongoing effort of the Institute to blend education with Swami's teachings and were entitled "Educare through Biosciences" and "Educare through Physics", respectively. Shri G S Rangarajan from the School of Business Management, Accounting and Finance addressed the assembly next on what it meant to be students of the Avatar and exhorted that all must recognise this unique opportunity to realize the ultimate knowledge. The Vice Chancellor then prayed to Swami to bless all with His divine message.

Much to everyone's delight, Bhagavan rose to address the assembly. Here is a brief summary of the discourse –

*) Education and money are of no use whatsoever if you forget the lotus-eyed Lord. And that Lord is the One in the Many, as Krishna said, "*Mamaivamsho Jeeva Loke, Jeeva Bhoota Sanatanaha*."

*) The six vices are a result of the food habits. Food and water must be pure and taken in a regulated manner.

*) Secular knowledge is fairly good but spiritual knowledge is the one that needs to be improved today. Education is needed but it is not to be mistaken with mere learning. Educare is beyond the world. All the worldly traits that you see today are only because of the education people receive. Though you have all the knowledge, you are fools because you do not understand your own selves. What then is the use of being so egoistic about this kind of second hand knowledge? Whatever your teacher tells you is not educare. Only the *Atma* (spirit) is the true teacher. However it is sad that none are even thinking of the knowledge of the Self. If you do not do this you are wasting a lot of time. Remember however scholarly you may be with respect to books, they all contain only 26 letters in their alphabet! The entire world you see is a drama. "*Daivam Maanusha Roopena*", that is, "God is in human form". There is nothing to be achieved through worldly knowledge, so do not place undue importance on it.

*) Truth (Satya) is the fundamental changeless one. Where there is Satya, there alone peace exists. It is foolish to think that Truth is mere factual correctness. Bodies and names may be different, but the principle within is the same. You talk about Swami also in various ways. That too is just your imagination. The Truth is that you all are also God. Even the Buddha set out searching for Truth but concluded finally that "The Truth is within me" and was thus enlightened.

*) People often think that sages prayed and did intense penance and God went to them. God never travels or goes anywhere. When you pray, you come closer to God. It is not important whether God comes to you; what is needed is that you go to God.

*) Sai Geetha came to me as a tiny tot. She was a baby who escaped falling into the pits during the *Kheddah* operations to catch elephants in Mysore. I took her into my car and brought her all the way to Bangalore. I had honey on my finger which she kept lapping all the way to Bangalore. She was a born *Brahmacharini*. She did not allow any male elephant to even touch her when she was taken to Bandipur for bearing calves. She came running back to me at Whitefield. Ramabrahmam who was the caretaker then, thought that some ruffians had come in. It was actually Gita at my door. When I cry for her, it is not because I am sad. It is due to the *Vatsalyam* (Deep Motherly Affection) I have for her. She will be back soon. So no one need to feel sad.

Swami concluded His discourse and the vote of thanks was offered by the Principal, Prof. U.S. Rao after which *prasadam* was distributed. It was 11 am by the time Swami left the dais and all the Institute staff surrounded Him to offer their gratitude before His car finally moved on.

Deenajanodhaarana Foundation Day Programme – June 20th, 2007

The Sathya Sai Deenajanoddharana project was taken up by the Sri Sathya Sai Central Trust in the year 2001. The project had its genesis in 2001, when Bhagavan, made a declaration that He would take up the cause of as many destitutes as possible and rehabilitate them. He recounted how he was moved

by the news of a mother who committed suicide by consuming poison after she had administered the same to her three children as she could not combat the abject poverty they found themselves in. He declared that he would provide food, shelter and clothing to many destitute children, besides educating them to be self-reliant.

Swami Himself laid the foundation stone for the project. Sixty boys from such families were selected from Bukkapatnam, Kothacheruvu and Puttaparthi mandals. Some among them had no mother. Some had no father. Some had no parent at all. But as soon as they came to Prasanthi Nilayam, they found a loving mother in Swami. Swami would give them clothes, suitcases, blankets and would bless them with His kind words very often. During the period of construction of Sai Nagar, the home for these children, the boys and their widowed mothers were housed in specially allocated sheds and given some orientation. Volunteers started taking informal classes according to the age of the boys, until they were formally accepted in the upcoming school at Sai Nagar. There were in total 58 boys, the age ranging from 4 to 14 years. The mothers were ten in number.

Today, the Sathya Sai Nagar is an ideal of community living. It is more or less an example of a self-sustained, self-sufficient village. The children there have been excelling in all spheres of activity. They have been performing excellently well in the SSLC examinations and have also started putting up programmes for the Annual Sports and Cultural Meet of the Sri Sathya Sai Institutions. With enthusiastic participation in all the activities started by Swami, the children occupy a special place in Swami's heart. Every Thursday and Sunday, when they come for Darshan, Swami would pay special attention to them.

June 20 is the Foundation Day of this Deenajaodharana Pathakam. An elaborate programme had been organised and all the children had come early to the Mandir in all readiness. Swami came out about 3:30pm but He went into the interview room to speak to few people He had picked up from the portico. At about 4:35pm, the tempo and pitch of the Vedic chants went up indicating Swami's arrival after the completion of interviews. Swami had a peep into the bhajan hall where all the children were in costumes and told them all to go out and begin the programme. Swami too immediately came and occupied the stage. The programme began with Veda Chanting. Swami asked for the mike to be placed in the centre of the performing area and not in its traditional place next to His chair. After the chants, a little boy delivered a speech in English. And then, the invocation dance began. The dancers wore rich and bright costumes and the dance was paced to a melodious and fast rhythm.

Thereafter, started the main event of the evening's programme - the 'Kavi Sammelan'. The children had come dressed up as various ancient and modern poets. The flow was designed in such a manner that each poet would praise some aspect of Swami's Love and Grace. The *Vikatakavi*, (humorist-poet) Tenali RamaKrishna was the person introducing the poets. First to take centrestage was Sage Valmiki. He envisioned Rama Rajya in the whole world beginning at Puttaparthi. He was followed by the great Kalidasa whose recital praised Swami as the Divine Mother who gifted him with His prodigious talent.

The Telugu poet Nannayya praised Swami's cosmic form and His nature of transforming demonic qualities into the human and then into the Divine. Then the Telugu poet Pothana articulated the need for using the human birth in service of God. Interspersed between these poets were humorists specially nominated to add comic relief to the proceedings. Humorous poems punning on words, playing with phrases and making powerful yet funny similes and comparisons, elicited hearty laughter from both Swami and the audience. The English poets, Tennyson and A. M. Modi were also brought to life. Though the English rendering was accented, it brought forth the tremendous enthusiasm and effort that the children had put in for the presentation and that touched Swami. When Kamavadhani Garu's (a vedic scholar who enjoyed Swami's proximity for many years) name was announced, Swami became nostalgic and there was a small burst of emotion on His face. Along with Ganapathy Shastry Garu, he offered salutations in the form of Veda chanting. The Hindi poet Tulsidas and Tamil poet Thiruvalluvar brought the programme to a close with recitals from the Ramcharit Manas and Thirukkural.

As the programme concluded, Swami said that He was very happy. The children continued to sit in their places in a disciplined manner. Swami called the children to come onstage so that group pictures could be taken. The overjoyed children went to Swami, still in a disciplined manner, and group photos were taken. After that, Swami asked for white cloth pieces and He distributed the dress material to each and every boy personally. The children were full of excitement and joy and expressed their deep sense of gratitude to Swami. The curtain fell on the beautiful evening when prasadam was distributed and Swami accepted Aarthi before getting into His car.

Bhangra Dance by His Students – June 24, 2007

Come Sunday, the students of Sri Sathya Sai University this month were ready with some programme to put up in front of their beloved Swami. On the last Sunday of the month, it was a Bhangra dance programme. The whole marble block was left empty for the performers. Swami came for His darshan rounds and as He reached the area where the students sit, a few boys in the traditional costumes went up to Him and informed Him of the programme. Swami alighted near the interview room and seeing costumed boys in the Bhajan hall, went straight into the hall and asked the lead boy there for the details of the programme.

"Swami in the beginning there will be Nagar Sankirtan and the installation of the Guru Granth Sahib. Then there will be the traditional dances Swami", was the reply. Swami spoke to both the trainers and some of the other boys too. He enquired for the duration of the programme. The very sight of the boys in *pugarees* (turbans) seemed to bring a broad smile on His face. Anybody in a different coloured *pugaree* and Swami would ask Him about it. The sight was one that was so filled with Love and Joy. After about ten minutes, Swami told the boys to go out and get ready for the programme. Then He went into the interview room. Within the next five minutes, the stage was set for the performers and Swami came out to sit on stage. The programme began with a

procession and Nagar Sankirtan. There was a lot of josh but the first song was more of a lilting type and the steps were gentle and swaying. The Guru Granth Sahib was brought to Swami and He blessed it. The Sikh trainers offered their salutations to Swami and with a pleased smile He blessed them. The Holy Book was installed and two fan bearers sat there fanning it. This was followed by more vigorous dancing. The boys made formations and danced with superb co-ordination. The beats were provided by the trainers with huge drums. The dancers even kept chanting in unison rhythmically. The sight of these thirty odd dancers moving fast and furious was really thrilling. The audience too was mesmerized with the pulse of the songs and very often began clapping their hands in beat. The tempo of the songs began to increase with each passing moment. As a grand climax, there were gymnasts who made small yet marvelous human pyramids. Turning on the ground like wheels, some gymnasts even began to swirl long decorated sticks as they did the stunts. Swami and the people assembled were fully appreciative of the efforts.

The last few minutes were very energetic and enervating and the beats were at the fastest. As the programme came to an end, the audience seemed to ask for more. Swami immediately made His appreciation known with, "*Bahut Achcha*" meaning, "Very Good". He agreed for group photos and the boys sat in neatly organized groups of five. After the group pictures, Swami called the trainers and asked them as to what their names were, where they came from, etc. And then, He materialized a gold chain for one of them who was absolutely thrilled. As Swami finished putting it around his neck, he took Swami's hand and put it on his head. There were smiles all around at this loving act of his! Then began a session that was to be a very memorable one for the participants. Swami asked for the break up of boys' class wise.

"Swami, there are boys from all classes."

"Any MA boys?"

There was silence as there were none from the MA class.

"Swami, there is a BA boy, but none from MA."

Swami asked for the list of the boys participating in the programme. When that was given, Swami went through the names and began even calling out some of them. As He called each name, that boy stood up. Swami would confer on him a smile and a beautiful *Abhayahasta* and the boy would sit down, the smile on Swami's lips now transferred on to his. Swami now began to call individual boys and began to speak to them. The topic of Swami coming to their hostel propped up in the boys' minds.

"When can I come to your hostel?"

"Swami is this anything to be asked? It is our home. You can come whenever you want."

"Even now?"

"Yes Swami, even now."

"But all of you are here!!"

"Swami, that will hardly take any time for all of us to be back in the hostel. We will come with you."

"I will come when even good food is ready for all of you. Is the food good in the hostel?"

"Swami it is very good. See all of us have become fat having it!"

Swami smiled at this. The loving exchange between Him and His boys is something that must be seen to be believed. It becomes so evident that He has given Himself entirely to them and the boys too just reciprocate whatever He gives.

Swami then called the trainers to get the Guru Granth book. It was brought to Him and He leafed through the pages. After that it was back to Swami calling boys one by one and speaking to them.

"Is there anybody by name NANAK?"

No answer.

"Anybody by name Guru Gobind?"....."Ok anybody by name Govind?"

None seemed to have these blessed names.

"Who are the boys from Punjab?"

Three hands went up and Swami spoke a few endearing words with them.

"How many new boys?"

Over half the participants raised their hands.

"How many boys from Brindavan? (Boys who were in the Brindavan campus previous year)"

Again a dozen hands went up.

The interaction thus went on. Finally Swami said, " Very happy. Very nice dance." He raised both His hands in benediction. As he went back too, He stopped to speak to the VIPs seated there as to how nice the programme was.

Things seem to be warming up for a wonderful new academic year at Parthi. With Guru Poornima, Aashaadi Ekadasi and the Youth Conference being scheduled for the month of July, we can surely look forward to wonderful events in the next month. Till then, thank you for being with us. Hope you could relive the events as we enjoyed covering them. Sairam.

SWAMI AND ME

AMAZING GRACE IN AFRICA

By Mr. Jay Ravji Jethwa

Dear Reader, nearly four decades ago in this month of July, Swami made His only trip overseas, to the continent of Africa. Thousands were blessed in this unexpected visit to the 'dark continent' and the impact it had on the people of Uganda, Kenya and Nairobi is tremendous. One such devotee who had a life-altering experience is Mr. Jay Ravji Jethwa who was a teenager then and is now a barrister and lawyer of the Supreme Court of Victoria and the High Court of Australia. He is also presently the National Vice-President of the United Nations Association of Australia. This is what he narrates:

The Light Shines in Africa

It was indeed a most fortuitous period for the "Dark Continent", Africa. For Bhagavan, in His infinite mercy, had decided to set foot on the very soil that is regarded as the cradle of civilisation, and where humankind's ancestry can be traced. This event took place in July 1968, when Bhagavan spent two memorable weeks in Uganda, a country where I was born and raised. Uganda, a very beautiful and picturesque place once described by Winston Churchill as the 'Pearl of Africa', is a country which is the source of the River Nile flowing out of Lake Victoria (the second largest fresh water lake in the world) which sustains many millions of people in countries ranging from Uganda all the way up to Egypt, where it empties itself in the Mediterranean Sea. It is indeed the lifeblood of most of Africa. The Creator was now putting the final lustre on this pearl by physically going there.

Bhagavan has not yet stated the reason for this Divine visit to Uganda. However, there are many conjectures. Did He go because of the love for His devotees living there? Did He go there to warn His devotees of the dangers they were to face in the coming years at the hands of the ruling military junta? Did He go there to plant as yet some unknown seed in Africa, which will blossom at some time in the future? The answer to these questions may be all of the above and more.

Africa, as a general rule, has been beset by many and varied problems, ranging from natural disasters such as drought and famine, to problems, associated with racial and ethnic disharmony. It appears that some of the latter problems worsened as most individual countries in the Continent gained independence from their colonial masters in the 1960s.

It was against this backdrop of strife and discontent that Bhagavan visited the Continent of Africa. It was the first and only time He had left India for an overseas visit. It is interesting to note that not long before His Divine visit to

Uganda, Pope Paul VI became the first ever Pontiff to set foot on the African soil by also visiting Uganda.

A Childhood Blighted by Asthma

I was a very sickly 13 year-old boy in 1968. I had a very severe form of asthma since I was born. My father had sought expert medical advice from as far away as the United Kingdom, all to no avail.

One day in June 1968, Kampala, the capital city of Uganda, was abuzz with the news that "Bhagavan" was coming to town and that His name was Sai Baba. I had neither heard this name nor seen what He looked like. My Father, Ravji Kara, and my mother Urmilabhen, had made arrangements to take myself and stay for the duration of His visit.

Thousands Flock for Bhagavan's Darshan

When we arrived at Dr. Patel's home at about 4 p.m, thousands of people of all races and colours had already gathered there. His car was to arrive at Dr. Patel's home at 6 p.m, but the motorcade was delayed en route from Nairobi in Kenya, where His plane had landed from Bombay.

It was not until 1.30 a.m. that the motorcade finally arrived. Bhajans had been going on all evening at the makeshift hall that had been erected by Dr. Patel at his residence where all the people were patiently waiting for their first encounter with Bhagavan. I was indeed very fortunate that the car Bhagavan was traveling in stopped right in front of me. As He alighted, I took my first ever glimpse of Him. And what a wonderful sight it was. He looked majestic in the golden robe He was wearing. I remember thinking that He looked quite unusual for an Indian.

Bhagavan had an immediate impact on my being. Just one look at Him made me feel completely confident that He was to "cure" my illness. My very young mind was also convinced that Bhagavan has come to Africa just for me! I knew I would never be the same again.

My illness had been so severe that I cannot ever recall having slept at night times. I remember my mother having to wake up at least a dozen times a night to give me medication for my difficult breathing.

A few days after His arrival in Kampala, on 7 July to be precise, without my parent's knowledge, I decided not to attend school that day, visiting Bhagavan instead to obtain His Darshan. When I arrived at Dr. Patel's home, there were already thousands waiting in the streets for precisely the same reason. I joined the crowds and waited patiently for Him.

Called to Grace

It wasn't long before He came out to the delight of all gathered there. I saw Him materialising vibhuti for some people, and also witnessed Bhagavan

creating a watch for an African policeman standing at his post at the gates of Dr. Patel's home. He then approached me where I was sitting, and summoned me to get up and go to Him. This I did immediately. What follows is a personal account of the "miracle" I experienced all those years ago.

As I approached Him, He asked me, "How is your asthma?" I remember being very surprised at His knowledge of my illness. Before I could utter any words in response, He said, "Go" pointing towards the gates of Dr. Patel's home. He then walked right past me. Hesitatingly, I started walking towards the gates. There was a policeman at the gates (incidentally, the same policeman who had earlier received the materialised watch) who opened the gates for me. I entered the compound, and was asked by the sevadal to sit there until Bhagavan called me into the interview room.

The Healing Touch

It appeared that I waited for an eternity for Him to beckon me in. Whilst I was waiting, my young mind was going through all sorts of questions like: "What if something happens to me while I am inside?" "What is this large fuzzy-haired man going to do to me?" "What am I going to tell Him when I am inside?", "Am I going to be cured of my illness?" As all these thoughts were racing in my head, Bhagavan came out of the small door leading into the interview room and waved me go inside. Still quite nervous, I approached Him and He took me inside holding my hand.

The interview room was approximately 6m x 6m in size. As He greeted me in, He started telling me of my asthma, at the same time, 'acting' very similarly to when I was having one of my asthma attacks. He then invited me to enter another very small room that led out of the larger interview room. This room was barely big enough for the two of us. I entered this room first, and Bhagavan 'squeezed' in after me. We stood facing each other, barely six inches apart. I must admit that my heartbeat was now racing, and He must have sensed this, as He tried to relax me by saying some pleasantries. **As I looked up to His face, he opened His right hand palm and instructed me to "look, look, look" at it. I did what He asked, and after about 10 seconds, He said "touch, touch, touch." The palm was beautifully soft and dry. As I looked up to Him again, He asked me to keep looking at His palm. Within a few seconds, I witnessed droplets of liquid forming on His palm, completely filling it up.**

He asked me to remove my shirt, which I did immediately. He then rubbed the materialised liquid on my chest until all of it was absorbed into the skin. I was asked to put my shirt back on. We both then proceeded to very gently squeeze out of the small room. As I looked into His eyes, I experienced the feeling of love that I don't believe I had ever experienced before. It was a most wonderful moment of my short life. He then gave me a few packets of vibhuthi, said many other things that I cannot now recall, and patted me on the back and said: "Go - no more asthma." These few magical words have

always kept ringing in my ears since then. He led me out of the interview room, letting me undertake *padanamaskaram*.

“Mum, no more asthma!”

I remember running home after the interview (my home was merely 15 minutes walk from where Bhagavan was staying). **I greeted my mum with biggest smile shouting: "Mum, I have just had an interview with Sai Baba and He said that I will never suffer from asthma again. Mum, I will never wake you up in the middle of the night to administer the medication again, and I will never have to see another doctor again."** I was truly ecstatic.

It has been 34 years almost to the day as I sit here in Sai Kulwant Hall in Prashanti Nilayam, writing this short account! – My direct experience of Bhagavan's spontaneous expression of Divine Love. My asthma has deserted me completely. My wife Julie and I, and the rest of my whole family who all now reside in the United Kingdom, have been visiting Bhagavan in Prashanti Nilayam for many years now and we all constantly experience His Love and Divine Miracles in our daily lives.

“My methodology is love” - Swami

Professor N. Kasturi, in his book ‘The Light of Love’, giving a short account of Bhagavan's visit to Africa, said that at a question and answers session held in Kampala at the gathering of the Rotarians, Lions, lawyers, and doctors, Bhagavan was asked what the purpose was of His performing miracles, and whether it was good for people to know that the laws of nature can be broken. He replied that He does not perform miracles. What we call miracles, He said, are just spontaneous evidences of His Divinity. He said that He has not acquired the power to perform these so-called miracles, nor does He exhibit them for demonstrating His Divinity. The expression of His love is a *nidarsana* or evidences of His Divine Power which induces one to take to the Godward path. He went on to say that "I do not set about to 'perform' what you call 'miracles'; It is My way of doing things, My way of expressing My love and grace."

Courtesy: Mathrubhumi's Sai Jyothi, 2002

A LIFETIME OF LOVE

By Mrs. Padmini Hundy

Mrs. Padmini Hundy is a former student of Sri Sathya Sai Higher Secondary School, Puttaparthi where she attended Grade 11 and 12, completing her high school. Currently in Texas, USA, her family has been associated with Bhagavan for the last fifteen years.

Mee Kanta, Inta, Venta Janta eppudu vuntanu – “In your eyes, in your home, I will be there along with you ...Forever.” Those are the Divine Blessings we received time and again during our many interactions with our Beloved Swami – and true to His words, He has been the Cosmic force that has changed the lives, future and destiny of our entire family. People often ask me how Swami has influenced my life. I cannot describe in words, what Swami's presence in my life means to me. He has been the anchor of my life, and I can very humbly say that everything we in our family are today is because we have had Him to guide us, to teach us and to love us!

My first *darshan* of Swami was way back when I was in high school. I was visiting Puttaparthi along with my mother and grandmother, as a part of a group of Sai devotees. My knowledge and awareness of Swami was a bare minimum. To my utter surprise my family was called in for an interview. I did not even realize then that it was such a great blessing. In fact, all through the interview, naïve and foolish that I was, I kept thinking how my other friends in the group must feel at being left out of this interview. When Swami asked my name I said: "Please call my other friends also" Swami just smiled and said “I will talk to them” ...and today I know that when our time comes Swami will find a way to come into our life and stay there.

Soon after that my brother joined Swami's University to pursue his MBA and our visits to Puttaparthi became more frequent. My parents were blessed to have continuous and frequent interactions and audiences with Swami. Even before we realized it, He had become a part of our everyday life and for the smallest of things and decisions we looked to Swami to guide us and He always did. Life was great.

Only He is Our True Father!

Then in 1992, tragedy struck our family. We lost our father unexpectedly due to kidney failure. Swami sent for my brother and asked him to bring us all back after the ceremonies. When we reached Puttaparthi, He immediately called us for an interview. The moment Swami closed the interview door I started crying and asked Him why this had happened? How could He take away my father when I was just barely 15 years old and who would take care of us?

The compassionate and patient Lord asked me to be calm and listen. He then narrated an incident that had happened earlier that year. He reminded me of

how my parents, my sister and I had gone to the sacred Kedarnath shrine, located amidst the mountains in North India. My brother had not joined us on this pilgrimage as he was training for his job at the Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Medical Sciences then. When we reached the foot of the mountains, my mother stayed back as she felt unwell and my dad went up the mountains on a pony while my sister and I trekked half way up and then took a pony for the rest of the climb. My dad was already there when we reached our destination and the moment we met, he told us that something very strange had happened on his journey up.

The ponies there are trained to trek the narrow, slippery and steep path in the mountains; most of the time their guides don't even have to handle them. It's a slim winding trail carved along the circumference of the mountain and on its other side is the deep valley ...almost bottomless with a sheer drop of 8000 feet. **The pony on which my Dad was riding was close to the edge and then in an unguarded moment, the pony lost its balance and slipped and it was all set to fall in the deep valley with my Dad on it. At that very moment, Dad felt as if somebody physically pushed him and the pony back on the road.** When I and my sister heard the account, we were relieved that a possible disaster had been averted and then we completely forgot about it ...till Swami narrated this incident vividly in the interview room. You can imagine our shock and surprise, and my mother had not even known about it till then!

Swami then took my hand and said, "That was the day your father's life was to be over. Had he fallen in the valley, what would you two girls do? How would you manage? That's why Swami pushed him back and extended his life. But now he has work to do with me. Does that answer your why? And you ask me who will take care of you. Then I promise you that I will always take care of you." **He turned to my mother and said, "I will take care of everything. Your son is with me; don't worry about him. I will perform both your girls' weddings...you will never feel his absence".**

With those precious, comforting and consoling words, He explained to us the harsh reality of our life and the finality of the death that had left us devastated. Every birth is subject to death, we realized and that we should not only be prepared for this ultimate truth, but face it with courage, as God is our true Father. Even in our moment of loss, what profound life lessons we received from Him!

His Word and Will are Unalterable!

Swami also very graciously gave me permission to join the school at Puttaparthi for my 11th grade. Accordingly, I sat for the entrance exam. However, to my disappointment, the combination of subjects I wanted to pursue was not available in the girls' school and I was offered another course combination. Since I first hesitated and then finally decided to accept what was offered, my admission was not assured. Upset at the unexpected turn of events, I spent a restless night, angry with my brother for having put me through this ordeal and expressed my intention to go back to Hyderabad. The

only advice that my brother gave me was to wait for one more day and trust Swami. My brother's conviction and trust in Swami made me stay back that day. I am glad I did as I learnt the most powerful lesson that Swami's Word and Will are unalterable and He always stands by His Word no matter what the circumstances are.

Next day in Darshan Swami came out of the mandir and went straight to my brother and the following exchange took place:

Swami to my brother: "*Seat mil gaya?*" (Did she get accepted?)

My brother: "No Swami".

Swami to Headmistress aunty: "Why Srinivas's sister didn't get a seat?"

Aunty: "We gave her the seat, but she refused it."

Swami back to my brother: "Why did she refuse the seat?"

My brother: "Swami she wanted Math and they gave Commerce, and then she said she will take anything but they asked her to go."

Swami to Headmistress aunty: "Give her what she wants".

After the Lord of the Universe had settled the matter personally, He went about His regular Darshan round that morning. Witnessing His concern for my petty stubbornness, I was moved to tears. I saw Him go from my brother to Headmistress aunty, back and forth trying to sort my situation ... just because I cried the previous night and asked Him to do something for me in the morning or I was never coming back there. I was so dumbfounded and humbled by His immediate intervention and response to my prayer. **Even Headmistress aunty said how lucky I was that Swami thought about me and my small problem and paid such detailed attention to my wishes. By the way, I got my preferred subject group which until then was available only at the boys' school!**

Truly a Dream Wedding!

From then on, He has showered so much love on our family and answered our every prayer, including my mother's ardent wish that He perform both her daughters' weddings. He personally supervised and arranged my sister's wedding in Puttaparthi, looking after every aspect from the date and venue of the marriage to the minutest details about the traditional nadaswaram music, the menu and so on. He even sent one of His cars, decorated with roses, to transport the bride and groom to the marriage hall. The day before the designated date, He personally performed their wedding in a private ceremony, chanting the mantras while my brother-in-law tied the necklace that Swami materialized, to solemnize their wedding, and said, **"This is your true marriage; tomorrow you marry for the world"**. He has also fulfilled my sister's wish that Swami provide her with her mangalasutra, the necklace worn as a symbol of marriage in Hindu culture. It was truly a dream wedding.

"See! I Always keep My promises!"

A couple of months before my wedding, He granted mother and me an interview. My mother expressed her concern about my fiancé Partha and I

having frequent disagreements and asked Swami to take care of us and grant us more patience and restraint. Swami just smiled and told my Mom one incident, confirming His omniscience beyond belief.

One day, Partha and I had had a disagreement. I went to sleep very upset and disheartened. As soon as I fell asleep, Swami came in my dream. He took me in His arms and cradled me like a mother. He held me as a mother holds a child all night and didn't say a word. Next morning I woke up feeling overwhelmed by His love. However I didn't say anything to my mother as I did not want her to know the background and be concerned. I mentioned it only to Partha and we were both sorry about the fight and so touched by Swami's concern. After all these months, in the interview, Swami narrated this entire dream to Mom and said, "You need not tell me to take care. I know more than you know about what is happening with her and I will always be there, just like I was there for her that night. They will be fine; you don't worry." Needless to say we were overjoyed at Swami's love for us and awed by His all-knowing nature.

My wedding was also held in Puttaparthi. However, Swami was away at Bangalore at that time. He had earlier presented us both with wedding clothes. After the wedding, we went to Whitefield and He blessed us with *padanamaskar*. Subsequently, we made many visits to Puttaparthi but never got an interview. Somewhere at the back of our minds it was troubling both my husband and I that Swami had not spoken to us as a couple yet. Finally after a year or so one day, I held His photograph and cried and told Him that I can't take His silence any longer and He should show me in some way that He is not angry with me.

In less than a week my brother called up with some great news. My mother had just then returned from the USA and had gone straight to Puttaparthi to have Swami's Darshan and spend some time with my brother. I was to go and get her back to Hyderabad in a week. That day in Darshan Swami spoke to my mother and asked her if I was coming to Puttaparthi to take her. My mom said yes and Swami said "Good, ask her to come". I was thrilled with the news and after that day Swami asked my mother the same question for rest of the week! My Mom would call and say everybody is so astonished, because He keeps asking, "Is she coming, is she coming?" I couldn't wait to go to Puttaparthi. My husband was planning to visit his parents, so he was leaving for Orissa the same day as I was to depart for Puttaparthi. A day prior, Swami asked my brother if Partha was coming with me. My brother replied in the negative. When he told me so, I took it as a hint. It took some convincing to bring my husband to Puttaparthi as he was eagerly looking forward to seeing his parents. But finally, with Swami's Grace we both came to Puttaparthi and to this day we count it as the luckiest day of our lives.

Swami called us for an interview and He showered so much love on Partha, gave him so many gifts... it felt to me that He was trying to put to rest all my doubts about Him being upset with us. He made us feel so loved and accepted in a way that only He can. He created a beautiful chain for me and asked Partha to tie it around my neck. And then Swami pronounced our

wedding vows. A year into our marriage, we were married yet again and my dream of a perfect wedding, the way I saw it happen for my sister....was coming true for me.

He then told my mother "See! I always keep My promises. Now I saw to the wedding of both your girls. You don't worry about anything I will always be with you all."

What more could anyone ask for.....He has given us a lifetime of love and all He wants in return, and I quote His own words to me: "Swami does not want anything from you *bangaru*. Just be a perfect daughter, a perfect daughter-in-law, let your in-laws always be proud about getting Swami's child as a daughter-in-law. Be a good wife and be a good mother."

And that my dear friends is all that Swami ever asks from each of us...To be the best we can be, to do the best we can do. For everything else, He is there to take care.

H2H SEPCIAL

“HE IS MY SWAMI”

- Conversation with Mrs. Padma Kasturi - Part 3

This is the third and final part of the conversation between Mrs. Padma Kasturi (PK), daughter of Sri N Kasturi, Swami's biographer and Ms. Rajeshwari Patel (RP), a former student and faculty member in the Anantapur campus of Sathya Sai University, aired on Radio Sai a few weeks ago. Click below to read the previous parts of this article.

RP: Ma'am, Why don't you share with us some of your own experiences with Bhagavan?

PK: Yes, sharing is very wonderful. My marriage was celebrated here during Dasara festival in 1950 in the old mandir. At that time the new mandir – Prashanti Nilayam - was not open until later that year. So both the Dasara and the Birthday celebrations were clubbed and celebrated in November. After my marriage, when He gave interview to both, me and my husband, He blessed me by creating a fruit and told me: “The next time you come, you will bring with you a son.”

Sai Protects the Pregnancy

After six months I conceived. But after the sixth month of pregnancy, there was some complication – I had high blood pressure. The Doctors were very worried and they asked me to not take any salt in my food, etc. At that time medical science was not as advanced and they thought that since I have high blood pressure, I might get fits during labour. So they put me on medication. My parents were very worried. They came to Puttaparthi and told Swami everything. Then Swami created a piece of sugar candy and gave it to my father saying: “When she is taken into the labour ward, you can put this in her mouth and the delivery will be painless.”

In the eighth month, they found that due to a lot of albumen in my urine, there was a lot of swelling in my body. They took me into a nursing home and kept me under observation and medication. I was in the nursing home that whole month and the albumen was under control. The Doctor said: “You have been here since the last whole month and since the child has not grown fully yet, it would take at least another 15 days for the delivery. Why don't you go home and continue being under the same diet and medication?”

So I went home; I was discharged from the nursing home on February 28th. But Swami had said that the delivery would take place in the first week of March. One day, at home, suddenly I experienced some pain and got myself admitted in the nursing home again. The Doctors said: “This is the first

delivery that we don't know what the cause of the pain is! But since you are here, why don't you spend the night here and go home tomorrow morning?"

That night, I still had pain but it was bearable. When my mother had come to Puttaparthi, Swami had told her not to worry and that He would be there at that time. My mother thought that maybe Swami would come to Bangalore in February or March. But Swami corrected her: "No! Not physically but spiritually!"

RP: Oh!

PK: Then I felt some pain - I think it was around 3:30 or 4 in the morning. Then I felt I saw a hand near me! In those days Swami used to wear different colour robes; pink, yellow, not just orange. And I saw one hand in pink sleeves come and start to rub on my stomach! I could feel the touch!

RP: And you saw it too? A pink color robe!

PK: I wanted to catch the hand but I couldn't and I was scared too because it was only 1952 and I didn't know much about Swami and all these miracles then! I immediately called my mother: "*Amma!* Some hand came and it started rubbing on my stomach! I don't know what it was!" She said: "Don't worry! I saw Swami standing by your bed."

RP: She saw Him? She was in the room too?

PK: Yes. She was sleeping next to me in the room.

RP: So she saw Him!

PK: Yes. She said: "It must be Swami!" Then, on the next day, the Doctor said: "The baby's head has turned; maybe the delivery may take place today!" After that the labour pains increased and they took me to the labour ward and immediately my mother put that sugar candy in my mouth. As I was lying on the labour table, sucking on the candy, and as the juice was going in, I went into deep sleep! It was a sort of chloroform!

My whole family – my parents and my in-laws were there. The Doctor said: "The delivery cannot take place while she is sleeping! So all of you can go home."

RP: The Doctor didn't know about Swami!

PK: Yes! My mother had asked one of the nurses to be with me. And when I felt some pain the nurse immediately called my mom: "*Amma!* Please come! The baby is coming out!" Then she ran and came and of course the delivery took place!

RP: So it was a painless delivery!

PK: Yes, painless. But the baby was very small – only 3 and 1/4 pounds but he didn't cry! He was bleeding through the nose and the mouth so they had to give him an injection and he was very weak too. They then gave him a bath and put him in the incubator.

The nurse said: "I am very worried about the mother having the blood pressure and also about what would happen to the child since he was so weak." Three days passed and she didn't have any hope for the child. Then she said: "You talk about this Sai Baba. Why don't you go and ask Him or get some *prasaadam*?"

So my father came to Puttaparthi. And as soon as he entered the gate – the Dashavatara gate; which was a big bungalow then, with a big portico and a veranda – Swami was standing on the veranda. As soon as He saw my father entering, He asked him: "How are you? Are you worried about the child because he is so weak? You see, because he was so small, the delivery was very easy! I came there to turn the child's head and that Padma wanted to catch My hand! How can she get it?"

RP: He even mentioned that?

Overwhelming Divine Concern

PK: Yes! And then He sent some vibhuti for me and the child to smear all over the body after the bath on the tenth day and also to give it to him everyday and He instructed him to not bring the child for *namakarana* (naming ceremony) until he was 5-6 months old. And He gave another instruction – the reason I want to mention it is to show how Swami takes care of even the minutest details! He said: "Because she had the high blood pressure problem, ask your wife to take care of the child during the night so she can have some good sleep." He also said: "Your house is in a place where there are a lot of mosquitoes! So you must stitch a big mosquito curtain so that your wife, Padma and the child can sleep." See how He is?

RP: So much concern! And to even make observations like these!

PK: Yes. So we brought him here on the 5th month and then He named him. In those days, we were allowed to do *paadapooja* (worshipping His feet) for every occasion. Do you know about *paadapooja*?

RP: I have heard about it but we would like to hear it from you; so please tell us.

PK: Opposite the interview room there is a room which we used to call the *paadapooja* room.

RP: Right across the interview room which is now closed?

PK: Yes. We used to keep a plate under Swami's Feet and worship His Feet

with plain water first, and then collect that water and wipe His Feet with a towel and then wash His feet with rose water too. That water used to be collected too. Then we would worship His Feet with *haldi*, *kumkuma* (turmeric and vermillion) and flowers and we used to garland Swami!

RP: Was everybody given the opportunity to do this *pooja*?

PK: Yes. Each time we came and while returning, and on any small occasion, He would accept it.

RP: Now He doesn't allow us to touch His Feet!

PK: We used to garland Him and He used to give us some *prasaadam* and we used to eat it and do aarti and then he kept my son on His lap and named him Sai Ramesh. He said: "You can call him Ramesh but his name will be Sai Ramesh."

Abundant Blessings For Her Son

After one year, we came for his *annaprashna* – that is giving his first solid food; porridge with rice and milk and sugar – which He fed him by holding him on His lap.

On his third year He did the *aksharabhyasam* – the ceremony of the writing of the first letter before putting the child in school. That was a very auspicious and a different experience too which I would like to narrate.

RP: Yes, of course!

PK: By that time I had my second child too. Swami said: "How can you manage both the kids together? Why don't you put the older child in school?" I said: "Swami, the *aksharabhyasam* has not been done yet." He said: "I will do it before you go." I was here in Puttaparthi at that time. He said: "You arrange everything, and I will come to your home tomorrow and do it." So we arranged that. Since there were no shops here at that time, we had to ask somebody to go to Bukkapatanam and get the slate and the slate pencil and in those days we didn't have any big chair or anything for Swami to sit on. We had a big wooden box and we placed some cushion and a cloth and He sat on it. This was during bhajans.

RP: So while bhajans were going on in the mandir, Swami would go around visiting people?

PK: Yes. Bhajans were between 11 and 12.

RP: Everyday?

PK: Yes, everyday!

RP: Not like now – just half an hour! And Swami would walk around?

PK: Yes. And Swami would do so many other things too – this *paadapooja*, interviews – all during bhajan time! And He would go to people's houses too! So, He said: "How can I sit on this high wooden box and do the *aksharabhyasam*? Please put it down!"

There was a wooden plank, so we put that down and we spread the cushion and He sat on the floor! And He asked my son to sit on His lap!

RP: That was his fortune!

PK: Yes. Then He asked me to bring some rice in a plate and He wrote *Aum Namoh Narayana Namaha* on it.

RP: On that?

PK: On the rice! Then He wrote *Aum* on the slate and then He asked him to put *haldi*, *kumkuma* on what He had written – like a pooja – and He held his hand and made him write that too!

RP: What did He make him write?

PK: *Aum Namoh Narayana Namaha* – that full *beeja mantra*. He had given a *navaratna* (nine-gemmed) ring to my father whom He now asked him to give and He wrote on my son's tongue "*Aum Namoh Narayana Namaha*."

RP: With that ring? Using it as a pen?

PK: Yes, with the ring.

RP: Great! But what about the slate? He didn't use the slate?

PK: He did! He made him write on the slate and the rice too! And He wrote it on his tongue too! Then after that, He asked him to do *namaskaaram* (pay obeisance) to all of us – his parents and his grandparents, and He asked my father to bring him upstairs to the bhajans and there He gave him some sweet box.

RP: So it was a real big day for him!

PK: Yes! When he was 2 yrs old, we would come here a lot and as soon as we would come here, we would get an interview.

RP: Did you record all of those interviews?

PK: No. in those days there were no tape-recorders.

RP: Recorded them in words?

PK: No. From whatever I can remember...

RP: You were already saying that about Swami, you remember everything – you might have forgotten other things, but this you can't!

PK: Yes. Then He said: "You must have another child. When he will go to school, what will you do? You will get bored!"

RP: He said that?

PK: Yes. So when he was 1 ½ years old, I conceived again and when I went to the Doctor, she scolded me: "You had high blood pressure during your first pregnancy! It's too early! I am afraid it will repeat again!"

My father was here; he had come here after retirement. I wrote a letter to my father and a letter to Swami. Then Swami said: "No. Do not worry!" and he sent a letter with my father with about 40 packets of vibhuti! He said: "Let her take this in water every night before going to bed and there will be no blood pressure problem."

Second Son is Sai's Prasad

And nothing happened! Though I did have to go to the Doctor every month and she used to write out some medicines and I used to bluff her with: "Oh! It's working wonderfully!" I never took them – just vibhuti! Maybe that's why He named the second son as Sai Prasaad!

Then when he was 2-3 years old, He said once again: "This boy will go to school" I said: "Swami! This will go on again and again! Everybody who is born will have to go to school! But I can't be delivering every time!"

He said: "No. You must have one more child!"

RP: He insisted?

PK: Yes! So when he was 2 years old, I conceived again! At that time my father was working as an Assistant Producer in Bangalore in the All India Radio. After retirement, he was working there for three years.

RP: He shifted here?

PK: He and my mother. My grandmother was here. Swami said: "I will take care, you both go." It is the Indian custom where they take the daughter to their parent's house in the sixth month and she will stay there for a month and to make her happy, they give her to eat whatever she desires.

RP: Yes, usually that's a tradition.

Delivery Deliberations

PK: My parent's house and my in-laws house were very close by. When my mother would call me and insist me to come to her house, I would say: "No. It's too nearby!" Whenever they would call me, I had to go – so it felt as though I was staying in my in-laws house. So I thought I better go to Puttaparthi and stay with my grand-mother for one month.

At that time, Swami was in Bangalore and had come for dinner to my father's house. My mother said: "You ask Swami. We can't ask Him like that!" So when Swami came for dinner, I asked Him: "Swami, I would like to stay in Puttaparthi for a month with my grandmother so I could be of some help to my grand-mother." Swami joked: "Oh! You want to come to Puttaparthi? It's just an excuse! Alright, why don't you come?"

So I came to Puttaparthi and stayed here. At that time we had a problem of not knowing where to have the delivery because if we would have had it in Bangalore, there would be nobody to help my mother around in the house because she had to help me and be with me in the hospital. So she was a little worried. By that time, the General Hospital had opened in Puttaparthi. But we didn't know if Swami would agree or not.

When I was here one day with my grandmother, Swami came and asked me: "What are your plans?" I said: "Swami, I don't have any plans. Whatever you say, I will do that." He said: "Why don't you have the delivery here itself? There's a hospital here! You always want Swami and a hospital – now both are here!"

I said: "But Swami, it's only the sixth month! I cannot stay here for so long!" because there was no convenience in coming here at that time.

RP: Yes, there was a lot of difficulty making your way to come here to Puttaparthi. Did you come here by bullock cart then?

PK: Oh yes! Even in those days, we had to take the first the train, then bus, then bullock-cart and all that.

RP: I remember when we came in 1972; we came to Bukkapatnam by a bullock-cart!

PK: Yes! So I told Him: "Why don't I go to Bangalore for a month and I can come back here for the delivery because after the delivery, for three months then I wouldn't be able to go back and make that journey."

He said: "No! You stay here because the *budhi* and *jnana* – the intelligence – is formed in the womb after 6 months! So you be here and do the *naamasmarana* (chanting god's name) and bhajans."

RP: Well, Swami! He is the Creator and He knows what is happening in the sixth month of pregnancy! So that's when the child gets the intelligence?

PK: Yes. That's what He said and that's why they say about why one must keep a pregnant woman happy.

RP: Yes, they say that in the scriptures too!

PK: Yes. So I stayed on. And in those days, we could not get much fruits and all that. So whenever some devotee came and brought some fruits for Swami, He would send some fruits or apples or bananas to our home! Now and then He would come to our house to check me. When the ninth month came, my mother came here too.

Swami had gone to Tirupathi to attend that First Divine Life Society Conference in Venkatagiri and He came back with so many *sanyasis* (renunciants)!

RP: This was in 1961?

PK: No, in 1957. Many *sanyasis* followed Him and they were all in Puttaparthi. On the day before Ramnavami, I started to feel some pain in the afternoon and my second son - who was just three years old then - was there too. I was lying down and he asked me: "Why are you lying down mother?" I said: "I have some fever, I want some vibhuti from Swami and then I will be okay."

Sai Arranges for Her Total Care

He did not know what to do! In those days, Swami used to climb up the hill – where the University is now – there were some big, huge rocks there and Swami used to take some people there in the evening and give them interviews or to have some conversations.

RP: You mean, while the bhajans were going on?

PK: No, before that too – around four or five o'clock. So my son started to climb up the hill to get some vibhuti for his mother. Swami saw him and asked him: "What is the matter?" He said: "Swami, mother is having some fever and she wants some vibhuti." Since He knew that the time was close to delivery, He came down and came and asked me: "Do you want to go to the hospital?" I said: "Swami, I don't know, whatever You say!"

He said: "Let me arrange some bed for you." Because there were some old village people in the ladies ward; there were four beds there. He said: "I will go and talk to the Doctors and arrange a room for you." He went to Dr. Sitaramaiya's house – who was in charge then – to arrange a room. My father's house was on the East block. He said: "The Doctor will put the bed in the labour room itself." There were only four rooms in the Hospital then – one four-bed room for the men, one four-bed room for the women, one labour room and one central hall – that's all. It was a very small hospital.

But then He said: "But no! If you lie there, it will be too far from the bathroom!" that's how considerate He was! Then He said: "Since there is only one man

lying in the men's ward, I will ask them to put him in the veranda and I will make a special four-bed ward for you!"

Then He told my mother: "Since the cars cannot climb up on the hill, I will find some jeep so that she can be taken by the jeep to the hospital and I will come after bhajans."

RP: So He took care of everything!

PK: Yes! Then the bhajans were going on but after the bhajans there was no jeep and I was finding it very difficult to stay home because the pain was increasing. Then He came for dinner – in those days He used to come to the other side for dinner; and His sister was serving Him; the ladies could approach Him.

My mother went up there and told Swami: "She is finding it very difficult to stay at home; it might be better if we took her now." He said: "There is no jeep available right now, what can I do?" then He asked for water and He created something and put it in the water and He said: "You give this to her to drink and the pain will subside and then you can take her."

She brought it - it was some fruit juice and it smelt very good! I drank it and the pain subsided and I could even walk up to the hill!

RP: You walked up?

PK: Yes, I walked up! We went to the hospital and I lay down and the pain subsided. There were two male doctors and there was no mid-wife or nurse or anything. There was only one lady who knew little of nursing, so Swami sent her in too along with my mother. My mother and she then started to discuss what to do because they were not familiar with the whole process of delivery.

The Doctors were sitting in the veranda and they gave us everything that was needed – scissors, thread, etc. - and said: "If there is any problem, we will be here, waiting." The pain subsided and I had a good sleep. Suddenly that lady remembered that on that same day, there was another lady who was a cook there – from some village who had delivery experience. So she went and brought that lady there. But the night passed.

The next day was Ramanavami and the bhajans were going on between 9 and 10 in the morning – on other days it was usually between 11 and 12. It was summer and in those days, there was no current or water facility in Puttaparthi.

RP: How did they manage?

PK: With fans!

RP: And with water?

PK: There was a well then!

RP: Oh! So you had to go and draw the water!

He Takes Over Completely

PK: Yes! Then Swami came to the hospital around 9 and said: “What happened?” I said: “Everything subsided - nothing happened!” He said: “Since you have already been having too many problems and since it was *ashtami* (8th lunar day in the month – not considered auspicious), I stopped it! Today is Ramanavami and the child will be born today!” Then He gave two packets of vibhuti to my mother and said: “After the delivery, rub this on her stomach. Once the pain increases, she will not be able to eat any food! So bring some food now and give it to her.” So my mother went and brought some food for me.

RP: It’s amazing! The amount of care He has taken!

PK: Yes! Then in the evening around 6 or so Swami took everybody to the Chitravathi River. It was April and because of the heat I was exhausted. I just had some pain but there was no delivery. Someone said to Swami: “Swami! She is there in the hospital! What if something happens there?” He said: “No! Nothing will happen until I return! You can all come!”

So He took everybody to Chitravathi and there it seems He created from the sand Lord Rama, Laxmana and Sita idols and they did some bhajans and Swami delivered a Discourse and He created some *amrita* too!

RP: On Ramanavami day!

PK: Yes, on Ramanavami day! At that same moment, here, I felt some severe pain and I was sweating a lot. There was nobody there to help except my mother; she was crying and didn’t know what to do – she was so upset!

It seems that when Swami was distributing *amrita* to the ladies there, He suddenly said: “Oh! My back is painning!” He was sweating a lot and then He sat down for 2-3 minutes, stretching His legs.

RP: Oh! So that means He had taken the pain on Himself?

PK: Yes. He was rubbing Himself with His handkerchief that He has. Of course, they all came and helped Him. It was 8-8:30 by then!

RP: So the devotees were with Him on the sands of the Chitravathi River so late? They used to take lanterns with them?

PK: Yes – torches, lanterns, etc. Also, whatever idols He used to create from the sands there, they used to bring it to the mandir and keep it in the shrine and do *aarti* there – it was the usual custom then.

Then they brought the idols and did *aarti*. I was of course becoming very weak and exhausted by then. There was no sign of delivery! Then Swami came back and a lot of ladies were there too – some of them gossiping: “Why did you come here? You should have gone to Bangalore!”

Because of my weakness and exhaustion, my mother was getting very worried; she went to Swami and started crying. He was having His dinner. She said: “Swami! She is suffering a lot!” He said: “No, there’s nothing to worry!” He then created some *vibhuti* and told her: “You mix it with water and give it to her. I will come too.”

Then she came and mixed the *vibhuti* in water and as she was giving it to me, Swami came into the hospital!

RP: Imagine! What time was it then?

PK: It was 9:30 p.m or so! I wanted to get up but He said: “No! Lie down. What has happened?” I said: “Swami it is very awful, I can’t bear it!” He said: “That is *samsara* (worldly life)!”

RP: Ok! He summarized it in just one word!

‘Call Out Sai Ram!’ - Baba

PK: I said: “Swami! It was not like this during the first two deliveries! It was easy then; but this time I don’t know what has happened! I am suffering so much!” Then He said: “When you have pain, why do you call out ‘Amma! Amma!’? Why don’t you call out: ‘Sai Ram! Sai Ram!’?”

RP: Oh! So that was another indirect lesson!

PK: Yes. But I was bold enough and I said: “Swami, even though I did not say: “Sai Ram!’ you know that I was not calling out for my mother - it was for You only!” Then He said: “No Padmamma, it’s not like that! When the pain comes, you must say: “Sai Ram!”

Then Swami stood by the door - which was towards the side of my head on the bed - and He took the lady outside and told her to instruct me that when the pain comes, let us say: “Sai Ram!” then as He was standing near the door, He waved His hand. And though He was standing far, He was making some gestures with His hand and immediately I felt a thud in my stomach and then immediately the pain came and I said ‘Sai Ram’ and the child was born!

RP: And Swami was standing by the door?

PK: Yes! And immediately the child was born!

RP: My God!

So Intimate...Just Like Family

PK: And when He heard the child's cry, He went down. The next day, in the evening, He came to the hospital again and in those days there was no electricity so there was no light; He had brought a torch along – He used to have a big torch with six cells. Then when He saw the child He said: "Oh! Such a small baby! And for the delivery of this, you had to go through so much!"

Then He joked with me: "Oh! You wanted a daughter and you got another son! Are you not happy?" Then on the eighth day, my father came to Puttaparthi. He went straight to see Swami, he did not come to me first – that's how he was.

Then Swami narrated to him all that happened on Chitravathi and that's when we found out that Swami had taken my pain! He told my father: "There was no body there except her mother, and she was in so much agony, so I had to take the pain; and then everything was alright."

Then He brought my father along with Him and told him: "See! Padma is very angry with Me and is not talking to Me because she did not get a daughter!" He was behaving just like family!

RP: Yes! So finally, since He allowed so much intimacy with you and your family, what would you say Bhagavan means to you then?

PK: He was like a close relative – He was more than a Mother to me, because of His Compassion and Care.

RP: So you were never awed by His Divinity?

PK: I couldn't see Him as someone Divine or His Divinity because He was so close and took so much care and with so much compassion that I was just attracted to that! I thought that He was a very, very close relative to me – even today! But sometimes - because He has now kept me at a little distance - I can feel His Divinity.

RP: I think we had a very long session. And on a later day, we can share more for our listeners at Radio Sai. Thank you very much for accepting our invitation. Talking to you has been like entering a secret garden of hidden treasures. You are virtually a diamond mine and a treasure trove of Divine showers and blessings! You are indeed fortunate ma'am and we are fortunate too to have been today the recipients – vicarious recipients – of those blessings through you! Thank you very much!

PK: Thank you Rajeshwari for giving me this opportunity of sharing my experiences with you.

SAI WORLD NEWS

WALK FOR VALUES TOUCHES THE HEART OF TORONTO

City revitalizes with the resurgence of values

Over four thousand caring and responsible Toronto residents along with scores of Americans and a few Europeans put their best foot forward as they converged at Yonge-Dundas Square which is the heart of Toronto and then lovingly walked 2 ¼ Km in the prime streets through the downtown core, raising the level of human commitment towards universal human values of Truth, Right Conduct, Peace, Love and Non-Violence that transcend barriers of race, religion, culture and ethnicity. Apart from thousands of onlookers, tourists, drivers and shoppers, what a group of friends it drew! Barbara Robbins and her husband Bernie Michel along with friend Anjali DeSai drove all the way from Hartford, Connecticut in the USA, as did Xavier Gomez, specially to join through the downtown core pledging self-transformation. Professor Anita Sankar from Buffalo, USA came with a bunch of friends and Miss Anita Perrson of Sweden flew in from Europe to walk through Toronto's Yonge-Dundas area, hoping to learn how to organize a similar event in Sweden.

For the fifth year in a row, Toronto, the city that gave birth to the world's most unique walkathon, rocked to the rhythm of righteousness on June 10, 2007 with the banner of the Sathya Sai School of Canada flying high.

A Walk for Me, My Family, and My Community

Under picture perfect weather conditions, a long and disciplined corridor of men, women and children walked through the busiest streets of the city's business district and the seat of local government, promoting and celebrating these cardinal principles of Sathya Sai Education in Human Values. The response from even the most casual passers-by was warm and welcoming. "While walking in downtown Toronto on Sunday I ran into the Walk for Values. I was impressed by how polite people were and the avowed purposes of the walk," says Rob Barlow from Toronto. "I would like to learn more about who Sathya Sai Baba is and His teachings. I would be grateful if you could arrange to mail some literature to me, or forward this e-mail to his organization so they would."

Another Participant, Sa'ad A. Saidullah, an Advocate, Barrister, Solicitor and Notary in Canada said, "I am glad that I was able to join the parade organized by the Parents Council under the name 'Walk for Values' today. It was good to be able to walk with those concerned about violence and its escalation all around the world. I hope that there will be others who follow your example and organize bigger parades and marches for peace elsewhere in the world as well. I believe that running in marathons (such as The Boston Marathon or the New York Marathon) appeals to the strong and sturdy, while 'The Bay Street Rat Race' in Toronto might appeal only to

cut-throat Canadian lawyers of my own class. A walk such as yours involves the whole family and can include the weak as well as the physically handicapped and those with personal limitations. It was wonderful weather and I hope all the other participants enjoyed the Walk for Values as much as I did.”

At the only walk of its kind in the world, participants neither pledged nor sought any monetary contributions. Instead, they had to introspect and pledge to improve an area of personal weakness, by promising to practice any one of the numerous universal values and their sub-values such as patience, caring, love, forgiveness, appreciation, gratitude, conservation, responsibility, discipline, better time management, self-esteem, acceptance, punctuality ... you name it, you could pledge it.

A brainchild of the Parent Council of the Sathya Sai School of Canada, the fifth annual Walk for Values is one of the school's many community outreach projects. The only school of its kind in entire USA and Canada, the Sathya Sai School of Canada provides a values-based Character Education program from JK to Grade 6 founded by beloved Swami in 2000.. The school was also recently rated as a top Toronto school for its excellent academic performance. [To read a cover story on the school from June 2007 issue of H2H, [click here](#)].

The raison d'être behind this walk is that when individuals transform, families improve; when families work towards self-improvement, communities thrive and cities blossom and ultimately countries prosper in peace. The domino's effect to transform the world starting with an individual effort has always been the underlying message of this walk. With each passing year, a growing number of political leaders, policy makers and community representatives have been participating in this event, expressing their admiration and appreciation for Baba's teachings of human values and their universally appeal and relevance at all levels of human endeavours - personal, professional, community or government.

Policy Makers, Media Personalities Endorse Human Values

This year, Honourable Mr. George Smitherman, the Deputy Premier of Ontario and Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, and Honourable Mr. Bas Balkissoon, Member of the Provincial Parliament and Parliamentary Assistant to the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services were present to inaugurate the Walkathon.

City Councillor Honourable Mr. Raymond Cho delivered a message from the Mayor of Toronto. Honourable Mr. John Tory, Leader of Ontario's Progressive Conservative Party and Leader of the Opposition in the provincial parliament was present at the multi-cultural program that followed the walk. Prime Minister of Canada Honourable Mr. Stephen Harper sent a special message of greetings as did other Members of the Canadian Parliament.

Well-known media personalities Mr. Spider Jones of the popular radio station CFRB1010 and Mr. Jake Dheer of Rogers TV took up the roles of Masters of Ceremonies along with Sai youth Mr. Rohit Vishwa. Powerful messages of

self-transformation were presented, celebrated and encouraged through colorful floats, bands, placards, displays, songs, dance and dramatic presentations. The program was interspersed with seven speeches by students of the Sathya Sai School ranging from Junior Kindergarten to Grade 6.

Before the event, TV Channels like ATN and Rogers interviewed the Organizers including Dr. V.P. Singh, Central Coordinator of Sathya Sai Organization, Dayal Mirchandani, President of Sathya Sai Education Trust, Dr. Revathi, Principal, Sathya Sai School, Co-Chairs of Parent Council, Mr Nathan and Mr Niranjan and also Mr. Surinder Sharma who led the Planning & Steering Committee.

The Hard Rock Cafe nearby reinforced the lofty ideals of the Walk with the words 'All is One' and 'Love All Serve All' printed in gold letters on its front walls. A number of business houses joined as community partners and pledged to practice values and bring ethics in business.

As always, the event was open to everyone - individuals, diverse faith groups, businesses, social and cultural clubs ... as long as each participant committed to active self-transformation, leading to social improvement. One of the themes under spotlight this year was conservation of the environment.

National and International Appeal

This walk this year generated a love energy like never before, charging the atmosphere at the event with joy and hope. The ever-dynamic and disciplined Sai youth energized the environment further with their exemplary behaviour and devotion to service and as always, the value girls brought smiles to all with their synchronized and meticulously choreographed moves and catchy value songs. Just observing young Sai adults performing their assigned duties with high levels of discipline and finesse was a treat for many newcomers. The dedicated teams of volunteers from the extended Sai family had further fine tuned the logistics of the walk, after carefully reviewing the feedback received from previous years. The theme of the walk was a 'Walk for Me, My Family and My Community' and the program was more family-oriented this year.

Barely had the walk concluded when a colourful multicultural carnival took off. Talented performers representing the diverse cultural mosaic that is Toronto, performed some outstanding dances while the walkathon participants settled down to enjoy their lunch. The venue at Dundas Square truly became the epicentre of Toronto's multicultural hub with dance performances by groups representing rich and ancient traditions such as the Chinese, Irish, Russian, Latin, Egyptian and Indian.

A variety of food stalls, Food Bank collection booth, exhibits on Value Parenting, henna tattoos, handicrafts, face painting and games for children were part of the carnival that attracted large crowds. Over 18 community groups as well as students from several public schools in the York Region,

including Middlefield Collegiate Institute and Cedarbrook Public School took part this year besides the large Sathya Sai School community, bringing the total number of active participants to well over 4000.

Proving that you cannot hide a good thing too long, the Sathya Sai School of Toronto is emerging as a trailblazer across the great nation that is Canada and its fame is also spreading beyond national borders. The Walk for Values 2007 took place at the same time across 9 other cities in Canada. Apart from Toronto, it was also held in Calgary, Coquitlam, Edmonton, Kingston, Ottawa, Regina, Saskatoon and Winnipeg. Earlier in March this year, the Walk was held nationally in Australia in cities such as Brisbane, Adelaide, Melbourne, Perth and Sydney. While Albany in USA also attempted a similar walk, some other cities in the USA are keen to learn and replicate it in their areas.

Mr. Ramesh Maharaj is a proud grand-father of two Sathya Sai School students Ajay and Arun and each year he volunteers to coordinate the event in other parts of the country. In his report he remarks, "The Walk in downtown Toronto, was the best and most exciting yet. Just holding it in downtown had its own dynamism. Participants were joined by so many from surrounding towns and cities including friends of the school from Montreal in the province of Quebec, London-Ontario, Buffalo-New York and Hartford-Connecticut and even Sweden, as well as other community groups from schools, churches and spiritual movements ... all of whom added to the impact in the big city.

"Nationally across our great nation, the Walk in Coquitlam, British Columbia, held in collaboration with the Teddy Bear Parade, was also the best ever done in BC. Despite the rain, the turn out was massive and the Human Values presented created a stir among members of the public. In Ottawa, participants walked in the nation's capital and on Parliament Hill itself. Kingston too walked downtown. Regina had a great turnout with the Mayor declaring the day as Human Values Day. Calgary, Winnipeg, and Edmonton - all these cities had a great Walk for Values 2007.' Saskatoon is doing their WALK on June 17th.

"Let us pray to Swami for His continued help in spreading His Message of Human Values throughout the World by means of these exciting and enjoyable events - by the way of 'International Walk for Values'. "

Taking Sai Message Mainstream

Selecting Dundas Square in the heart of Toronto's central business district, a high visibility and frequented spot as this year's venue proved to be the best move ever made by the steering committee. Under the leadership of Mr. Surinder Sharma, the dedicated volunteers began the planning of this event almost a year in advance by approaching various city departments for permits and coordinating the route of the walk in close consultation with the police department. Various committees swung into action shortly after the Walk for Values 2006 concluded and the feedback from participants and committees was collated.

Be it the promotions team, the T-shirts committee, the liaison group that applies for the permits and books the venues nearly a year ahead of the event, the police department contact persons, the floats design and assembly teams, the sound engineers, the Sai youth in-charge of web streaming, the value girls who meet up despite their exams to practice their value songs, the food committee volunteers who start preparing over 3000 vegetarian sandwiches and snacks a day in advance and through the night leading to the walk and storing them in a refrigerated truckhundreds of volunteers dedicated to Baba's message that "the hands that serve are holier than the lips that pray" attend monthly and weekly meetings, after work that run late into the night through the long and severe Canadian winter, to ensure that when summer finally comes, Canadians welcome it marching to the tunes of such wholesome values as Truth, Beauty and Goodness.

For the parents of the Sathya Sai School of Canada and the thousands of Sai devotees that live in the Greater Toronto Area, participating in the planning and preparation of the annual Walk for Values is an ideal opportunity to emulate Swami's example of love and service.

While the drive to bring awareness about individual transformation is the visible goal of the exercise, there are many more profound lessons and experiences of divine intervention and grace that are received at every step of the preparatory process.

For starters, the walkathon generates pure love and unity among the many groups of Sai devotees and school parents who participate in its planning and execution. It inspires those involved to be the best they can be because the atmosphere is charged with noble ideals that the school's Founder, Sathya Sai, personifies. The need to go back and pray and seek divine interventions is felt frequently, reminding everyone of the invisible hand of God that ensures all obstacles are overcome, even if at the very last moment.

This year's Promotions Committee is a perfect point in case. Since the organizers were venturing into a completely new territory by exploring a new venue, it was felt that it would help to promote the event at this new locale a fortnight ahead of schedule so that businesses in the area and others who frequent it would have an idea of what to expect. What seemed like a pretty simple idea at the outset proved to be quite a challenge as the proposed date approached! But for every challenge that came along the way, divine intervention and grace were available in abundance.

Pre-W4V Community Promotion - A Resounding Success!

Here is an eye-witness account of how it happened and as it happened:

Friday evening, 6 PM, May 26, 2007

Two team members are busy giving final touches to their PowerPoint presentation for the upcoming community promotion event scheduled for Sunday, May 27, 2007. The promotion aims to create added awareness about

the Walk for Values two weeks ahead of the scheduled event at the chosen location where it is going to be held for the very first time. Weather forecasts for the day for the Promo event look glum, forcing the planners to create back up plans and sincerely call upon the tried, tested and true intervention from the divine so as to keep the rain out of their parade, literally.

And then there are always the other details that scream for attention and accommodation! For starters, the team finds out at the very last minute of course, that, even to hold a small promotional event at venue, namely Dundas Square in downtown Toronto, where the Walk for Values 2007 will be held two weeks later, a permit from the City of Toronto is required. It is late Friday afternoon and no sanctioning officials are available!

How the Divine Steps in...

A young parent and community worker who believes in the vision and mission of the school steps in and traces the official who is authorized to sanction the permit, to her residence, and informs the organizers to fax the request to her immediately. A glimmer of hope sets in. Soon it comes to the team's attention that the permit will cost \$500! Since there is no time to seek approval from the Walk for Values committee for such an expense for merely creating pre-event awareness, one of the team members takes the leap of faith and decides to foot the bill herself. After all, the event must go on, given its importance.

Friday evening, 7.30 PM, May 26, 2007

More Surprises!

The meeting begins and the members make their presentation to the volunteers who are ready to participate on Sunday May 27th. Half way through, Grade 1 teacher of the School Miss Poddar, who is constantly on the line with the helpful interventionist, receives the news that given the civic and social focus of the event, the \$500 fee has been waived by the city! The parents and volunteers at the meeting break into a spontaneous applause.

The discussion now turns to the need for a contingency plan on the day of the promo event. After scouring through the various weather networks, it is obvious that Sunday is going to be a washout with a 70% chance of thunderstorm and rain throughout the entire day. A W4V committee member, Mr. Deo Goocool dismisses all the forecast. With utmost confidence, he asserts the day will turn out just fine! With that assurance from an unflinching Deo, the presenters resolve that come rain or shine, they intend to be there at the venue. On Sunday, the event will begin at 12 noon no matter what.

Sunday morning, 10.30 AM, May 27, 2007- The Day of the Scheduled Event

At 10:30 AM on Sunday, the sky is gloomy and grey and it is spitting/drizzling/raining across the city of Toronto. Despite the uncertainty looming, everyone is trying to be optimistic. Many are praying really hard.

HE Comes to the Rescue, Again!

Divine intervention # 3 occurs as all participants continue to glance up towards the heavens praying that no rain comes crashing down on their efforts. By 11:15 AM, the sky decides to hold its moisture within its clouds for the next little while. The day appears calm and uneventful for now.

Sunday afternoon, 12 noon, May 27, 2007

Dundas Square is a hub of activity with Sathya Sai School parents, volunteers, teachers, school choir, Sai youth and supporters all working in unity, setting up a small stage and information booth in a prominent corner, right beside what may possibly be the busiest crosswalk in Toronto.

In no time, Miss Poddar begins her peppy introduction of the event that draws the attention of passersby who stop and enjoy the singing of the value songs by the school choir, looking impressive in their neat uniforms. An alumni student, Shaumithri Kulendran's rendition of Nelly Furtado's "Powerless" proves to be the ultimate show-stopper and spectators absolutely love the value cheers of the Value Girls, the priceless youth girls from various Sai Centres across the Greater Toronto Area. All are highly disciplined, pleasant, cheerful and spirited. People across the road literally stop what they are doing to listen and watch, thanks to the effective sound system in place.

Meanwhile, volunteers led by school parents and members of the Sai family are not only handing out flyers but also engaging the public in conversation, providing them with valuable insights into the meaning and need for the Walk for Values across all the intersections within one block of the event. Numerous people are signing up to participate.

"What, no money involved? Really!" Are some of the responses from the public. A young couple comes by and loves what they hear. It happens to be the lady's birthday. At her friend's request, the MC announces Kasha's 21st birthday and wishes her well. The crowd joins in. They couple promise to join us and sign up for June 10.

A local school Principal stops by to enquire about the promo event. He loves what he is hearing and seeing and says he is looking for ideas for his school. Tourists in stretch limousines and tour buses stop by and lower their windows to take pictures. Volunteers step forward to hand out flyers which are well received. A group of students visiting from the USA stop and collect all the information. "This is so unique and unusual. So Canadian," they say.

An energetic Sai youth dressed as a loving heart mascot, is running up and down the street, drawing attention to the event and sometimes taking over the microphone, entertaining the crowd with clever limericks and witty slogans. The crowd roars with applause for him.

By now everyone has forgotten about the 70% possibility of rain and thunder. As if to remind us of the divine intervention, Mr. Golden Sun peeks through the clouds dispersing what remains of the gloomy clouds from before.

School teachers Miss Das and Mrs. Jain are busy talking to people, explaining the rationale behind the walk and taking pictures. Miss Chandrakanthan is playing the keyboard while Miss Poddar is the MC at the event and she is also conducting the choir. Some volunteers are handing out flyers while others are holding placards with quotes about values for everyone to see. A very happy and loving energy has infused the environment.

Sunday afternoon, 2.40 PM, May 27, 2007

The promotion is at its climax. Things are moving really well. Grade 4 teacher Mrs. Ganesh crosses the road to the Eaton Centre side to check audio levels and distribute flyers. An elderly gentleman of Caucasian descent approaches her. He seems to be in his early 70's and is dressed in a white shirt with blue pin stripes, khaki pants, hat, glasses and has a grey flowing beard. The gentleman strikes up a conversation with Mrs. Ganesh. He tells her that this promotion is not a political event, but it is simply the right thing. He goes on to elaborate on the approach of the event and claims that it is perfect. You are not pushing anyone, but simply promoting good values. She doesn't tell him anything about the walk, but just listens, happily.

Where is he getting all this from, wonders Mrs. Ganesh. He continues by telling her that when you are doing the right thing, you can't do it the wrong way. He advises her that when we do God's work, we get caught up and think it is our work. Not so. Actually it is He who is guiding us and doing it through us. God is selfish, he jokes, for he gets His work done regardless. A volunteer from across the road notices Mrs. Ganesh is engaged in an intense conversation with a stranger who looks like Jesus. Interesting, he thinks.

The elderly gentleman's attention is now on the students of Sathya Sai School as they gleefully sing value songs. He continues on to talk about the students and how much of a gift they are to the world. He pauses, turns to Mrs. Ganesh and intuitively adds, "The school is doing a wonderful job and the kids are like angels. They bring you happiness."

"I would like you to come and speak to my children," she says.

"I will come and speak to them (your students), not now, but when they least expect it. I am a story teller. I will come to your school one day and tell them the story of the future, the story of peace," he declares.

"Where are you from?" enquires Mrs. Ganesh. "If I can have your contact information, a telephone number, I will arrange for you to come and speak to our students at the school before the end of the year," she says.

"I am a hermit," he replies. **"I have no telephone number. But I will contact you."**

He then crosses the street with her to where the choir is singing and assures her that he will distribute the brochures as he knows 6000 people within his own voluntary organization! She hands him some copies of the brochures and he leaves with a very pleasant smile on his face. In no time, he disappears into the crowd on Yonge Street and is seen no more.

The event continues full steam and more groups of shoppers, tourists, students, passersby, and passengers in transit huddle in groups to watch and learn about the upcoming Walk for Values. Many are interested and all enjoy the music and the value cheers.

Sunday afternoon, 3 PM, May 27, 2007

It's 3 o'clock and the event is a resounding success. It is now at its conclusion, the MC thanks the audience for sharing the afternoon with the Walk for Values promo team and the crews begin to pack up. At 3:30pm we load the vans and the students are all on their way home. The sky decides it can no longer hold on to its moisture and suddenly at 3:30 PM, the rain begins its descent.

Sunday afternoon, 4 PM, May 27, 2007

It is raining like the Indian monsoon in downtown Toronto. The drive home is long and arduous but who really cares. The day was full of joy, full of divine interventions and so full of highs that no rain or traffic jam on the highway can dampen the spirits.

"Truly, where there is Love, there is God, joy and bliss! In whatever capacity each of us played a part, we are better for it because we too made it into the direct gaze of the divine eyes that oversaw the smooth and successful execution of the day!" says Mrs. Karuna Swarup-Munshi, Office Administrator at the Sathya Sai School.

To a casual observer, the Walk for Values 2007 may have been a fun-filled celebration of Love, Truth, Peace, Right Conduct and Non-violence. To the knower within, every year's walkathon represents a baby step towards individual transformation and a giant leap in collective efforts towards a new world order where the values will become the order of the day!

- Walk for Values Steering Committee
of Sathya Sai School, Canada

GET INSPIRED

THE ULTIMATE SOLUTION

A long time ago in China, a girl named Li-Li got married and went to live with her husband and mother-in-law. In a very short time, Li-Li found that she couldn't get along with her mother-in-law at all.

Their personalities were very different, and Li-Li was angered by many of her mother-in-law's habits. In addition, she criticized Li-Li constantly. Days and weeks passed and Li-Li and her mother-in-law never stopped arguing and fighting. But what made the situation even worse was that, according to ancient Chinese tradition, Li-Li had to bow to her mother-in-law and obey her every wish. All the anger and unhappiness in the house was causing Li-Li's poor husband great distress.

Finally, Li-Li could not stand her mother-in-law's bad temper and dictatorship any longer, and she decided to do something about it. Li-Li went to see her father's good friend, Mr. Huang, who sold herbs. She told him the situation and asked if he would give her some poison so that she could solve the problem once and for all. Mr. Huang thought for a while, and finally said, "Li-Li, I will help you solve your problem, but you must listen to me and obey what I tell you." Li-Li said, "Yes, Mr. Huang, I will do whatever you tell me to do."

Mr. Huang went into the back room, and returned in a few minutes with a package of herbs. He told Li-Li, "You can't use a quick-acting poison to get rid of your mother-in-law, because that would cause people to become suspicious. Therefore, I have given you a number of herbs that will slowly build up poison in her body. Every other day prepare some delicious meal and put a little of these herbs in her serving. Now, in order to make sure that nobody suspects you when she dies, you must be very careful to act very friendly towards her. Don't argue with her, obey her every wish, and treat her like a queen." Li-Li was so happy. She thanked Mr. Huang and hurried home to start her plot of murdering her mother-in-law.

Months went by, and every other day, Li-Li served the specially treated food to her mother-in-law. She remembered what Mr. Huang had said about avoiding suspicion, so she controlled her temper, obeyed her mother-in-law, and treated her like her own mother.

After six months had passed, the whole household had changed. Li-Li had practiced controlling her temper so much that she found that she almost never got mad or upset. She hadn't had an argument with her mother-in-law in six months because she now seemed much kinder and easier to get along with.

The mother-in-law's attitude toward Li-Li changed, and she began to love Li-Li like her own daughter. She kept telling friends and relatives that Li-Li was the best daughter-in-law one could ever find. Li-Li and her mother-in-law were

now treating each other like a real mother and daughter. Li-Li's husband was very happy to see what was happening.

One day, Li-Li came to see Mr. Huang and asked for his help again. She said, "Dear Mr. Huang, please help me to keep the poison from killing my mother-in-law! She's changed into such a nice woman, and I love her like my own mother. I do not want her to die because of the poison I gave her."

Mr. Huang smiled and nodded his head. "Li-Li, there's nothing to worry about. I never gave you any poison. The herbs I gave you were vitamins to improve her health. The only poison was in your mind and your attitude toward her, but that has been all washed away by the love which you gave to her."

Swami says, "If there is any defect in your Love, it should be removed only through Love. Love begets Love. Love can be understood only through Love... Transform your entire life into a saga of Love. You will then lack nothing to make you happy. All wealth and position will be added unto you, for Love conquers all!"

- **Adapted from "Islamic stories".**

REPENTENCE AND REWARD

Once upon a time there lived a King by name Satvika who ruled Puri Kshetra (the pilgrim town of Puri in East India). He was deeply devoted to Lord Jagannath (a form of Lord Krishna worshipped in Puri). This King, who was highly learned, was unequalled in debates and ruled the Kingdom in a righteous way. He had but one bad habit - he was obsessed with the game of dice. However much he tried he could not give up this bad habit.

Once, King Satvika, along with his courtiers, went to the Temple to have Darshan of Lord Jagannath. At the time he went to the Temple the screen had been drawn across the Sanctum Sanctorum. King Satvika sat on the 'prakara' (corridor running outside and around the Sanctum Sanctorum) and began to play the game of dice with his Minister.

The screen was opened and the Temple priests came up to King Satvika and informed him that the 'abhisheka' (ritual) was about to be performed. But, he turned a deaf ear to it as he was excitedly playing the game of dice. As the wait for the presence of the King went in vain, the priests commenced the 'abhishekha'. Though the King was again informed about the *puja* being performed, he did not pay heed to it, passionately playing the game of dice.

The priests performed 'Alankara' (decoration), 'nivedanam' (offering of food), and 'karpoora harati' (showing lighted camphor). But, the King was still playing the game of dice. Going to where the King sat, the temple priests requested him to accept the 'prasad'. Turning the dice with his right hand the King extended his left hand to receive the 'prasad'. It has been said in the scriptures that the Lord's 'prasad' should be received in all humility and devotion. Since the King failed to receive the 'prasad' in this manner and had indifferently extended his left hand (which is considered disrespectful), the priests went back without giving him the 'prasad'. After a long time the game of dice came to an exciting close and returning to his normal state the King learnt that the *puja* to the Lord was over and 'prasad' had been distributed.

The King questioned the priests, "Why did you not inform me when the screen was opened?" The priests explained to him, "At every stage of the *puja* we invited you. But, you did not come, as you were playing the game of dice. Moreover, when we came up to you to offer the 'prasad' you extended your left hand. As receiving the 'prasad' in the left hand and giving the 'prasad' to one who receives it in this manner is verily a sin we did not give you the 'prasad'." Realizing his fault the King said to the priests, "You have indeed acted in the right way!"

The King deeply regretted playing dice at the temple instead of worshipping the Lord and also for holding out his left hand for receiving the 'prasad'. He was unable to eat or sleep. He was eaten with remorse that one who had to set an example for the people of his Kingdom had acted so sinfully. He decided to cut off his hand by way of punishing himself. Since he had played the game of dice with the Minister he decided to ask the Minister to cut off his hand and informed him. The Minister was totally shaken by this and refused to

carry it out. The Minister advised him, "It is enough if you seek the Lord's forgiveness from the bottom of your heart!" But, the King was unable to accept this advice.

One day, when the Minister had forgotten about this matter the King said to the Minister, "Oh! Minister! For some time now I have been unable to sleep at nights. Through the window a hand seems to appear into my room and wave out. I think that this might be the work of some ghost!" The Minister thought for a while and said that he would stay that night in the King's room and find out. The King said to the minister, "If you see that hand tonight cut it off. Only then can it be known if it is the work of a ghost or that of a thief." Agreeing to this suggestion the Minister, holding a sword in his hand, stayed awake in the King's room that night. Just as the King had said a hand appeared through the window. Without any delay the Minister cut that hand down.

The Minister was shocked to find the King's ring on the finger of the hand and rushing out of the room he found the King standing there bleeding. Only then did he understand the King's motive in asking him to cut off the 'ghost hand'. Though writhed in pain the King was happy that he had been punished for the wrong he had committed.

Everyone wondered at the devotion and righteousness of the King on learning about this incident. Some time passed and one day the King went to have Darshan of Lord Jagannath. That day, after the *puja* when the priests came to him to offer the 'prasad', King Satvika tried to receive it with both his hands. A miracle occurred when by the Grace of Lord Jagannath the King's right hand was restored!

Deeply touched by the compassion of the Lord, the King said, "I came here today with a decision to give up my life, as losing the right hand is not enough for the wrong done by me. But, oh! Lord! What compassion you have even towards a wicked person like me?" and fell in prostration to Lord Jagannath.

From that day King Satvika undertook the service of the Lord and His devotees as his duty and finally merged with Lord Jagannath.

Courtesy: Sri Sathya Sai Bal Vikas, January 2007

YOU HAVE COME TO THE WRONG ADDRESS

A Rabbi was delivering lectures on the Torah, the sacred Hebrew scripture, to a few young Jewish students.

One day, in the course of their studies, they came across a line which said, "The truly evolved person is he, who continues to smile in the midst of the greatest of difficulties." The young students had a problem accepting this statement at its face value. "If we are truly in difficulty, how is it possible for us to smile under such conditions?" they asked the Rabbi. The Rabbi took off his spectacles and looked at his young pupils thoughtfully. "To be perfectly honest with you," he said, "I myself cannot answer that question. The truth is that I, too, cannot smile when I am in the midst of difficulties. At such moments I seem to forget how to smile." Silence prevailed in the class, as the teacher and the students pondered over the issue.

The Rabbi continued after a pause, "However, I believe there is someone who can give you the answer."

He proceeded to tell his students of an old man who lived in their city, not far from the synagogue. He had been an abandoned child- an orphan. When he grew up, he had lost both his legs in an accident. His life had been a series of struggles, a saga of pain and suffering.

"And yet," continued the Rabbi, "he always wears a lovely smile! He is a wonderful human being. You must go to him and ask him to answer your question."

The students were amazed to hear of this brave man. In a group, they went and knocked at his door. The door was opened by the man himself, moving briskly in a wheel chair. He welcomed the young students cordially and asked them the purpose of their visit...

"Sir, it's this text we are discussing in Class," said one of them hesitantly. "It's all about how one must smile amidst the greatest difficulties in life."

The Rabbi told us that you were the best person to talk to." "Tell us please, sir," added another. "How do you continue to smile amidst so much suffering and pain?" The old man was genuinely surprised. "I'm afraid you have come to the wrong address", he said. "I am 73 years old, and in all these years, I have never had to face any difficulty. The Lord has always been good to me, and protected me in His mercy. How can I teach you how to smile in the midst of difficulties?" This was a man who lived in close proximity with God!

"More Snacks for the Soul"

FEBRUARY, 2007

TEST YOUR SPIRITUAL QUOTIENT

MULTI FAITH QUIZ - JULY

1. Please fill in the blanks (which is the same word repeated four times) in these lines, penned by Bhagavan Baba in Prasanthi Vahini.

When the person engaged in dhyana, forgets both himself and the fact that he is engaged in dhyana, then it becomes _____. That is to say, when he is merged in the thing he meditates on, he enters into the stage called _____. Dhyana fulfils itself, becomes complete, in _____. Dhyana strives, proceeds through effort, but _____ comes effortlessly. It is the culmination of the eightfold discipline, the Ashtanga.

- a. Dharana
 - b. Yoga
 - c. Samadhi
 - d. Prema
 - e.
2. 30th July 2007 is known as Dharma day for Buddhists. What does this festival commemorate?
- a. The occasion when Lord Buddha left the comforts of his palace.
 - b. The occasion when Lord Buddha preached his first sermon.
 - c. The occasion when Lord Buddha defeated a learned brahmin in debate.
 - d. The occasion of Lord Buddha's *mahasamadhi*, or passing away to Nirvana.
3. To whom in the following list of great personages does Bhagavan give the appellation of the greatest of the *Santha-bhakthas* (peace-filled devotees)?
- a. Bhishma
 - b. Mira
 - c. Radha
 - d. Lakshmana
4. In Christianity what does the word *catechism* mean? It is -
- a. An underground chamber used for burial.
 - b. The belief in the infallibility of the Pope.
 - c. Classes on Christian belief.
 - d. The Pope's inauguration ceremony.
5. In the Ramayana what was the bad omen that Ravana exhibited when he learned that Rama's army was outside his city's gates?

- a. Ravana roared through all his ten throats.
 - b. Ravana slipped and fell.
 - c. Ravana choked on his food.
 - d. Ravana fainted.
6. Which religion uses the holy book, the *Tao Te Ching* as its main scripture?
- a. Confucianism
 - b. Zoroastrianism
 - c. Shinto
 - d. Taoism
7. Swami describes three levels of mantras for the use of sadhakas. The first level fills one with the feeling that 'I am Your servant'. The second is 'So Hum' which diminishes the individuality. What is the final mantra?
- a. Om
 - b. Om Namah Shivaya
 - c. Sai Ram
 - d. Hare Krishna
8. Who was the founder of the Hare Krishna movement?
- a. Swami Nikhilananda
 - b. Swami Muktananda
 - c. Meher Baba
 - d. Swami Prabhupada
9. What does Bhagavan state is a hindrance to realizing God for the sadhaka?
- a. Eating sweets.
 - b. The householder's life.
 - c. Body consciousness.
 - d. Sleeping in the afternoon.
10. In Islam what does the Arabic word *adhan* refer to? This is -
- a. The head of the mosque.
 - b. The call to prayer.
 - c. Someone who writes out the Koran.
 - d. The name of the robe that Muslims wear.

ANSWERS:

1. ANSWER C: Samadhi.

Bhagavan goes on to state:

When one knows that there is absolutely no iota of distinction between the Jiva and the Atma, that they are one and the same, then it is the highest samadhi. It is the fruit of ripest dhyana, the dearest moment of Yogis, the destroyer of ajnana, the signal of the Grace of God. Incessant thirst to know the Atman as all, is worthy to be encouraged and welcomed, for, it is the path through which all doubts can be eliminated... Samadhi is as the ocean to which all sadhana flows.

The seven streams of Yama, Niyama, Asana, Pranayama, Prathyahara, Dharana and Dhyana all find their consummation in it.

(Prasanthi Vahini p87-88)

2. ANSWER B: The occasion when Lord Buddha preached his first sermon.

Soon after he realized full enlightenment, Lord Buddha wanted to share his discovery with the five monks with whom he had previously practiced asceticism. In his great compassion he wanted to help his friends find the path to liberation. So his very first sermon as the Buddha was to these five monks at a grove near Sarnath called Deer Park. This discourse is called Setting in Motion the Dharma Wheel and delineates on the Four Noble Truths and the Eightfold Path.

3. ANSWER A: Bhishma

Commenting on this great bhaktha, Swami exhorts us:

Remember Bhishma! Though prostrate on a bed of arrows, he bore the pain patiently, waiting the dawn of the auspicious moment. He never called out to God in his agony, asking Him to put an end to his suffering. "I shall bear everything, whatever the pain, however long the agony. I shall be silent until the moment comes. Take me when it dawns," he said. For Bhishma was the chief among the Santha-bhakthas. He lay firm and unshakeable.

(Prasanthi Vahini p 12-13)

4. ANSWER C: Classes on Christian belief.

Catechism is a class or manual on the basics of Christian doctrine and practice, usually as a precursor to confirmation or baptism. Catechisms normally include lessons on the creeds, the Lord's Prayer and the Ten Commandments, as well as the Hail Mary in Roman Catholicism.

5. ANSWER A: Ravana roared through all his ten throats.

This event is related to us by Bhagavan as follows:

Very soon, news reached Ravana that the enemy was at the gate. Though possessed of ten throats, Ravana was using only one throat so far to communicate with others; but now he roared through all the ten, in anger and hate. He did not remember that it was a bad omen to speak through the ten throats! There was a curse laid on him long ago, that when he spoke through all the ten his end would draw near. Within a few seconds of the roar, he recollected

the curse and was frightened at the fact. But however much he attempted to control the other throats, his voice came out of all the ten. The Rakshasas who noted this strange occurrence inferred that his destruction was imminent, now that Rama and his Vanara armies had entered Lanka.

(Ramakatha Rasavahini - II p 182-3)

6. ANSWER D: Taoism

An excerpt from the *Tao Te Ching* is as follows:

The Tao is (like) the emptiness of a vessel; and in our employment of it we must be on our guard against all fullness. How deep and unfathomable it is, as if it were the Honoured Ancestor of all things! We should blunt our sharp points, and unravel the complications of things; we should modify our brightness, and bring ourselves into agreement with the obscurity of others. How pure and still the Tao is, as if it would ever so continue! I do not know whose son it is. It might appear to have been before God.

(*Tao Te Ching*, chapter 4)

7. ANSWER A: Om

Swami explains this as follows:

Persons who have attained a higher stage believe that they are jeevis (distinct individuals). For these, the manthra can be "Soham" (I am He) so that the sense of distinctness can be eliminated. In fact even this manthra has a face of distinction, for it posits an "I" and a "He." How can this manthra lead one to the awareness of the one? The next higher stage is the Aathmic. When man reaches this level of consciousness, the idea of 'I' as different from 'He' disappears. That is to say, So (He) and Aham (I) fade away and Soham is elevated into OM. OM or Pranava is the Manthra for persons conscious of the Aathma in them.

(Divine Discourse 14th June 1983)

8. ANSWER D: Swami Prabhupada

The Hare Krishna movement was founded by A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada (1896-1977), upon his arrival to America from India in 1965. His mission was to encourage people to worship Lord Krishna and the movement

is famous for propagating the Hare Krishna mantra. There are many Hare Krishna temples all over the world.

9. ANSWER C: Body consciousness.

Swami explains this as follows:

Of one thing, be certain. So long as the delusion that one is the body is not cast aside, God cannot be realised; however far one may wander, whatever the number of Gurus one might select and serve. Stick to that delusion and all the Dhyana (meditation), all the Japam (repetition of name of God), all the waters of all the Holy Theerthams (Sacred Waters, pilgrim centres) that you bathe in, cannot win success for you! All your effort is as useless as trying to bale out water with a vessel riddled with leaks.

(Geetha Vahini p 108-9)

10. ANSWER B: The call to prayer.

Adhan is the Islamic call to prayer. It is recited by the muezzin (prayer caller) from the minaret of a mosque five times a day. An English translation of the prayer goes as follows:

Allah is the greatest.
I bear witness there is no god but Allah.
I bear witness Muhammad is the Prophet of God.
Make haste to prayer;
Make haste to welfare.
Prayer is better than sleep.
God is most great
There is no god but Allah.

H2H QUIZ JULY

1. In our September 2005 edition, we informed you about an incident related by Mrs Geeta Mohan Ram when she was an eight year old child. Her grandmother was fearful about an impending eye operation, and mentioning this to Swami on the telephone she asked for Vibhuti. What happened next?
 - a. Swami made Vibhuti appear from the telephone.
 - b. Swami appeared in the room and gave the grandmother Vibhuti.
 - c. Vibhuti immediately started flowing from one of the family's pictures of Bhagavan.
 - d. The grandmother found Vibhuti in her purse.

2. In our July 1 2004 cover story, 'The Perfect Disciple: The Story of John S Hislop', we carried the following episode as related by Mr Hislop:

One time, Swami went to Madras and arrived unexpectedly at the house of His hostess. You know, when the Avatar come to visit your house, I am sure you would want to have something with which to greet Him – some flowers or a tray of food or something to the welcome the Lord to your house. That was the case with this hostess too. Swami came to the door and knocked. The hostess answered, saw Swami standing there, and exclaimed, "Oh Swami, Swami, I am so happy to see You. But Swami, You didn't tell me that you were coming, and I don't have anything to welcome you with. I don't have flowers or fruit. I don't have anything." The poor lady was quite distraught. So Swami said, "Don't worry, don't worry."

What happened next?

- a. Swami asked the lady to take her time to cook a meal and returned later.
 - b. Two angels arrived carrying food.
 - c. Swami asked the lady to go into her garden where she found a tray of food.
 - d. Swami waved his hand and created some flowers with which she was able to garland Him.
3. In June 1 2004, we carried the cover story 'God's Own Children' concerning Sathya Sai Deenajanoddharana, the orphanage run by Swami, in Puttaparthi. In which year did Swami inaugurate this institution?
 - a. 2004
 - b. 2003
 - c. 2001
 - d. 2002

4. In our April 1 2004 cover story, 'Sai Leela', you will be able to find many entrancing and astonishing leelas, as recorded by old-time devotees. One such occurred when Swami went to the Chitravarti sands and presented Himself to the devotees first as the scorching Sun and then as the freezing moon! In what form did the Lord appear next? As -
- a. Lord Shiva
 - b. Sathya Sai with a Third Eye.
 - c. Lord Krishna.
 - d. Shirdi Sai
5. In our cover story from March 1 2004, 'With Baba to Badrinath', we carried Swami's epoch-making trip to this Himalayan shrine, the highlight of which was Swami's creation of the Jyothirlinga and its installation in the shrine. In which year did this take place?
- a. 1972
 - b. 1961
 - c. 1958
 - d. 1969

ANSWERS:

1. ANSWER A: Swami made Vibhuti appear from the telephone.

The story as related by Mrs Geeta Mohan Ram is as follows:

On the other side Swami said that His blessings are with her; but then my grandmother replied, "Your blessings are there but I want your Vibhuti, without it how can I go." That was the kind of personal love she had for Him. Swami says, "You can demand. I am your mother." So I think He said to give the phone to me, and then He said, "Geetha, do you find a piece of paper anywhere there." I said, "Yes, Swami." "Put it near the phone." So I put the telephone down and there came a mound of Vibhuti onto the paper, enough for the whole month! I knew that the phone service does not provide such things, so I was surprised! And then Swami said very sweetly in Telugu "**Vachinda?** (Did you get it?) Give it to the old woman - she will be very happy."

2. ANSWER B: Two angels arrived carrying food.

The story continues:

Then He turned around and beckoned at the car. Out of the car came two angels with wings, carrying a big silver tray, loaded with fruit and flowers and everything the hostess would need to welcome Swami. The angels brought this tray up to the house and gave it to the hostess. Then Swami turned to the angels and waved them back to the car. They floated back to the car, folded their wings, got into the car, and disappeared!

3. ANSWER B: Two angels arrived carrying food.

The story continues:

Then He turned around and beckoned at the car. Out of the car came two angels with wings, carrying a big silver tray, loaded with fruit and flowers and everything the hostess would need to welcome Swami. The angels brought this tray up to the house and gave it to the hostess. Then Swami turned to the angels and waved them back to the car. They floated back to the car, folded their wings, got into the car, and disappeared!

4. ANSWER B: Sathya Sai with a Third Eye.

The account is as follows:

We now began to wonder what miracle He would perform next, when He announced: "I shall show you the Third Eye. Watch attentively." "Third Eye?! How does it look?" we wondered. Swami's body was not visible but His head appeared gigantic, as if stretched across the entire sky. Bewildered and stupefied, we stared at the sky. An orifice appeared on Swami's forehead between His two eyebrows; and fiery sparks issued from that opening. We were dazzled by the brilliance of those sparks. We were also scared. More than being afraid about ourselves, we were worried about what might happen to Swami. The sparks continued to gush out. Meanwhile, many had fallen down unconscious, and we did not know why these people had fainted. That made us even more scared.

5. ANSWER B: 1961

The account of the aforementioned incident begins thus:

17th June was a Day of Days, a Day that will be enshrined in the memory of everyone in the party, for years and years. In pursuance of His Mission of re-infusing spiritual efficacy in all Holy Places where men congregate for acquiring peace and joy, a Mission which took Him recently to Ayodhya, Kasi

and Prayag, Baba that day reinvigorated Narayana worship at Badrinath, by means of a unique ceremony, whose significance is beyond our tiny understanding!

HEALING TOUCH

NEW VISION, NEW LIFE

“Eight months ago, one evening I was returning home from work, and suddenly I was gripped with a never-before-felt pain in my head. I also started vomiting. After few minutes, the pain did stop, only to recur after 10 days,” says the thirty-eight year old Varanasi Sarweswar Sharma.

“I am a farmer,” continues the frail-looking father of three daughters aged eleven, eight and five years. “I did not have the time to go to the hospital; I cannot afford to go; I cannot wait long hours as it generally happens in any hospital. So I started taking Homeopathy pills, but as days passed my condition only got worse. For some inexplicable reason, my vision started deteriorating, and I had to start wearing spectacles,” Sarweswar recalls the troublesome days of his trauma. But this was only the beginning.

The Terrible Trauma

On January 29, 2007, at 10:30 PM when he was lying on his bed, Sarweswar says, “I got a wake up call - an excruciating headache which lasted for four long hours, and thereafter I could not open my right eye lid at all! I lost vision in my left eye.” It was the most dreadful day of his life. He felt utterly helpless and was worried like never before. His brother immediately took him to a private hospital in Kakinada, a town in the East Godavari District in the state of Andhra Pradesh.

The doctors there promptly advised a Radiology examination. What the CT scan revealed, devastated Sarweswar and his family. He had a brain tumour. The hospital in Kakinada was ill-equipped to handle such cases and the doctors referred him to the Nizam Institute of Medical Sciences (NIMS), a reputed Government medical university located in the capital city of Hyderabad.

But Sarweswar was too worried. He knew it would cost a fortune and for a farmer like him it was unthinkable. It was at this time that destiny decided to come to his rescue in form of a kind hearted nurse. The gentle lady seeing his plight intervened and informed Sarweswar of the Sri Sathya Sai Institute of Higher Medical Sciences at Whitefield. The moment he heard that it was free hospital which specializes in Brain Surgery, Sarweswar wasted no time.

On February 1st, 2007 Sarweswar arrived at Bhagavan's Hospital with his brother for a checkup and was immediately admitted. A series of blood test and radiological investigations followed. The doctors' impression of the scan read:

“It is a well defined rim enhancing heterogeneous intensity lesion, widening the sellar and suprasellar region, measuring 3.4 x 3 x 4.3cms. It is compressing the optic chiasma and displacing the right internal carotid artery (ICA) around it. Areas of different hemorrhages are seen within the lesion.

In simple words, it meant, it was Pituitary tumor (abnormal growth of the cells in the Pituitary gland located at the base of the brain) accompanied with bleeding. This condition caused an increase in pressure leading to compression of the optic nerve resulting in visual deterioration and drowsiness and finally blindness.

The Gift of Sight

On the very next day of his arrival into Swami's hospital (that is, February 2, 2007), he was wheeled into the operation theatre and the doctors explored trans-nasally and the tumor was decompressed. It was a smooth surgery; Lord's Grace on Sarweswar was abundant. On the 8th day after the surgery, Sarweswar began to see again. His joy knew no bounds! It was like being reborn again, and this precious gift of new life was offered to him absolutely free and with lots of love in a world which everyday exemplifies that 'there is no free lunch'.

Just like a lotus in a sordid pond, this Hospital right from its inception has been 'out of this world' by living and demonstrating principles which are considered utopian by the modern man. It is a testimony to the power of selfless love. Bhagavan Baba says, "Love does not watch through the eyes; it knows the heart. Love does not hear through the ears; it listens with peace. Love does not talk with words; it talks with compassion." And right from its inception in January 19, 2001, this 'Temple of Healing' has done only this.

Three months later when Sarweswar walked into the Neuro Out-Patient Department with a big smile on his face, a Sai Volunteer working at the hospital asked him, "How are you?" He joyfully said, 'Fit and Fine'. And Sarweswar is just one of the many that walk into this hallowed hospital every day irrespective of religion, region, caste or class differences. To quote another instance, here is the case of Rajkumar, who is nearly half of Sarweswar's age, in the prime of his youth.

Rajkumar – His Father's Prince

A young handsome boy, Rajkumar S. Korale, is his father's favourite son doing his second year in the Industrial Training Institute, in Bijapur, a city which is also the district headquarters of the eponymous district in the state of Karnataka. Nothing gave more happiness to Mr. Korale than seeing his son blossom into a qualified young man. He spent all his earnings from working in the fields in his village in educating his son. And Rajkumar too responded beautifully by being an earnest student. Every afternoon he would return from college, have his lunch and diligently settle down on his favourite spot on the terrace of the house with his books. It did the same few months ago on March 1, 2007 too but what followed next on this fateful day was very disturbing.

From Delight to Depression

He felt a sudden throbbing in his head and started to vomit. Hearing his

screams his father, mother and sister ran up to the terrace and to their horror he was lying there unconscious. The distraught family carried him to the nearby government hospital in their village. The doctors there administered some drug and he recovered soon. The family was relieved and returned home, their hearts lightened and minds calm.

But their peace would not last long. After twenty days, on April 21, 2007, Rajkumar had a second episode of this mysterious headache and vomiting. This time his father took him to a private hospital in Kolapur, a prosperous city in the neighboring state of Maharashtra.

A CT scan of the brain done here revealed a blood vessel abnormality called 'Aneurysm'. The family sunk in despair. Aneurysm, in layman terms, is a bleb or bulge in the artery. A cerebral aneurysm is a bulge in the artery in the brain. It can be fatal if the 'bulge' in the blood vessel ruptures causing a brain hemorrhage. The doctor did not mince words, he said, "Your son's life is poised on a razor's edge. He needs to undergo immediate surgery which is both expensive and complicated."

When the doctor mentioned to Rajkumar's father the approximate cost of the surgery (about Rs 1 – 1.5 lakh), he stood motionless. He was too shocked to even think. When he regained composure, he knew he has only one option or rather actually no option left. He cried out within, "Dear God, why do You want to take him so early, when he wants to live? You know I have spent all my earnings all these years in trying to put him in college and get a decent education, now where do I go for this huge amount. Please have mercy on me. Please let him live." His predicament was heart-breaking to say the least. It was like somebody was now mercilessly taking away from him the very inspiration of his life, the dream for which he had toiled nights and days converting his blood into sweat.

The Divine Steps in

Whether it was an amazing coincidence or the inscrutable ways of the divine, that same day a friend who visited them said, "There is no need to worry. Haven't you heard of Sri Sathya Super Specialty Hospital (SSSIHMS) in Whitefield? They treat such cases and it will be done all free."

Next week the father made the 530 kilometer journey and landed in Swami's Hospital with his son. At first sight, he was awestruck to see such a big and beautiful building. He could not believe it was a Hospital. The atmosphere was so serene, the vibrations so uplifting.

The doctors in Swami's Hospital, after seeing his CT scan reports, immediately admitted Rajkumar in the emergency ward. Routine blood test, urine test, MRI and an angiogram were done and the doctors confirmed that it was "Left ICA (Internal Carotid Artery) bifurcation aneurysm", meaning, a bulge at a junction point inside the brain where the artery bifurcates into two.

On May 4, 2007, the Neuro Surgeons operated on Rajkumar. The surgery

“Left Pterional Craniotomy”, wherein the brain is explored by opening the top left portion of the skull. The surgery lasted six hours and the aneurysm was successfully clipped using a Titanium implant.

“Now I know God is very loving” – Rajkumar’s Father

The surgery, like every other done at this Hospital by Swami’s dedicated surgeons, was a success and Rajkumar recovered remarkably. While walking out of the Hospital after few days of stay, the emotional father said, “Thanks to God and the Medical Team that saved my son’s life. I have always believed in God, but now I know that He is very loving”. For the hospital staff there is no other greater joy than seeing Rajkumar, now with his rediscovered youthful exuberance and his father’s faith in the almighty more strengthened now than ever.

Such miracles of pure love are everyday phenomenon in this Temple of Healing. Dear reader, we brought you only two of such moving tales and there are happening in hundreds every single day. The whole magazine would not be sufficient to track the patients who have found hope, love and light in just one day of the hospital. What is happening here is phenomenal and it is best we leave it your blissful imagination! The power of selfless love is limitless, we know it. But here, you can see it every day, dawn till dusk.

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We are grateful to Mrs. Poornima Shirale without whose contribution and active support this article would not have been possible.

- **Heart2Heart Team**

YOUR SAY

- Feedback from Our Readers

Feedback on the Cover Story: Canada's Crown Jewel ...*The Sathya Sai School in Toronto*

Dear H2H team,

RE: The cover story on Canada's Crown Jewel

The Sathya Sai School in Toronto is an excellent, motivating and highly inspiring article compiled in a very beautiful and lucid manner. Every paragraph is conveying a message which adds value to life as taught by Swamiji

Thanks for this issue. I have learnt a lot.

K.V.Narrasimham
Prof & HOD Q.T. / I. T.
Rai Business School Delhi.

Aum Sri Sairam
Dear H2H,

I am very very happy to see the comprehensive article about our Sathya Sai School here in Toronto. An excellent job indeed and we are very blessed to have the school here in our city. Your write up will inspire millions more to know Swami and His Divine Teachings. Thank you so much

Ever in Sai's Love,

V. Jayaraman
Toronto, Canada

Sai Ram Brothers & Sisters of the Heart to Heart Team,

Your article in the June 2007 Issue on Sathya Sai School in Toronto is inspiring, revealing Swami's Love and Grace.

We are regular readers of your monthly issues and enjoy feeling the Love of Swami. Very often tears come down, seeing the manner in which SWAMI takes care of all HIS children, facing different calamities. Your Team is doing a wonderful job of bringing more and more awareness of Swami's Mission and our Role and how HIS devotees are carrying out selfless seva activities in different parts of the world.

We thank Swami and your Team Members for connecting us with Swami and other members of the Sai Family all over the world.

S.Pathy

Sai Ram,

The Sathya Sai School in Toronto is another jewel from H2H web journal to its readers.

It is nice to read about its founders, teachers and students experiences on how their lives have been transformed by the education provided by this Sai School.

Regards,

Kartik Bhatia
San Bruno, CA

Sairam,

It brought tears while going through the inspiring article of the Sathya Sai School of Canada. Praying to our Sai to make each one of us his instruments in making this world a better place to live

Loka Samastha Sukhino Bhavanthu,

Ranga

Sai Ram,

Your article on the Sathya Sai School was superb. I do volunteer at times at the School and is very pleased to see many details have been captured so well.

Congratulations to the Sathya Sai School on all their achievements during this short period of 7 years. Congratulations also goes to Ms Karuna Munshi who has done a marvellous job in putting this article together. Her talents and hard work has contributed immensely to the success of the school. We are

all proud of the Sathya Sai School and our heartfelt thanks goes to the principal and staff for their, committment, dedication and selfless sacrifices that they make every single day.

May Swami's divine grace and blessings be with them always.

Regards,
Deo Goocool

Feedback on the H2H Special "He Is My Swami" by Mrs. Padma Kasturi.

Sairam sir,

It is glorious that h2h has made us to know the total freedom Late Kasthrigaru got in the proximity of lord Shiva himself. *Kasthurigar* got *kapalamoksha* as he was an ardent and most liked devotee of Bhagavan. We are grateful to smt. Padmamma for narrating these memorable incidents to the world of Sai. So that coming generations of Sai devotees will see the soul of Kasthurigar in a different body close to Begawan Prem Sai.

Jai Sai Ram,
Yours,
Krishna Prasad

Sai Ram Heart2Heart Team,

I want to tell you that I like the transcript of the conversation with Mrs Kasturi very much. More of these are indeed inspiring for me!
Thank you for your service.

Om Sai Ram,

Joop Sturkenboom,
Holland

Feedback on the article GREATEST WONDER OF THE WORLD By Prof G. Venkataraman.

Dear Brothers, Sai Ram,

I enjoyed your article "THE GREATEST WONDER OF THE WORLD ' by Dr Venkataraman, is very inspiring indeed, because it is all about Swami's interaction with His students. Full of love and wisdom.

Yes, I would like to read more articles like that which brings joy to our heart by learning so many things from the students' experiences with Swami.

Jay Sai Ram,
Ferry Karimi
Greece

Yes, Heart2Heart,

This was a splendid article/experience/story. I become more acquainted with Sai Baba how he lived His daily life among devotees, how He guides and teaches us how to live, how to live in silence but not in recluse but in the world, in humility and in His Divine Presence always.

I presently reside in North America.

Thank you for your wonderful work and Love and seva,

Sai Ram,
Jutta Benner

Feedback on Swami and Me “The Source, Sweetness and Sustenance of My life – My Sai” by Dr. Narendranath Reddy

This is a response to Dr. Reddy's article.

His article describing Swami's loving attention to the whole family was heart warming and reminded me of how much Swami loves us.

Thank you for publishing such wonderful stories of our dear Lord.

Very truly,
Richard Murray

Dear Sir,

This is the type of inspiring article I am always look for and enjoy.

Thanks,

Mridul Barua,
Toronto, Canada

General Feedback

Dear H2H team,

H2H magazine is spreading brilliance and radiance around the world since its inception. Quality is so great that the readers shall not miss any of the articles right from editorial to quiz contest.

After getting involved in reading H2H magazine, our Sunday routine has dramatically changed. Early morning Sunday bhajan at local Sai Centre automatically drags us. Back home, our routine prayers are continued. Thereafter sitting in study area, we focus on Sai Radio simultaneously reading all the articles in H2H magazine.

Prior to the above transformation, our interest was on Sunday TV schedule.

Listening to the programmes on Sai Radio is so soothing to our ears and viewing the Sai Videos is so cooling to our eyes. Swami's omni presence is felt thru all our senses after the transformation.

He formed the World and transformed the Humanity.

H2H team is the most blessed one to work as part of His Mission.

Sai Ram

Udayasankar
Indonesia

Feedback on the article **IS THE WORLD A STAGE?**
By Dr. Sara Pavan

Sairam Dear brothers,
I came across this enlightening article. My humble thanks to Dr.Sara Pavan for

sharing the divine thoughts, it was like a cool sprinkle to sooth my scorching tears.

Loving Sairam,

Sandhya
Chicago

Feedback on the article **THE BLISS OF HIS PRESENCE**
By Mr. Maharaj Krishen Kaw

Hello there in the Sai Radio,

I read the article THE BLISS OF HIS PRESENCE
By Mr. Maharaj Krishen Kaw and was very much moved by how the
divine moved through Swami.

God Bless
Richard Okello.

Feedback on the article **The article: A MOTHER'S AGONY**

Dear H2H team,

I don't have a personal experience I can share with you but surely I can say that this story, like so many before, is once again an overwhelming one. It fills my heart with immense love and joy for God, that in his boundless compassion and love for one and all, takes care of those that seem to have been forgotten by society and even God. But HE is there in the darkest moments, not only to rescue us but to fill our hearts with joy and hope. These are the moments our faith gets strengthened, our hope increases and our wish to share our joy with our fellow men is born and growing. The longing for God and the love given to us by the all pervading, our dearest mother and father can't wait any longer to flow.

Loving Sai Ram

Marina Gagetti
Universität Zürich
Jacobs Center for Productive Youth Development

Hi:

I have just seen the journal with my country Chile.
It was just beautiful. !!! Thank you all h2h!!
My congratulation to the team!

Keep going!!
God bless you all,
Carmen

Feedback on Sai Inspires, our daily inspirational e-mail service

Dear Sirs,

Thank you so much for yours emails and the words that are beautiful in the Sai Inspires. I look forward to reading them every morning.

Kathleen Anderson
In Sai Love

Hi Team!

I really missed you bunch of guys! I always kick-start my day reading H2H and felt quite lost without your mails in my Inbox.

Great to have y'all back. You've made my day. Keep doing the great job you folks do - spread Baba's message of Truth, Righteousness, Peace, Love and Non-Violence. Our world needs Baba's sage guiding advice, now more than ever. Wishing you all more Sai Power.

Smiles and Sunshine

Om Sai Ram H2H Team,

This e-mail is just to say: I am so glad to receive your inspirational messages again! Thank you for all your wonderful work!

Sai Ram from Rita-Maria
Linnenkamp, Holland, Europe

Dear Sir,
Sai Ram! It was really very disheartening not to receive H2H for such a long time. It is like daily dose of Swami's amrut. Heartfelt thanks for resuming it.

Regards,

Capt (IN) PS Raghuvanshi

Sairam Heart2Heart Team

All I can say is thanks to you each day I get closer and closer to my Sai. The messages, each day, strangely seem very to be very apt for the kind of situation I am in, and keeps reminding me that at the end of it all it is only between me and God, and His love is the only constant factor, nothing else. God bless you.

Warm regards,
Anoojjaa